

STYLISH

1 APRIL 2012


THE SUNDAY TIMES

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OR
WITHOUT
YOU**

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SALLY

MY MARRIED BOYFRIEND WANTS HIS WIFE TO LEAVE HIM

I have been seeing my boyfriend for 18 months, but he is married and I wish he wasn't. He and his wife sleep separately and his work allows him to stay with me two nights a week. They have discussed separation and he left for a few days, but she said he could only see his daughter briefly on her birthday. It scared him so much, he went back. He wants her to make the decision, so she cannot use the children against him, but she has a nice life, so I cannot see why she would. We split up for six weeks, because I said he had to decide, but were both so miserable, we got back together. Perhaps I was weak to give in, but I worry about backing him into a corner in case it causes resentment later with his children. I have this nagging fear I will be in the same situation in a few years' time. I don't want to waste my life, but I love him totally. I would be amazed if his wife isn't suspicious, but he says she would challenge him. Am I expecting too much or fooling myself?

Just to put everybody in the picture with regard to your longer letter, you are divorced with two adult children, happy at work, have no financial worries and a great social life, so you are not some desperate spinster (awful word, but it serves its purpose) pinning all your hopes on a married man.

I am not going to wade into the moral quagmire of adultery or hurting another woman, but, however much we might plead love, we have a choice, and when we make a choice to have an affair with a married man, we cross a line into a future racked with pain and uncertainty. To pretend otherwise really is to fool ourselves, which might form the answer to part of your question.

You wish your lover wasn't married (big wish, that), but he is — although he says he is convinced that one day you will be together. The question is: when will that day come, if ever? His children are young teenagers and his wife seems perfectly happy with independent lives and separate beds — although cynics would say, "Oh, not that old line."

I am not suggesting he is lying about his marital situation, but I do feel that if anybody is fooling themselves, it is him — in believing his wife will make the decision to separate and will not use the children against him. Surely even the tiny insight about restricting access to his daughter to her birthday after a few days' separation must tell him (and you) otherwise.

You say she has a nice life materially and doesn't work and, because he works long hours and keeps out of her way, you cannot see why she would choose to separate. Let's put it another way: your lover sounds like a high-flyer who earns a fair amount of money, so in any divorce settlement his wife would still have a good life materially, and he would be well and truly out of the way.

Despite his claims about discussions between the two of them about separating, her willingness to use his children against him seems to indicate she feels otherwise. If that is because she still loves him, wants to punish him, hates the thought of life on her own, or doesn't want the upheaval that change brings, who is to say when it comes to the complexity of the intimate lives of others?

There is, of course, one important element missing in the equation and that is the children and the fact that she says she wishes to stay together for their sake. You say you "totally do not agree", but add that it isn't your call to say so. Indeed, it is not, in as much as you don't know the characters of the children, their emotional make-up or how they would react to the break-up of their parents' marriage. Some kids cope; others don't.

In order to convince ourselves, or to maintain a particular script in our heads, we have a tendency to objectify things — which is what it seems you are doing with your lover's wife and family. They are part of a story; a distant tale far removed from the intimate fantasy in which you and your lover exist for two nights of the week.

Reality is far more brutal, as is emotional pain, so when you say you are worried about handing out ultimatums to make him come to a decision about your relationship or backing him into a corner, which may lead to later resentment with his children, I'd say you are right to worry. As I said, reality is brutal, and however great a part love might play, it is a fragile creature, liable to take flight in the furious onslaught of anger and resentment.

Are you expecting too much? That depends on your expectation. If it is an easy passage to the happy ever after then, yes, I would say you are. As to whether you are wasting your life, only you can be the judge of that. All I can say is that we only get one, so we would do well to live it as happily as we can. ●

DOES SOMETHING WORRY YOU, A SITUATION IN YOUR LIFE YOU CAN'T RESOLVE? THEN EMAIL SALLYBRAMPTON@SUNDAYTIMES.CO.UK

WE'RE SORRY, BUT SALLY CANNOT ANSWER LETTERS PERSONALLY

Follow Sally on Twitter at @SallyBrampton



A BEAUTIFUL MIND TAKE A MOMENT...

...TUNE INTO YOUR INSTINCTS

Caught in a dilemma, it's easy to turn to a pros and cons list, as you try to think your way to an answer. But perhaps there is a better way.

"Often the brain is telling us to 'do this, do that', but we'd do better to tune into our emotions," says the life coach Susie Pearl. "Imagine you're in a meeting and you get a gut feeling about someone that you don't trust them. But you ignore it and think, 'I'm being silly.' Don't ignore it. Your instincts give you the most acute version of what's going

on in your life, and what will lead you to be happy."

Pearl believes that we could pre-empt many future regrets if we acted on our intuition and behaved "irrationally", rather than obeying our rational mind. The trouble is, many of us are so used to suppressing our emotions that we are deaf to our instincts. "If you've lost it — just practise stopping the chat in your head and notice how you feel instead," Pearl says. "Meditation or just sitting still and daydreaming are

great ways to tune back into your intuition. And the next time you're in a quandary, if you find you're inclined one way or the other, listen and act on it. Your emotions are your best GPS."

Francesca Hornak

Instructions for Happiness and Success by Susie Pearl (Quadrille £13) happinessandsuccess.org

