

My husband and I have not been intimate for a year

My husband and I have been married for six years, but we have not been intimate for more than a year. It began with excuses, tiredness, and frequent phrases such as "not today." Over time, that part of our marriage simply faded away. At first, I convinced myself it was due to stress or work pressure. But now, I feel there may be something deeper going on. He no longer touches me, compliments me, or shows any interest in me. Even though we share the same bed, it feels like we are worlds apart. Whenever I try to bring it up, he avoids the conversation, changes the subject, or tells me I am overthinking things. I have reached a point where I feel rejected, unattractive, and even ashamed to initiate anything. Is it normal for intimacy to completely fade? Could there be something he is not telling me? And how can I address this without pushing him further away? Sarah

Dear Sarah,
For a six-year marriage to go a year, or even three months, without sexual intimacy, without obvious challenges such as illness, while the couple still shares a bed, is a very big red flag. Something is clearly not right. From the outset, let me say this column will attempt to provide some direction, but this situation really requires external help, especially from a trained counsellor, because it appears more complex than it may seem.

Let us explore the possible causes for his "turning his back on you," so to speak. Sometimes biological factors, such as a decrease in testosterone in men, can affect interest in sexual intimacy. Along with this may come erectile dysfunction, which many men generally handle poorly. In fact, such is the difficulty many men

have in dealing with problems around sexual performance that they will not even discuss it with other men. They would rather avoid the subject altogether because they do not know how to begin. This is not helped by perceived social expectations, especially from their wives.

The obvious place to point a finger would be the possibility of another partner. However, typical behaviour associated with infidelity is not to withhold intimacy in such an obvious way, but rather to cover it up. From the way you describe the situation, it does not seem immediately apparent that this is the case.

Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and chronic stress can also have major effects on libido. This may be compounded by performance anxiety, creating a cycle of low interest and poor performance that eventually

25%

Prevalence.

Research suggests that intimacy challenges are more common in marriage than many couples openly acknowledge, with studies indicating that about 25 percent (one in four) of couples experience extended periods of little or no sexual intimacy at some point in their relationship. In some cases, this phase may be temporary and linked to stress, exhaustion, or major life transitions, but for others, the absence of intimacy can last for months or even years, gradually affecting emotional closeness and the overall connection.

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 infidelity.



Samuel Ssettumba
Counsellor

discourages any attempts at intimacy. As mentioned earlier, those affected may be reluctant to seek help.

The avoidance of touching you or complimenting you may be part of a broader effort to avoid anything that could bring up the subject of intimacy. However, this is clearly not healthy for the marriage or for your emotional and psychological well-being. You may, in fact, be the best person to help him, but doing so will require certain skills you may not have recently applied.

So, how do you help your husband? It begins with your attitude. He has a problem. Are you able to approach him with empathy? This may not come easily, especially since you are already in an unhappy position. However, it may help to consider that he could be dealing with something serious and deeply sensitive. This means that the timing of your conversations and the tone you use will be crucial. The goal is to show him that you are not seeking to blame or judge him, but to genuinely support him. If you can better understand the possible causes, since you live with him, you will be able to approach the issue from a more informed standpoint.

With such sensitive matters, persistence and patience are essential. As you have already seen, his initial reaction may be avoidance. But with the right attitude and consistency, you may eventually encourage him to open up. If he does, listen carefully and without judgement. Stay positive and solution-oriented. At least in the beginning, try to focus on him rather than how the situation is affecting you, even though you may be hurting. This can help prevent him from withdrawing further.

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. Sometimes women experience low desire for intimacy, and a husband who shows genuine care and a willingness to find solutions is more likely to succeed.

The same applies in reverse. When a wife can approach her husband with skill and without turning the situation into a conflict driven by resentment, it can bring them closer together.

So, Sarah, this may be another opportunity to choose support over resentment, even though that is not always easy. Do not forget to seek help from a marriage counsellor to guide both of you through this process.

Please contact us on sssettumba@ug.nationmedia.com

READER ADVICE

Seek spiritual guidance

Yvonne Njiru Ndabisi. I would start with prayer and seek spiritual guidance from a trusted pastor. Situations such as this can be deeper than they appear. It could be infidelity, a health issue, or even spiritual interference. For me, prayer comes first, then honest reflection and guided counselling to understand what is really happening.

Could he be cheating?

Patricia Essie. Personally, I find it unusual for a man to share a bed with his wife and show no desire at all. In my view, something is not adding up. I would suspect he may be getting satisfaction elsewhere and advise looking closely at his behaviour beyond the bedroom.

Consider walking away

Turnahereza Kakuru. If I were in that situation, I would seriously consider walking away. A year without intimacy raises serious concerns for me. It often points to another relationship. I believe it is important to protect your emotional well-being rather than stay and keep guessing what is really going on.

He is protecting you

Rukiah Mwanje. Consider the possibility that he could be dealing with a health issue such as HIV and is afraid to open up. His withdrawal might be out of fear of hurting you. I would encourage approaching the matter carefully and suggesting testing together to remove doubt.

Sit down and talk

Shalot Shaz Kirungi. I believe there could be several reasons, such as illness, infidelity, or even outside influence. But before assuming anything, choose calm and open communication. Sit him down, talk without anger, and try to understand what he is going through before making any serious decisions.

It is more serious

Isaac Rugaba. From where I stand, this looks like a very difficult situation. I would not ignore it because it may already be too late to fix easily. My advice would be to prepare yourself emotionally and start thinking seriously about whether this relationship can still be saved.

Show concern

Ivan Mukasa. To me, this could point to an undisclosed illness. Sometimes people withdraw because they are struggling privately. If I were you, I would approach him with concern rather than accusation and create a safe space for him to share what he might be hiding.

Try giving him space

Nachie Urshie Mpanga. Honestly, I would match his energy. If he is distant, I would not stress myself trying to fix everything alone. I might even consider finding companionship elsewhere while observing him. If he continues to provide, fine, but if not, I would then rethink staying in the marriage.

