

case 54B

Conversation transcript

User

I am about to get married and I am wondering about my future together with my husband.

What he might reasonable expect from me in terms of meeting his needs for companionship & non-sexual intimacy as well as physical intimacy.

Assistant

A reasonable expectation in marriage is not that you meet every need your husband has, but that you both take each other's needs seriously and build a pattern of mutual care, affection, responsiveness, and compromise.

For companionship and non-sexual intimacy, it would be reasonable for him to hope that you want to share life with him - not merely coexist. That might include spending regular time together, talking about your days and inner lives, showing interest in what matters to him, offering comfort when he is struggling, enjoying activities together, and expressing affection through things like hugs, cuddling, holding hands, kisses, or sitting close. It is also reasonable for you to expect the same from him. Neither spouse should have to be the other person's entire emotional world, though; friendships, family, solitude, and individual interests remain healthy.

For physical and sexual intimacy, it is reasonable for each spouse to hope that sex and erotic affection will be an important part of the marriage if that is something you both value. It is also reasonable to talk openly about frequency, initiation, preferences, affection, and what helps each of you feel desired. What is not reasonable is an entitlement to your body, a fixed sexual quota, or an expectation that you consent when you do not want to. Marriage does not remove either person's right to say no. At the same time, repeatedly dismissing a spouse's need for sexual connection without discussion or concern can understandably become painful. A healthy marriage makes room for both truths: sexual needs matter, and consent matters every time.

A useful standard is that neither of you should be asking, 'What is the minimum my spouse owes me?' Instead, you want a relationship where each person can say, 'Your needs matter to me, even when they are different from mine, and I want us to find a way of caring for both of us.'

Before marrying, I would especially recommend talking explicitly about how much time together you each expect, how affectionate you naturally are, how often you imagine having sex, who tends to initiate, what makes each of you feel loved or rejected, how you handle periods of low desire, and how you want to respond when one person wants closeness and the other wants space. Differences in those areas are very common; discovering them before marriage is much easier than silently discovering them afterward.

If you'd like, I can also give you a fairly concrete picture of what a healthy husband's reasonable expectations of a wife might look like week-to-week, including companionship, affection and sex, without turning it into rigid rules.

User

ok

Assistant

A practical, healthy week-to-week picture could look something like this:

- **Companionship:** making regular time to talk, eat together, go out, relax, or share interests. Not every evening has to be 'quality time,' but he could reasonably hope to feel that you enjoy being with him and make room for him in your life.
- **Non-sexual affection:** everyday warmth such as hugs, kisses, cuddling, touching his arm, sitting close, affectionate words, and checking in emotionally. For many people, these small things matter just as much as sex.
- **Emotional intimacy:** listening when he wants to talk, sharing your own thoughts and feelings, showing interest in his worries and hopes, and being willing to repair things after disagreements.
- **Physical intimacy:** some mutually satisfying sexual connection at a frequency that works for both of you. There is no universally 'reasonable' number per week. What matters is that neither of you feels chronically pressured, rejected, ignored, or taken for granted.
- **Initiative:** it is healthy if affection, dates, conversations, and sex are not always his job to initiate. Feeling actively wanted can be very important.
- **Respect for differences:** there will be times when one of you wants more closeness, sex, conversation, or space than the other. A good marriage involves negotiating those differences rather than treating either person as unreasonable.

The key distinction is between a reasonable hope and an entitlement. He can reasonably hope for affection, companionship, sexual connection, and responsiveness from his wife. He cannot reasonably expect you to be constantly available, to suppress your own needs, or to consent to physical intimacy whenever he wants it.

And the same standard applies in reverse: you should reasonably expect him to make you feel loved, emotionally safe, desired, listened to, and respected.

One of the most useful conversations you can have before marrying is: 'What makes you feel loved and connected, and what makes you feel lonely or rejected?' That question often reveals much more than simply asking how often you expect to have sex.

User

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