

10 Surprisingly Common Reasons Men Initiate Divorce

See what prompts husbands to end their marriages

BY DEBORAH SKOLNIK Dec 16, 2013



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As you'd expect, "She cheated!" is one big reason guys take the speed ramp to Splitsville. But every year, faithful women get blindsided by divorce papers. What gives? We asked relationship experts about the other grievances once-happy husbands cite for divorcing—their unexpected answers give clues on [how to keep your marriage solid](#).

1. You've let yourself go. Men understand that women change over time. But there's a difference between putting on weight and getting so big that the Discovery Channel would be intrigued if you washed up on a beach. And is your car the only thing you wax? "I have one client whose partner has a chin hair that bothers him so much," says Sherry Amatenstein, who specializes in couples' therapy in Long Island City, NY. "If you don't care enough to look good for your guy, he wonders if you care about *him*." Wouldn't you wonder the same if he gave up on his appearance? So banish the granny panties, grey roots and other frumpy fixins'—you'll both feel better.

2. You always say no. If you're speaking in negatives as often as a two-year-old does, "you become a killjoy," says Amatenstein. "It makes you seem more like his mother—not someone he can have fun with, or, if you do it often enough, wants to be around." Even if you're naysaying for your guy's own good, try to compromise: Maybe he can have a Harley if he promises to always wear a helmet. Hear his wants and your marriage may go the distance.

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3. He's more nagged than nurtured. "If you dig into your husband for every little screw-up or letdown, [he'll feel resentful](#) and eventually shut down," says Chicago divorce lawyer Corri Fetman. "Once this happens, good luck getting your husband to voluntarily put forth effort into anything again—including your marriage!" Ditch the fuming, and try some finessing. For instance, is your guy always running late? Set

your clocks a few minutes ahead. It's sneaky, but less destructive than getting on his case.

4. He feels disrespected. Don't follow the husband-bashing humor trend, urges couples' therapist Rosalind Sedacca of West Palm Beach, FL. Resist joking on Facebook about how your favorite basketball fan can't even dribble—and don't rib him in front of friends either. "Your husband will feel belittled," Sedacca warns. "Confidence and security form the foundation of any marriage," she adds. Eventually your man's self-esteem will erode and he'll lose his connection to you. "Meanwhile, there may be other women who are willing to treat him with admiration," Sedacca adds. See where this one's going? Nowhere good!

5. He doesn't have a marriage mentor. If your husband's pals make Charlie Sheen look like a choir boy, he needs some buddies who'll raise the bar, says relationship coach and minister Don Nations, of Sarasota, FL. "If more men had a friend with a solid marriage to whom they could talk, someone who could listen and offer counsel, they'd be less likely to seek a divorce," he explains. Your house of worship can fill the void: "Many offer marriage workshops and discussion groups," Nations says. Or pursue friendships with other happy couples—their dedication may inspire you both.

6. You aren't his financial partner. If you two can't get on the same page about what to do with your money, it can cause a marriage meltdown, Amatenstein says, "because of the behaviors it leads to, like engaging in power struggles and keeping secrets, like big purchases, from each other." The remedy? Sit together and make up a list of dreams you can both agree on, whether it's to retire early or travel more, so you're working toward shared goals. If you really can't find common ground, speak to a financial advisor.

7. You never let him feel like he's Superman. "Men stay in a marriage as long as they feel it's possible to be their spouse's salvation," says Tracy Thomas, PhD, a licensed psychologist and relationship coach in San Francisco. Praise your husband when opportunities arise, but don't say "good job," Thomas adds. "It's demeaning, as if he's a little boy." Instead, be specific—for example, tell him, "When you call me

during the day, it makes me so happy to hear your voice," or "When you shovel the snow for us, it makes me feel so cared for!" Appreciating his everyday heroism can help you through marriage's rough spots.

8. You disagree about how to raise your children. Maybe he's a softie who buys the kids treats, while you fear they'll never learn the value of money. Perhaps he believes in curfews, but you favor free-range kids. "Get on the same page as much as you can, so you don't undermine or resent each other," Amatenstein says. Hammer out mutually acceptable policies about bedtimes, homework and consequences for misbehavior. And before you veto his viewpoint, see where he's coming from (maybe he grew up in a dicey neighborhood, so being home by sunset was a way to stay safe). Give in sometimes, as long as his way won't hurt anyone—"he'll feel that his opinions and feelings matter to you," says Amatenstein. And that's crucial for any relationship.

9. He feels neglected. Life pulls you in different directions, sure. But "focusing all your time and energy on your kids or career, and not at all on your husband, emasculates him and makes him feel as interesting as old furniture," cautions Fetman. Carve out a few minutes daily to talk to, listen to and laugh only with him. The best time? "When your guy is most likely to open up, whether it's while relaxing on the couch with a beer, or during pillow talk at bedtime," Fetman recommends. "Try talking about things that have nothing to do with the kids, schedules or anything stressful. Make it fun."

10. Blended-family drama. If his children from a previous relationship don't like you, your own couplehood is in danger. "He understandably may feel intense loyalty to his kids—after all, partners may come and go but children are forever," Amatenstein points out. Make it clear to your husband that you'd love to be a part of the kids' lives, and that no matter what, you know he loves and needs to see them. Don't try to take their mother's place—and never, ever badmouth her in front of them. Ask your hubby for his help in portraying you to the children in the best possible light. With time and a little luck, they'll soon see you're someone worth knowing, respecting and maybe even eventually loving.

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