



In more than one of my classes this last week the question of boundaries and attraction has come up. It is true that whether a person is single, married, or celibate, we never stop experiencing attraction to other people. Attractions are completely natural and testament that as humans we are disposed toward being in relationship. What matters, though, is how we deal with those feelings of attraction.

Joshua and I have talked about this a good deal. In our 15 years of married life we have both been attracted to other people more than once. Sometimes it is a passing, in-the-moment attraction – like acknowledging that certain athletes are just plain beautiful people in the prime of their physical lives. Other times we become aware of attraction that one of us is experiencing toward someone we work with or come into contact with in an ongoing way. These are, of course, attractions that require more careful attention.

In either case, our approach to navigating attraction is more or less the same. There are elements to navigating it between us and navigating with others. Between us, the first and most essential step is always acknowledging outside attractions to one another. From our point of view, any attraction to another person that either of us is experiencing needs to be brought up and on the table between us. We cannot allow anything to remain hidden in this regard. The few times this has come up for us, one of us usually mentions that we have a certain attraction. The other might ask a couple of clarifying questions and we might have some brief conversation about it. This usually finishes up with the other one of us expressing gratitude for bringing it up, asking if there is anything we can do to make navigating the situation easier, and possibly ending in some good-natured joking about it. In subsequent weeks or months, one of us might bring it up again just to check in about how it is going. But the key is that the topic is always fair game and on the table for discussion.

To others we do not acknowledge the attraction. This is the stuff of our inner-most circle of intimacy and belongs squarely between us and no one else. Additionally we do not allow feelings of attraction to inform the way we behave in any way other than to be cautious. We pay close attention to our interactions and

motivations: how much time we spend with the person? How much interaction is in a group setting or isolated? How do we use eye contact, physical contact, and humor?

I once heard an evangelical pastor speak about how his relationship with his wife informs how he behaves personally and professionally. Their marriage is inextricably part of his identity at all times. So even when he is on the other side of the country on a speaking engagement, he is still mindful of comporting himself in a way that embodies that fact.

I think the same holds true for navigating attractions as a married person. Always and everywhere, I am Joshua's wife. Attraction is natural and usually unexpected. There is nothing right or wrong with feelings of attraction, just what we choose to do with them.