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Beatless in Seattle: Masturbation stops when relationship begins ^[1]

Hello Alice,

I have been seeing a girl now for almost eight months, and we have been sexually active for a good while. At a point in our sexual relationship, I came to a conclusion (no pun intended); I was going to stop masturbating. It just seemed silly, what with a girlfriend that was so much more satisfying than self-gratification. This has been going on for about two months, and I haven't felt "the need" for almost as long. I feel very satisfied with my sex life with my girlfriend, and I don't have that post-orgasmic sort-of shame that came with most masturbation for me. It's not much of a question after all that, I guess. I'd just like your thoughts, and maybe just pose it as a possibility for all the guys out there reading this page while they're waiting for the smut to load. And also, thanks for providing your page as a resource.

Sincerely,

Beatless In Seattle

Answer

Dear Beatless In Seattle,

It's great that you're in a relationship in which you're sexually satisfied! Your thoughts (thanks for sharing) touch on a couple of different ideas. As you noted, masturbation isn't mandatory — you may choose not to "beat off" while with your current girlfriend or with future partners. However, choosing to do so isn't "silly" or dirty. Masturbating and being in a loving relationship aren't mutually exclusive, and many people in relationships use masturbation, alone or with a partner, as a healthy release of sexual energy — just as they did when they were single.

Solo sex isn't a shameful betrayal of a partner and isn't reserved for one gender. Rather, like penetrative sex, masturbation is a healthy and, for many, an enjoyable activity that stands separately from other activities. Masturbation can have lots of positives outside of sexual gratification such as:

- Releasing sexual tension

- Reducing stress
- Assisting with better sleep
- Improving self-esteem and body image
- Relieving menstrual cramps and other muscle tension
- Helping you figure out what you like sexually

List adapted from Planned Parenthood [2].

Of course, if masturbation replaces sex between partners without mutual consent, or if its popularity with one partner leaves the other sexually dissatisfied, partners may need to talk about what would constitute a sexually satisfying relationship. Guilt before, during, and after masturbation isn't uncommon among "beaters" of all ages, and it may stem from moral, religious, or social doctrines that disapprove of it. Breathing a huge sigh of relief when you have a new partner because it replaces a need for self-pleasuring may be worth reflecting on further. After all, the frequency of sex with a partner may vary widely due to health conditions, changes in ability, stress, or even travel that separates partners. As such, you may want to consider asking yourself some questions that may help you better understand why you came to the conclusion that you did about self-gratification:

- What were you taught about masturbation? Who taught you about it?
- When did you first discover masturbation?
- How did you feel before, during, and after masturbating (e.g., guilt, excitement)?
- If applicable, how does your community (social, religious, etc.) regard masturbation?

Finally, you may want to consider discussing this with your girlfriend. Does she share the same beliefs about masturbation? What does she think about masturbation in a relationship? How would you (and your girlfriend) feel about including mutual masturbation during sex? Having this discussion is up to you, but you may find that discussing desires and new ways of giving pleasure may positively affect your sex life with your girlfriend.

Perhaps it would be helpful to learn more about masturbation and other ways of achieving sexual pleasure. You may want to check out some Q&As in the Masturbation [3] category of the *Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health* [4] archives to learn more about it.

Partnered sex may rock your world, but this doesn't mean that beating off needs to be out of bounds.

Alice!

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