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10 things your husband's friends won't tell you

See what your spouse's buds think about how you treat them—and your man

By Denise Schipani



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Ever wonder what your husband's friends really think of you—and your marriage? You may be surprised to learn that your joking eye rolls at your spouse's corny jokes make his friends feel bad for him—or heartened to find out that his closest pals want to see you more. "People outside your marriage can often see blind spots we can't see," says Julie Hanks, LCSW, BCD, director of **Wasatch Family Therapy**, which has multiple locations in Utah. We asked men to share their thoughts on their buds' wives. Read on to see if you recognize yourself in any of the below, and discover how you can

benefit from these guys' feedback.

"We think you're judging us."

Scott* is convinced that his oldest friend's wife is a snob. "Whenever we tell stories from years ago, she rolls her eyes as if to say we're pathetic for living in the past." Even if you never say a thing about your husband's and his pals' antics, your eye-rolling can send the message that you think you're above them when you like them just fine. Perhaps you feel threatened by the amount of time your husband spends with his buddies, especially if their association predates you, says Elizabeth Lombardo, PhD, author of **A Happy You**. So avoid setting up a "you versus them" dynamic. You need not adore all your partner's cronies, but your husband will appreciate it if you accept them cheerfully, noting the positive things they give him, like sharing memories of college.

"We wish you'd spend more time with us."

The good news from this obvious compliment is that they like you. The bad news? They think you don't want to see them. "It's cool that they want to get to know you; they value your husband enough to want to spend more time with the whole family," says Hanks. So

take the hint. You don't have to go to every softball game, but consider inviting them and their significant others out for dinner. Or when they call, at least talk to them for a minute ("How's work? What's new at home?") before handing the phone to your hubby.

"We hate when you call him 10 times during poker night."

Jeff* gets annoyed and defensive when his friend's wife phones more than once during a guys' night. "Why doesn't she trust him after all these years? It's not like he's doing anything wrong!" But it might not even be a matter of trust, says Dr. Lombardo. "Often, when the husband is out and the wife is home, maybe with the kids driving her crazy, her stress levels go up and make her do things she wouldn't ordinarily do—like texting or calling incessantly." But you don't want to be seen as a nagging wife. And how would you feel if your husband called you every few minutes when you're out with a friend? Unless you need him for a legitimate reason, don't check in multiple times.

"We're annoyed that you often come up with an 'emergency' to cancel plans."

When you chronically cancel on a friend, they feel devalued, says Hanks—no wonder his chums don't think you take their relationship with your husband seriously. Ask yourself: Is there a pattern of forcing your husband to back out of plans with all his friends? Or does it happen only with a particular friend you aren't crazy about? Instead of sabotaging time your spouse spends with his friends, "take a page from his book and arrange your own social plans," recommends Dr. Lombardo. That said, if he truly is spending more time with the boys than with you, Dr. Lombardo suggests explaining what you want assertively ("I would love some time for just the two of us. How about we go on a date this weekend? I've already lined up a babysitter."), rather than passive-aggressively ("Oh, sure, go out with them again. I don't *care!*").

"You can be dismissive of your husband."

"If your husband's friends are true ones, they'll defend him if they see you putting him down," says Hanks. That describes Frank's* experience: "My good friend's wife always belittles what he says. It makes me feel terrible for him and angry with her." While this loyalty is a tribute to your husband, it's a wake-up call for you. Maybe your tongue is too sharp or your attempts at humor are taken the wrong way. Or perhaps you correct his mistakes to prove you're smarter. Explore whether there's some buried resentment that's making you disparage your husband in public, and deal with that behind closed doors, says Hanks. It's better to keep your mouth shut rather than put him down, which shows a lack of respect, she adds. In the meantime, try to see your spouse the way his friends see him—as a great guy who deserves your support.

"We hate that you begrudge him every dime he spends when you throw cash around all the time."

Do you think the money your husband drops on restoring his classic car is extravagant? Perhaps he and his friends think it's frivolous that you get your roots touched up every six weeks. "This comes down to a mismatch in values, a common issue in marriage," says Hanks. "Unless one of you is spending large amounts of money without telling the other, tolerate (within reason) what your husband spends on his hobbies, knowing you have your own priorities." Hanks advises having regular check-ins about financial matters during which you discuss the big stuff (college savings, retirement) as well as your personal spending. If you're worried about how much money he's going through, tell him, and ask

him if he has any concerns about your spending, says Hanks.

"You're a beautiful 40-year-old; why are you dressing like you're 21?"

Jake* is uncomfortable when he sees his good friend's wife dressing like her teenage daughter. "It makes me wonder if she thinks her husband doesn't find her attractive anymore." Your man's friends may, like Jake, guess at what's behind the Forever 21 look—others might simply feel uncomfortable around you. If you dress the way you do purely because you love it, don't worry about what anyone else thinks. That said, notes Dr. Lombardo, "be careful you're not trying to be someone you aren't or solicit extra attention." And if it's true that your husband and his friends think you're beautiful when you dress and act your age, well, that's one good reason to shop where grown women do.

"You've changed your husband for the better!"

"I have a friend who was kind of a mess before he got married. His apartment was like a dorm room, he never exercised and he always ordered fried food," says Rod.* "Now that he's married, the rough edges are smoothed out." And Rod completely credits his pal's wife for the positive change. Guys like Rod may never share this praise with you because they don't want to offend you or your husband, don't feel close enough to you or aren't comfortable bringing up the subject. But take this as a reminder to work to bring out the best in your husband, says Dr. Lombardo. "It's good for him, sure, but also for you because it fills you with positive energy."

"It's annoying when you intercept texts and phone calls."

Steven* was shocked to discover that a friend's wife had been reading texts her husband received. "It made me think she's insecure, and it turned me off her," he says. Same goes for interrupting phone calls, assuming the friends aren't ringing at bad times, like when you sit down to dinner or are putting the kids to bed. "His pals might perceive that you're keeping him on a short leash," says Hanks. Again, think about why you're acting this way. Are you envious that he's on the phone with the guys and not plopped on the couch next to you? Are you worried they're talking about topics that would upset you? Then tell your husband directly, says Dr. Lombardo.

"You flirt with us."

True, some women are friendlier than others. But if you're trying to get your husband's attention—by sparking jealousy, say—his inner circle may notice. "Try to see how people around you perceive your behavior," suggests Dr. Lombardo. Is everyone having a good time and joking back and forth? That's fine. But if you suspect you're making someone uncomfortable, rein it in. And if you'd like more attention from your husband, "flirt with *him!*" says Hanks.

**Names have been changed.*

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