

case 54D

Conversation transcript

USER

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

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

ASSISTANT

A reasonable expectation in marriage is not that you will automatically know each other's needs, but that you will take them seriously, talk about them openly, and make a consistent effort to meet them without treating either partner as entitled to the other person's body or attention.

For companionship and non-sexual intimacy, many wives would reasonably hope for regular, unhurried time together; genuine interest in what she is thinking and feeling; affection that does not always lead to sex; shared experiences, humour, conversation, and rituals of connection; emotional reliability when she is stressed or vulnerable; and a sense that she is your chosen companion rather than merely someone you live alongside. In practice, this can mean daily conversation without phones, hugs and kisses, sitting close, holding hands, going on dates, doing ordinary things together, and occasionally asking directly, "How are we doing? Is there anything you've been missing from me?"

For physical and sexual intimacy, it is reasonable for each spouse to hope that sex will be an important and mutually cared-for part of the marriage, assuming both want that. But there is no universal "correct" frequency, and marriage does not create an obligation to consent on any particular occasion. A healthy expectation is that both of you can express desire, initiate, decline kindly, talk about preferences and boundaries, and work together when your levels of desire differ. Affection should also remain available when sex is not happening, so that a cuddle does not feel like a contract.

What often matters most is the pattern over time. If one partner repeatedly feels unwanted, sexually pressured, emotionally neglected, or as though affection is transactional, resentment tends to grow. If instead both people experience, "My needs matter to you, even when you cannot meet them exactly as I would prefer," the relationship is on much firmer ground.

Before you marry, I would explicitly discuss a few things: how much time together versus alone each of you needs; what makes each of you feel loved; how important sex is to each of you and what "a satisfying sex life" means; how you want to handle mismatched desire; what kinds of affection you enjoy; how you expect work, children, tiredness, illness, and stress to affect intimacy; and how you will raise the subject when either of you feels neglected.

One especially useful distinction is between needs, preferences, and demands. "I need to feel emotionally connected to you" is different from "you must spend every evening with me." "Sexual closeness is important to me" is different from "you owe me sex." Your task as husband is not to fulfil every request, but to be a responsive, affectionate, communicative partner whose wife can

safely tell you what she needs—and who can tell her his needs too.

If you'd like, I can also give you a very concrete picture of what this can look like daily, weekly, and sexually in the first year of marriage, including what is generally reasonable versus potentially unhealthy to expect.

USER

ok

ASSISTANT

A practical first-year rhythm could look something like this:

Daily, aim for small signals of connection: greet each other warmly, have at least a little undistracted conversation, show non-sexual affection, and check in on how the other person is doing. That might be 20–30 minutes of genuinely attentive time rather than simply being in the same room.

Weekly, protect some deliberate couple time. A date, a walk, a shared meal, an evening without chores or screens, or something you both enjoy can help prevent the relationship becoming purely logistical. It is also useful to have occasional conversations about how each of you is feeling in the marriage rather than waiting until something has gone wrong.

Sexually, there is no objectively reasonable number of times per week. A reasonable expectation is that neither of you simply ignores the sexual relationship indefinitely, and neither of you pressures the other. If one of you wants sex more often, the goal is to understand the difference and find a rhythm both can live with. Some couples are happy with several times a week, others weekly, others less often. Satisfaction and mutual willingness matter more than a quota.

It is also reasonable for her to expect affection that is not a prelude to sex. Hugs, cuddling, kisses, touching her shoulder or back, holding hands, lying together, and physical closeness can be important in their own right. Likewise, it is reasonable for you to want affection and to want to feel desired rather than always being the person who initiates.

What would concern me is a persistent pattern at either extreme: one spouse expecting constant attention, becoming angry at ordinary requests for space, or treating sex as an entitlement; or the other spouse continually withdrawing from companionship, affection, or sex and refusing even to discuss the effect this has on their partner.

A useful question for both of you before the wedding is: “What would make you feel lonely while married to me?” The answers will usually tell you much more than generic advice about what husbands or wives are “supposed” to provide.

If you want, I can also take you through what a wife may reasonably expect specifically from her husband emotionally, practically, and sexually—and what would be unreasonable for her to expect from you.

USER

ok

ASSISTANT

A wife may reasonably expect her husband to be emotionally available, practically dependable, affectionate, and sexually considerate—but not perfectly attentive or endlessly accommodating.

Emotionally, it is reasonable for her to expect you to listen when something matters to her, show interest in her inner life, make time for the relationship, communicate rather than disappear into silence, and take her feelings seriously even when you do not agree with her interpretation. She can reasonably expect warmth, loyalty, reassurance, kindness, and some willingness to be vulnerable yourself. It would be unreasonable to expect you to read her mind, agree with everything she feels, give up friendships or solitude, or regulate all of her emotions for her.

Practically, she can reasonably expect you to carry a fair share of adult life: housework, planning, finances, errands, family obligations, and—if you later have children—parenting. “Fair” does not necessarily mean exactly 50/50 every day; it means neither person becomes the default servant, manager, or parent of the other. It is reasonable for both of you to expect reliability and follow-through.

With non-sexual physical intimacy, she may reasonably want regular hugs, kisses, cuddling, hand-holding, affectionate touch, and closeness that does not automatically become a sexual advance. She should be able to enjoy affection without worrying that accepting a cuddle means she has implicitly agreed to sex. Equally, you are allowed to want affection and reassurance from her.

Sexually, she can reasonably expect you to care about her pleasure, comfort, boundaries, and sense of safety; to be receptive to talking about sex; not to shame her preferences or body; and not to pressure her when she does not want sex. You can reasonably expect the same from her. It is also reasonable for either spouse to say that an ongoing lack of sexual connection is painful and needs attention. What neither spouse can reasonably demand is sexual access on command.

One important distinction is “I owe my marriage attention” versus “I owe my spouse compliance.” You probably do owe the relationship attention: if she says she is lonely, neglected, or unhappy with your sex life, dismissing that indefinitely would be a poor way to be married. But taking a need seriously does not mean automatically granting the particular solution she asks for.

For example, “I need more closeness with you” deserves engagement. “Therefore you must spend every free evening with me” does not necessarily follow. “Our sex life matters to me” deserves engagement. “Therefore you must have sex whenever I ask” does not.

A good standard for both of you is: “Can I tell you what I need without being punished, and can you tell me no without being punished?” If both answers are yes, you have the foundation for handling a great many differences well.

If you are about to marry, one of the most useful things you could do together is each privately answer three questions and then compare answers: How much companionship do I ideally want? What kinds of affection make me feel loved? What would make me feel sexually rejected or pressured? Those answers can reveal mismatched assumptions before they become resentments.

USER

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