

INTIMACY, SEX & RELATIONSHIP

Acting On Sex Fantasies Can Be Fun, Or Backfire



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Does sexual fantasy enhance intimacy?" It depends on whom you ask.

Fantasies exist along a continuum. Favorite fantasies include sex with more than one partner, domination, submission, and sex in taboo locations or in some romantic hideaway. If your secret fantasy enhances your intimate connection, it may work for you. But if it leads to other attachments (personal or otherwise), you may be venturing into dangerous waters.

Norman and Carla, in their late 30s, have been married for 8 years and are without children by choice. They are successful management consultants with sky-rocketing careers. Both are marathon runners who have cultivated a solid network of friends, but they have one problem — their marriage is sexually boring. "Swinging" (having sex with other couples) became their solution. Up until now, they had only fantasized about involving others in their sex lives. But one day they crossed the line.

It started out innocently last New Year's Eve, after too much alcohol and too little inhibition. Alex and Penny, their closest friends, hinted flirtatiously about bringing the party upstairs. Norman and Carla were turned on by the "naughtiness" of the idea and went along.

"Everyone used condoms," they said. After they returned home, their own sex was blistering hot.

They got together with Alex and Penny several times after that evening. As long as Norman was in the same room with Penny and could watch Carla with Alex, he wasn't concerned. The voyeuristic part of the experience turned him on so much that he failed to notice Carla's growing emotional attachment for Alex. She was falling in love with him, or so she thought. When Norman insisted Carla call it quits, she refused. After a tortuous struggle and two failed therapies, both marriages crashed and burned.

Although some couples claim to successfully compartmentalize sex from attachment, I question the good sense of this decision. The more people you invite into your bedroom (real or imaginary), the more you risk diluting and complicating your primary intimacy bond.

Sally encountered a different kind of complication. A thirtysomething single website designer, she thought she had found "the one" at a local speed-dating event. Paul, a 38-year-old university history professor, had it all . . . tall, toned, well-dressed and charming. Conversation was easy; chemistry was abundant. Within two weeks, they were talking about moving in together.

Then he suggested the "f" word . . . fantasy. She was game. His fantasy was dress-up. "What harm could there be in that?" she thought. So the next evening, Paul presented Sally with a pair of lacy cerulean blue panties and matching bra.

"How sexy," she thought. What she didn't know was that Paul would be modeling them. But he was such a great kisser and had such a gorgeous body that the steaminess of the moment overwhelmed her. She thought it was just a little quirkiness, a one-time thing. He thought he had finally found someone who would accept his passion. But it soon became obvious to Sally that if there was no lingerie, there was no excitement for Paul and no sex.

When fantasy crosses over into fetishistic behavior, the objects of gratification (lingerie, shoes, etc.), become the focus of attention. Even though Sally knew other women might be fine with this, she wasn't.

Keep in mind that thinking is not the same as doing. If you decide to incorporate fantasy into your relationship, go slowly. Be prepared for any feelings that may be stirred in yourself or your partner.

Fantasy can be a fun addition to your love life — as long as you have a clear understanding of the rules and be sure to respect each other's boundaries.

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