Dear Alice,

The man I am having a relationship with seems to prefer coitus interruptus. That is, during intercourse, he will hold out until I come, then withdraw, and either ask me to masturbate him or masturbate himself until he comes. At first this did not bother me since he was considerate of my orgasm, and every guy has his own peculiarity, I guess. Nevertheless, I now feel unfulfilled in intercourse without those final thrusts from a man. It is a little bit embarrassing for me to talk about, although communication is the key. Any suggestions on how to broach the topic?

Signed,
Unfulfilled sex

Answer

Dear Unfulfilled sex,

Kudos to you for coming forward to figure out how to navigate this sometimes uncomfortable situation. Coitus interruptus, sometimes referred to as withdrawal, is often used as a way to prevent pregnancy. However, some may use this method because they find orgasming from masturbation to be more fulfilling. It’s worth noting that withdrawal[^2] has a lower effectiveness rate than other forms of contraception because for some people, pre-ejaculate may contain viable sperm that can lead to conception. Additionally, the point of ejaculation may not always be clear or easy to control. As such, it’s recommended that other forms of contraception, such as condoms[^3] or other barrier methods be used to protect against pregnancy[^4] and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)[^5]. Regardless of your partner’s reason, it sounds like talking you’re your partner about both of your sexual needs is a good idea. Read on for tips for how you might approach this conversation.

In any relationship, communication is critical for ensuring all partners are on the same page. Not all conversations are easy, but by approaching your partner in a nonjudgmental and open way, it might open up the door to deeper discussions about what you both want sexually or otherwise. Before having this conversation, think about where and when you might broach the subject. It’s probably best to do this at a neutral time when you both aren’t preoccupied with other things and not right before or right after you’ve had sex. You might also choose to have this conversation...
after you’ve had a chance to process your emotions so you’re able to better able to communicate your thoughts and feelings.

One way to start the conversation is to tell your partner how much you care about him and this relationship. Then you can explain what you’ve been noticing with your sexual interactions. At this point, if you feel comfortable doing so, you can tell him how it makes you feel — that it feels like you’re not getting the full sexual experience when he pulls out early. This might also be a good time to ask him why he pulls out early, whether it’s to prevent pregnancy or whether he finds it more pleasurable. If he says he’s been doing it as a way to prevent pregnancy, consider sharing some other, more effective contraceptive options that will allow you both to finish together. You can read more about different forms of contraceptives in the Contraception category of the Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health archives. If he shares that he finds masturbation more pleasurable because it’s what he’s used to as feeling good, then maybe you can ask him if he’d be willing to try staying in a few times, to see if he discovers any new pleasurable sensations. However you choose to go about this conversation, be yourself and use your own language to express your desires. And, because it takes two to convo — make sure to be present, listen to your partner, and be open to new ideas that prioritize shared pleasure (even beyond orgasms).

Though this conversation may seem intimidating, it can offer an opportunity to understand what’s going on and how you can work it out together. If both of you are able to hold this conversation successfully, your pillow talk may turn into some potentially tantalizing play time in the future. Good luck!

Alice!
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