

Telling My Fiance About My SSA

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This past weekend was very difficult for me. My "core emotions" of anger, fear, sadness, and joy were soaring and descending all over the place. Let me explain why:

My therapist (who was recommended by JONAH) encouraged me to tell my girlfriend about my same sex attractions (SSA) fully, and honestly. He knew that she and I were dating for over a year and are very serious about each other. He felt that if I wanted to marry her, I needed to be authentic with her about my SSA.

My girlfriend knew I was struggling with some type of sexual issue but she didn't know exactly what. On several occasions, I tried to tell her exactly what my issues were, but I just couldn't do it! I believed (or at least told myself the story) that she wouldn't know what to say, or how to understand my SSA, because of her background as a sheltered Sunni Moslem (similar to me) --- a culturally conservative religion, and where these things are really never talked about. In most cases, the existence of SSA is simply denied.

I was truly in pain struggling about keeping my SSA secret from my girlfriend. I had previously told her I was struggling and said that I had problems being totally attracted to her (though I wasn't even sure what that meant). In my heart and soul, I sincerely wanted to be completely attracted to her. This apparent conflict was making me sick because I felt I wasn't being fair to her because she didn't know what my conflict was about. I believed I had hurt her and in the process had allowed her to think or believe she wasn't attractive enough - which was really unfair to her because she is gorgeous, and a spectacular woman with a phenomenal personality. The problem, however, was not her. It had nothing to do with her. It was me. And, I was too much of a coward to come out of the closet and man up to tell her the truth, or to inform her exactly what I was dealing with.

So, after going back and forth about telling her and mustering up the courage to say something, I decided to tell her exactly what I was dealing with by being authentic and laying out the whole truth. She didn't have a clue as to how much work I had done, including attending a Journey into Manhood (JiM) weekend. When I decided to go to JiM, I lied by telling her I was visiting a sick uncle in Florida. I felt bad about not telling her the truth, but I was afraid of losing her if I did so, especially because I have never felt so comfortable with a woman in my life as I do with her. Anyway, after thinking through it all day Friday, I finally got the courage to call her that night and tell her there was something I need to share with her. I finally concluded that she had the right to either accept me as I am or to walk away from me. When I told her we needed to talk,

she asked “what is it??” I said that it had something to do with things I had previously shared with her, but I felt it was necessary to be clearer and more authentic in my explanation. She said, “Absolutely, sure. Let's plan a time.”

The time we planned was Sunday night at 8 PM. So, imagine the fear and anxiety I felt for the entire weekend. In any event, I picked her up for our dinner date at a restaurant. I was so nervous throughout dinner that I don't remember if I had any appetite. I just couldn't eat much, obviously because of all the pressure, stress, and anxiety I felt. During dinner, I could not speak about my SSA and made lots of small talk.

After eating, we went outside and sat in the car. I tried to start explaining but said I needed to first check something on my phone. I went online to ask advice from a close JiM brother. He was really, really nice, and gave me great advice:

He said “Begin your story by telling her your father passed away at such young age, and go from there.” While that made sense, I knew it would be difficult. I told him, “It's hard bro!” He replied, “I know it's hard; it was hard for me to tell the woman I loved, but believe me, it was worth it.” I said “OK, but given her and my common conservative Moslem culture, I hear the words you are telling me, but emotionally I am a wreck! What will I do if she rejects me?” He responded, “Trust me. I've been there. After you tell her, all your anxieties, fears, and shame will be gone. She is going to love you even more.” I was like “OK, but I'm not sure how she is going to understand this.” Lastly, he said, “Mohamed - do it bro , or if you think you are not ready, you can wait until you are. Being authentic is the key to a successful marriage.”

At this point I realized that if I don't tell her this by tonight, it would be tough for me to live with myself and go to work tomorrow. So I decided to go for it and let my friend go to bed. Having summoned up my courage, I turned to face her to start the conversation. At that point she received a cell phone call from her cousin and started chatting with her. She was oblivious to my emotional state. I was feeling very vulnerable. I was hoping that she would be fully present with me, but she clearly was not. I became anxious and annoyed as she continued chatting with her cousin.

Getting even more annoyed and agitated, I told myself the following story: She was enjoying my pain, saw how vulnerable I was but didn't give a damn about me and was taking advantage of my vulnerability! That was all story and rationalizations and had no logic. In fact, it was not true. Nevertheless, I started driving back home annoyed and, I believe, visibly angry. She got off the phone as we merged into the freeway, and told me, “ O h that was my cousin who had something important to tell me.” All I could think to myself was, “ L ike I didn't have something important to say that I've been fretting about all weekend ! ”

Then when she asked me to tell her the story, I said we would talk about it. However, at this point, I'm like annoyed even more and no longer felt ready to tell her. And so I said, “I really don't have a story to tell.” She responded, “Oh, OK cool!” LOL! [Lough out loud]

So, I kept driving silently. Neither of us said anything. I was completely shut down emotionally. We made it home safely but I didn't even park my car. She got out of the car quickly, and as she was getting out of the car, she said “ Good night, baby. I hope you have a good night 's sleep.” I answered, “OK, thanks. Bye.”

I left angry and sad, and certainly depressed. I just parked nearby and sat in my car clueless about what to do. After a while, I started checking things on my phone. While in sitting in the car releasing my sadness, she texted me and asked, “Honey, are you... OK? You were OK before, and then all of a sudden, you shut down emotionally. Is there something I said that bothered you???”

At that point, I texted her to tell her exactly how I felt, that I had taken her to dinner to tell her something important about how I felt, but when I was about to start I told myself a story that she saw her conversation with her cousin as being more important than what I wanted to say. She apologized and asked if I could come back to her house to pick her up so that we could talk about it further and determine how we could work it out. She did not want us to go to our separate homes angry at each other so I went and picked her up. This time, however, I had an infusion of courage.

I opened up to her by starting with my dad and explained all the things I missed from him and how his absence affected my life. I followed up by showing her the People Can Change website and the video on it explaining the Journey Into Manhood weekends. As I watched the video with her, I began shedding tears. She hugged me as she seemed to understand what I was going through. She wiped the tears off my eyes with her bare hands and looked straight at me and said, “You will be OK. I'm here for you, honey, and I will pray for you, for your healing.” She continued, “Don't be sad sweetheart, you have my love, and support. Don't lose hope. We are in this together!”

She was so loving and accepting. I realized how much I loved her and how much she loved me. My core emotion moved from sadness to incredible joy. The ability to be honest, open and authentic put me into such a joyful state, one that is difficult to explain. She asked questions, showing that she understood more than I had thought possible; I answered honestly. She gave me advice, and repeated over and over how her love for me did not change one bit. In fact, she said because I was able to reveal to her my inner self, her love for me was stronger than it had ever been. She now understood certain things about me that puzzled her before.

We talked about what to do. I told her about all the work I had therapeutically done and how I wanted to keep working on my journey over the next 6 months so that when we get married I would be the kind of man who could be present for her emotionally, spiritually, and economically. She replied that as far as she is concerned, she is ready for us to get married anytime I feel ready, and then said ... “ even if it's tonight.”

She is an amazing woman. That is all I can say. After being so candid and authentic, I felt such a weight off on my shoulders. In return, she expressed how much more confident she was in me as a person and as her future husband. She said that my vulnerability allowed her to express her love for me even more!!

After I took her back home, we kept texting each other back and forth. I could not believe how she texted me all these loving text messages such as “Just because your sexual attractions changed doesn't change how I see you,” or “I love you, and you are my joy and my life. I would never trade you for anything else or for anyone else in this world!” Sentiments like that made me just break into tears! She is just amazing. I was so wrong to think she wouldn't understand what I was going through. She did, and she accepts me just as I am today!

I told her I wanted her to join me on my journey. I want her to be part of my life, and to be my loving wife - one who sees my shadows, and accepts me just as I am.

Going through this experience took a lot out of me. The courage to show my true feelings really took a lot of guts. I could not have done this without support from all of my fellow journeyers, many of whom I met at the JiM weekend. Without such a support network, I would never have gotten the courage to open up to my girlfriend and to know that she and I can now plan our marriage without my “stuff” interfering. I can't be a happier man than I am right now. I am so grateful to all of you who supported me, and especially my brother who really encouraged me by texting me the advice to start with my father. He was there when I needed him. I'm also very grateful to God who enabled and empowered me to do the work I needed to do to be ready for the lovely woman who He knew would be my perfect mate. Thanks to all who helped me on this journey. I eagerly await our marriage and to live in harmony with my loving wife in the manner God intended for us!