

# MY BOYFRIEND IS MARRIED TO HIS WIFE, MY FRIENDS SAY I SHOULD DUMP HIM



GAY RELATIONSHIP EXPERTS ALAN DOWNS & JOE KORT ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

DEAR JOE

I HAVE BEEN DATING A GUY FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS AND I'M FALLING IN LOVE. THE PROBLEM IS HE IS STILL MARRIED TO HIS WIFE. THEY STILL LIVE TOGETHER BECAUSE THEY HAVE CHILDREN AND HE DOESN'T PLAN ON MOVING OUT ANYTIME SOON. MY FRIENDS ARE TELLING ME I SHOULD DUMP THE GUY BUT I REALLY LIKE HIM. WHAT SHOULD I DO? SEAN. BUSHEY

ILLUSTRATION: DERMOT FLYNN

## UNTIL HE IS READY TO MAKE SOME DECISIONS, THERE CAN BE NO RELATIONSHIP

### DEAR SEAN

My first question is whether or not he is out to his wife? I don't recommend dating or moving forward in a relationship with a heterosexually married gay man (HMGM) unless he has an open, totally above-board agreement with his wife. If he isn't out to her then to avoid deception and heartache I suggest avoiding him and walking the other way. Otherwise, you'll only cause harm and pain – not just for you and your HMGM, but for his wife and family too.

If he tells you that his wife does know and has arrived at some sort of agreement with him, you still have a lot to consider. Do you want to be with a man with two partners? Even though he may not be involved with his wife emotionally or sexually, his being legally married creates a built-in exit in your relationship. If he does plan to leave her and divorce, you are still going to be with a man whose ex-wife will likely be in the picture for better or worse, especially if children are involved. There is nothing wrong with this but you need to keep it in mind.

When you date an HMGM, you have no way of knowing for sure whether he will leave his wife. It's best not to get involved at all until he does leave her and moves on, or at least decides what to do. Otherwise, you might end up waiting and waiting, with nothing ever changing.

#### THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT DATING A GAY MAN WHO IS HETEROSEXUALLY MARRIED

Gay men emerging from their heterosexual marriages can be the best candidates for dating or even a long-term relationship. They've learned to value relationships and have gained skills that can sometimes be lacking in gay men who've never enjoyed close relationships with women. They know how to deal with their emotions and how to express them, when and how to sacrifice their needs for a relationship, and how to keep connectedness and commitment alive. Unless we gay men are in some form of positive and healthy relationship with women – straight or lesbian – many of us will miss these lessons. Women are often more evolved and equipped to be relational and communicate their intimacy needs. They often teach men these skills. Many gay men who avoid relationships of any kind with women remain handicapped when it comes to relationship skills.

#### THE BAD NEWS IS YOU MAY BOTH BE UNAVAILABLE

Single gay men who enter into a relationship with a married man will often signify – ironically – that they themselves might not be fully available for a relationship. If you're attracted to someone who's married and thus unavailable, that means you're unavailable as well. So when the heterosexual husband does finally become freely accessible, it's often the case that his boyfriend will become distant and unavailable. You need to conquer your own roadblocks to establish more intimacy.

If you're in a relationship with a heterosexually married man, there are a number of factors to understand if you choose to continue down that route.

Gay men who pursue closeted HMGM are just as unavailable as their potential partners. It's too easy for the single gay man to state that his heterosexually married gay boyfriend has all the issues. Until he is ready to make some decisions, there can be no

relationship. Too often, I have seen an HMGM leave his wife only to find the other man distance himself. This usually happens for a number of reasons, the most common one being that the single gay man is attracted to the HMGM because there's little possibility of anything more serious. For the single gay man not really interested in pursuing a serious relationship, the HMGM is almost as safe as a straight man, or a gay man involved with a male partner. Unconsciously, the single individual assumes that not much can come from this – but when it does, he will flee the relationship.

I know this is not always true. I have treated many couples – gay and straight – whose relationship began as 'just an affair'. While this does happen, it is not optimal and I don't recommend it, if only because it seldom works out for everyone involved – and especially not for the innocent people who get hurt. I've worked with couples who began in an affair, then found that more affairs occurred within these relationships. Other couples who begin in affairs often grow to distrust their relationship and each other, and worry that their partners will begin cheating on them.

If you're dating or are in a relationship with a heterosexually married gay man who is not out to his wife, it's important to question what this says about you. What draws you to a guy who, from the start, is not available? What lets you minimize the hurt you are doing to his wife and children? What factors contribute to you denying the hurt you might be causing to yourself and the others involved?

#### GUIDELINES FOR DATING HMGM

- 1. The most important thing is to be open and honest with each other. It's dishonest for you, and for his relations with his wife and family, to do this secretly.*
- 2. Remember, if he has kids, you're not involving yourself with just him, but with his wife (whether they're going to divorce or stay married) and his children. This isn't just a romantic affair – it's a family affair. For the guy you're getting involved with, they are a lifetime commitment, emotionally and financially. It's not necessarily a negative, but a vital consideration to remain aware of while dating him.*
- 3. If all is out in the open, and she has an agreement or is in the process of divorcing, that's more appropriate. Always remember that keeping secrets brings on more dysfunctional problems, so your goal in any situation is to strive for openness and honesty as much as possible.*



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