

Breanna and her man had been together three years when she made a shock discovery

Breanna Percy, 24, Epping, Vic

# Why I forgave MY MAN'S AFFAIR

**S**crolling through my boyfriend's emails, I was shocked by one. It was from an old flame of his... I wouldn't normally look at Dave's private email account but he'd given me permission to go in and find a receipt for a hotel we had booked.

And there it was, a message from Elaine\*. The words in it sent my heart racing.

*I want to see you again,* she had written.

In that instant I knew – my man was having an affair.

A hot rage was rushing through me as I picked up the phone to call Dave.

'How could you?' I cried, tears streaming down my face. 'Please, let me explain...' he begged, telling me how Elaine had got in touch six months earlier and they'd seen each other a few times since.

It was like a knife to my heart. Just two days earlier Dave and I had been gushing about how in love we were. In spite of everything.

You see, I was still a virgin, even though we had been together for over three years. It wasn't by choice – at 19 I learnt I had a condition called vaginismus. It's an involuntary contraction of the pelvic floor muscles that meant I couldn't use tampons, have a pap smear. It also prevented me from having sex.

While the reaction was physical, the cause was psychological, my doctor told me. Which meant there was no medication to cure it! Dave's warm and loving nature is what attracted me from the start. No-one ever made me laugh like he did. We were soon an item and I introduced Dave to my family.

At first, my vaginismus wasn't an issue, but after some time it started to affect me. Dave and I would sit side by



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Our trip to New York meant the world to me – I could finally be treated

Me and Dave with staff at the Women's Therapy Center



Dave and I are closer than ever

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I was devastated. Would I ever have a relationship?

But when I met Dave in 2010 through work, I was completely honest with him.

'I'm a virgin,' I said, 'and I might always be.'

Dave took the news well. 'Don't worry,' he told me. 'I'll love you no matter what.'

side on the lounge watching a film, content until the storyline heated up. As the couple got romantic, I'd freeze.

Dave never said anything, but I couldn't help thinking that I was somehow *inadequate*.

'If you want someone else, I'll understand,' I'd tell him. 'As long as you're honest.'

if we could talk, I agreed. 'I'm really sorry,' he said. 'I didn't want to hurt you.'

As he took me for a drive, he opened up about how he'd been affected by my condition. He'd wanted to be intimate in other ways, but with me freezing up all the time, he didn't know what to do.

Then, instead of talking about how he felt, he had acted on impulse. 'Let's go on a holiday,' he said, thinking that the break would be good for us.

Booking a trip to Europe, we then had something positive to look forward to. Meanwhile, I started researching my condition in more detail. I found some online forums where women with vaginismus shared their experiences.

I also read about some

who had been successfully treated at the Women's Therapy Center in New York. Telling Dave about it, for the first time I realised I might actually be able to get help for my condition. 'We could even start a family one day,' I sighed. 'Well that's it then,' Dave declared. 'Let's go to New York instead of to Europe.'

But the treatment was going to be expensive – \$11,000! 'I'll get a loan,' Dave declared. 'Whatever it takes!'

When I mentioned it to my mum and dad, they gave me their complete support. 'If you are able to change your flights from Europe to New York, we'll pay for the treatment,' Mum said. So, six months later, we

were nervously boarding a plane to America. Thankfully, as soon as we arrived the therapist put us at ease. Each day we worked through a combination of physical therapy and counselling. It was incredible, by the end of the two weeks things were so different. My condition was overcome. Now I'm sharing my story to raise awareness about vaginismus and help remove the stigma that surrounds it. Hopefully treatment can be more widely available. While Dave's infidelity was a huge challenge, I'm glad we were able to work through it. We've survived so much, and I feel we have a bright future. •

As told to Megan Reynolds

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'But all I want is you,' he'd say, squeezing me tight. I believed him. At least, until I found that message from Elaine... 'We're done,' I told him, heartbroken. But at the same time I knew I didn't want anyone else. I felt so torn. So when Dave asked me

if we could talk, I agreed. 'I'm really sorry,' he said. 'I didn't want to hurt you.'

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\*NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED

Dave Farmer, 28, says

Cheating on Breanna was the worst thing I have ever done and it took a long time to regain her trust and the trust of her family. In hindsight, I realise I should have talked to Breanna about how I felt. Now we talk about everything and we're closer than ever. She's the most beautiful girl in the world to me and I'm very lucky to have her back in my life.

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