

A Moral Dilemma

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Matthew: Greetings, James. I recently found your site and what you write resonates with me. I have an issue I am recently struggling with that relates to my sexual being. Ten years ago I met and fell in love with a woman. One year into the relationship I got genital herpes from a cold sore she had on her lip. We stayed together and I managed it naturally, also with suppression therapy. We married, bought a home and had a lovely daughter. This December she left me for her personal trainer, who she claims is her soulmate. We had not been intimate since January at that point.

I am working hard to discover within myself what beliefs and behaviors I need to let go to move forward. I embrace the idea that I am whole and complete and my health and wellness is available to me if I accept it. What I find myself struggling with is the fear over telling someone that I have herpes. I understand that this fear is about rejection, shame and humiliation.

I want to move past it and recently had an amazing experience that put me on the path to letting go of my fear of never being intimate again. The problem is that night I didn't tell the other person anything. It was a peculiar, alcohol-fueled night for me; the other person was not drinking. An invitation to walk on the beach – the person said no expectations – and then we proceeded to have amazing but protected sex on the beach. Amazing sex, like she was the first person who ever made love to me in such a kind and generous way. She slept over and the next morning I wanted to experience that again so badly that I said nothing, and again the experience was amazing. Both times we used condoms. Is my obsessing over the herpes and telling people about it necessary? Does it have to be part of my life story or can I really let it go? My mind says morality is king and telling the truth is imperative – my ego wants to hide the shameful bits – and so starts to rationalize: well, if we were consenting adults and we used protection, what's the harm? Of course I can expound upon the harm that could be done but if I do, am I then creating that harm? If I embrace what happened as a beautiful experience that the universe laid at my feet like a gift and I accepted it, can't it just be that? My mind creeps in and says yes, but what if you meet her again?

~ Thank you, Matthew

James: Hi, Matthew. I am glad you wrote. Obviously, when you do not do the right thing the mind is agitated. It is the same with everyone. You expect people to be honest with you. Is it fair to not be honest with them, particularly when the consequence of such dishonesty may result in injury? You don't want to be injured either. Leaving others out of it for now, the real issue is that you injure yourself spiritually when you lie. How can you respect yourself if you do not tell the truth? Isn't this why you are writing to me? If the universe made you feel good from your contact with this woman, why did it make you feel guilty and write this letter?

Life often presents these moral dilemmas. It is cowardly to lie for the sake of a little pleasure. I know, you did not see the sex you describe as a little pleasure; it obviously meant a lot to you. But in the fullness of time you will not be able to live

comfortably with yourself if you let your desires overcome your morality. Why compromise your self-intimacy for sexual intimacy with a stranger? I suggest that in the future you make full disclosure in straightforward way and suggest protected sex. Many people are willing to take a chance for a bit of pleasure or forgo a bit of the extra pleasure of unprotected sex, but it is up to your sex partner to worry about it if you do the right thing. The bad *karma*, if any, will be visited on your sex partner if she chooses to ignore the warning.

Forgive me if I journey too far afield, but I noticed what seemed to be an absence of the word "love." It seems to me that if you love yourself properly, you will not be tempted to violate *dharma* and you would be interested in sex that was somehow connected to love. If you love someone the truth comes easily. The other issue that caught my eye was that in this recent encounter you were drunk. How much of those wonderful feelings was the alcohol responsible for? Not to mention that alcohol inhibits morality. I know for sure about this because I was an alcoholic and did many self-insulting things when I was drunk. In any case, what I am suggesting is that this little moral dilemma is a symptom of a deeper problem. If you agree and want to discuss it, please write.

~ Love, James

Matthew: James, I am so glad I wrote to you. Of course "do no harm," how pathetic that I chose to ignore that. I was so selfish to have not said anything that night/next morning. I was hoping that magically it would not be a problem, but of course the post-experience angst I'm having is a clear indicator that what I did, or more correctly what I didn't do, was wrong. Thank you for being a sounding board.

"It seems to me that if you love yourself properly, you will not be tempted to violate *dharma* and you would be interested in sex that was somehow connect to love."

Yes, this is probably a problem, and actually a pattern, that I had before I met my now estranged wife. I would find someone, more often than not sleep with them and then "fall in love." These past few months since she moved out I've been reading a lot, going to therapy and trying to get to the bottom of my issues so that I wouldn't repeat any mistakes I made in the relationship with her. I didn't spend much time analyzing the patterns I had before meeting her, when I was single. Though upon reflection, those patterns were every six months or so after not being in a relationship or not having been intimate I would go on hunt for that intimacy and take in as a one-night stand, consequences be damned, and if it turned into something deeper that was a bonus. My goal since realizing my wife wasn't coming back was to build myself up and "get a life," but about two weeks ago the craving for intimate contact was just getting stronger and stronger and unfortunately I wasn't directing that energy anywhere - not working out, not doing *yoga* and not meditating - because they were all on my get-my-life-back to-do list that wasn't getting done. Now I've done this.

Thank you for listening.

James: I'm glad to have been of service. You seem to have the key for solving the craving for intimacy issue when you say that you were not directing your energy into your get-a-life program. If you commit yourself to a worthwhile goal the sexual

energy eventually gets sublimated into it and the mind becomes peaceful. Discrimination is available to a composed mind and one's consciousness of what is appropriate in every situation is sharp. Good luck with everything.

~ Love, James