

DR JOE KORT IS A LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER AND BOARD-CERTIFIED SEXOLOGIST. HE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF 10 SMART THINGS GAY MEN CAN DO TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVES JOEKORT.COM



You say you feel guilty and that he has made all first moves. That doesn't negate or minimize that you have accepted all of his moves. You are equally as accountable for participating in his cheating as he is

love is the first stage of a relationship, which can last as long as you don't commit more deeply to one another. The more a couple commits to one another the quicker the romance ends and conflict sets in. This is normal and predictable. Every long-term couple goes through this. However, an affair never moves to the second stage of relationships because the commitment to one another remains superficial and shallow - just like yours.

And most of all I want you to accept responsibility for your own actions. You say you feel guilty and that he has made all first moves. That doesn't negate or minimize that you have accepted all of his moves. You are equally accountable for participating in his cheating as he is. People have affairs for many different reasons and are working through all types of things through them. When I work with people who cheat I try to help them discover what they are finding in the affair that they cannot find in their relationship.

When I work with the partner on the other side of the affair, I try to help explore what you are finding with an unavailable partner that you can't find with one who is fully accessible and able to commit to a monogamous relationship with you.

I ask questions such as whether either of your parents were unavailable as a child? If so, maybe you are chasing a parent who was never there for you through a romantic partner. Often things that happen to us that go unresolved are the very things we recreate in adulthood. It is not intentional or conscious. We return to the scene of the crime in childhood by re-enacting old unresolved patterns with one or more caretakers trying to solve the crime each time. But we don't. Instead we loop repeatedly into the same cycle of negativity or abuse in our current relationship without realizing what we are tolerating.

I wonder about why you are drawn to an unavailable man. Is this the first time you have found yourself with someone who can't and won't commit to you? Or is this a pattern for you? What I know about those who are attracted to unavailable people is that you are most likely unavailable yourself. We seek the familiar. We seek comfortable. The problem is that while this may be comfortable to you it is also very painful.

The longer you stay involved in this situation, the harder it is going to be to get out and the more likely it is that you will do it again. You are creating patterns that will recycle themselves until you end it and identify what is driving you to be with someone who is already committed to someone else.

Sometimes it takes many attempts to end a relationship so don't beat yourself up; as you say, you go back and forth to being friends. Knowing and doing the right thing in terms of ending a relationship are two different things. There is a deep emotional attachment you have to him that will make it difficult to just walk away. Breaking up is very painful and people do all they can to avoid the pain and try to make even a bad relationship work.

But you are not in a real relationship, not as long as he is involved with his partner and you are a secret.

You deserve better and so does he. Let go.

Leave him! That is my answer. End everything right now because in the end you are only going to get hurt. I am starting with my answer and then backtracking to symbolically send you a message, which is to save yourself a lot of time, hurt and grief. If you are waiting and hoping that one day he will leave his boyfriend, I can assure you that it will take a very long time, and you are guaranteed the longer you wait, the more you will miss all chances of a long-term, fully available love of your life.

The problem is not the age difference. May-December relationships are common within the gay community and many are strong and long-term. I fully support relationships that have a decade or more between the partners.

The problem is exactly what you say, he has a long-term boyfriend! Don't be fooled by him telling you how awful his boyfriend is to him. The fact that he tells you this means nothing. When someone is cheating they always tell the affair partner how bad and awful their partner is to make the affair partner feel special and loved. It gives them a reason to cheat and rationalizes in their minds that what they are doing is okay. If you were a fly on the wall and witnessed their relationship, I am sure you would see that his partner is nowhere near as bad as he is portrayed.

Let's face it, if he were going to leave his partner then he would have by now. It is that simple. If you truly think he will, then I recommend you separate and come back to each other once their breakup is official. Support him to go back to his partner and work on whatever is wrong in their relationship. Most likely, though, he will not end his relationship.

While there are many couples that make it from an affair, most don't. The odds are against you. Even if he does leave his boyfriend, you will always be thinking that if he can cheat on his current partner, he will potentially cheat on you. How will you ever know? How will you be able to trust him when he is being untrustworthy right in front of your eyes? The odds of you making it are against you from the start.

What you have with your boyfriend is only romantic love. Romantic



MY BOYFRIEND HAS A BOYFRIEND. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

▶ DEAR JOE ▶

Earlier this year I met a lovely guy, who I adore and am really attracted to. I have never gone for men who are not my own age – but I am 49 and he is 33. Sometimes I feel guilty about this, but he has made all the moves. The problem is he has a long term boyfriend. Sometimes he feels guilty about that and we go back to being just friends. And then sometimes he wants us

to sleep together and he is very tender with me. He tells me how awful his boyfriend is to him – and I'm kind of waiting and hoping that one day he will leave him. Most of all, I don't want to lose his friendship but I am not getting any younger and wonder if by hanging onto this I may miss all chances of long-term love. What should I do?

KEITH, DUBLIN ▶