

INTIMACY, SEX & RELATIONSHIP

**Don't Talk
Divorce Until
All Avenues
Are Exhausted**



DR. SANDRA SCANTLING

DEAR DR. SCANTLING: I am a 36-year-old male. My wife is 32. We have no children and are very professionally driven. We've been married for 12 years but have only had sex about a dozen times. During the past year, we tried separation, hoping it would enliven her passion. We've recently thought about divorce. I can't imagine living like this for the rest of my life.

I love my wife and find her very attractive, but she is always pushing me away sexually. The last time we had sex was on our anniversary about two months ago. I was hoping it could be a new start, but since then we've only had intercourse one time. Each time I try to reach out to her, she rejects me. I can't seem to do anything right. When I try to rub her leg, she tells me to stop — that it makes her uncomfortable. I just don't know where to turn. I would like to tell her how much I want her, but I'm afraid it will start an argument. I welcome any ideas.

—SEAN, HARTFORD

DEAR SEAN: I'm surprised to hear that you thought separation would help your flagging marriage and are now considering divorce. You haven't even identified the cause of your problems. I'm not sure why your wife is pushing away your advances, but it's time to stop the guess-work and have a serious heart-to-heart talk. So what if it starts an argument — sounds like that would be progress, given what you have now.

If you're both interested in saving your marriage, you're certainly not acting that way. When you have one of your rare "intimate moments," are they pleasurable? Why not do more of what works for both of you?

Before you let the "D" word cross your lips again, make sure you've done everything you can to revive this marriage. See a therapist, talk with your pastor, or share with a professional.

DEAR DR. SCANTLING: After 14 years of marriage, I found out that my husband has been going to a strip bar about once a month and has even had a few lap dances. I thought we had a perfectly happy marriage. Now I feel duped. I never would have known, but I found a ticket stub in his pants pocket.

Why do men who claim they love their wives go to strip clubs? Obviously I'm not enough for him, and he needs more. ... Maybe it's time to let him out of the marriage so he can have all the lap dances he wants.

—CLAIRE, NEW BRITAIN

DEAR CLAIRE: Love has nothing to do with it. And you don't have a "perfectly happy marriage." I'll tell you why — it's not honest. If I were you, I'd be more upset about the lack of truthfulness in my relationship than the voyeuristic activities.

People go to strip clubs for fun, curiosity and excitement. Watching women take off their clothes or feign interest in them for a mere \$20 is a kick for some guys (and women). Although there are "private dance" rooms, most men don't do much touching there. They are the passive recipients who can watch without fear of rejection (as long as they play by the rules).

Let's face it, how often do you playfully strip off your clothing and straddle your husband in a chair? And for that matter, how often does he do that for you?

Is it morally wrong to get turned on by another person's body? Each intimate couple needs to answer that question personally. What about watching explicit films or reading erotica? You can't control your partner's fantasy repertoire.

Before you send your guy packing, I'd make sure that you're fighting about the right issue. Your marriage isn't being threatened by his choice of fantasy; it's being damaged by his willingness to sacrifice honesty for such a cheap price.

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