

He Slept With Someone Else Before We Were Exclusive – 7 Experts Share Their Best Tips + Insights

by [Rachel Armstrong](#) – Psy.D., [Erica Blystone](#) – LCSW, [Samantha Ricard](#) – MS, MFTC, [Michelle Henderson](#) – MA, LMHC, [Sally LeBoy](#) – MFT, [Mary Rizk](#) – B.A., M.A., M.Ed., [Anita Gadhia-Smith](#) – PsyD, LCSW-C, LICSW

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and the people you allow in it.”**

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Mary Rizk



Sally LeBoy



Anita Gadhia-Smith



Samantha Ricard



Michelle Henderson



Rachel Armstrong



Erica Blystone

Follow the below suggestions



Some would say that if you weren't "exclusive" at the time he had sex with another woman, then what's the problem? He wasn't really being unfaithful, was he? Besides, they might add, isn't it what happens from here on in that matters?

However, I sense that you have a deeper concern about him and that your concern goes to the question of trust. You are not confident that he is as committed to you as you are to him. And you wonder if you can trust him to be faithful to you both physically and emotionally even though you now are officially a couple.

So what do you do with your doubts and fears? Here are some suggestions:

Face Your Fears – Talk to Him

Perhaps it's time to face your doubts and fears and engage in an open and honest discussion with him. During your discussion, I would encourage you to:

- **Be open about your concern** about his sleeping with another woman while you were dating.
- **Ask him what that relationship meant to him.** Ask him what made it okay for him to do this? Listen to his response with care and respect.
- **Tell him what exclusivity in a relationship means to you.** Be specific. Include your expectations of him and what he can expect from *you* in terms of exclusivity.
- **Ask him what exclusivity means to him.** Ask him how he defines exclusivity and ask whether it's important to him or not. Specifically, ask what you can expect from him in terms of exclusivity now and into the future. Listen respectfully to his response.
- **Find common ground.** If possible, reach an agreement about the meaning exclusivity in your relationship and mutually commit to go forward on that basis. And remember, you don't have to sacrifice your values or abandon your needs just to get an agreement.

- **Call time out if no agreement can be made or you still have doubts.** This might be good time to get professional help jointly and/or separately before getting back together.

Take It One Step At a Time

If you are able to reach a mutual understanding about commitment and faithfulness in your relationship then great! But take things slowly, meaning take time to really get to know each other. Experiencing each other as you navigate varied and challenging situations over a period of time will tell you a lot about each other. During this time, you will not be scrutinizing his every move nor should you be policing him.

Trust Yourself and Your Intuition

While you are getting to know each other more deeply, you will begin to develop a sense of your man and his character. Listen to what your inner voice – your intuition — tells you about him. In my experience, my intuition whispers to me, it doesn't scream. When something is "off", my intuition may even express itself as a subtle feeling of unease. If I ignore it, it is usually at my own peril.

So, consider how your intuition speaks to you about your man and your relationship. Don't ignore or rationalize away any warning signals.

Mary Rizk, Transformative Coach, B.A., M.A., M.Ed. – www.maryrizk.com

Be explicit about your expectations



I suppose there are different ways to define the boundaries around a relationship, including the expectation for exclusivity.

When should a relationship become exclusive? Not everyone will agree on this. That's why it's so important to be truthful. If you are seeing someone and assuming that he isn't seeing anyone else, the two of you will be playing by different rules.

That's not fair. The boundaries inform the level of commitment the partners have for each other and for the relationship. If he is seeing other women (or you are seeing other men), your expectations will be different than if it's understood that your relationship is exclusive.

Most of the time exclusivity is implied, probably by the frequency with which you engage with one another and also by the perception of the depth of the connection.

You really shouldn't need to spell it out.

That being said, it's still a good idea to be explicit about your expectations.

That's how you'll know if you are both on the same page. Having that information allows you to manage your level of investment in the relationship. There is also your health to consider. There are obvious risks if you are having sex with someone who is having sex with other people.

I think it's unusual for partners to be in on very different pages about whether or not they are exclusive.

You have to be truthful with yourself.

Do you want this relationship so much so much that you'll deceive yourself into thinking there is more there than there actually is? What you feel and want may not be the same as what he feels and wants.

People commit at different paces.

You may be ready earlier than he is but that doesn't mean that he won't get there. You just really need to know so you won't get blindsided. And when you are sure about the relationship including a commitment to exclusivity, tell him. If he can't make that kind of commitment, he may not be the one for you.

Sally LeBoy, MFT – www.sallyleboymft.com

If it all possible, give him the benefit of the doubt and base your assessment on where you are now, rather than on things that have happened in the past



If the person you are dating slept with someone else after you started dating, but before you became exclusive, you may feel distressed.

Ask yourself exactly what your concerns are:

- Are you concerned that he may do this again in the future and cannot be trusted?
- Are you concerned that he is dishonest?
- Did you and he have a different understanding about where you were in the relationship?

Once you understand the exact nature of your own feelings, then you can decide whether or not you can proceed in the relationship.

If you had an open relationship, and it was fair for him to be involved with others, you may be able to put this behind you and move on to better things.

If you had a different understanding of where you were in the relationship, it may take some time for you to resolve your trust issues and to be able to continue to move forward with him. Try not to let your past emotional issues contaminate the present.

If it all possible, give him the benefit of the doubt and base your assessment on where you are now, rather than on things that have happened in the past.

The formation of a bond in a relationship takes time and happens very slowly. We cannot always expect people to be all in the minute we are.

Talk to your partner about what has happened, and see if you can come to a mutual understanding and resolution of this issue.

As long as it is not continuing, there is no reason that you cannot move forward and continue to build a long lasting and healthy relationship.

Anita Gadhia-Smith, PsyD, LCSW-C, LICSW – www.drgadhiasmith.com

Follow the below 4 tips



So you and your beau are having a harmless conversation and he discloses that he has slept with other women before you. It's a hard pill to swallow, but nothing you haven't experienced before... until you do some detective work and put together that you two were pretty serious (even if not exclusive) at the time he chose to sleep with someone else. Ouch!

In this moment, you have the choice to either *react* or *respond*.

A *reaction* may look like verbally expressing your emotions in full force. You probably want to make him feel as awful as you do right now! If you have no desire to continue the relationship, this option may feel the most satisfying in the moment.

However, if you want the chance to reach a resolve, *responding* may be a more productive choice.

To respond, you would...

1. **Identify your emotions.** It's likely you may feel angry or betrayed. That's okay! If you can, explore those deeper. You may find that you feel inadequate, confused, and maybe even jealous.
2. **Determine what you would like to get out of a conversation with your partner.** An apology? Clarity? Expectations and boundaries for the future? A break up?
3. **Find your calm and express your need to have a conversation.** It may look something like this: "I'd like to talk about the information you shared with me. I felt inadequate and confused when you told me you had slept with someone else. I'm hoping we can talk more about it to figure out our boundaries. Would now be a good time for that?"
4. **Keep your sights set on your end goal.** Take breaks during the conversation if you need to in order to keep a level head. Remember, your

goal isn't to convince your partner he hurt you, but to understand what happened and protect your relationship from that same hurt in the future.

If this is your first argument, it will likely lay out the foundation for how the two of you will handle conflict in the future.

If it is one of many and you're still in the early stages of your relationship, consider where your trust stands with your partner. If you find it slipping away with each bit of information you uncover, it might be best to cut things off before you get too invested.

Although it hurts, your energy is better focused on someone that will also make you a priority.

Samantha Ricard, MS, MFTC – www.ricardcounseling.com

Follow the below 3 tips



Ouch. It hurts when you get blind-sided by the news that he slept with someone else when you weren't expecting it. No matter how much you might try to rationalize to yourself why it isn't "that big of a deal" because you weren't exclusive, it doesn't diminish the hurt and mis-trust you may now feel moving forward after receiving news like this.

Do the below three things to help you decide what happens next:

1. First things first: Be safe.

Yes, these are the uncomfortable conversations no one wants to have, but you have a right to know some details. Did they use protection? Has he been tested for STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) since they slept together? Do you need to get tested now if he hasn't been?

Every time a new sexual partner is introduced to the mix, it's important to make sure both of you have a clean bill of health. Having this conversation will also tell you how open and willing he is to talk about what happened. If he wants to brush it under the rug, that's a red flag.

2. Ask yourself why you feel hurt.

When I found myself in this position with a guy (years ago!), I was hurt because he had slept with a girl who was a close friend of mine. I realized that even though it would have still been hard if he had slept with anyone (because I really wanted us to start dating!), what was really getting under my skin was WHO he had slept with.

Take a deeper look at this for yourself.

Are you hurt because of how he met this girl? Who she is? Because they do/don't have a history together? Because of how you found out (especially if he didn't tell you)? Because you didn't find out right away?

Because he didn't think it was a big deal? I could go on and on with potential questions to ask yourself, but really dig into why this hurts. Talking about it with your therapist could help you figure this out if you have a therapist you're working with.

3. Forgive or move on.

Forgiveness is no joke and the only way to move forward with him is to forgive him for sleeping with her. It can be all too easy here to get caught up on what other people may say. He may say that it doesn't matter because he didn't actually have feelings for her. Your friends may say this happens "all the time."

All that matters is for you to pay attention to how YOU feel.

You may find that after you talk to him about it and pinpoint the real reason why it hurt that you can move forward or you may find that this is a dealbreaker. Either way, take some time to journal (if you find that helpful) and think about it on your own before making a choice.

Michelle Henderson, MA, LMHC – www.nextchapter-counseling.com

Ask yourself the below questions and don't be afraid to talk about how you feel with your partner



Trust in a relationship is key.

Once you decide to be exclusive with a man, it can be difficult to find out that he was intimate with another woman while you two had dated. If your partner has let you know about this, value that he was honest with you.

If you asked to know more about the time you dated, and then you got this answer, see if you can ask more that will help you understand his experience.

- Did you feel misled?
- Did you feel less than?
- Did you feel betrayed?
- Did you feel devalued?

Share how it makes you feel and see how he can validate your feelings and be supportive.

Let this become a starting point to talk about each of your own feelings about sex and intimacy. This can be a great place to learn more about your man's ways of giving and receiving love.

Not all people see sex as intimacy if it's not with someone they are in a committed relationship with.

It can just be about fun consensual exploration in dating. It's okay if two people view sex differently but be clear about how you view it and how you want to move forward with sex and intimacy in your relationship.

Don't be afraid to talk about how you feel with your partner.

Remember that honesty in this conversation will get you much further along in feeling heard and respected as you grow your relationship.

Rachel Armstrong, Psy.D. – www.rachelarmstrongpsyd.com

Follow the below 4 tips



I read Twilight for clinical reasons, after numerous clients lamented the fictitiousness of Edward Cullen and unfavorably compared their husbands to him.

What was it about that pale stalker that reframed their husband as a selfish dud?

Sure, getting the entire house cleaned in the three minutes since hearing you leave the grocery store a mile away, then zipping out to the garage to carry everything in before you ask is great, but can't be the whole story.

Another characteristic of this particular vampire is he never experienced lust or love for anyone before Bella, and never would. Talk about feeling special.

Sadly, this characteristic doesn't translate to humans.

We are capable of experiencing attraction or feelings of love for a number of people throughout our lives, in varying flavors and degrees. Phew!

Could you imagine how daunting it would be to have to find the one person in the entire world you could connect with romantically? Evolutionarily it would never work – we'd die out. People are hard-wired to connect with others, emotionally and physically. This is healthy and normal.

It is also normal to sometimes feel bad about it. So, what to do?

1. Label your feeling.

What kind of "bad" do you feel? Worried? Angry? Sad? The more specifically you know what you feel, the more effectively you can resolve or tolerate it.

2. Identify the thought leading to that feeling.

Anxiety might be coming from something like, “Was she more fun than I am?” while anger would stem from, “What a jerk! I was saying no to other men!” Sadness would be the result of thoughts like, “I guess he’s not that into me.”

3. Rationally challenge that thought.

That anxious thought could be challenged with, “I know I’m fun, and a whole lot more!” the anger thought with, “To be fair, we hadn’t had the exclusivity discussion yet.” The assumption that he’s not into you could be debunked with listing the evidence he is.

4. Check it out if it’s not resolved.

Sometimes rational challenging and a bit of time is all we need. But if not, check out your interpretations with your partner by giving them the whole story: what you *feel* about a *specific thing* they did because of the *story you told yourself*.

- “I feel worried knowing you slept with her when we were dating because the story I tell myself is you still like her more.”
- “I feel angry you slept with someone when we were dating because the story I told myself is it’s unfair, since I wasn’t.”
- “I felt sad that you were with someone else after we’d met because the story I tell myself is if you were really into me, you wouldn’t have wanted to.”

***The story I tell myself* is a magic phrase because it shows willingness to be vulnerable, open-mindedness that your interpretation might be incorrect, and an interest in hearing their side of the story.**

Team skills even Bella and Edward could use.

Erica Blystone, LCSW – www.wakeadultcounseling.com

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