

Dear John,



Dear John,

My husband and I have been married for 20 years. We have one child who is now a freshman in college. During our marriage my husband and I have had many high times, and by high I mean we love to drink. It is not a stretch to say that alcohol brought us together, as we were both drunk when we met, and alcohol has kept us together, as we drank side by side each night for close to two decades.

A year ago I confronted the fact that I am an alcoholic. I have not had a drink in thirteen months, a hard earned achievement I am really proud of.

The problem is, my husband refuses to confront his own issue. He still drinks nightly and I have a hard time being around him. I feel like I am a different person than who I was, and a million miles from the person he still is. I love him deeply and want to help him and want our marriage to last, but I feel that something has to give. I've asked him to stop drinking, but so far he has refused, saying my issue is not his issue. What should I do?

Signed,

Sober in Seattle

Dear Sober in Seattle

Maybe one day your husband will follow your lead, but even if he doesn't, be proud of the example you've set for him and your child, and the work you continually do to give yourself a better life.

I am sure there are all sorts of things going through your husband's head as he sees your pledge to sobriety. As much as you feel a million miles from him, it would follow that he feels miles from you, too. However, whether he is an alcoholic or not, he is right to say your issue is not his issue. You being alcohol-free does not require anybody else to be, just as his decision to continue drinking is his and his alone.

If his drinking bothers you now, it will probably always bother you. Get a handle on what bothers you most about it. Witnessing his behavior no doubt shows you what an ugly sight you were. But your annoyance could also be due to envy over his continued drinking. Hopefully it is the former, and you can use his conduct as a reminder to never look like that again.

Staying in your marriage will require huge amounts of patience, understanding, will power and love. If you are committed to staying, you must set hard boundaries for his drinking. But be prepared to be let down. If his commitment is to alcohol, abiding by your boundaries will probably be untenable.

If you determine that your husband's drinking poses a threat to your sobriety, you should seriously consider removing yourself from the relationship. At the very least, please immediately tap into a network of people with similar issues as you. There are many places to turn to and many people in similar predicaments.

The bottom line is, while love can be intoxicating, your sobriety is the only thing that matters.

Please never black out on that fact.

Thanks for playing,

John