

# What's wrong with separate beds?

You might associate sleeping apart with the over-50s. Not so, says 26-year-old *Phoebe Luckhurst*. She explains why a new generation are giving it a go



**T**here is something mercilessly Victorian about the idea of couples who sleep in separate beds. It's fine in your sixties, when the spark might well have gone out, but millennials ought surely to be spooning with co-dependent abandon, spending whole nights curled together like perfect commas, whispering sleepy somethings in each others' ears till dawn.

So perhaps my boyfriend and I are squaring up for disaster. We're 26, and at least a few times a week we retire to separate double beds down the hall from one another.

Evidence suggests we're in the minority among our peers. A recent survey found that 84% of the over-50s said that sleeping apart made "perfect sense", largely because doing so

meant they slept better. What's good for the over-50s, though, is rarely good for those in their twenties. "They're sleeping in separate rooms" is usually waspish code for a relationship in peril. Couples are only supposed to sleep apart after arguments, or if one partner snores like a drill, or if a squirming child has successfully colonised the bed. Right?

Well, for our part, we find there are better reasons than pure necessity. Granted, our situation is odd: we live on the same floor of a four-bedroom house in north London, where the other two rooms are occupied by friends from university. And technically the set-up was by accident, not design: we started going out after he moved in. Consequently, we spend most evenings together, but on a few nights every week, we turn in separately.

Of course, when I have remarked casually about it to friends, some wince. Experts are also sceptical about the practice. "I've heard couples talk about having a hard time finding a way of feeling connected to their partner," says Shirlee Kay, a London-based couples and psychosexual therapist. "Sharing a bed is a symbol of being in a relationship, and it also keeps a couple connected both physically and emotionally."

And so our sleeping arrangements have become the topic of prurient interest. Especially the sex bit. To clarify (some points): there is no "prescribed" routine for our separations — we don't have a shared Google calendar to schedule the bed-sharing nights, nor are the semi-regular separations the result of semi-regular arguments. We've never faced off about it;