



TALKING TO STRANGERS

Do you talk to people on the train? A study titled *Mistakenly Seeking Solitude* found that people enjoyed talking with strangers, but underestimated other people's interest in connecting. "This misunderstanding is particularly unfortunate for a person's wellbeing given that commuting is consistently reported to be one of the least pleasant experiences in the average person's day," says lead professor Nicholas Epley. Next time someone makes eye contact try giving them a smile or friendly greeting.



LIFE LOVE etc

Our monthly look at the world of love, friendship and sex



SILENT TREATMENT

Silence clearly isn't golden when it comes to relationships. Recent research shows that couples engaged in demand-withdraw patterns feel less relationship satisfaction. This is when one partner pressures the other with requests, criticism or complaints and is met with avoidance or silence, otherwise known as the silent treatment. Partners get locked into this pattern, both seeing the other as the problem.

Soul SEARCHING

"We've grown apart"

Q I feel like I've outgrown my partner. How do I know whether the relationship is salvageable or whether I should just move on?

A After some time it is normal for relationships to go through difficulties, when all the things that attracted us in the first place seem to have morphed into things that trigger us. It's a good idea to explore the underlying issues as thoroughly as you can before making a decision, especially if your perception is that your partner is the one who has the problems.

It's important that you are seeing the reality of your relationship clearly and it's difficult to do that unless your heart is at peace with your partner.



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We can be sure we're seeing reality distorted if we are finding lots of faults with our partner and in this state, our heart doesn't feel at peace with them any more. We're possibly feeling quite righteous or better than them.

A way to get yourself back into an open-hearted state is to

recall times when you have been in that kind, loving place or to actually spend time with people who you do feel that way with. Even spending time with an animal that you love can do this. You'll feel your body begin to relax and your ability to be friendly towards the wider world expand.

When you have re-connected with this state





in yourself, then ask the question again: 'Is it really true that I have grown beyond him?' Explore this with as much curiosity as possible. Ask 'Could my dissatisfaction be a way of covering up the ways in which I've withdrawn and disengaged? Did I just stopped seeing what is lovely and attractive about him?'

Try seeing his potential, focusing on what you could do together if you re-engaged.

It's possible that you'll still decide to leave, but you'll do it from a place of love and not judgement. When your heart is really at peace and you're seeing him as a friend and an equal, it'll be easier to discuss things and move on if that feels right. Whichever is the case, you will have found your answer from a heart at peace, and that is the closest you'll get to being sure you've made the right decision.

DID YOU KNOW?

Short men tend to marry later in life than average or tall men, but are 32 percent less likely to divorce, researchers found

“The most common conflicts in relationships are about poor communication and money”

Inner Self | LOVE & SEX

The LOVE CLINIC

HOW TO OWN YOUR DESIRE

Our culture still tells us repeatedly – in subtle and not so subtle ways – that women are allowed to be sexy. They are permitted to evoke sexual desire (usually by looking a certain way which conforms with our society's idea of idealised youth-centric beauty). Meanwhile, men are given permission to be sexual. To act out their sexual impulses and to express them. This is seen so clearly not only in pornography but in the media imagery around women and their bodies.



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The sad thing is that men have done such a great job of suppressing female sexuality that most women have internalised the belief themselves. "What, not me!" you may cry. But ask yourself, do you really allow yourself to access your full desires? Do you dare to admit to yourself what you truly long for?

This denial of female sexuality means that both men and women suffer. When a woman disowns her sexuality it is all too common to project that out onto others. Sexually active women become 'easy' and men become 'only interested in one thing' or labelled as lewd, sex-obsessed perverts or, at worst, potential abusers.

One of the reasons for the success of *50 Shades of Grey* is, I suspect, that it gives women permission to get in touch with some of those long suppressed desires. It is only a relatively recent myth that men want sex more than women. Until 200 years ago, it was believed that women needed to orgasm in order to get pregnant. Sadly modern science in the 19th century disapproved that wonderful idea and with it the importance of female sexual pleasure declined and women's pleasure assumed a less important role.

My experience is that when a woman truly gets in touch with her desire, it is stronger than in most men. As a man, unless you're trained in taoist or tantric practices of retaining your ejaculation (or you're 20 years old) once guys have orgasmed that's usually them done for a bit. Women on the other hand have the potential to have as many orgasms as they can handle.

This high libido caused men to fear the infidelity of their women and hence encourage the suppression of female sexuality. Most women have bought into this; believing that suppressing their desires to fit in a monogamous relationship is a fair trade for the supposed security it offers. Yet studies show that the numbers of women cheating in relationships is roughly the same as men. The idea that women want emotional connection and men want physical sex is also a myth. Women want sex for the sake of sex just as much as men, it's just that they mostly don't allow themselves to admit it. When they do, both men and women will be able to be more honest with one another and enjoy sex more!