

Sex AND THE NOT SO SINGLE GIRL

Aisle be fine, thanks

Jo Usmar is OK with not being married. No, seriously

No, I'm not married; I snarled, snatching my naked left hand away from a woman I'd just met at a friend's party. 'Oh, that's a shame,' she tutted sympathetically before wandering off, leaving me punching the empty air where her smug face had been. *Is it a shame?* I don't think so, but as more and more people insist it is, I'm starting to question myself. When people learn that I've been with my man for six whole years, they immediately raise their 'and you're not married?' eyebrows, provoking a Hulk-style fury in me.

No, we're not married. We're not even engaged. And (prepare the smelling salts) I'm OK with that. We only moved in together nine months ago. And we had to import some industrial-strength Prozac to psych ourselves up for *that*. Not because we didn't want to or felt forced into it, but because things were just so great *not* living together, it made us wonder whether it would all go a bit *The Shining* if we did. (So far, so good, though. The real test will come once we build up an immunity to Prozac.)

But since when has it been acceptable to question a woman's marital status? I don't ask married women if they're pregnant while looking pointedly at their stomachs. Isn't it presumptuous (and prehistoric) to assume that I, as a female in a relationship, automatically *want* to be married and am upset

that I'm not? One day I would actually like to get married, but not because some arsey ring-bearing matrimony merchants made me feel like I had to.

Maybe it's because at 27 (me) and 32 (Ben), we're no longer what my grandad would have termed whippersnappers, as much as I might try to convince everyone I'm down with da kidz. LOL. Or perhaps I'm just noticing it more as lots of Ben's friends *are* getting married and, as the longest-standing girlfriend among his group of mates, I find myself patting them on the back, whispering, 'This one's much better than the last. Well done.'

My dad reassures himself that if we do get married we'll (in his words), 'Bugger off to some beach for a nice quiet do,' but in the current financial climate it'll be Brighton pier in February.

My friends ask what I'd say if Ben did propose. I have no idea. I'd probably be so shocked I'd snort in his face and inhale all the romance out of the room. But according to John Molloy, author of *Why Men Marry Some Women And Not Others* (yes – that's the actual title), I needn't worry: 'The

statistics say most men propose after 22 months. For the next three and a half years, the prospects diminish. After seven years, the likelihood you'll get married is virtually nil! (Heaven forbid I propose or we have a civilised chat about it all.)

So the next time someone looks sad on my behalf when I tell them that I'm not married, I'll inform them that I'm just keeping Ben warm until he meets his future wife, and offer *them* some Prozac.

• Read Jo's Sex And The Not So Single Girl blog at Cosmopolitan.co.uk/blogs

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