

Q & A Mindline

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Q I had an arranged marriage five years ago, we live in a joint family and I work extended hours. Over the past two years, my wife seems quieter, disinterested (in me) and avoids spending time together. She does shows enthusiasm when we meet a friend of mine and the last time I saw her starring at him at a party. I don't have any information to confirm that she is having an affair. We have fought for months now and I think it's time to separate. Please advise.

Well, I think this is a sensitive matter requiring more details and understanding, in order to help you resolve it amicably. But from what you state, it would seem that you are acting in haste and your assumptions about your wife may be wrong. Keeping in mind similar issues I have dealt with, it would appear that you both may have drifted apart over the years due to commitments - hers being caring and support of a larger family (I guess she is a homemaker) and yours with work and extended time away from home. Consequently, both the quality and quantity of time spent together would have taken a 'hit' for the worse and this can be a breeding ground for mistrust

and apathy in a relationship.

Couples not fully aware of the drift apart, have a tendency to feel rejected and ignored, with consequences on trust and communication. Each may find it harder to confide and share sweet nothings or larger matters. Whilst she may feel generally unappreciated, until meeting friends where there may be appreciation and recognition, thereby appearing more open and enthusiastic. While on the other hand, you may be feeling ignored over her other domestic responsibilities, which usually is a fixed commitment for homemakers, but may seem trivial to the breadwinner of the house.

I think you need to carefully evaluate your assumptions or concern about her having an affair and sensitively discuss this matter with her, before concluding that this relationship needs to end. Consider the above issues and try to see the relationship/issues from her and/or from an objective point of view, to have an improved understanding of the reason for drifting apart.

For now, I suggest you both seek a formal one-to-one couple counselling/therapy to improve communication. Until communication improves, I suggest both call a 'status quo' on plans to separate. Avoid involving other family members as this can bring in bias and unwarranted /misinformed attack on her character and worsen the feud. Focus on 'quantity' of time together and as you grow closer, the 'quality' time will return.

Remember, matters of the heart take time to mend. So give yourself and her enough time, whilst working on it continuously. I think all problems are solvable, provided there are willing participants. Wish you all the best.

Q Since I got married, I think my life has taken a turn for the worse. I find it hard to cope with my wife's demands and to maintain

a balance in my social life. Also, although she comes from a large family herself, she does not respect my parents. After nine months of (arranged) marriage, last week we separated. How do I go about being 'happily married?'

Marriages are made in heaven but have to be managed right here in this very life and when it's an arranged marriage, both husband and wife have to work harder to establish a relationship with trust and care. Love usually follows, if all the other things are in place and attended to, in a timely manner.

Arranged marriage does get complicated, as it tends to be a formal union of not just the man and woman but of their families as well. This means, there will be multiple forces in place, usually working to the advantage of the newlywed couple, enabling adjustment, etc. However, this is not always the case and an ego tussle may kick in, especially if the couple lives in an extended joint family. If you live away from family, then it can be harder. Unlike a romantic relationship, marriage is a 24-hour affair!

Remember in a marriage, two individuals become one that is - 100 per cent. Which means, contribution from either doesn't have to be equal all the time. You could be 60 per cent and she may be 40 and together it will add up to 100. What is important is flexibility and acceptance of the other being different. It's never too late for reconciling a relationship problem. Speak to her discretely and if possible, keep family out of this for now to avoid untimely advice and unnecessary cross communication. I think, argument is a form of communication, which is better than impasse. Also, effective communication requires more listening and less talking - it's also the key to a happy marriage. If she agrees, then it will be ideal to seek professional help for independent objective advice and couple/marital therapy. Best wishes.