

nXtra | Advice

My husband shares every detail of our marriage with friends

My husband and I have been married for eight years and have three children. I have always tried to be patient and supportive, especially when he is stressed. Recently, I was told by a neighbour that he often discusses our private marital issues with friends at a bar. I did not believe it at first, but I later overheard him on a phone call talking openly about our disagreements, including very personal matters about me. What hurts most is that his friends now seem to know intimate details I have never shared. When I confronted him, he dismissed my concerns, saying he needed someone to talk to and accused me of being too sensitive. I feel exposed, embarrassed, and betrayed, and I no longer feel safe discussing anything with him. I love my husband and want to protect our marriage, but I am struggling with how to handle this without breaking our home. **Rebecca**

Dear Rebecca, the average man generally limits what they share about their private life, and thus there is the common assertion that men are poor communicators, especially about intimate lives. That does not mean that every man is average, and the ability to limit what one shares publicly, in the case of a man, offers deeper insights into who they are and probably how they were raised.

On top of this, Rebecca, the environment at home may exacerbate this tendency, perhaps from feeling dominated by the woman and seeking validation from friends. It also lends a glimpse into the quality of relationship you might have.

It might not be possible to pinpoint the particular combination of factors specific to your situation, and a visit

to a professional marriage counsellor would be of great help in helping you get clarity in this regard.

Let us hover for a moment on the possibility of personality and upbringing that your husband might have. Understanding privacy is more a result of nurture, meaning the environment we were raised in. Take for instance people who grew up in an environment where everything was supposed to be shared and there were no personal spaces.

Your clothes could be worn by anyone else in a home, and even embarrassing details were okay to be shared publicly. That would be a strong reference point for that individual and generally shape their worldview around privacy. If your husband was raised in such an environment, you can appreciate why for him intimate details about

25%

Silence.

Studies suggest men are less likely to share family matters deeply with friends. Only about seven percent of men discuss personal health and family issues regularly with male friends, while around 20 percent occasionally discuss parenting matters, and nearly a third never do.

Most men (about 74 percent) prefer a spouse or partner for emotional and family support, showing friends play a secondary role in sharing private family concerns.

As a counsellor, I have seen the power of partners helping each other navigate sensitive periods in marriage, especially when the situation is not complicated by unfaithfulness



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you can be shared, and if you raise the issue, you may be dismissed as overly sensitive.

In effect, you have an area where your value systems clash, and thus an area of total discomfort for you.

Being laid bare, so to speak, is making you unhappy, and yet he shows no intention of changing. Before you take any serious action, you need to raise the issue with him, but not as a by-the-way matter, rather something you are dead serious about. He needs to sense that you are serious and, therefore, take you seriously on this issue. Find the appropriate time to discuss this issue and do not back off because you are being dismissed.

You might discover the real motivation of his behaviour. Is he getting back at you perhaps, or is it in fact not just a weakness but an instrument of control against you?

You cannot continue discussing other important issues of the family and ignore this very important matter. It might even require that you involve someone else he respects in your religious and family circles or even his friends whom you find reasonable. Sometimes that external "pressure" helps bring people to their senses and underlines how serious a matter it is to you.

Only in the event that you clearly understand the root or reason for his lack of privacy, and can tell yourself you tried all means to address it, including getting external help, may you start to manage information and what you share with him as a protective measure for yourself.

Take note that if you were to reach this extent, you may receive a reaction from him to attempt to keep the status quo. This is where calm resolve would be important.

Rebecca, if this is important to you, do not let it go without redress. Sometimes preserving a marriage requires difficult and careful action, especially to deal with fundamental issues that can threaten its existence.

Evidently, sometimes the wife takes the lead in addressing some of these issues, requiring from her a little more self-awareness and a less emotional approach to things. It would definitely change a bit of who you are as a woman and yes, tweak some dynamics in the marriage, but is that not what life is about sometimes, change so as to get better? Marriage cannot be an exception.

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