

PART-TIME WIFE:

WOMEN WHO PARTY *without* THEIR WEDDING RINGS



Would you pretend to be single on a night out with the girls?

Is it harmless fun or a slippery slide towards divorce when women go out sans wedding band? *Cosmo* explores this new trend...

appearing to be any other night out, Sasha*, 28, and her four girlfriends are sipping a glass of wine each and chatting excitedly about their love-lives, dramas at work and the latest family issues. There aren't any wedding bands at the table, yet two of the girls are married – and both chose to remove their rings for the night.

"When I don't wear my ring and a guy comes up to have a chat with me, it's empowering," says Sasha, one of the girls who goes ring-free. "I never feel guilty because cheating is out of the question and I know my act is absolutely harmless. Who doesn't like getting attention?"

So, if you're just after a bit of male flirtation – and you're sure you're not going to cheat – is a husband-free night completely innocent? Or could it be more damaging than you think?

Single-minded

Kylie Dunjey, from Relationships Australia, says a wedding ring is the only physical symbol of matrimony and its removal can mean an array of things. "When the ring comes off, it's almost like you're entering the rules of the game that seem to be active in online chat rooms. You depart from reality and responsibilities. It's a form of escapism," she says.

If, by removing your wedding ring, you're hoping to inject some adventure into your life, Dunjey says there are many other ways to get it – which don't involve pretending you're single. "This could be a sign that you miss your single life, the freedom and unaccountability," she says. "You need to find a way to include those aspects in your married life." If you think that excitement is missing from your relationship, do something adventurous with your partner, she says. Surprise him with a voucher for skydiving, enrol in a tantric sex class, book a weekend

away at the very last minute, or splurge on super-sexy lingerie. You'll get a rush of excitement knowing that it's unexpected and you can both enjoy the outcome.

Feelgood fun

For Kay, 25, temporarily removing her ring isn't so much about excitement as it is about her self-esteem. Her bare finger attracts more male attention than usual and her confidence gets a workout. "I don't go looking for a hookup, but it's a great way to test whether I still have it in me or not," she says. "Either way, I still know that I have someone to come home to."

An innocent flirt might make you feel good, but psychologist Thomas Clifopoulos says that looking for other men to make you feel good about yourself could be a warning sign. "Yes, there's freedom in taking the ring off and enjoying the feeling of 'I'm not tied down tonight', without being tagged as an unfaithful partner," he admits. But be warned: needing validation from other men could mean "you're either unsatisfied or things aren't being met, sexually or emotionally, by your husband".

What wives are missing out on

The married women we spoke to say the things they miss most about being single are...

- Decoding text messages from men and coming up with the perfect response.
- Telling juicy (and sometimes dirty) hookup stories over Sunday brunch with their girlfriends.
- The butterflies, anticipation and excitement of a new crush.
- Not having to tell anyone where they're going or when they'll be arriving home.

One of the girls

When Alice, 24, got married, she worried that her group of friends looked at her in a different light. "They didn't bother seeing me anymore and assumed that my life revolved around my husband," she says. By going out sans wedding ring, she feels more included in her group of single friends. "I miss being silly with them, and if pretending to be 'single' for a night changes that, then why not?" she says.

Dunjey believes that, sometimes, sisterhood can be of more value than a gold band. "If her mind says she's no less faithful, and if [removing her ring] is only adding excitement to her relationship with the girls, then that would act on her self-esteem in a very positive way," she says. "But her stand on commitment and fidelity needs to have a solid grounding."

Double standard

However, what if it were their husbands who were partying without their rings? Sasha says flirting isn't any competition for her relationship and she wouldn't hold it against her husband if he did the same. "We both know the intentions are right," she says. "We're just adding some spice into an innocent night out with friends."

Before you hit the bars without your wedding ring, there are things to consider. Clifopoulos advises being honest about your intentions, or you risk hurting the man you pledged your love to. "To curb a volatile reaction from him, you'd have to explain calmly as to why you're doing it," he says, adding that even if you can conduct a rational discussion, it would still be challenging to prove the innocence of it.

Dunjey advises asking yourself an important question before doing anything risky: will my actions clash with my morals and values when it comes to trust and honesty? "It's similar to tapping into porn or substances – you do it once and it can get addictive," she explains. "Ask yourself: is this going to be detrimental to my relationship?" And if a resounding "no" doesn't come back to you instantly, you might just want to leave that ring right where it is: on your finger, not in your pocket. **Shitika Anand** □

Tweet your opinion @CosmopolitanAU #cosmopart-timewife

*ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED. URBANLIPCOM/SNAPPER MEDIA