Hello Alice,

My boyfriend and I have been together for almost 2 years. It has come to my attention that he just does not cry. Not when a relative dies, once we got into a huge fight and he was on the brink of losing me and our family and that didn't even make him cry. So I asked and he says he doesn't think he has cried since he was 14 (20 years ago) even though he's had a pretty rough life, one that I would think needed a lot of crying to get through. He generally seems rather emotion-less. He's either angry or just here. As where I am a very bubbly person. Should he see a therapist? Could there be something wrong with him mentally? It's causing serious issues in our relationship because he's just not very lovey and I am and I feel if you are about to lose someone you love, you cry; which makes me feel like he does not love me. What's going on here? Thank you.

-Brittany

Answer

Dear Brittany,

It seems like you're struggling with two issues here? you're wondering why your boyfriend doesn't cry despite having had a rough life, and disappointed and hurt that he doesn't show more emotion in your relationship. Not crying may be a coping mechanism that your boyfriend developed in response to his challenging life, which doesn't necessarily mean there is something wrong with him. However, it's clear that your relationship is suffering because you desire for your boyfriend to be more emotionally available and expressive, and this is something that you can work on together in the context of your relationship.

What this means is, your boyfriend's lack of emotion in his individual life is likely a separate issue from his emotional inaccessibility in your relationship. Perhaps your goal could be to work on your relationship together so that you can both feel loved and fulfilled, instead of putting effort forth in an attempt to change him. You've made a great first step by starting a conversation with your boyfriend about his crying (or rather, lack of crying), but intimacy within a relationship takes time and effort on the part of both partners to build and maintain.
If your boyfriend has not felt emotionally safe and supported in the past, he may not be used to expressing his feelings for you and your family, and may not even know how to do this. There are several steps you and your boyfriend can take to try to increase the emotional intimacy in your relationship:

- **Pay close attention to your feelings.** If you’re not sure how to describe those feelings or express them, an Internet search can be a great way to find terms that work for you. You may even try keeping a journal and writing down how you feel throughout the day or week.
- **Talk about your feelings with each other.** This may feel strange at first, but this odd feeling will fade with time as you both gain comfort talking about your emotions with each other. Trying not to make assumptions or judgments can go a long way to increase communication and the feeling of a safe space to share thoughts and feelings between you and your partner.
- **Actively listen to each other.** Again, your boyfriend’s hard life may mean he’s not used to having his feelings heard and validated. It seems like you might be facing that same problem in your relationship with him. So, listening to each other and making sure the other person knows they have been heard and understood will help both of you feel safe being emotionally expressive in your relationship. You might also think about setting aside time and space to have these conversations when needed.
- **Remember this is a process.** You and your boyfriend won’t be able to achieve perfect emotional intimacy on your first try. You may make some mistakes, but these are opportunities to learn and build an even deeper connection with each other.

Couples therapy might be a good place to start. As it sounds like you’re just starting your journey to becoming more emotionally intimate, having a non-judgmental third party’s help may allow you to work on your issues more effectively. This may also be a great time to ask yourself if this relationship is giving you what you need. Answering this question will help to remove the burden from your boyfriend needing to change the way he shows emotions, but more about refocusing on whether this relationship is giving both of you what you want within a romantic relationship.

Hope this helps,

Alice!

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