Is it ever OK to snoop in a relationship?

Dorothy Horton, PsyD, answers your questions in her latest Ask Doctor Dee column.

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Q: Is it ever OK to snoop in a relationship?

A: Although many people are guilty of snooping at one time or another, this breach of trust can doom relationships in a heartbeat. Worse still, the sneaky act can be extremely dangerous if a partner takes exception to it and reacts in anger.

Snooping is often triggered by the suspicion that a partner may be cheating. When we confront a significant other with questions about his or her fidelity and our fears remain, snooping can seem like a logical next step because we feel justified in doing detective work to learn the truth. But snooping can become a monstrous problem because distrust in a relationship can chip away at its foundation.

In no time, those who snoop may find themselves spying on their partner. This behavior can become addictive, and snoopers may find themselves lying to hide their own shady behavior, such as checking loved ones' computers or smartphones for damning emails or text messages.

Additionally, snooping can snowball, leading one partner to go all out to discover the worst about the other.

In a relationship, it's always better to express your concerns and fears instead of sneaking around. But if you've lost trust in your partner, you might have to decide whether to stay or go.

Finally, if your sanity or safety is at stake, snooping is not the answer; leaving is.

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