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I don't want my husband to go to a strip club in Vegas – am I controlling?

COUPLE THERAPY

In this week's Couples Therapy dilemma, couples counsellor Cate Mackenzie advises on communication and control within relationships



Is it controlling to not let your partner go to a strip club on a boys' holiday? (Photo: Getty Images)



By **i Team**

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Each week, **i** asks experts to answer readers' questions about *love, sex and relationships*

My husband and a few friends are going to **Las Vegas** for a long weekend at the end of the summer. He said casually last week that when they are there, one friend wants to go to **a strip club**.



Cut through

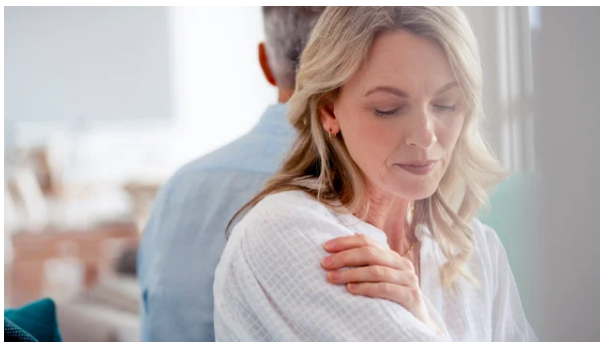
Is it **controlling** to not want him to go? Is it unfair on him? I just don't get why a group of married men want to pay money to stare at naked women who are probably 10 years younger than them. It makes me really uncomfortable. The conversation ended without him explicitly asking for my permission, and I didn't explicitly say no, so now I don't know where we are.

Couples counsellor and psychosexual therapist Cate Mackenzie says:

First of all, you are not wrong to feel what you are feeling. Allow yourself to feel all the feelings that are coming up; maybe there is hurt, worry, concern, unknowing or even anxiety about what this means.

Sometimes it's not just the issue presenting itself in the present moment that is the reason for your upset. Sometimes a current situation can be triggering a much older wound, so this might be something to think about. Was there, for example, a father figure who might have been unfaithful which makes you fearful that your partner will follow suit? Or have you, perhaps, felt objectified as a woman and so feel very sensitive to your husband doing that to other women?

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Is there an earlier memory being triggered? When you pay attention to how you feel about this in your body, can you think of the first time you felt this way? You may be surprised by the memories that arise.



Could you possibly **talk this through** with your husband calmly and lightly? Like the Bananarama song “it ain’t what you do, it’s the way that you do,” which in this case means relaxed body language, tone and pace of conversation. Voice your feelings and let him voice his. It might help you to talk through your concerns with friends first so that you feel clearer when it comes to talking with your husband.


I would take it as a good sign that he is telling you about it – it demonstrates that you have a good relationship, **one of trust** and openness. This is so much better than hiding things from you. Many men wouldn’t say anything to their wives.

I would not insist that he doesn’t go. He might not appreciate being told what to do, few of us like that. If you push him and try to order him it may set up a negative cycle where he disappears or hides what he is doing. If you share openly and vulnerably in a kind way about your concerns he may be able to reassure you.

Control does not work **in a relationship** but what you can do is create a space where you appreciate and acknowledge his right and desire to go away on a guys’ weekend and also ask to have a dialogue about it.

I imagine going to a strip club does not mean the same thing to him that it might mean to you. It does not mean that he wants to be unfaithful or objectify women. Men are often visual and do like to look at women and so to him it might seem quite normal.

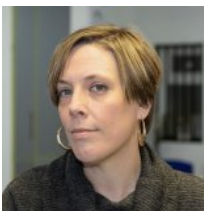
On the other hand, if you talk about it openly, it might be that he is not comfortable about going to the strip club himself, but expecting him to duck out because his wife doesn’t like it may expose him to some ridicule. It could be that talking it through helps him to make his own informed decision rather than just following the herd.

As told to Marianne Power 

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