



## My Mother, Misogyny & Men

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### **My Mother, Misogyny, Marriage and Me.**

? - Anon

Id like to start by saying thank you for this opportunity to speak out about this. I am an almost 40 year old woman currently living in a sexless marriage.

I met my then future husband in 1992 when I was 19 and he was 42. Being quite young I didn't have a frame of reference for what sex should be like so when it was just basic penetration and nothing else I truly thought that that was just how it was.

In 1996 he stopped wanting to be with me in that way.

I turned to food. I gained a lot of weight. We were married in 1998.

I was brought up in an extremely closed household and as a Catholic ( a religion I rejected long ago) but I was taught growing up that marriage was what you did. I remember a conversation that took place between my mother and me when I was a teen. I was sounding off about things and said I never wanted to get married. She replied "Well what are you going to do then - become a nun?" The message that was frequently sold to me was that you did one or the other. I was also quite naïve for 25 and on my wedding day I still thought that the situation would somehow "right itself".

And I still had sexual feelings for him at that point.

Over the next few years I gained a lot of weight. In 2002 while working in a sex chatline office I started a healthy eating plan while attending a diet class and over the next eighteen months I managed to lose ten stone. I began to feel incredibly lonely. Its not just the sexual act or the lack of it that is missing in situations like this. It is the loss of affection and emotional closeness that leaves the relationship too.

In June 2003 the day after my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday I started a new job. It was in that job I met \*Adam. I began to feel very attracted to him and the feeling was mutual. I asked \*Stuart to go to counselling. He didn't want to and said it wasn't worth it.

I began an affair with \*Adam which lasted until January 2008. It was the most eye opening, passionate and exciting time of my life. I finally found out what making love could be like and how wonderful it could be.



I once made the mistake of confiding in my mother. I did this after someone else told me "She's your mother. She'll understand." My mother told me to stop acting like a whore. I explained that \*Stuart hadn't touched me for 7 years and she intimated that was because I was having an affair. But at that point I had only been seeing \*Adam for 4 months.

I now know that the terminology for what my mother was doing is called gaslighting.

Then she began crying and banging her hand on the arm of the chair demanding that I stay with my husband. It was emotional abuse and blackmail. My mother comes from Italy and was brought up in a different culture. Shaming women for fulfilling their own needs seems to be part of the culture. I do realise though that this may be just my experience.

I should also say at this point that \*Stuart (my husband) is unaware that this conversation with my mother took place even to this day. I continued my affair with \*Adam.

In 2006 \*Stuart had a massive heart attack and nearly died. He spent over a week in hospital. Just after one visit the staff nurse took me aside and said to me "He does love you you know. In his own way". It wasn't until later on that I was told by another professional that this was a manipulative thing for him to do that I started to wonder why on earth he could talk to a stranger when he couldn't even talk to me. To this day I still don't know what he said to that nurse.

I broke off my affair with \*Adam for a short while to care for \*Stuart when he came out of hospital.

I carried on with this dual life for about 18 months but something shifted with \*Adam in that time. He became verbally abusive towards me. He would shout at me and lose his temper out of the blue. I ended the affair in January 2008. Even though there was bitterness towards the end losing such a big part of my life overnight nearly broke me.

I turned back to food and gained back half the weight I'd lost.

I coped most of the time and became depressed at other times. And 2 years ago came the catalyst.

In 2011 my parents had an argument over a jewellery receipt my mother found in my father's room. (when I moved out of my parents home in 1992 my mum moved into my room). A realisation dawned on me that I have ended up in a very similar situation to my dad. I've realised that I've fought so hard not to be like my mum that I've ended up like my dad.

I don't want to get into my seventies and be in that situation.

I became incredibly depressed and joined a social networking site when I saw a thread on there about women in my situation. It is shocking how common this is. I really thought that this was rare and that I was totally alone. There are more severe cases than mine where there is SEVERE emotional abuse if a woman dares to raise the issue of her partner's choice of lack of intimacy. I started posting on the feminism boards of the same site and discovered feminism at



the late age of 38. From talking to other women on forums about this and very similar situations I discovered a very sinister undercurrent in society with regards to this issue. It seems that when it comes to intimacy issues, it is almost always the woman who gets blamed whether it is the man or the woman who is losing or has lost interest -- there is an interesting article which I spotted on the Jezebel website just today which touches upon this issue.

Before 1991 it was perfectly legal for a man to rape his wife. Not only is this a horrific and abhorrent crime, just the fact that this was legal before that date proves that men's needs are more highly prioritised than women's. Thankfully this is now illegal but when it comes to men's needs trumping women's not much has changed. There is STILL an assumption in society that women don't want or need intimacy or sex . This is absolute rubbish.

I am now back where I was before. I have some weight to lose so have embarked on another healthy eating plan. I feel lonely and lost. I have to lock my needs away. The heart attack left my husband partially disabled. So now he can't be intimate but in the ten years prior to the heart attack he didn't want to be.

The few people that I have confided in tell me im lucky -- because hes not hitting me or raping me. I used to agree with them.

But since discovering feminism I now disagree with what some of my friends have told me. Yes he's not hitting or raping me. But I am supposed to be grateful? Really????!!! There are many women in this situation whose needs are being ignored and sidelined and if we dare to speak up about it we are slut-shamed or told we don't need sex (as a GP once told me) -- apparently I don't need sex if I'm not trying to get pregnant.

There are not many platforms for women in this situation to talk safely about this. This needs to change. I cannot talk to my mother because of her attitude towards women which may come from her culture. Last year when the truth about Jimmy Savile emerged my mother said that the victims should be ashamed for going on TV and talking about it. I was absolutely appalled by her attitude but unfortunately not surprised. I have grown up being exposed to this kind of misogyny and victim-blaming all my life.

But now im eating healthily again and seem to have confronted and dealt with my comfort eating. I don't know what the future holds but hopefully it will involve me being mentally and emotionally stronger.

Thank you for giving me the platform to share these issues and I hope reading this will help other women in similar situations to see that they are not alone.

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