

He's Losing Weight.

I Can't Stand It.

What happens when half a couple starts getting fit alone?

BY PAULA DERROW

I AWOKE TO the sounds of my guy moaning and panting. With one eye, I glanced at the clock: 6 a.m. I let out a moan myself. It used to be that Randy, naturally an early bird, would humor me, lingering in bed so we could snuggle, have pillow talk (and sex), then drift off again, intertwined. Now, he spends mornings doing an intensive strength workout—a CrossFit of his own making—and follows a modified fasting plan, skipping breakfast and avoiding carbs at dinner in an attempt to shed some extra flab. The panting is not his hot breath in my ear but his efforts as he executes a series of bicep curls and bench presses from our coffee table.

He's not fat—far from it—but he is 10 pounds heavier than he was when we met. I've also put on pounds since we got together. And I know I could join in his program. But right now, the only willpower I have is sticking to just one bowl of ice cream for dessert. I counted reps and calories for months before our wedding, and I know how much mental and physical energy it takes. These days, I'm more excited about spending my juice on something other than getting up at 6 a.m. to sweat, things like my new business and studying Italian (I've always wanted to learn).

Still, burrowing in bed with my cat is not nearly as fun without my husband's warm body by my side. Even though the changes Randy is making are positive ones, they've thrown off a routine that I'd come to love. I miss our habit of being "bad" together and sleeping late. I also feel less connected to him emotionally now that we don't have our unguarded, dreamy morning conversations.

It could be worse. At least my dieting mate doesn't ask me to make sure he's staying the course or interfere with my food choices,

like other guys I've dated. One ex, an avid runner, announced, "I want to be gaunt," then promptly cleared our kitchen of any junk food. No wonder we broke up. "When one partner asks the other to play a major role in weight loss, the dynamic can get tricky," confirms Alexis Conason, a research associate in the division of endocrinology, diabetes, and nutrition at Mount Sinai St. Luke's Hospital. "If the dieter says, 'Don't let me have any bread,' then when he reaches for a roll and his wife says, 'You're on a diet!'—well, that's a fight brewing. It can lead to negative emotions like shame and guilt."

I don't feel shame about my weight...but I do feel insecure. I watch Randy's body get leaner and more chiseled as mine grows rounder, and I worry that the slimmer he gets, the less he'll want me. He doesn't say anything outright. Still, I can't stop wondering if he disapproves when I help myself to seconds of the healthy dinner he's cooked. Maybe, if I'm honest, I'm testing my newish husband to see if he'll still love and appreciate me with some extra cushion. Maybe I'm testing myself—can I not obsess about weight and make peace with my body, imperfect as it is?

Sometimes, I find myself trying to sabotage his efforts. "I'm craving pasta tonight—what about you?" I'll say sweetly...or not so sweetly. Then I kick myself a little, both for my own insecurity and for not being the supportive spouse I always thought I would be.

On a recent vacation, I was hopeful Randy would ease up on his regimen. And he did. We spent a week drinking cocktails, indulging in lobster rolls, and relaxing on the beach. Weirdly though, his joining me in my slightly gluttonous ways wasn't as satisfying as I'd expected. (Although I was happy about the resumption of morning sex.) I couldn't help but notice how crestfallen he was when he got on the scale back home. "I've gained

weight," he said, and I felt a stab of guilt and disappointment. I hadn't exactly been a nurturing partner—maybe even the opposite. So I gave him a hug, told him I knew he could get back in the groove, and realized that I truly hoped he would.

And he did, the very next morning, taking up his floor routine with renewed fervor. Listening to him panting away in the other room, I snuggled deeper into our still-warm bed and felt proud of him. My husband isn't a quitter, a fact that bodes well for his health and longevity. And for our relationship too. ■

"MAYBE I'M TESTING MYSELF—CAN I NOT OBSESS ABOUT WEIGHT AND MAKE PEACE WITH MY BODY, IMPERFECT AS IT IS?"

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR GUY IS ON A LOSING STREAK

- 1. Appreciate his body.** It's natural to be worried that your newly muscular BF will be more attractive to other women. Still, let him know how hot you think he is. "If he looks amazing, what better person to hear that from than you?" says Ramani Durvasula, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Los Angeles.
- 2. Watch your language.** Your cheerleading can be misinterpreted. You say, "A diet is a great idea!" and he hears, "You do need to lose weight." Put dieting in the context of health, and acknowledge how tough it can be, suggests Durvasula. Ask, "How can I help?"
- 3. Don't be his mom.** "It can be easy to monitor your partner, saying, 'Did you exercise? Should you eat that?'" says Leslie Heinberg, PhD, of the Cleveland Clinic. "That sets up a parent-child relationship." Instead, suggest you try that new vegan place or run a 5K together.
- 4. Be aware of your feelings.** Ask yourself: Am I unhappy? Do I want to change my body? Remind yourself of what getting healthy can mean (more energy and confidence). Or, says health coach Debi Silber, "You may realize, I'm fine the way I am. And that's okay."

FROM LEFT: STUDIO FIRMA/STOCKSY; GETTY IMAGES.