

My Man Betrayed Me

The biggest problem with marriage breakups is that neither one knew how to avoid it. Neither knew what was expected of them. Find author Bill Allin at <http://billallin.com>

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Question: My partner's recent affair is causing me to lose sleep. He apologized, but is it possible to save the marriage?

Answer: If you can't live with what he did, then get out of the relationship. Remaining...will hurt you both.
- [Colette Baron-Reid](#), Canadian intuitive, counsellor, speaker, author (b. 1958)

The questioner, no doubt fictitious, a composite of many women Baron-Reid has counselled, and her reply appeared in a column titled "Self Esteem" in the summer 2010 issue of *Zoomer* magazine.

The article led with a photo of a woman, alone, arms crossed, looking dejected yet angry, propped up on one side of a king size bed with a gap between the pillows so wide a Doberman could have curled up in there without troubling her. In fact, the look on the woman's face suggested a Doberman might have been welcome for protection. Or for offence.

This woman was upset, in abundance. But why? What had her man done wrong that violated something?

Had he broken his marriage vows? Not likely. Most marriage vows are not specific about fidelity. Some say "keeping only..." but those words are anything but clear. In most marriages, the husband doesn't promise to never have sexual relations with another woman. In fact, recent studies where anonymity was assured indicate that husbands have sex with at least one other woman in 85 percent of marriages.

Many will claim that fidelity is implied in the marriage vows, that a man knows he has promised to be "faithful" to his wife. As a judge would say, where is the evidence of that promise?

Should the woman feel cheated? Studies in the US show that 75 percent of wives have sex with at least one other man during the term of their marriage. I don't claim to be a math expert, but those numbers show something is very wrong.

First of all, and by no means a minor factor, is the fact that humans are mammals and like most other mammals have sexual urges that go beyond the marriage partner. Men have hormonal urges to spread their sperm (their genes) to as many available females as possible. Women have similar hormonal urges, only in their case to gather sperm from the best available males offering.

If anything, a husband who doesn't want to have sex with any woman other than his wife is unnatural. Or, in today's lingo, he would be "gay." That term doesn't necessarily mean homosexuality as it's used often as a reference to reputation.

Is every man who is faithful to his wife unnatural? Not necessarily. Some may be so sexually satisfied by their wives that they have no interest in or need to look at greater female challenges.

How many women fill that role. Many women believe, and studies can be presented to support the claim, that men never let sex get far from their minds. Their brain is locked behind a zipper. By reputation, if not by fact, that is not true of women. On the other hand, that 75 percent of unfaithful wives stands out as evidence that sex isn't buried that far down in most women.

This looks like an unworkable or unmanageable problem. It isn't necessarily.

Put four small children in a sandbox and eventually two or more of them will start scrapping. Parents interfere to show the kids social skills that apply to the situation. We don't think it unusual that kids will have differences of opinion in a confined space because they don't know the rules of social interaction that apply to that context.

What are the social rules of conduct of marriage? Where are those rules written down. Where are they taught?

Ask ten men what their specific role as husband is and most will find themselves speechless. Ask ten women who their role as wife is and several will have answers (based on what they actually do), at least answers that satisfy them. Now ask the ten husbands of those wives with answers what they understand the role of their wives to be. Again, don't expect much.

Most men expect their wives to be...Superwife. Whatever that means. Most women expect their husbands to be...something better than the man they married.

Talk about an unsolvable problem. But is it a problem when the players don't follow the rules of the game even if they don't know what the rules are and they were never asked to agree to them?

While you are speaking with those ten men and women, ask them to define "marriage," what the relationship called marriage really is supposed to be. The chances of your getting even one good answer are low. Is it, in fact, more than legalized, socially acceptable free sex? Everyone agrees it should be more, until they are asked what.

If the level and amount of legal and socially acceptable free sex works for one partner but not for the other, which feels cheated? In a relationship, does it not seem likely that the partner who feels cheated will eventually find a way to "fill the gap" with someone else, perhaps someone who serves no other meaningful purpose than satisfying the natural need for sex?

Few would disagree that sex constitutes a very important part of a marriage. Yet in how many marriages do both partners agree on the kind of sex, the amount and frequency of sex, even on the "cleaving only unto each other" part? And, in the cases of the few who agree, where would that agreement be? Is there a clause in the agreement to accommodate changes in the ability of one partner to provide for the sexual needs of the other, or the changes of interest in sex of either, or the need for variation in sexual expression of a couple over a marriage of, say, half a century?

Sex as a problem in marriage is only a problem so long as the two partners don't talk about it and reach an agreement, with both partners being honest with themselves and the other in the discussions. When one partner asks the other to defy nature, to ignore and overcome natural urges of chemicals that affect the brain as well as sex organs, it will be difficult for the agreement to stick.

Sex is only one component of marriage. If two partners don't talk about and agree about sex, they likely won't talk about other aspects of their marriage either.

Of this we may be certain: if one partner sets the rules and expects the other to follow them strictly, obediently and without failure, over time the rules will be broken and the relationship will fail.

Not that many years ago at least one partner of a marriage had died before both reached age forty. Today most people will live past 80 and many will live to see their 100th birthday. Something needs to change. If we don't talk with each other about our needs and expectations, they will not be met by our partners.

Remember the woman in the photo I mentioned at the start of this article? While her husband confessed to an affair, apologized and asked forgiveness, if nothing in the wife's behaviour changes from what caused him to look for sex with another woman in the first case, the problem with the marriage will persist. The woman in the picture thinks she did nothing wrong and has not given a thought to what she could have done differently to avoid the marriage breakdown. She believes it was all his fault.

In her mind, that's the way it plays out. Her ignorance of what constitutes marriage protects her from self recrimination. In real life, it never works that the other is always at fault. In most cases of marriage breakdown, neither partner knew what was expected of them, so they had nothing by which to assess their own performance as a partner and they believe the problem is the fault of the other. They only had their own feelings to evaluate their partner with.

If marriage today is a contract, then both parties need to know the details, the clauses, the expectations of the other, the needs of the other and what they should do if they find their needs are not being met.

Imagine the implications of a marriage contract being renewable every five years.

Bill Allin is the author of ***Turning It Around: Causes and Cures for Today's Epidemic Social Problems***, a **guidebook for parents and teachers who want to have their children develop in all the ways they need, not just physical and intellectual. The book has hands-on materials for parents and teachers. Learn more at <http://billallin.com>**

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