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6 Common Reasons Men Cheat?

Get explanations from experts and cheaters on why husbands stray

by **Denise Schipani**

Did Tiger Woods cheat on his wife because he thought he could get away with it, because he felt entitled, because he was addicted to sex? Was it the pressure of his public life? Was it something his wife did—or didn't do? We'll probably never know (unless he eventually pens a tell-all book), but we can ask far less famous men why they step out on their wives.

Stephen* has been married six years—and cheating for the last four. “The main reason I'm not faithful is that my wife and I haven't had sex in more than four years. First it was a physical problem for her—intercourse was too painful. I supported her through treatment and we went to couples therapy, but even when she physically could have sex, she was, and remains, completely uninterested.” He remains at least hopeful enough to be careful with his affairs. “I get myself tested regularly [for STDs] in case my wife and I ever start having sex again. And other parts of our relationship are strong; we work together and get along well. But we don't have much intimacy.” And that, he says, is what he misses most.



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A sexless marriage is a major straying trigger, but other reasons come into play, too, for celebs as well as your average workaday guy, says Doug Hirschhorn, author of *8 Ways to Great: Peak Performance on the Job and in Your Life*. It could be anything from the banal—“to see if they can get away with it or to feel the adrenaline rush of possibly getting caught,” says Hirschhorn—to the more serious, such as feeling out of control or emasculated in their home lives, and searching for a connection that makes them feel more like a man. Below are some other reasons why married men look elsewhere for sex, love and companionship.

1. He doesn't feel his needs are being met. Not just his sexual needs. “Like women, men want to feel understood emotionally,” says **Elizabeth Sloan, a couples' therapist in McLean, Virginia.**

2. He's been made to feel that wanting sex is bad or dirty. It may make men sound shallow and vain, but “a man likes to know that the woman he married will remain a sexual person, that she'll retain her sense of passion and enjoyment,” says Sloan. If their wives shut off sexually, treat sex as a chore or never initiate intimacy, some men feel punished, as though wanting sex were a bad thing.

3. He's feeling inadequate at home. If a husband hears nothing but a litany of complaints when he feels he's doing his best—getting the car repaired, playing with the kids, working hard—it can leave him ripe for an affair, says Sloan.

4. He has deep-rooted monogamy fears. “Men may make the commitment to marry one woman but they remain afraid that their wives will change—and meanwhile, they've ‘given up’ their right to have sex with anyone they like,” says Sloan. “Plenty of men see sex the way children see candy,” adds Mira Kirshenbaum, author of *When Good People Have Affairs*. “They want what they want, when they want it. Marriage shuts the gates on that, but not on the temptation.” That was the case with Ron.* “I cheated because I could,” says this unapologetic serial non-monogamist, who admits to multiple affairs with married women he works with. “And I did it because a new woman would look at me like a Greek god, whereas my wife knew I was imperfect.”

5. He seeks status. “In our culture, affairs can be a kind of status symbol,” says Sloan. The more women a man's slept with, even if he's married, the more admiration he gets from other men. “Take the Tiger Woods story,” says Sloan. “Outwardly, men may disparage what he did, but I'll bet many men are inwardly envious, because they couldn't get away with it themselves.”

6. He's a perfectionist. The man who has to excel at everything—the best job, the most money, the ideal family, bringing his wife flowers and doing things around the house—but also has an affair. “It sounds like a paradox, but men who are perfectionists put themselves into such a tight box that they ultimately rebel against *themselves*,” says Sloan. Patrick* exemplifies this type: “I was in a loveless marriage that was simply about making as much money as I could. Buying jewelry, trips, an expensive condo, and I learned the hard way that these things amounted to nothing. [Having an affair] was a way to support my ego and manhood.”

*Names have been changed to protect privacy

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