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9 Surprising Reasons You Shouldn't Share Your Marriage Woes

Find out why trouble in paradise should stay between you and your husband

By Charlotte Latvala

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It's natural—and comforting—to turn to friends and family when things go awry. But think twice before dishing about marital strife, says Scott Haltzman, MD, author of *The Secrets of Surviving Infidelity*. "Whenever you talk to others about your marriage problems, you risk driving a wedge between you and your spouse," he says. Read on for unexpected reasons to keep marriage drama to yourselves and better ways to address it.

1. You never know who else will find out. Unless you're absolutely sure your friend won't blab, don't be surprised when the whole world suddenly seems to be privy to your latest spousal spat. "As soon as you reveal

difficulties in your marriage, you've lost control of the information," says relationship expert **April Masini**. "This becomes a problem on top of whatever marital issues you're having" because it's embarrassing to be the topic of whispered conversations. Bite your tongue and follow your grandmother's advice: Don't air your dirty laundry in public.

2. Your spouse could feel betrayed. Just because you feel compelled to confide in a third party—or all of Facebook—doesn't mean your partner does. And you should respect that. "Turn to your husband first when there's a problem," says Beverly Hyman, PhD, co-author of *How to Know if It's Time to Go*, who adds that your marriage should be your primary intimate relationship. "When you speak ill of your spouse, you're betraying his trust." Try the "fly on the wall" test before sharing: If your husband were in the room and heard your words, would he be OK with them?

3. You could turn a minor blip into a major problem. "Once, I impulsively complained to my sister-in-law about my husband's inability to show affection," says Jessie, who lives in Cincinnati. "She relayed the conversation to him, and he was horribly upset. It took us ages to get over it." A smarter tactic: When you're angry with your spouse, find **ways to calm down** without venting to

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others. “Doing something physical can help,” says Dr. Haltzman. “Go for a long walk or run, or drive with your favorite music blaring.”

4. A sympathetic ear isn’t objective. Your pal’s concern is primarily for you—not your marriage. And because you can’t help but give her a one-sided view of the situation, she’s unlikely to give your spouse a fair shake. “In the early days of my marriage, I’d call my best friend whenever my husband hurt my feelings,” admits Janelle, of Pittsburgh. “She agreed with me on everything, which made me feel good but ultimately didn’t solve any problems.” So instead of firing off another “Can you believe what he did?” text, try journaling, suggests Dr. Haltzman. “It’s a great way to vent without harming others.” But keep it private—a public blog isn’t the best option.

5. You may get bad advice. Your friend’s experiences color her counsel; if she lived through the humiliation of a cheating spouse, she may assume your husband’s guilty of the same offense and recommend **getting a divorce**, says Dr. Haltzman. But that may be a premature step. Biased outsiders aren’t in the best position to judge your marriage—only you two can do that.

6. Your friend may sound the alarm to others. Gung-ho loved ones may send out an email blast to too many people, enlisting them to come to your rescue. “Before you know it, you’ve got a full-fledged intervention in your living room,” says Masini. Tracy, of Bakersfield, CA, learned that the hard way. “My mother ended up hating my now ex-husband and turned my whole family against him,” she says. “Sharing too much with her—and the strain that ensued—contributed to the downfall of my marriage.” That’s why it’s especially wise to stay mum around people who tend to blow things out of proportion.

7. You might change your mind about your spouse, but they won’t. When you paint your partner in a negative light, friends and family will look at him differently. “They may give him the cold shoulder, exclude him, even confront him—sometimes long after things are resolved in your mind,” says Dr. Haltzman. “Now you have a whole new set of problems.” His suggestion: Confide in a neutral third party—a certified **marriage counselor**, clergyperson or representative from an employee assistance program—when you want advice.

8. Their comments could hinder your marriage from healing. Even if your confidantes remain polite after you reconcile with your spouse, their remarks during your tiff will linger. “When our marriage hit a rocky patch, my mom called my husband immature and unreliable,” admits Janelle. “I’ve forgiven him and things are much better now, but years later, those words haunt me—and sometimes plant a seed of doubt in my mind.” While you can’t erase what’s been said, remember that everyone has her own agenda. “Your friend or relative may have said unkind things about your husband because she wanted more of your affection,” says Dr. Hyman. And when comments from the past bother you in the present, focus on the positive, healthy relationship you now have with your spouse.

9. You could become the girl who cried wolf. The next time you truly need guidance, your buddy might hesitate to chime in. “If you run to family and friends after every tussle with your husband saying it’s ‘the last straw,’ but it never is, they won’t take you seriously,” says Masini. It’s always better to talk (and listen) to your spouse before going anywhere else with your problems.

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