Kissing with eyes open [1]

Dear Alice,

My boyfriend kisses with his eyes open. I've heard you are not supposed to trust people who kiss with their eyes open. I naturally kiss with my eyes closed (except to peek occasionally to see if his eyes are open). What's up with kissing with your eyes open?! What does that mean?

Answer

Dear Reader,

While pop culture often paints the perfect kiss as one with eyes closed and birds chirping, there’s certainly more than one way to lock lips. Kissing is as much a skill as an art, and there could be a number of reasons why someone might choose to gaze at whom they’re kissing. And, there’s no reason to believe that someone kissing with their eyes open is inherently untrustworthy. It’s possible that they feel an extra spark when they’re stimulated visually. For others, extra visual input might be distracting, so closed-eyed kissing can help to amplify the touch and taste sensations that give smooching its mass appeal. Though research points to the tendency for the brain to prioritize certain senses at a given time, these impacts haven’t yet been explored when it comes to kissing. Whatever the case, now that you’ve noticed that the two of you have different kissing styles, it may be a great opportunity to have a conversation about it. Openly communicating your preferences or experimenting with some changes to your romantic routine could be rewarding for both of you.

Before getting into the hype around kissing with your eyes closed, it might be helpful to know a little about the science of the senses. Every second of every day, the brain is bombarded with sensory signals. With competing stimuli from sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound, the brain has to choose what to focus on. In fact, studies have found that when the brain prioritizes a sense, it gets processed and remembered more deeply. One study looked at how awareness of tactile (code word for “touch”) senses changes relative to the degree of visual stimuli. The researchers found that when visual stimuli increased, there was a reduction in tactile sensation. While this evidence may be leveraged to explain the preference for closed-eyed kissing, there aren’t any studies directly looking at the connection between touch and sight when it comes to kissing. Some speculate that the reasons people close their eyes while kissing are to focus on the act, avoid awkwardness, increase pleasure, or express intimacy. That being said, any of these
explanations are anecdotal at this point.

While kissing with your eyes closed is what’s shown in the mainstream media, perhaps there’s an allure to trying it differently. For example, why not try kissing with your eyes open the next time you’re together? The really close eye contact might be strange at first, but there’s also the potential for an even more intimate experience. At the very least, it could give you some insight into what makes your partner tick — maybe you’ll be surprised to find you’re into it, too!

All that is to say: despite what you've heard, there are no technical kissing rules. How you kiss, where or what you kiss, and whether your eyes are open or closed is all about what feels best for you and your partner(s). You could even make out while knitting sweaters if that’s what gets you going! What’s key is that that you both feel that your physical and emotional needs are being met while you're at it. While there are no hard-and-fast rules in tonsil hockey, using your tongues for talking about what you’re feeling might help to ease your angst!

Alice!

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