

He named our family car after his ex

My husband and I have been married for six years, and we have a six-year-old child. Our family car is a silver Toyota Premio that we rely on for school runs, weekend trips, and errands. Lately, I have been feeling hurt and confused because he named the car after his ex-girlfriend, "Grace." Every morning, he pats the dashboard, greets it by name, and even talks to it as if it were a person. I have asked him to stop, but he laughs it off and says I am just jealous of a machine. It got worse last week when he splurged on brand-new alloy wheels for "Grace," yet completely forgot my birthday. I feel invisible, overlooked, and frankly frustrated. Am I unreasonable to ask him to rename the car, or am I being overly sensitive? **Justine**

Dear Justine,

Thank you for reaching out to us for assistance with the issue you are facing in your marriage. As I read your letter, the word "lately" stands out to me. If this reference serves as a guide, it seems that what you are experiencing is relatively recent within the six-year span of your marriage.

I sense that there may be more details you have not shared that could help us identify the source of your husband's recent behaviour. However, let us work with what you have presented to navigate the situation. It is unusual and

even provocative to name your car after an ex, especially when your wife knows about it. It seems to be a deliberate choice. People, especially men, often have strong attachments to their cars, but flaunting the name of an ex and even talking to the car in your presence is not typical behaviour.

This may be intended to provoke the response you are experiencing. Also, the timing of this alongside "forgetting" your birthday does not seem coincidental. This suggests that there may be aspects of the story you have not shared. His behaviour could be a form of revenge for unresolved issues between you, and instead of addressing those re-

20.9%

Prevalence. Studies show that infidelity is not always about strangers; in many cases, it involves someone from the past. Research indicates that 20.9 percent of people who cheat do so with an ex-partner. This is often driven by familiarity, shared history, and unresolved emotional ties, which make reconnecting easier than starting anew.

Former partners already know each other's habits and vulnerabilities, lowering emotional barriers. As a result, ex-relationships can remain a quiet risk in long-term commitments, especially where boundaries are weak. This underscores the need for trust, clear limits, and open communication to guard against the lingering pull of past relationships.

Start by stopping any complaints about it. This may go against your instincts as a wife, but learning to do this will help you regain control



Samuel Sseffumba
Counsellor

al problems, he has turned to the name of the car as a battleground, a likely distraction from the actual issues at hand.

Please take a moment to reflect on when he started naming the car "Grace." What happened before that? What else might have changed in your relationship over the past six years? It is important to consider if there are factors unrelated to the car that have recently shifted in your relationship. Can you discuss your marriage without focusing on the car issue?

A professional marriage counsellor can help you gain clarity on what you are truly facing.

Let us assume, for a moment, that there is nothing that justifies your husband's behaviour. Could it be an attempt to destabilise you emotionally in order to control you? Some partners engage in behaviour that intentionally causes distress, deriving pleasure from their partner's unhappiness. They may provoke complaints and anger, all while remaining unaffected themselves.

This is a telltale sign of a controlling partner, reinforcing their sense of authority and ensuring that you still care about them.

If this is the case, awareness is your first line of defense. Your initial step should be to render the source of control, the car and its name, ineffective. How can you do this? Start by stopping any complaints about it. This may go against your instincts as a wife, but learning to do this will help you regain control. By responding to manipulative behaviour with minimal emotional reaction, you can disrupt the cycle.

Controllers often thrive on the emotional responses of their victims, using what you say to manipulate the situation further. By changing your reaction to be unexpected, you regain a sense of control.

Even regarding your birthday, you might need to act as if it does not bother you in order to gain insight into what he is really doing. Still, Justine, seeking help from a professional marriage counsellor can provide valuable assistance in navigating this situation while preserving your marriage.

If not handled carefully, this could be just the tip of the iceberg. You may be noticing this after six years, but it might have been present all along, emerging in other seemingly trivial situations until it escalated to this more sensitive issue that now demands your attention.

Please reach out to us at ssseffumba@ug.nationmedia.com

READER ADVICE

Try a subtle approach

Cyrus Suge. Your man seems stuck in the past with Grace, and it is understandable to feel a little jealous. Instead of confronting him directly, try a subtle approach. Maybe rename a pet after your ex and show it affection. Sometimes, mirroring behaviour quietly can make someone reflect and realise how their actions feel.

Focus on yourself

Phoebe Miriam. You married a man who may not have fully moved on from his past. He likely needed more time to heal before committing. Instead of constant arguments, take a step back. Focus on yourself, reduce the tension, and pray for clarity. Healing, for both of you, might take patience.

This is a small issue

Martin Ssebiyiba. Handle this carefully. "Grace" is also just an English word; it may not necessarily be about his ex. Try not to read too much into it. Honestly, this feels like a small issue compared to bigger relationship challenges. Focus your energy on more meaningful matters that truly affect your marriage.

Do the same

Acio Rungi. Next time he calls the car "Grace," loudly respond with your ex's name and see how he reacts. Sometimes people only understand when they experience the same behaviour. Eventually, one of you will get tired, and the habit will stop. It may sound petty, but it could send a clear message.

Have a chat with him

Sarah Nakato. Do not ignore how this makes you feel. It may seem small, but it carries emotional weight. Sit him down calmly and explain why it hurts you. If he values your feelings, he will adjust. Resentment in marriage often shows up in these small, seemingly harmless actions.

A joke gone too far?

Paul Kato. Honestly, this looks like a joke that has gone too far. Some men do not realise when humour becomes disrespect. Instead of competing or retaliating, call it out directly. Let him understand that marriage requires leaving certain things in the past, including symbolic attachments like this one.

There is more to this

Brenda Namusoke. I think you need to look beyond the car. Is this the only sign he is stuck in the past, or are there others? If it is just the name, address it lightly. But if there is a pattern, then it is deeper. Do not dismiss your intuition; it is usually pointing at something important.

Turn it into a positive

Hellen Achieng. Try turning this into a moment of connection instead of conflict. Ask him why that name matters to him. His answer might surprise you. From there, agree on something that works for both of you. Relationships grow when both partners feel heard, not when they compete or retaliate.

