Foot fetish? [1]

1) Dear Alice,
I like to kiss my wife’s feet. Do I have a foot fetish?

Signed,
Reader

2) Dear Alice,
I get sexually aroused by feet. Am I a freak, or what?

Signed,
Foot Worshipper

3) Dear Alice,
I have two questions:
1. It’s getting to be summer over here; I don’t know if that’s part of it, but why do so many people wear sneakers or sports shoes without socks? Is it a new style or something?

2. Does it mean I have a foot fetish if I get a “hard on” when I see other guys not wearing socks? I mean, I’ve seen the foot fetish web pages and I have no reaction to them (basically the same reaction as if I were reading a VCR manual). And, occasionally, I do get a really big “woody” when I go out in public barefoot in my high-top sneakers or see other people do it.

Signed, Reader

Answer

Dear Readers and Foot Worshipper,

Believe it or not, researchers have yet to study the age-old question of why people go sockless in sneakers, so the best that can be done is to kick around a few guesses. It could be a new style, it could be about comfort, or maybe a whole lot of people have been putting off laundry day, but
these are all sole-ly speculations. As to whether you all have foot fetishes, that can depend on various criteria. Rest assured Foot Worshipper, it certainly wouldn’t make you a freak.

To dip a toe a bit further into this topic, a fetish is defined as sexual arousal and further gratification that depends on a non-genital object. Many people have some level of attraction to body parts that aren’t labeled by society as explicitly sexual. If they don’t require attention to that body part in order to achieve sexual fulfillment, it would likely be defined as attraction or desire, rather than a fetish. Therefore, simply enjoying kissing your wife’s feet or having a feeling of arousal in response to feet doesn’t necessarily indicate a foot fetish. Fetishes, along with other desires, can arise from many sources, including culture, genetics, age, and individual experiences. Given the many media representations of feet (think Wizard of Oz and Cinderella) it isn’t surprising that foot fetishes would be common for people who grew up with those representations, especially as some professionals believe fetishes may be informed by childhood experiences. Fetishes are often specific (such as sexual arousal at the sight of sockless shoes, for example) and people might have little to no interest in other iterations of that particular object or body part. They can also occur with inanimate objects, such as shoes, and aren’t restricted only to parts of the body.

Generally speaking, fetishes are of little need for concern. They can be part of a healthy expression of sexuality, and as long as they aren’t causing harm to you or anyone else, they’re considered safe! If the enjoyment of the object crosses into obsession or fixation, and the object is made the center of sexual activity rather than being integrated into mutually enjoyable sex, then it can be considered a fetishistic disorder. Additionally, if someone is only able to be sexually aroused with the subject of the fetish and not without it and if it causes distress or prevents them from functioning in their day-to-day lives, these may also be indications of a disorder. In these cases, a mental health professional can help address the urges through treatments such as medication and therapy.

At the end of the day, a foot fetish doesn’t have to be an Achilles heel as long as it's not tripping you (or anyone else) up!

Alice!

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Related questions
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Resources
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [7]
Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [8]

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