

Advice from the Trenches: Dream girls

Dear C and Dr. B:

I recently met the most amazing woman. She intrigues me in every way – she’s smart, funny and completely captivating. When we start talking, our conversations seem to spark all kinds of connections.

The problem is that I’m a 44-year-old man, who’s been married for 21 years. I’ve got four kids. Until now, I’ve had a stable, comfortable life and I thought no further.

Since I met this woman, I’ve been energized. Thoughts of her infiltrate my dreams. I’ve felt attracted to other women before, I guess most men do, but it was always a passing casual thought. This is hitting me on a much deeper level. My emotions are all over the place and I’m really torn – is it real? But how can it not be real? It’s more real than anything else.

And what does this say about my marriage?

- Torn Terry

Dr. B says:

I can’t tell you what to do but what I can say is: humans are physiologically wired to feel infatuation and passion. In and of itself it doesn’t indicate a problem with your marriage. Most of us go in and out of these feelings for various people over the course of our lives whether we’re married or not. No emotional state lasts forever – it is natural for the passion of dating and early marriage to become contentment over time. If you left your wife for this new woman your feelings would probably change in the same way over time. But it does raise the question: is there a problem in your marriage?

You make decisions every day that give meaning to your life and these accumulate to build your future. There are consequences to everything you do. Weigh those consequences.

Infatuation is more about you than it is about this new woman and is not reflective of a deep love. Infatuation and passion act like a drug – they don’t go on forever. Our society, however, is split on the issue of love and attraction. The messages we hear in the media are either “anything outside of the sanctity of marriage is a sin, blah, blah, blah,” or, “Live today like it was the last day of your life, just do it!!” Neither is the basis for a reasonable course of action.

What you do repetitively and consistency is what you become. This is the definition of personality. So you need to decide what kind of person you want to be and work towards that.

You can live infinite lives in your dreams. That doesn’t mean you should do any of it.

C says:

Let me save you some time, Terry. This woman doesn’t really exist. You have fabricated her out of these moments you’ve shared in a very rarified bubble of time. You have never been in the real world with her. You do not know what may lie beneath her bright social presence. You have no idea who she really

is.

Now let's think about this wife of yours. You've shared 21 years of your life with her. During that time, you functioned well as a team. You've solved problems together, you've raised children together - you built a real home. Now you've hit middle age and you feel an itch to try something new.

What exactly do you think will happen with this new woman? Are you imagining that a real life with her would be as it is in your rarefied bubble? Will you both stay in this bubble together and need nothing else?

The bubble of radiant joy we feel upon meeting someone new is a very fragile thing. The hard edges of the world tend to pop the illusion. You can't live there.

I have no doubt that you need more stimulation in your life. But please don't be so foolish as to think that this woman is the answer. She has her own needs, her own history and her own ambitions. She has her own life. You may not fit into it anywhere at all.

I'm guessing that you are torn and confused because a very real part of you isn't buying this infatuation either. My advice? If you don't know what to do, don't do anything. As time goes on, the picture will come into focus.

But there are some things that once broken are never the same again. The trust of your family is one of them. Don't blow it over a woman who is nothing but a dream.

- Cathren Housley

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com.