

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy
Tuesday, 05 May 2015 13:18



The Rage Machine

Dear Aunt Bossy,

My husband, to whom I have been married for thirty years, cheated on me when he was out of town on business. I cannot get over that.

□□□□□□□□□□ *We are as close to perfect as a couple can get – same interests, same taste, same goals in life. We have a great time together. We even look alike. We have four terrific children, who have done us proud. We have so much to be thankful for in our lives.*

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□□□□□□□□□□ *However, he cheated and he lied and I feel so utterly disrespected and devalued that I just can't get past it. I know he loves me and will do anything for me, especially at this point. What shall I do? I don't want to live with this anger.*

RM

Dear RM,

Ouch. That hurts. A lot. I'm going to answer this, even though I could be completely wrong about his feelings and motives. You didn't go into detail, but I think the subject applies to many people, and so I will attempt to ease some pain. I hope it helps you, too.

Far be it from me to say it is all right to cheat on your spouse. It is wrong under any and all circumstances. Horribly wrong.

However, if you stop and wonder why he did that, and are strong enough to accept that it doesn't have anything to do with a lack on your part – which is undoubtedly true – you might be able to understand the lack in him that allowed that behavior.

Nature is a strong force. Men are hard-wired to bring home the bacon, protect the family, be in charge and be strong. No matter how much our society has tried to “fix” it so that everything is the same with men and women, it isn't and never will be.

Putting aside the hormonal cheerleaders which race through our systems, think about the pressure that many men feel to be successful, to keep their vitality, to avoid being pushed out by the young “ram.” It can be horrifying and paralyzing. Especially if they don't acknowledge those feelings or talk about them.

They age. So do women. We talk about it, fight it, work around it. Men might exercise a bit more and buy Corvettes and cigarette boats, but they rarely (and, yes, I am stereotyping) admit why.

So, when a man who is struggling with the very meaning of success, the meaning of life, and his mortality, is faced with some female creature who thinks he is perfect, it can be understandable that he figures out a way to justify bad behavior.

It isn't all right. It is **WRONG**. However, it can be understood.

If your husband were arrested for shoplifting or for speeding, or even for driving drunk – all serious charges – you might be upset, but you wouldn't be devastated because you wouldn't think it reflected on you.

This has to do with intimacy and betrayal on an intimate level. However, I would bet that you have shared feelings and even actions with your friends that you would never share with your husband. True intimacies, although non-physical.

You have probably shared things about him that sound horrible because you were furious with him for one reason or another, even though everything was basically good. You would feel awful if he heard or became aware of these "betrayals."

None of us is perfect. Your situation is horribly painful. I don't know the details, but here is my advice:

Change the way you think about it. You can never change that it happened. Try opening your heart to him and give him some room to act as your equal again. The longer he is in the role of the supplicant, the more difficult it will be for him. The bad puppy has to be able to pull that tail from between his legs (I hope this doesn't turn out to be an unfortunate metaphor) and wag it again if he is to become the joy to you and your family that he used to be.

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Do it for your children. You will be happily surprised at how that will lift your pain.

And, of course, talking to a professional third party is always a good idea.

The Political Divide

Dear Aunt Bossy,

My best friend and I just love each other. We get along famously and have for fifty years. We can just hang out and laugh and go places together and never feel anxiety or get bored. We talk and we talk. There is just one problem: we are at totally different ends of the political spectrum and cannot discuss politics. We avoid the subject, but it is something that is a big part of my life. In fact, it is my main focus.

□□□□□□ I feel like we have to be able to talk about everything if we are really lifelong friends. Am I kidding myself about our relationship?

Lucy the Lefty

Dear LtL,

My dear, you are trying to change and control a situation that doesn't need to be changed or

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controlled. At this point many would make a snide remark about your political “side.”

Leave it alone. Treasure your friend and your friendship. This is something that can't be legislated, so relax and continue to enjoy something that many people would envy.

After all, isn't love the answer?

Aunt Bossy is Susan Murphy, an internationally known Communication Skills Coach who adores spending every winter and spring in Beaufort. Ask for advice at bossymurph@mac.com

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