

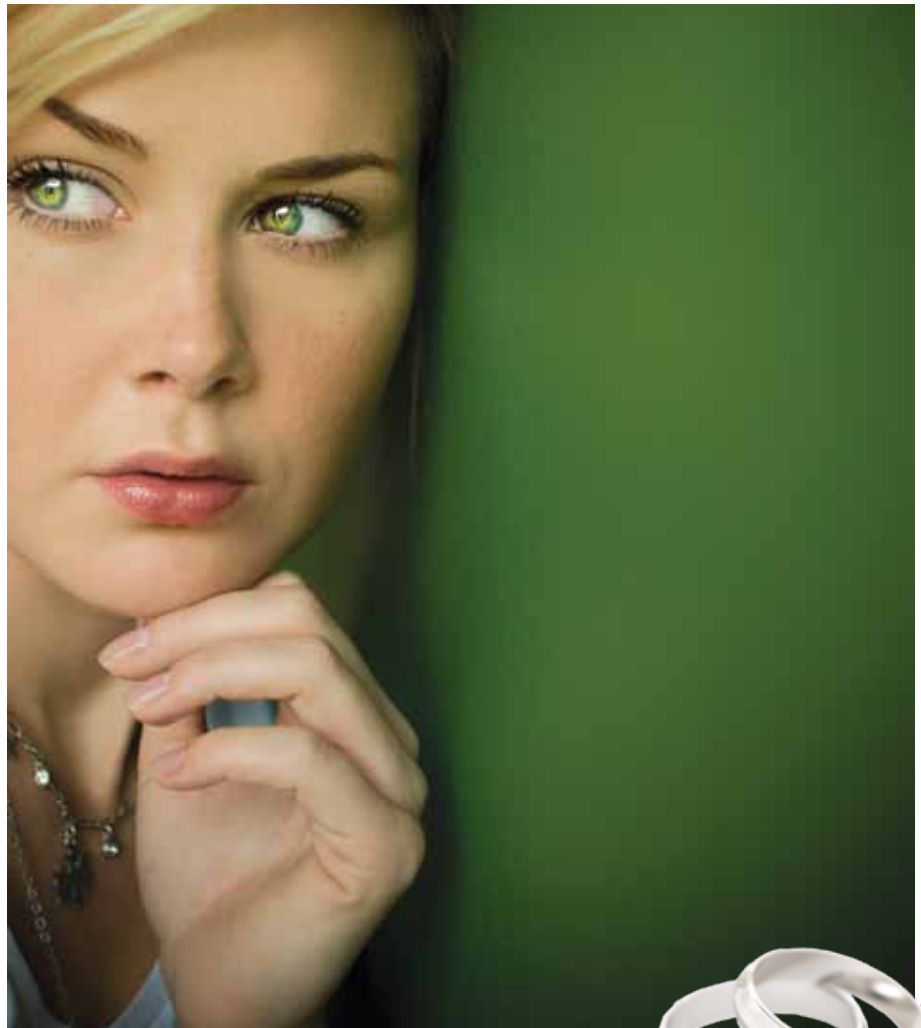


IS THE GRASS GREENER?

LIFE COACH FLÉCHELLE MORIN ANSWERS YOUR RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS.
THIS MONTH: LETTING GO OF A PAST LOVE AND LEARNING TO LIVE LIFE IN THE PRESENT

Q. Help! I can't stop thinking about an old boyfriend and it is running my marriage! Twelve years ago, immediately following college graduation, I spent the summer with Jeff—a man I had met at my summer camp job. Our relationship was fun, exciting and passionate! In fact, I've never felt so care-free and full of life as I did when I was with him. But when summer ended, so did our relationship. We both had to move back to our respective cities and eventually lost touch with each other. That fall, I met my (now) husband, fell in love and got married. My husband is a good man—completely dedicated to me and our three girls—and we have a nice life together. Still, I've never forgotten Jeff and the free-flowing fun we had that summer. Throughout the years, I've daydreamed about what my life would have been like had I followed Jeff and kept our relationship going. I've even fantasized about him being my husband and the father of my children. Six weeks ago, after doing some research online, I found Jeff's profile on Facebook and joined his list of friends under a fictitious name. Reading about his life now has only intensified my feelings for him and I think I am still in love with him. Jeff is single and lives less than two hundred miles away. I've been contemplating calling him and perhaps arrange to meet him for lunch or a walk in the park. My girlfriend thinks I'm crazy to jeopardize my marriage for a guy I haven't spoken to in years, but if he was just a fling, why would I still have such strong feelings for him?

A. It's human nature to wonder if the grass is greener, especially in times of difficulty or routine in a marriage. But when fantasy starts to threaten real-life relationships, its time to



take a step back and examine why you are really feeling the way you do.

You asked if this was just a fling, why would you have such strong feelings for this man and the answer is quite simple: chemistry. We are all made up of chemicals. (In fact, the average adult human being is composed of some 60 chemical elements.) And the emotions of love

or infatuation we feel are generated as a result of a chemical reaction that occurs in our body. It works like this: Every time you think about Jeff, you activate your pituitary gland to produce and release a very powerful neuropeptide called oxytocin. (For women, oxytocin can be released by just hearing the

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sound of a man's voice or the smell of his cologne—which is why I advise women who are trying to get over an ex to stay away from the men's cologne counter at department stores!) When released into the blood stream, oxytocin (the bonding agent believed by scientists and researchers to be responsible for most feelings of love and lust), can make you feel as if you are in love with Jeff—or any other man—who would otherwise leave you feeling indifferent.

Now that you understand much of what you are feeling for Jeff is the result of a chemical reaction, it might sober you up enough to look at the prize—and price—of your decision to contact Jeff. The prize might be a wonderful life with him or perhaps just a casual affair. But the price could be losing your husband and shortchanging the lives of your daughters.

So let's take a look at the relationship you have with your husband. You say your husband is a good man, but he obviously doesn't make you feel as passionate and alive as you did when you were with Jeff. But have you really given him the chance? The truth is: it takes two to tango and much of the spark you are lacking in your marriage is likely the fruit of your non-commitment. You can only grow your relationship by investing in it your time, energy and focus. When a woman (or man) pines for someone other than her mate, she robs her partner of the love and attention he deserves. So, by keeping the flame burning for Jeff, you

have, in essence, negated any chance of growing a vital,

intimate relationship with your husband.

Every relationship has a "flow of energy" within it. When it comes to the relationship with your husband, he loves you and is dedicated to you and your family. This is illustrated by the chart on the next page (Illus. 1A) which shows the energy coming from him and going to you, without your acceptance or reciprocation. In contrast, you are feeling love for Jeff and are giving him your love and attention, as illustrated at the bottom of this same chart which shows the energy coming from you and going to Jeff, without his acceptance or reciprocation.

As a result, your husband isn't getting the love he deserves from you in return and you are not accepting the love of your husband, nor are you getting the love you desire and need from an absent Jeff.

In a healthy intimate relationship between a man and woman, indicated by Illus. 1B on the next page, the man loves and cherishes his wife and is dedicated to her and their children (the energy goes from him to her.)

The woman loves and respects the man as a husband and a father and is dedicated to him and their children (her energy goes from her to him.) As a result, he gets the love he needs by feeling her love and respect which helps him grow more love for her. She gets the love and cherishing she needs from him, which helps her grow more love and respect for him. He gives her love; she gives him love back! Can you see how a circle of love is created and nourished by both partner's



commitments to their relationship and dedication to one another?

You said you have thought about Jeff often throughout the years and what your life might be like together. If this is true, then you have never really committed more than your body to your marriage. Your energy flow with your husband is truncated—never going back to either of you because your mind and your heart was—and is—still 'married' to Jeff.

Now the good news. Obviously the fact you wrote to me tells me you do not want to jeopardize your marriage or family. You seem to be reaching out for a way to end these agonizing feelings for Jeff and move on with your life. Here are some suggestions to get you on your way...

1.) Get committed to your marriage. Put your focus on your husband and your relationship. Period.

2.) Whenever you start thinking about Jeff and all those warm feelings begin to resurface (remember the oxytocin?), replace

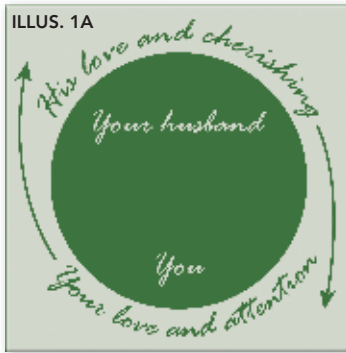
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Jeff's face in your mind with your husband's. It might cool you off at first, but eventually, if you do it consistently, you'll start feeling the same feelings you have for Jeff for your husband and you'll genuinely be more open, fun and alive whenever you're around him.

Note: It may take a lot of dedication and visualization to replace Jeff's face with your husband's, so, in the meantime, 'Fake it 'til you make it! You can also help snap yourself out of your thoughts—literally—by wearing a rubber band on your wrist and pulling at it anytime you think of Jeff. For this to work, you have to snap the rubber band pretty hard (not just a little pinch.) But

ENERGY FLOW IN A RELATIONSHIP



after awhile, your brain will develop 'mirror neurons' that will activate feelings of pain at the simple thought of him.

3.) Cut off all contact to Jeff. Sign off of his Facebook page and delete your fake account. Don't talk about him again; don't

even mention his name again. If you are serious about moving on, you need to concentrate on the relationship with your husband and you can't do that by reigniting feelings every time Jeff's name comes up.

4.) Get in touch with yourself. That essence of 'feeling alive' you are searching for is inside of you. Jeff didn't create it for you; you created it for yourself... and you can recreate it now in the relationship with your husband.

I hope you give these suggestions a sincere try. Though it will take some hard work, I think you can stop the rumination circle and fill the hole in your heart with a renewed love for your husband—and for your life.

Fléchelle Morin, Certified ASR Coach, Dating to Marriage Coach & Motivational Speaker, is the author of the book, "Kissing or No Kissing; Whom Will you Save Your Kisses For? A Dating Guide to Creating Your Dreams." Have a question or comment for Fléchelle? E-mail her at flechelle@nokissing.com or visit nokissing.com for more information about Fléchelle's book, dating philosophy or scheduling her as a speaker at your next event.
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