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Title: Having an affair? It's time to own up

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You're having an affair. And you've got an excuse for leaving the house. Little does your partner know, this "chore" you keep having to go out and do is a person.

Bad partner. Bad. Bad.

There, done with the tongue lashing, on to the real action: What are you going to do about it, cowboy?

You're making a mistake if you think your partner won't find out. Whether someone's gossip or your actions tip off your partner, the truth will be spilled. Perhaps your diminishing sex drive or sudden need to work out is the hint. Maybe your guilt-induced gifts or "busy work schedule" is the clue. Or, the most insulting, the whiff of someone else's scent on you. No class.

Clearly, if you thought your partner would never find out, you wouldn't say jack. As one cheater explained to me: "I'm not telling ... she'd chop off the 'man' if she knew." His girlfriend actually does suspect, but as of press time, the "man" is still intact. She has simply chosen, like many betrayed partners, to ignore it. Unfortunately, she hasn't found a way to ignore the pain it causes.

The reality is people know when they're getting jerked around. Whether or not they choose to acknowledge those signs is a different story.

Though any way you play it, if your partner suspects, you're done--and living under suspicion kills. Your own guilt can make you continuously answer with a compliant "Yes, dear." And that does nothing for your self-respect, or your respect of the relationship.

One man justified his lies by claiming he didn't want to "let his public down." He's an accountant, by the way. And like many cheaters, he's afraid of destroying his image of perfection. So he perpetuates this "perfect" lie that covers his affair to avoid his imperfect relationship.

Cheaters, don't fool yourselves. Forget where you think the affair is going because it isn't going anywhere. Couplings based in lies--just look at reality TV's showmances--don't work. As "different" as your situation seems, the reality is that cheaters cheat, whether with you or on you.

So get on your knees and clean up your mess. Concentrate on what led you to stray and what you truly want out of the relationship.

When you talk to your partner, be truthful. Bringing back trust in a relationship isn't easy, but it's possible. If you're lucky enough to get the second chance, you best respect it.

Either way, especially if you've been having sex, your partner needs to know. It's a matter of health. When you do come clean, share the truth, not the dirt. No matter how many times your partner asks, don't reveal every lick and tick. Those details will only plague your partner in the future.

Then be prepared for the "Do you love him/her?" question. Be kind but honest. The truth might hurt your partner for the moment, but no worse than being humiliated by your ongoing affair. Give your partner closure.

Yes, revealing a secret affair can end your relationship. And for some with a family or years of history, that can seem too heavy to lift. But what's your alternative? Lying for the rest of your life? Continuing to disrespect your partner?

That's not an option. Be decent and resolve this. No sense running from the truth, it'll just follow you.

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