Hey Alice,

How can I convince my boyfriend that I do not fake my orgasms? When he asked me if have started faking them, I got really hurt. We have been dating for about five years and he questions this now?

Somewhat insecure about sexuality

Answer

Dear Somewhat insecure about sexuality,

Your conundrum brings up a few issues that are worth further exploration and discussion. First, it’s good to keep in mind that different folks experience sexual pleasure in a multitude of ways and what an orgasm means? in a sexual relationship may vary from person to person. And, though it may be referred to the big O, orgasms are by no means the only or best measure of sexual satisfaction. Research suggests that many other variables ? some of which aren?t explicitly sexual in nature ? can contribute reports of feeling satisfied sexually (more on those in a bit). As such, it?s good to consider these factors in your relationship. The good news is that this recent concern may present a good opportunity for you to take a step back and assess what is and isn?t working between you and your partner, both in and out of the bedroom.

Biologically speaking, an orgasm is a reflex, typically accompanied by pleasurable sensations that occur when the body is sexually stimulated. Despite this simple definition, there?s a lot of individual variation in the way people experience orgasms. Orgasms also vary by gender; for example, research has shown that females, regardless of sexual orientation, have less predictable and more variable orgasm experiences than males.

In the context of a relationship, the expectations and interpretations of experiencing an orgasm may vary between and among partners and contribute to some of the feelings you and your partner have encountered. For instance, one study investigating the experience of orgasms among heterosexual partners engaging in penetrative sex found that both male and female partners believed that it was the male partner?s responsibility? to ?produce? a female orgasm. It was also noted that the ability to do so was closely tied to male ego and confidence in sexual ability. In turn, it was acknowledged that repeated sexual experiences where the female partner didn?t have an orgasm may negatively impact a romantic relationship or cause undue pressure to perform, both for male and female partners.
Interestingly in the same study though, the female participants viewed their own orgasms not as an end-goal to a sexual experience, but more of a ?cherry-on-top? if you will. At least in this study, it?s easy to see how the wires of communication can be crossed when partners have different expectations or ideas about what the experience of orgasms mean for their relationship.

Beyond expectations, there?s more than just orgasms that contribute to a person?s reported sexual satisfaction. For example, research has shown that lesbian females tend to report higher rates of orgasms than heterosexual females, but both groups report comparable rates of sexual satisfaction. So what else may be at play here? Sexual satisfaction is comprised of more than just a physiological sensation and includes other physical, cognitive, and emotional factors. These may include feelings of contentment, emotional closeness, positive partner interactions, open communication, and compatibility regarding sexual preferences, desires, and attraction, whether sexual encounters place equal emphasis on both partner?s needs. Considering these factors may provide food for thought, as you further explore the why and what?s next in your relationship.

Along those lines, you might also ask yourself if you?ve noticed that your relationship has changed in some way recently. Anything different going on in between the sheets? What about beyond the bedroom door? Once you?ve thought about any of those possibilities, it?s wise to get your partner?s take on any changes he?s observed as well. This may also be a chance to discuss sex, intimacy, and what those mean for your relationship (which is wise to do when things aren?t heating up in the boudoir). Doing so can help you get back on the same page and hopefully get back to some mutual enjoyment in the sack!

Alice!

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