

## Morality of masturbation <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I have guilty feelings after masturbating. I'm not sure if it's morally wrong or not. I know I should probably just go ask a priest, but it's kind of an embarrassing thing to talk to a priest about. I really enjoy it, but I am really confused with whether or not it's wrong. Any help would be very much appreciated.

### Answer

Dear Reader,

Biologically and psychologically speaking, masturbation is as right and normal as sneezing, coughing, laughing, eating, and yawning. It carries no health risks but does carry benefits <sup>[2]</sup>. It can help alleviate insomnia, get you in touch with what turns you on sexually, and be a stress-reliever (of course, if you're worrying about the morality factor, it may not be much help with that last one).

The morality of masturbation, as it relates to your religious, cultural, or spiritual beliefs, is something you will have to decide for yourself. Many people seek the help of family, friends, books, life experience, and/or clergy or other religious leaders. You mention feeling too embarrassed to talk to your priest about it. Is there perhaps another individual you would feel more comfortable talking with who also shares your religious beliefs or background? The answers don't have to come today, but arriving at conclusions about sex-related matters that you can live with may be one way to say good-bye to guilt.

On guilt, psychiatrist R.D. Laing said "True guilt is guilt at the obligation one owes to oneself to be oneself. False guilt is guilt felt at not being what other people feel one ought to be or assume that one is." What do you suppose makes you feel guilty about masturbating? For many people, societal or family messages about masturbation being "wrong" or "dirty" can stick in our consciousness even when we "logically" no longer believe such declarations. Others may have had a parent "discover" them masturbating at a young age and still carry shame from a disapproving parental reaction. If your religion says masturbation is wrong, what are the reasons given? And how do those reasons sit with you?

If it turns out that nothing about masturbation seems to "rub you the wrong way," it may be worth working through the guilt so that you can continue to enjoy this pastime that is enjoyed by so many others. But if it begins to feel morally questionable to you, stopping may be the best route for you. On such decisions, Sting once said: "Let your soul be your pilot. It'll guide you well."

Alice!

Category:

[Sexual & Reproductive Health](#) [3]

[Masturbation](#) [4]

## Related questions

[Masturbation — too much of a good thing?](#) [5]

[No privacy to masturbate](#) [6]

[Masturbating friends](#) [7]

[Don't dismiss masturbation myths!](#) [8]

[Guilt after orgasm](#) [9]

Published date:

Mar 20, 1998

Last reviewed on:

Jul 29, 2014

## Footer menu

- ▼ [Contact Alice!](#)
  - [Content Use](#)
  - [Media Inquiries](#)
  - [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
  - [Licensing Q&As](#)
  - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
  - [Full Site Syndication](#)
  - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

**Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.**

If you are in an urgent situation, please [visit our Emergency page](#) to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

---

**Source URL:** <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/morality-masturbation>

### Links

[1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/morality-masturbation>

- [2] <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/masturbation-healthy>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/sexual-reproductive-health>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/masturbation>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/masturbation-%E2%80%94-too-much-good-thing>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/no-privacy-masturbate>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/masturbating-friends>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/dont-dismiss-masturbation-myths>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/guilt-after-orgasm>