

# *The **Sex** Secret*

THE SECRET THAT WILL REVITALIZE  
ANY COUPLE'S LOVEMAKING

DONN R. DAY

*For most of my adult life, I have believed that great sex was about finding the right partner, someone who shared similar likes and dislikes. I now believe something completely different; it's more about being the right person, then finding the right person.*



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*To Erika Youngblood, a co-worker who simply  
said, "You need to write a book."*



# Acknowledgements

Writing a book is not all that dissimilar to raising a child. In fact, it has taken thirty-six years to write this, my first book. No, the actual writing of what is contained in the following pages did not take that long – though at times it may have felt like it – but the lessons I needed to learn, the wisdom I needed to gain, and the idea that I should even put my thoughts in book form, did take that long. It's been quite a journey so far.

Writing a book about sex presents some unique challenges, to say the least. I am proud, yet also disappointed, by what I decided to put down on paper. I'm proud, not only because I believe I have something unique to say on a topic of such importance, but also because I didn't let fear stop me. Telling people you are writing a book on sex is not quite the same as saying you've written a wonderful children's story. On the other hand, I am disappointed because I wish I could have been more forthcoming about certain aspects of the journey that has led me to this point. Sometimes, however, discretion is the better part of valor. I have done my best to balance these two concerns.

I have dedicated this book to a former co-worker, Erika Youngblood, who simply said to me one day that I needed to write a book, after I shared some of my thoughts and ideas that follow in the subsequent pages. Another co-worker, A.G. Melendez, was invaluable as we shared ideas as time allowed.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents, Ellis and Marlys, for their love, support, and encouragement. To my six children, Jocelyn, Aaron, Danielle, Jared, Rachel, and Joel, I love

you more than you could ever know, or I could ever express. You have always been the kind of kids that make parents proud. And to Peggy, the world has never seen a better mother.

I owe a huge thanks to Sue Cox, who not only had the patience to read my life story, but then actually encourage me to write my thoughts in a book. Two other women friends, Sheril Loomis and Diane Stevenson, continue to play a part in my life for which I am eternally grateful.

And to Susan Filyau, you have loved me in a way that most men only dream about. I was the lucky one, the day you walked into my life. It really is possible for best friends to fall in love.





# Introduction

The reason couples struggle in the area of sex is as varied as the couples themselves. In any relationship, the quality, or lack thereof, of a couple's sex life, is as good a barometer of that couple's relationship as any. In other words, a poor sex life usually means a poor relationship. Today women are spending thousands of dollars on the G-shot, and other remedies, as a way to kick-start their diminishing sexual desire. *The Atlantic Monthly* proclaims, "Marriage used to provide access to sex. Now it provides access to celibacy."<sup>1</sup>

While there are many books on the market by marriage counselors and sex therapists designed to help couples recapture some of the magic and passion often experienced in the early days of the relationship, none I have ever read, offer the advice found in the following pages. No, I did not discover this secret in the pages of a book, nor did I hear about it from anyone else. In a way, this secret unfolded before me within the trials and tribulations of my own sex life.

I wish I could say this secret unfolded in one moment of great insight, but in truth, it unfolded through many years of pain, struggle, and tears, as I searched for answers within my own marriage, and the many affairs that took place outside that relationship. In the end, my affairs ended my 26 year relationship with my wife, and I'm not exaggerating when I say, I barely survived the breakup.

Since my divorce over ten years ago, I have talked to as many divorced men and women as I could in order to see if there was a common thread that led to their divorces. And while

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<sup>1</sup> *The Wifely Duty*, Caitlin Flanagan, *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2003

what I found through all those discussions is not the topic of this book, I will say that in every case, their own description of what their married sex life was like, ranged from fair or average on the positive side, to downright dreadful on the negative. I would even go further to say that only one or two people said their sex life had even been average; the rest had a lot of pain associated with sex within their marriage relationship. Not a single man or woman has ever told me that their married sex had been fantastic.

Naturally, it might be tempting to think that since I was talking to divorced men and women, it was only natural that their sex lives had been terrible. However, though most married men and women are reluctant to talk about their sex life, the evidence seems to indicate that many married people are just as unhappy as the divorced men and women I talked to.

“[A]ny efforts to quantify our love lives must be taken with a shaker of salt. The problem, not surprisingly, is that people aren’t very candid about how often they have sex. Who wants to sound like a loser when he’s trying to make a contribution to social science? When pressed, nearly everyone defaults to a respectable ‘once or twice a week,’ a benchmark that probably seeped into our collective consciousness with the 1953 Kinsey Report, a study that’s considered flawed because of its unrepresentative, volunteer sample.

“As a result, we have no idea what’s ‘normal’,” says Pepper Schwartz, a sociologist and author of *Everything You Know About Love and Sex Is Wrong*. Her best guess: three times a week during the first year of marriage, much less over time. When people believe they have

permission to complain, she says, they often admit to having sex less than once a month: “And these are couples who like each other!”<sup>2</sup>

The very fact that you are reading this book probably indicates a level of dissatisfaction with your sex life. That’s okay; you are no different than most people. The question is; what are you going to do about it? For many people, going without sex is the answer they come up with. We even have a name for these couples: DINS, dual income, no sex. Stressed from careers, mortgages, household chores, and especially kids, sex becomes just one more chore on their plate. And it’s a chore that more and more couples are giving up. In fact, because sex becomes indentified as a “chore” in the minds of many couples defines *exactly* what the problem is. After all, who wants or needs one more chore?

Everybody loves a secret. How many secrets, though, have the power to change your life? While a particularly enticing secret might bring a moment’s enjoyment to an otherwise routine day, it’s doubtful if any secret has ever changed your life. However, the secret contained in this book has the power to dramatically change your sex life. I know, because it has profoundly changed mine, and if you apply this secret to your own life, I guarantee it will profoundly change yours.

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<sup>2</sup> *We’re Not In The Mood*, Kathleen Deveny, *Newsweek*, June 30, 2003.



## CHAPTER 1

# Being or Finding

More than nine years ago I met a sex therapist in an online chat room, and over the course of our many talks, she recommended two books on the topic of relationships. One of the books was, *Will Our Love Last?*, by Sam R. Hamburg. Dr. Hamburg is a big believer in finding the right person; someone who is compatible in three major areas: the practical, sexual, and “wavelength.”<sup>3</sup> Hamburg states that we cannot *truly* understand a position different than our own, and what we long for is someone that *gets* us. He might ask; can a liberal Democrat really understand a conservative Republican?

While I certainly do not want to ignore the role that compatibility plays in relationships,<sup>4</sup> it’s essential to recognize that *being* the right person, is even more important than compatibility. Why? For one reason, most couples have more dissimilarities than similarities; opposites do, indeed, attract. A shy person, for example, is often attracted to someone who is more outgoing and social.

A second reason, with both positive and negative outcomes, was something I came to realize when hiring a management team during the years I worked in retail. In several positions I was the General Manager, and had to assemble a team of three or four Assistant Managers. While interviewing for the various positions, I was cognizant of the attributes I was looking for in each person, and these attributes would be dissimilar to my own. The key for an effective team, I believe, is in finding people that complement each other in their differences. There is one

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<sup>3</sup> “Wavelength” covers beliefs such as values, ambitions, and spiritual orientation.

<sup>4</sup> The match-making website *eHarmony* also emphasizes compatibility, utilizing their patented *Compatibility Matching System*.

problem in this method, however, and it's why I think that Dr. Hamburg is so keen on compatibility. A lot of my time, as General Manager, was spent in negotiating disputes within the management team. The reason for this is the same reason so many couples fight; because most people have a hard time accepting someone else's weaknesses. Sure, they want empathy and understanding for their own weaknesses, but find it difficult being empathetic with weaknesses that are different. This is why most marriage counselors emphasize *effective* communication, as perhaps the most basic tool of a harmonious marriage or relationship.

Another nagging question I had while reading Hamburg's book was what if a couple started out being similar in some area, but one person changed over the years, and they ended up being different? In other words, what happens when compatibility becomes incompatibility? For many couples, what happens is the ending of the relationship. The problem with this solution is that when couples split and move on to other partners, they are likely to find themselves in the exact same situation with a new partner. Sure, the issues might be different, but when any two people form a union, there will certainly be issues, as John Ortberg describes with amazing insight in, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*.

In certain stores you will find a section of merchandise available at greatly reduced prices. The tip-off is a particular tag you will see on all the items in that area. Each tag carries the same words: *as is*. This is a euphemistic way of saying, "These are damaged goods." Sometimes they're called *slightly irregular*. The store is issuing you fair warning: "This is the department of Something's-Gone-Wrong.

You're going to find a flaw here: a stain that won't come out; a zipper that won't zip; a button that won't butt – there will be a problem. These items are *not normal*.

"We're not going to tell you where the flaw is. You'll have to look for it.

"But we know it's there. So when you find it – and you will find it – don't come whining and sniveling to us. Because there is a fundamental rule when dealing with merchandise in this corner of the store: No returns. No refunds. No exchanges. If you were looking for perfection, you walked down the wrong aisle. You have received fair warning. If you want this item, there is only one way to obtain it. You must take it *as is*. When you deal with human beings, you have come to the "as-is" corner of the universe. Think for a moment about someone in your life. Maybe the person you know best, love most. That person is *slightly irregular*. That person comes with a little tag: *There's a flaw here. A streak of deception, a cruel tongue, a passive spirit, an out-of-control temper. I'm not going to tell you where it is, but it's there. So when you find it – and you will find it – don't be surprised. If you want to enter a relationship with this model, there is only one way. "As is."*

If you were looking for perfection, you've walked down the wrong aisle.

We are tempted to live under the illusion that somewhere out there are people who are normal. In the movie *As Good As It Gets*, Helen Hunt is wracked by ambivalence toward Jack Nicholson. He is kind and generous to her and her sick son, but he is also agoraphobic, obsessive-



compulsive, and terminally offensive: If rudeness were measured in square miles, he'd be Texas. In desperation, Helen finally cries to her mother: *I just want a normal boyfriend.*

*Oh*, her mother responds in empathy, *everybody wants one of those.*

*There's no such thing, dear.*

When we enter relationships with the illusion that people are normal, we resist the truth that they are not. We enter an endless attempt to fix them, control them, or pretend that they are what they're not. One of the great marks of maturity is to accept the fact that everybody comes "as is."

(Emphasis in original.)

The first step in *being* the right person is to accept others "as is." It's sad that we spend so much time trying to change other people, when often we cannot even change ourselves.

In *Getting the Love You Want*, Harville Hendrix divides marriages into two categories, conscious and unconscious. Hendrix believes that only five percent of all marriages fall into the conscious category. In the book Hendrix shares ten attributes of a conscious marriage, and for present purposes, I want to highlight two of these:

1. *You accept the difficulty of creating a good marriage.* In an unconscious marriage, you believe that the way to have a good marriage is to pick the right partner. In a conscious marriage you realize you have to be the right partner.
2. *You learn to value your partner's needs and wishes as highly as you value your own.* In an unconscious marriage, you assume that

your partner's role in life is to take care of your needs magically. In a conscious marriage, you let go of this narcissistic view and divert more and more of your energy to meeting your partner's needs.

I cannot emphasize enough how these two points form the foundation for an exceptional sexual relationship with your partner. In the next chapter I want to describe how I came to understand why these points were so important, long before I ever read anything by Harville Hendrix.

## Chapter Keys

- Being the right person is even more important than compatibility.
- The first step in being the right person is to accept others “as is.”
- You learn to value your partner's needs and wishes as highly as you value your own.



## CHAPTER 2

# Pain and Struggle

I met the woman that was to become my wife when we were both 22, and we ended up spending the next 26 years together. In all that time, we never had a frank discussion about sex. I don't think we were all that different than most couples in this regard. When we met, Peggy was a virgin, but because I had had a couple of long term (sexual) relationships, I considered myself the expert when it came to sex. It was good that I was an expert, because problems surfaced from the very beginning.

As you can probably guess, I blamed Peggy for most of the sexual problems in our relationship. In my mind, I thought, no one had ever complained before, how could it have been my fault? One thing is certain, once one person blames the other person for their bad sex life, things are bound to go from bad to worse. Yet, because men's egos are so tied to their self-image as sexual lovers, there really was no other possibility that I was willing, or smart enough, to consider. Tell a man he isn't good in bed, and you have just told him he isn't a man. Unfortunately, it took more than 25 years before I was willing to look at other possibilities for our bad sex life. In the meantime, I did what many other unhappy people do in this situation; I looked for different sexual companions.

Over the course of my and Peggy's first 15 years together, I had many different partners, some of which were one night stands, some short term affairs. The sex ranged from bad to excellent, depending on the "compatibility" factor of similar likes and dislikes.

One affair, with Susan, lasted over three years, and she was probably the closest thing to a “soulmate” that I had ever had. Susan liked being with married men, she was with one both before, and after me. I think they provided her the sex and companionship she liked, with an amount of personal freedom she found attractive.

It’s funny where and when “light bulb” experiences sometimes take place. One night, just around the corner from where Peggy and I lived when we had gotten married, I was in a hot tub, naked, with four women, and one other man. Nothing sexual took place; it was more or less normal 1970’s activity in California. Until this night in the hot tub, I had always thought of Susan as the “ideal” partner, something I obviously didn’t feel was true with Peggy. However, on this occasion, I found myself attracted, not to Susan, but to another woman that was there. It was then, at that moment, that I realized that the “problem” wasn’t Peggy, and it wasn’t Susan, it was me. Strange as it might seem, this was the beginning step in whole notion of *being*, rather than *finding*, the right person.

In the book, *Men and Women*, Dr. Larry Crabb’s basic premise is that the core issue at the root of virtually all relationship conflict is selfishness. And what is more selfish than cheating on a partner? For the last ten years of our relationships, I was faithful to Peggy. In many ways, I was trying to make-up for all the things I had done wrong in the first 15 years of our time together. In the end, though, when the truth finally came out regarding my past, our relationship ended. Before it ended, however, some remarkable things began to happen, at least for me.

During the last years of our marriage, I was reading all the relationship books I could find. One day, while browsing through the newspaper, I came across a 10 week (or so) seminar

that was to be given by a husband and wife counseling team, based on the book *Fighting for Your Marriage*, by Howard J. Markman, Scott M. Stanley, and Susan L. Blumberg. I suggested to Peggy that we attend the sessions, and she agreed.

After the series was over, we started seeing the man that led the seminar for private counseling sessions. On the night of the last time we met together, as we were walking out of the office, I noticed a book on the counselor's desk, and I asked about the contents as I picked it up to look at it more closely. The title of the book – now, I believe, out-of-print – was *The Secret Life of the Soul*, by J. Keith Miller, and this book was to have a profound impact on my life.

Miller's central hypothesis is that when kids are young, they think their parents are God-like, and can read their minds. Then one day, something significant takes place; a young kid lies, and lo and behold, his or her parents believe the lie. At that point, for some kids anyway, and quite unconsciously, they begin to form a false personality, one they can present to the world as better, more acceptable, than how they see themselves. This constructed personality is created to prevent one of humankind's greatest fears, rejection.

Around this same time, Peggy started attending another seminar, this one based on addictions. She didn't pressure me into going, but said I could come with her if I wished. On the last night of the seminar, the counselor had a guest speaker, a man who had been a sex addict for all of his adult life. The power in the man's words came from his total and transparent honesty. The man admitted that what finally set him free from his addiction was a full confession, to his wife, about his lifestyle. As he was saying this, two thoughts ran through my mind. "Wow, the things I had done were miniscule compared to this man, and if this man's wife

was able to handle his story, I was sure that my wife could handle mine.” On this second point, I was sadly mistaken.

It’s hard now, looking back ten to twenty years ago, to reconstruct all the things that happened during the final years of my marriage which brought about the changes that led to learning “the sex secret.” As I say in the *Introduction*, this secret unfolded through many years of pain, struggle, and tears, and not in a moment of profound insight. It’s safe to say, however, I would never have learned this secret without a complete life-style change, and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard accurately describes the changes that were taking place in my life:

Life [is] lived on three different planes or stages: the aesthetic stage, the ethical stage, and the religious stage. Man in the aesthetic stage lives life only on the sensual level, a life that is self-and pleasure-centered. This need not be gross hedonism. Man on this level could be very cultivated and even circumspect; but nevertheless his life revolves around himself and those material things – whether sex, art, music, or whatever – that brings him pleasure. The paradox of life on this level is that it leads ultimately to unhappiness. The self-centered, aesthetic man finds no ultimate meaning in life and no true satisfaction. Thus, the aesthetic life leads finally to despair, a sort of sickness with life.

But this is not the end, for only at this point a person is ready to live on the second plane of existence, the ethical plane. The transition to the ethical stage of life is a sort of leap motivated by despair to a higher level, where one affirms trans-personal moral values and guides life by those objective standards. No longer is life lived only for the self and for



pleasure, rather one is constrained to seek the ethical good and to change one's conduct to bring it into conformity with that good.

During the 1980s, I started moving from the aesthetic stage to the ethical stage. I volunteered to work for a crisis hot-line, and when that folded I did a year of counseling in an elementary school program called Project Listen. In this respect, I was becoming less self-centered, and more others-centered. Still, I have no doubt I was doing all these things through my constructed personality, and the biggest changes came when cracks began to show in the image that I had carefully created over the years. Keith Miller describes what was taking place, under my hood, so to speak, in *The Secret Life of the Soul*.

At first glance the soul's spiritual adventure appears to end with its imprisonment and the formation of a constructed personality. It often seems like the compulsive constructed life can't fail to flourish and win big time, sealing the soul forever in an impregnable prison.

But when we live our lives out of touch with reality, sooner or later a subtle spiritual disintegration process begins that quietly and patiently eats at the foundation of all that is unreal. No matter how successful the inauthentic personality may become in the world, eventually, as in bad cement, cracks appear in the foundation and walls of the tallest towers, or most successful personalities, that can be constructed.

As the disintegration process continues unabated, Miller states, "we wind up in a desperate losing struggle to *save* the very things we construct these unreal personalities to get:"

1) intimacy, love, and the connectedness that will overcome our

- basic loneliness and
- 2) the success and self-esteem for which we long to quiet the shamming voices.

For the first half of my marriage I did what I wanted, and didn't care about the consequences, but this process began reversing itself in the second half as I tried to quiet the "shamming" voices through success as a husband and father. The move to a more others-centered way of life was also duplicated in my marriage as I became less Donn-centered, and more Peggy-centered. I was beginning to practice Harville Hendrix's second point: "You learn to value your partner's needs and wishes as highly as you value your own." The move to being more mate-centered was slow, but unstoppable. Just as the destruction of my false personality took over 30 years to complete, even today, more than 20 years since I travelled the route outlined by Kierkegaard above, I still battle my self-centered tendencies.

There was one area, however, where my self-centeredness had a less tenacious hold, and that was in the area of sex. Because of this, and in combination with all the other changes that were taking place in my life, the sex secret began to unfold.

## Chapter Keys

- Once one person blames the other person for their bad sex life, things are bound to go from bad to worse.
- The root of virtually all relationship conflict is selfishness.
- Become less self-centered, and more others-centered.



## CHAPTER 3

# Marriage and Sex

Many marriage therapists, researchers, sexologists, and the like, claim that married's have the best sex, bonded as it were by commitment and monogamy. According to the most reliable surveys, the average married couple has sex six times a month, whereas the average for singles is four times a month.<sup>5</sup> Others in the field, Dr. Phil being just one example, call sexless marriages an "undeniable epidemic," and he further states that 20 to 30 percent of men, and 30 to 50 percent of women, say they have little or no sex drive. Most therapists' believe that sex 10 or fewer times a year constitutes a sexless marriage, and estimates are that this describes roughly 20 percent of all marriages. The difficulty with trying to determine whether or not sexless marriage is really an epidemic is the fact that people are notoriously untruthful when talking about their own sex lives, after all, who wants to portray themselves as a "loser?"

There is a larger, more important point, however, and that's whether or not a couple is having sex once every six months, or six times a week, how does the couple, and especially the higher-sexed partner, feel about the matter? Is sex, or the lack thereof, causing stress within the relationship? If so, this can be an early indication that the marriage may be in trouble.

Anger and resentment are often at the root of many sexless marriages, and it's not uncommon that a couple will start experiencing new and different levels of anger with the introduction of children into the marriage. Even though household burdens are often shared fairly equally before kids, this often changes after the birth of the first child, with women

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<sup>5</sup> The standard of such research is the American Sexual Behavior study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago in 1994.

assuming more household and childrearing tasks. Over time many women begin to feel resentment toward their husbands, and an angry wife will invariably decline the offer of sex. Often, women say that they are just too tired for sex once children are finally asleep for the night.

Husbands, too, are frequently angry because attention once directed by a wife toward her husband, is now, understandably, being directed toward the new infant. Furthermore, many men cannot understand why – although they do far more work around the house than earlier generations of fathers – today’s wives are still not happy with their husband’s involvement with household and childcare duties.

In *The Sex-Starved Marriage*, Michele Weiner Davis describes how a child impacted a couple who came to Davis for therapy.

Tom said that when they first married, he was passionately in love with Debra and found her irresistibly attractive. Their sex life was wonderful, they made love frequently, and he felt extremely close to her. His ability to satisfy Debra sexually made him feel good about himself as a lover and as her life partner. He recalled how their close sexual relationship reverberated throughout the rest of their marriage. They often snuggled on the couch while watching television, held hands when they walked, and kissed each other affectionately. He loved their time together. Tom felt that Debra was his best friend. All that changed after the birth of their first child.

Debra became extremely focused on her new role as mother, and when she wasn’t caring for their baby, she felt fatigued. Sleep, not sex, was the only thing Debra found herself craving. Tom’s need for

companionship and intimacy was not one of Debra's top priorities. In fact, to hear Tom tell it, his needs were not a consideration for Debra at all.

Initially, he spoke to Debra about his hurt with this change in their lives. He told her that he didn't feel important anymore. He wondered why she wasn't into sex. He kept asking, "What's wrong? Did I do something wrong? Aren't you attracted to me anymore?" But because Debra was sleep deprived, hormonally altered, and overworked, she found herself having little compassion for her husband's feelings.

In fact, she commented, "I couldn't believe he was complaining. I had so much to do with very little help from him. I felt like I had *two* babies, not one. It just seemed like he was jealous of our child, and I found that unfathomable. I never thought the man I married would be so selfish. After a day of taking care of our son's physical needs, the last thing I felt like doing was having one more person's needs to think about. I needed to think about me."

As the years passed, Debra's repeated rejections of her husband's advances hurt and angered Tom, and as a result, he stopped investing energy in their marriage. He focused on himself, his work, and his friends. And the more he distanced himself, the less inclined Debra felt to touch or kiss Tom, let alone have sex with him. "After all," she told herself, "why should I have sex when I don't feel close to him at all!"

Now their infrequent sexual encounters, too often tainted by feelings of resentment and hurt, left them both feeling empty.

Advice from marriage counselors has historically tended to focus on the area of communication, but there are signs that this advice is beginning to change. The first change is explained in an article on CNN.

Forget everything you've heard about frankness, sharing your feelings, getting him to express his. New research into the male mind makes it clear that discussion may be the fastest way to shut down communication. (Oh, you noticed that, have you?)

When I first heard about the book, I thought it was a gimmick. *How to Improve Your Marriage Without Talking About It* sounded like a title somebody's prankster husband dreamed up after a rocky couples' therapy session.

When I mentioned it to Hugh, my own husband – who in 22 years of marriage has never once said, "Honey, we need to talk" – his face lit up like the Fourth of July.

Needless to say, I was suspicious. What about the vast repertoire of communication skills women have spent decades perfecting? Were Patricia Love and Steven Stosny, the psychotherapists who co-authored the book, advising us to forget everything we've learned and rethink how we relate to our partners?

The answer is yes – and they're not kidding.



"The number one myth about relationships is that talking helps. The truth is, more often than not, it makes things worse," says Love, a tall, lean redhead with a down-home Texas twang and a generous smile. She is co-founder of the Austin Family Institute and leads workshops around the country when she isn't making television appearances or co-writing books, including the best-selling *Hot Monogamy*.

"Talking about feelings, which is soothing to women, makes men physically uncomfortable," says Stosny, the Maryland-based author of *You Don't Have to Take It Anymore* and an expert on male aggression.

"There's literally more blood flow to their muscles. They get fidgety, and women think they're not listening."

We're relaxing in the sunroom of my house in Washington, D.C., on a golden autumn morning. I learn that it was Stosny's research into the core emotional differences between the sexes that radically altered his thinking, as well as the way he works with clients. When he shared his findings with his friend and colleague Pat Love, they rang true to her, even though they flew in the face of the verbal problem-solving approach she'd been using for 30 years.

Instead of talking, what is the recommended solution?

"It's the connection, stupid!" exclaims Love, quickly adding that it's not me personally she's calling stupid. "Everyone – men, women, myself included – needs to learn that before we can communicate with words, we need to connect nonverbally. We can do that in simple ways, through

touch, sex, doing things together. The deepest moments of intimacy occur when you're not talking."

Stosny puts it this way: "We need to stop trying to assess the bonding verbally and instead let the words come out of the bonding."

Interestingly, he adds, "When couples feel connected, men want to talk more and women need to talk less, so they meet somewhere in the middle."

Perhaps that's why Carol Cassell, a nationally recognized leader in the field of sexuality, wrote a book suggesting that couples *Put Passion First*. Carol writes on her website: "Sexual passion is ultimately the glue that makes a partnership exciting, playful, and helps it stick."

The second reason advice to married couples has changed is highlighted by therapist Michele Weiner Davis, who stresses a "just do it" philosophy when it comes to sex, instead of waiting for the right mood. Radio talk show host, columnist, and author Dennis Prager took up this issue in two columns he wrote in December 2008, commenting:

Why would a loving, wise woman allow mood to determine whether or not she will give her husband one of the most important expressions of love she can show him? What else in life, of such significance, do we allow to be governed by mood?

What if your husband woke up one day and announced that he was not in the mood to go to work? If this happened a few times a year, any wife would have sympathy for her hardworking husband. But what if this happened as often as many wives announce that they are not in the mood

to have sex? Most women would gradually stop respecting and therefore eventually stop loving such a man.

What woman would love a man who was so governed by feelings and moods that he allowed them to determine whether he would do something as important as go to work? Why do we assume that it is terribly irresponsible for a man to refuse to go to work because he is not in the mood, but a woman can – indeed, ought to – refuse sex because she is not in the mood? Why?

This, naturally, rubs some women the wrong way, calling it a form of spousal rape or abuse. On January 7, 2009 Prager had blogger Megan Carpenter on his show where the following exchange took place.

**Dennis:** "I was accused by various sites, all on the ideological left, of advocating marital rape . . . I can usually predict how my words can be distorted . . . but I was wrong [in this case]. The lying about what I said, putting words I never said in quotes as if I said them, was unanticipated. This was a new low for critiques of my work. I decided to have these people on my show because I am curious how their minds work, how they morally can live with themselves after lying about what I write."

"I write that if you love your husband, you will have a better marriage if you don't regularly deny him sex . . . How do you justify your charge that I advocate marital rape?"

**Megan:** "The problem with many of us on the Left by advocating that a woman have marital relations . . . that she should do it whether or not she is in the mood. Rape is defined as a man having sex with an unwilling woman. That unwilling woman should have sex with their husbands. If we're striving for clarity, I would define a woman who is not in the mood as a woman who is not willing to have sex."

Although marital rape<sup>6</sup> is certainly a serious issue and definitely does take place, it's difficult to see how Prager's position can be accused of advocating such a thing. In fact, he does state that a woman's "no" must be honored.

In addition to some therapists (and even Church Leaders<sup>7</sup>) embracing this new philosophy, two recent books have been written on the same topic, *365 Nights*, and *Just Do It*. In reporting about the books, *The Denver Post* made the following observation.

Let's say you and your spouse haven't had sex in so long that you can't remember the last time you did. Not the day. Not the month. Maybe not even the season. Would you look for gratification elsewhere? Would you file for divorce? Or would you turn to your mate and say, "Honey, you know, I've been thinking. Why don't we do it for the next 365 days in a row?" That's more or less what happened to Charla and Brad Muller. And in another example of an erotic adventure supplanting married ennui, a second couple, Annie and Douglas Brown, embarked on a similar, if abbreviated journey: 101 straight days of post-nuptial sex.

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<sup>6</sup> Previous to 1976 States had Martial Rape Exemption, and a married man could not be charged with raping his wife. In 1976 Nebraska became the first state to abolish this exemption, and today marital rape is illegal in every State.

<sup>7</sup> I have seen at least three news articles in the past year about Evangelical Church Pastor's advocating a "just do it" sex philosophy to married couples in their congregation.

Both couples document their exploits in books published this month, the latest entries in what is almost a mini-genre of books offering advice about the "sex-starved marriage."

Even though the "just do it" philosophy can be a bit controversial with some women, there is a very good reason why therapists are jumping on the "just do it" bandwagon, and this was mentioned by both Dennis Prager and *The Denver Post*. First Prager:

In the rest of life, not just in marital sex, it is almost always a poor idea to allow feelings or mood to determine one's behavior. Far wiser is to use behavior to shape one's feelings. Act happy no matter what your mood and you will feel happier. Act loving and you will feel more loving. Act religious, no matter how deep your religious doubts, and you will feel more religious. Act generous even if you have a selfish nature, and you will end with a more a generous nature. With regard to virtually anything in life that is good for us, if we wait until we are in the mood to do it, we will wait too long.

From the *Post*:

But the couples may also be on to something. "There's a strong relationship between rating your marriage as happy and frequency of intercourse," said Tom W. Smith, who conducted the "American Sexual Behavior" study. "What we can't tell you is what the causal relationship is between the two. We don't know whether people who are happy in their marriage have sex more, or whether people who have sex more become happy in their marriages, or a combination of those two."

For a woman married to a man who continually hassles his wife for frequent sex, the “just do it” suggestion can understandably invoke strong negative feelings and emotions. However, a wife who frequently denies her husband sex can also fuel strong negative feelings, as Tom aptly noted above.

## Chapter Keys

- Anger and resentment are often at the root of many sexless marriages.
- The number one myth about relationships is that talking helps.
- Before we can communicate with words, we need to connect nonverbally.
- When couples feel connected, men want to talk more and women need to talk less, so they meet somewhere in the middle.
- There's a strong relationship between rating your marriage as happy and frequency of intercourse.





## CHAPTER 4

# Women and Sex

A while back a woman friend sent me an email with the following joke.

Scientists have discovered a food that diminishes a woman's sex drive by 90%.

It's called a Wedding Cake.

This is not the first time this joke has appeared in my inbox. While the joke is funny, is it also true? In a WebMD feature, Susan Selig writes: “The simplest way to capture the differences between men's and women's sex drives is to consider how you'd answer this test: create a sentence using the words ‘sex’ and ‘love.’ If you're a woman, odds are your sentence goes something like this: ‘When two people understand each other, trust each other, and love each other, then the sex is the best.’ If you're a man, chances are your sentence more closely resembles this: ‘I love sex.’”

It's a stereotype, it's a cliché, and more often than not, it's true.

“We like to think of men having the higher sex drive – it's not *always* true, but more often, it is,” says Eva Ritvo, MD, vice chairman in the department of psychiatry and behavioral science at the Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami.

Each person's sex drive is like an appetite: “Some people spend their whole life in the kitchen and think about food all the time; some people can skip lunch,” says Ritvo, who is also chair of the

department of psychiatry and behavioral medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center, Florida.

“As a rule, men don't like to skip lunch.”

Today, some researchers believe the discrepancy between men's and women's sex drive is primarily biological.

There are strong biological as well as cultural reasons why women may not be as free to pursue sex as men, even in our post-birth control, post-feminist world. In the simplest terms, women may be hard-wired to be cautious about sex because they are the ones who can get pregnant and wind up taking care of the baby.

Males, at least young males, seem more avidly interested in sex in nearly every species in the animal kingdom, because they have everything to gain – disseminating their genetic material – and not much to lose, according to [marriage therapist] Richard Driscoll. "You've seen dogs line up for the female in heat and cats go out in storms to tomcat around," says Driscoll, explaining that because the males of most species invest less in offspring, they're free to pursue opportunities for sex. The female, who will be required to invest more, does well to "go slowly and choose carefully, because she is going to have to put a lot of resources into each offspring." (WebMD)

Family therapist Esther Perel offers another possibility for differing drives between the sexes. “One of the most intriguing obstacles to desire is caretaking. Women today are largely

the caretakers – of the children, the husband, and the home, even if they, too, work outside the home. Why does this sabotage sex drive? Caretaking makes you think about others, while desire hinges on your being able to think about yourself and your own needs. "Desire is rooted in autonomy, freedom, and selfishness. If you can't be selfish, you can't have an orgasm," Perel says.

In March 2001 *Good Housekeeping* magazine ran an article, *Am I Normal?*, which disclosed some revealing statistics from a study done the year before by researchers at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Of the 1400 women surveyed, “99 percent reported having one or more sexual concerns. Eighty-seven percent felt they should be more interested in sex, 83 percent sometimes had trouble reaching orgasm, 69 percent worried that they didn't look attractive enough, and 67 percent said some of their sexual needs weren't being met.” And men wonder why women consider sex just another chore, and one they increasingly feel they can do without.

Patricia Koch, Associate Professor of Biobehavioral Health and Women's Studies at Pennsylvania State University, states the number one reason women seek sex therapy is due to low sexual desire, which can affect anywhere from 33% to 67% of all women. Jill Bialosky describes this loss of desire in the book, *The Bitch in the House*. “Sometimes we made love, usually on a Saturday night or Sunday, but it was short and uninspiring, and was more the kind of lovemaking where you are checking in to make sure someone is at home. I still desired my husband – sometimes watching him read my son a story, or pitch a baseball to him in the backyard, my stomach did somersaults, but a little faucet had turned off inside my body. My veins were cold. I didn't want to be touched.”

“Talking with other women who were in the same stages of their lives as I was, I realized that the lack of sexual desire I was experiencing was more common than I had known.”

According to marriage therapist Richard Driscoll, about 20 percent of women report that their husbands have turned them down for sex, whereas 50 percent of men say their wives have turned them down. (WebMD)

In *The Wifely Duty*, Caitlin Flanagan’s 2003 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, she discusses several books written by women with titles such as, *Okay, So I Don’t Have a Headache*, and *I’m Not In The Mood*. Another one, *For Women Only*, “lists various techniques that married women use to avoid sex, from the age-old strategy of feigning sleep to the quite modern practice of taking on household night-owl projects.”

About the chapter written by Jill Bialosky in *The Bitch in the House*, Flanagan had this to say:

The Jill Bialoskys of the world may feel that they belong to the most outrageously liberated group of women yet to stride the earth. These women assume that in the very act of confession they are wearing the mantle of freedom. They are not only free enough to perform oral sex in a moving car – a bit of cutting-edge eroticism that, I believe, dates back to the Model T – but also free enough to admit, in tones of outrage and bewilderment, to the abrupt waning of their desire. What they don’t understand, and what women of an earlier era might have been able to tell them, is that when the little faucet turns off, it is not time to rat out your husband (is there anything more wounding to a man, and therefore more cruel and vicious, than a wife’s public admission that he is not

satisfying her in bed?), but rather to *turn it back on*. It is not complicated: it requires putting the children to bed at a decent hour and adopting a good attitude. The rare and enviable woman is not the one liberated enough to tell hurtful secrets about her marriage to her girlfriends or the reading public. Nor is she the one capable of attracting the sexual attentions of a variety of worthy suitors. The rare woman – the good wife, and the happy one – is the woman who maintains her husband’s sexual interest and who returns it in full measure. (Emphasis in original.)

I find it somewhat surprising that my own take on Bialosky’s chapter is less harsh than the comments provided by Flannigan, possibly because, as her title indicates, she is placing much of the burden for bad sex in marriage on women, whereas I believe it’s primarily the opposite. For example, after Flannigan cites advice from the book, *The Sex-Starved Marriage* by marital therapist Michele Weiner Davis, comments:

All of this makes me reflect that those repressed and much pitied 1950s wives – their sexless college years, their boorish husbands, who couldn’t locate the clitoris with a flashlight and a copy of *Gray’s Anatomy!* – were apparently getting a lot more action than many of today’s most liberated and sexually experienced married women. In the old days, of course, there was the wifely duty. A housewife understood that in addition to ironing her husband’s shirts and cooking the Sunday roast, she was – with some regularity – going to have relations with the man of the house. Perhaps, as some feminists would have us believe, these were grimly

efficient interludes during which the poor humped-upon wife stared at the ceiling and silently composed the grocery list. Or perhaps not. Maybe, as Davis and her “new” findings suggest, once you get the canoe out in the water, everybody starts happily paddling.

The root of the problem, I believe, is something I mentioned a couple pages back (and in the *Introduction*) – sex becomes identified as just one more chore, which ends up being pushed aside like so many other chores. Now ask yourself, which chores are the ones least likely to be completed? Of course, it’s the ones you least like to do.

## Chapter Keys

- The number one reason women seek sex therapy is due to low sexual desire, which can affect anywhere from 33 to 67 percent of all women.
- Sixty-seven percent of women in one survey said some of their sexual needs weren't being met.
- For women, sex often becomes identified as just one more chore to complete.





## CHAPTER 5

# Men and Sex

In his brand new best-selling book, *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*, Steve Harvey claims that while a woman may want many things from a man, a man needs only three things from a woman: support, loyalty and sex. In an earlier book,<sup>8</sup> Dr. Laura Schlessinger stated something similar: men need food, sex, and respect. In a book written even earlier than Dr. Laura's, and now surpassing over one million printed copies, *His Needs, Her Needs*, author Willard Harley identifies sexual fulfillment as a man's number one need. Clearly, sex is on the mind of most men. Unfortunately, it seems to be much less on the minds of many women. Why this is so often the case is described in the book *Reclaiming Desire*.

Women with low libido often describe their sex lives as monotonous, uninteresting, or unstimulating. Worse, they feel bored, angry, and alienated from their partners because of bad sex. At the same time, they feel they can't do anything about it. They worry that by opening up about their dissatisfaction they will hurt their partners, or they're convinced that their partners wouldn't want to try to change anyway.

Any man living in a sexless marriage needs to take the above words to heart, if he has any intention of changing the situation for the better. And changing the situation is more important for the man because his self-worth is linked strongly to his sexuality. Remember these heart-rending words from Tom?

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Laura Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003)

He told her that he didn't feel important anymore. He wondered why she wasn't into sex. He kept asking, "What's wrong? Did I do something wrong? Aren't you attracted to me anymore?"

The vast majority of men in sexless marriages feel exactly like Tom, and when that happens men divert their attention to other interests, further alienating their wife, and driving a wedge deeper and deeper between them. In my own life, my sexual ego played an enormous role in my seeking out other women. Since I wasn't receiving positive feedback at home, I went outside the marriage to find the positive reinforcement that all men crave and desire. I never stopped to ask myself, "Why wasn't I getting positive reinforcement at home?"

The authors of *He's Just Not Up for It Anymore* surveyed 4,000 men and women to find out why the men in these marriage stopped wanting to have sex with their wives. Here are the top reasons men<sup>9</sup> gave:

REASON	PERCENTAGE (%)
• She isn't sexually adventurous enough for me.	68
• She doesn't seem to enjoy sex.	61
• I am interested in sex with others, but not with my wife.	48
• I am angry at her.	44
• I'm bored.	41
• She is depressed.	40
• She has gained a significant amount of weight.	38
• I am depressed.	34
• I no longer find her physically attractive.	32

In response to the above survey, the author's made these comments:

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<sup>9</sup> Women, who made up the majority of respondents (67% to 33%), many times were guessing as to the reasons their husband stopped desiring to have sex with them.

Although the men know (or at least *think* they know) the reasons for their voluntary celibacy but the women are only guessing, either way the situation is embarrassing and painful. It is therefore not surprising that both men and women agree most with statements that shift responsibility away from themselves. Indeed, men indicate a lack of sexual adventure (hers, not his) as primary. It is difficult to believe that this lack of erotic excitement is completely one-sided, and that these men who identify their wives as unadventurous are themselves imaginatively passionate guys, just somehow mysteriously unable to inspire the one woman they chose to marry. After all, they probably knew her acceptable level of tolerance for erotic exploration before the vows were exchanged. We suspect that boredom or other factors is closer to the truth, or they are confusing the pornography they see on DVDs or the Internet with reality.

Just as I did, men in this survey want to shift the blame for their bad sex life on their wife. To turn things around, one thing *must* take place. Men need to separate their ego from their sexuality, in one very important aspect. If a man is unable to do this, I don't see how it's possible to improve your marriage or relationship in the sexual area. This is so important; I need to repeat it again. To turn things around, one thing *must* take place. *Men need to separate their ego from their sexuality, in one very important aspect.* What is that aspect? A woman needs to be free to tell her partner about her dissatisfaction with their lovemaking, without the man taking it personally. Remember these words from *Reclaiming Desire*?

They [women] worry that by opening up about their dissatisfaction they will hurt their partners.

The reason a man needs to separate his ego from his sexuality in this one area is because when a woman tells a man “he’s not doing it right,” what a man hears is, “you’re not a real man.” And women need to realize that a man has a very fragile sexual ego, and it’s often not what you say, but how you say it. Still, though it’s hard to underestimate the effect of a woman’s words on a man when it comes to sexual performance, for both good and bad, separating his ego from his performance in this one area is something a man can only accomplish on his own. Please understand one important point. I’m *not* saying a man needs to separate his ego from his sexual performance, as if such a thing would not only be possible, but desirable. It would be like saying a pro athlete should separate his ego from his game performance – no, it’s his ego that drives him to perform at the level his sport requires. In the same way, a man’s ego should drive him to perform in the bedroom. In a sense, what men have is a “good” ego, and a “bad” ego. The good ego drives his performance, but the bad ego keeps him from wanting to hear anything he believes is criticism. No, it’s much easier to blame their partner than to look at their own performance. How far would a professional athlete get trying to blame his opponent for his poor performance? “Coach, it’s not my fault I’m only hitting .187, it’s those damn pitchers!” Just as a poor hitter needs to take responsibility for his own improvement, so too, a man needs to take responsibility for his poor sex life. As the author’s noted above, the men who identified their wives as unadventurous are unlikely to be imaginatively passionate lovers themselves.

So, how does a man reach the point where he can separate his “bad” sexual ego from his “good” sexual ego? It’s when he realizes that his “bad” ego is what is keeping him from true sexual fulfillment and happiness. For far too many men their idea of sexual fulfillment is having a nice orgasm and then quickly falling asleep. Unfortunately for men, women don’t seem to want to go along with this plan.

In January 2009 there was a very interesting article, *What Do Women Want?*, which appeared in *The New York Times*. One quoted professor of psychology, Marta Meana from U.N.L.V., made the following observation about women and sex.

“Female desire,” Meana said, “is not governed by the relational factors that, we like to think, rule women’s sexuality as opposed to men’s.” She finished a small qualitative study last year consisting of long interviews with 20 women in marriages that were sexually troubled. Although bad relationships often kill desire, she argued, good ones don’t guarantee it. She quoted from one participant’s representative response: “We kiss. We hug. I tell him, ‘I don’t know what it is.’ We have a great relationship. It’s just that one area” – the area of her bed, the place desolated by her loss of lust.

The generally accepted therapeutic notion that, for women, incubating intimacy leads to better sex is, Meana told me, often misguided. “Really,” she said, “women’s desire is not relational, it’s narcissistic” – it is dominated by the yearnings of “self-love,” by the wish to be the object of erotic admiration and sexual need. Still on the subject of narcissism, she talked about research indicating that, in comparison with men, women’s erotic fantasies center less on giving pleasure and more on getting it. “When it comes to desire,” she added, “women may be far less relational than men.”

Professor Meana, I believe, has it exactly right – and it’s also why most sex books don’t help – they focus on building intimacy and fostering good communication, and although these

are good and admirable traits for a healthy relationship, they don't necessarily foster great sex. Women *need* to be desired. Women *need* to be "*the object of erotic admiration and sexual need.*" Men, if you are bitching and complaining about your wife's sexual behavior, I can guarantee one thing – your sex life is not going to get better any time soon, if ever!

Several years ago I spent 14 months with a woman named Amanda (not her real name). During one period of Amanda's marriage, a therapist put her on a hormone cream in an attempt to stimulate her sex drive. By Amanda's own account, she and her husband were having sex about once every six weeks or so, and her husband never failed to let everyone know how unhappy he was. During one stressful time, he even tried the "wifely duty" approach, which led to tears and deep wounds in Amanda's soul that were still evident as she told the story, even then, many years in the past. But here is the really sad part. Amanda was the most sexual woman I have ever known, and she and her husband were far more compatible sexually than they were incompatible, and there was no reason there had to be conflict over sex in their marriage. In fact, the conflict over sex was one of the two major issues that led to their divorce. Amanda, like all women, needed to be desired and appreciated, but what she received was criticism and complaints, and the more her husband complained the less she desired to have sex with him.

Men, if you constantly complain about your wife's sexual behavior, let me ask you a serious question. How's that working for you?<sup>10</sup> My guess is, not very well. If you want to make a change in your sex life, you need to make a change in your attitude, and in the words you speak to your wife. In my experience, most men in low sex marriages do the exact opposite

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<sup>10</sup> To quote Dr. Phil.

thing they should do, and as a result perpetuate the exact situation they *don't* want – little or no sex.

## Chapter Keys

- Sexual fulfillment is a man's number one need.
- Women with low libido often describe their sex lives as monotonous, uninteresting, or unstimulating.
- Men need to separate their "good" and "bad" sexual ego.
- A man's "bad" ego is keeping him from true sexual fulfillment and happiness.
- A woman's erotic fantasies center less on giving pleasure and more on getting it.
- Most men in low-sex or no-sex marriages tend to do the very opposite of what they should do.





## CHAPTER 6

# The Secret

Men, if you are living in a low-sex or no-sex marriage, you have it within your power to completely transform this situation. If a man follows the advice I offer in this chapter, I guarantee things will slowly begin to change. Of course, there are some couples who have dug themselves so deep into a pit they may never be able to climb out. In some cases physical contact does not even enter the picture. For those couples, there are many relationship books which might offer much needed help. Also, there can be medical or other reasons why a couple have stopped having sex, and no “secret” will help in these cases. Still, I believe that if you “put passion first,” a lot of good things will begin to happen in your relationship. Too often we think that good sex flows from a good relationship, and as was noted in the last chapter, this is not always the case. More likely, I think, is that good sex creates a good relationship, or at least the basis for a good relationship. Why do I believe great sex is so important to a marriage? Once again, let’s go back to Tom in Chapter 3.

Tom said that when they first married, he was passionately in love with Debra and found her irresistibly attractive. Their sex life was wonderful, they made love frequently, and he felt extremely close to her. His ability to satisfy Debra sexually made him feel good about himself as a lover and as her life partner. He recalled how their close sexual relationship reverberated throughout the rest of their marriage. They often snuggled on the couch while watching television, held hands when they walked,

and kissed each other affectionately. He loved their time together. Tom felt that Debra was his best friend.

Do you see how Tom's self-worth is tied to his sexuality? How his ability to satisfy his wife sexually "made him feel good about himself as a lover and as her life partner." This is how all men feel, whether they are able to acknowledge it or not. And, what was the result of Tom's ability to satisfy his wife? Tom felt that Debra was his best friend! For men, sex *is* our expression of love, and everything else flows from this.

For two years I thought I had the perfect movie scene<sup>11</sup> to illustrate the "secret," but imagine my surprise upon watching the movie on DVD, the scene wasn't there. So, sans movie, here it is. About five years ago I took a speech class at American River College in Sacramento. One speech I gave was on marriage, primarily because I wanted to share the "secret" with the men in the class. When I came to the critical part in the speech, I looked at each and every man in the class (including the Instructor), and told them if they would take this one thing to heart, it would revolutionize their sex life. I then turned around and wrote on the board.

Q. How do you make love to a woman?

A. Anyway she wants you too.

It sounds so simple, but the plain fact is, most men are focused on themselves, not their wife or girlfriend. From a WebMD article, here's the sad truth.

Here's another difference between the sexes – how often they have an orgasm during sex. Among men who are part of a couple, 75% report that they always have an orgasm, as opposed to 26 % of the women. And

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<sup>11</sup> I thought the scene was in the movie, *Stranger Than Fiction*.

not only is there a difference in reality, there's one in perception, too.

While the men's female partners reported their rate of orgasm accurately, the women's male partners reported that they believed their female partners had orgasms 45% of the time.

So men, here's the thing. If women were having 75% of the orgasms instead of 26%, men would be having as much sex as they could handle. It's as simple as that. Now, here's an even more amazing thing. Even *if* women had 75% of the orgasms, and men were only having 26%, men would be much happier. To many men, this no doubt seems counter-intuitive, however, what I discovered is that as I began to focus more on my partner – and in the beginning this was literally an infinitesimal amount – I was enjoying sex more, not less. One of the first things that happened was I stopped *needing* to fantasize about other women when making love. Yes, I know that fantasizing during sex is common and normal, but I think that if a man *has* to do this all the time, it's a good indication he's thinking about himself, not his partner. When your partner is really enjoying sex with you, believe me, she'll become your fantasy! As you give more, you'll receive more than you can even imagine. Only by focusing on the woman, will a man bring her to her maximum sexual level. What that level is will be different for every woman, and a good indication will be what it was in the beginning of the relationship. In the early days and weeks of a relationship, does either person feel that sex is a chore? I highly doubt it, but over time, and with too many women, sex becomes identified as one more chore they need to complete. Remember these comments?

Women with low libido often describe their sex lives as monotonous, uninteresting, or unstimulating.

It sounds like sex for these women is about as exciting as cleaning the bathroom toilet. And who can blame them? Remember, for women “desire is not relational, it’s narcissistic – it is dominated by the yearnings of ‘self-love,’ by the wish to be the object of erotic admiration and sexual need.” Also, recall the words of Esther Perel, “Desire is rooted in autonomy, freedom, and selfishness. If you can’t be selfish, you can’t have an orgasm.” With men having three times the orgasms, it’s clear who has the easier time being selfish. If you want to turn your sex life around, men need to become unselfish, and women more selfish. This is why the first quote in this book is that great sex is not about *finding* the right person, but *being* the right person. And the very *first* step in being the right person is to listen to what your wife has to say about your performance as a lover. I know this can be very, very, difficult. For me it took over 25 years to finally say to my wife, “Give me a sex lesson.” No other five words were more difficult for me to utter.

So, assuming a man wishes to begin to focus more on his partner, and less on himself, how exactly does he begin this process? Besides the obvious talking about it – which can be too intimidating for many couples – the best method I have found is to become a student of his partner’s body, or what I like to call “a body detective.” Every woman is different, and what turns on one woman, doesn’t always work with another, and the only woman that really counts is the one you’re currently with. That’s why even if 10 women called you the greatest lover in the world, if the eleventh tells you you’re a lousy lover, than you’re a lousy lover (at least to that woman).<sup>12</sup>

For a “body detective” to do his work, the room needs to be fairly quiet. Background music is fine, but the volume needs to be low enough so that the man can hear his partner’s

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<sup>12</sup> Certainly, the issue might be with the eleventh woman, but I’m thinking of cases where the woman is sexually “normal.”

sounds. It's perfectly okay for the man to ask his partner how this or that feels, but he needs to be careful because too many questions can backfire. One therapist

recalled a patient whose lover was thoroughly empathetic and asked frequently during lovemaking, "Is this O.K.?" Which was very unarousing to her. It was loving, but there was no oomph – no urgency emanating from the man, no sign that his craving of the patient was beyond control.<sup>13</sup>

If the man is tuned into his partner's sounds, he won't need to ask a lot of questions because the sounds she's making will already tell him what he needs to know. Even if your partner is fairly quiet, her breathing and body movements should give you enough of a clue. If a man begins to do this, he will become more and more excited by his ability to please his wife. Not only will the man become more excited, so will the wife. And once the wife begins to enjoy sex more, there will be more sex to enjoy! In time, the desire to protect your great sex life will begin to spread into other areas of your relationship. Out of your sexual connection will flow easier conversations, not only about sex, but all types of conversations because you are connected body and soul.

At this point I need to give one very important note of caution – that is if you truly wish to put the sex secret into practice. From conversations I have had with couple's over the past year or so where I have discussed the ideas contained in this book, it's fairly obvious that there is a vast gap between what men say about their sexual performance, and what their wife or girlfriend has to say. I'm not saying that men think they're "Joe" stud and their women think

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<sup>13</sup> *What Do Women Want?*, Daniel Bergner, *New York Times Magazine*, January 22, 2009.

they are a joke in the sack. No, it's much more subtle than that, and therefore much more dangerous to great sex. Where the danger truly lies is that since a man's ego is tied so strongly to his sexuality, he has a hard time listening to, or hearing, what his wife really wants to say about their sex life. That's why I said in the previous chapter that a man needs to separate his ego from his sexuality. What I have noticed in the conversations is that a man typically wants to defend his performance, and isn't taking his wife's message to heart. And this was with couples that seemed to have a decent sex life, how much worse is it with couples that don't? We need to look at these words about wives, one more time.

They worry that by opening up about their dissatisfaction they will hurt their partners, or they're convinced that their partners wouldn't want to try to change anyway.

This is exactly what I have found in my conversations with couples about this book – even if the woman feels enough freedom to talk about her dissatisfaction – I can tell from the man's defensiveness that he is not really listening or understanding what his wife is saying. I need to be as blunt as I possibly can. A man, who does not take his partner's words about their sex life to heart, will never be a great lover.

## Chapter Keys

- Men have the power to transform their sexless marriages.
- Good sex creates a good relationship.
- Men need to make love to their partner the way the partner wants.
- Once the wife begins to enjoy sex more, there will be more sex to enjoy.





## CHAPTER 7

# Let's Talk

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, in the twenty-six years I spent with my ex-wife, we never had one discussion about sex. It's hard, now, to understand how that was even possible. In all my relationships since my divorce, talking about sex has been the same as talking about any other subject. Naturally, it's much easier if you *start* out that way, then trying to initiate talk if you have never done it with your partner over the course of many years.

It's possible that the aversion to talking about sex stems from our childhood, after all, how many parents will actually sit down with their kids and have an honest talk about the birds and the bees? More than likely we leave that kind of information to be handled in our child's Sex Ed classes.

In the case of men, we are hit with a double whammy. Not only is it difficult to talk about sex, it's also a case of not liking to talk, period. Comedian and author Steve Harvey says that "four little words can strike fear and dread into any man: *We need to talk.*" Steve writes in his book, *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*:

For a man, few words are as menacing as those four – especially when a woman is the one saying them and he's on the receiving end. Those four words can mean only two things to men: either we did something wrong or, worse, you really literally just want to talk.

Steven Stosny, co-author of the book, *How to Improve Your Marriage Without Talking About It*, stated in the interview cited earlier:

Talking about feelings, which is soothing to women, makes men physically uncomfortable. There's literally more blood flow to their muscles. They get fidgety, and women think they're not listening.

As girls grow, they go beyond needing eye contact and refine a coping strategy identified by UCLA psychologists as "tend and befriend." If there's a conflict, girls and women want to talk about it.

Boys and men, however, need to pull away. A man's greatest suffering, comes from the shame he feels when he doesn't measure up – which is why discussing relationship problems (i.e., what he's doing wrong) offers about as much comfort as sleeping on a bed of nails.

Add in the further difficulty men have with their sexual self-image, and it's very obvious why talking about sex can be very intimidating. Because of this, one of the biggest challenges couples face in the quest for great sex is overcoming their inability and reluctance to talk about sex with their partner. Somehow we think that being a good lover is something that comes naturally, that possibly it's picked up through osmosis, or is an innate ability that some people have and others don't. No, being a good lover is someone who is able to listen to what your partner states, and then responding reasonably and non-defensively. Then equally important is the willingness and ability to do what your partner requested. Once I had a woman tell me that recently when she was making love to her husband, she told him that what he was doing was hurting her, but after stopping for a few moments, soon was back doing the same thing the exact same way. All the husband was doing was building up frustration and resentment in his wife.

For couples experiencing a great deal of stress in their relationship, talking about sex during lovemaking is most likely a very bad idea. For these couples, it's far better for any

conversation about sex to take place in a neutral setting, outside the bedroom. The LoveLife Plus website offers some good advice for couples that face difficulty in this area.

It's never too late to start talking about sex and to review your attitudes to sex. Talk with your partner about why it's hard to talk about it. Be honest about how you feel when the topic is raised, and why you think you feel that way.

Begin by sharing your sexual histories and such topics as how you received your sex education and first awareness of sex. Keep it light-hearted and laugh!

Read books or view DVDs about sex and discuss them with your partner.

There are also entertaining games that can help break the ice as you practice communicating about sexual matters – 52 Weeks of Naughty Nights, 52 Weeks of Romance, and Fantasy cards. Play with your partner and have some fun!

Next time you and your partner have sex, talk about it – discuss what was great and what both of you would like to make even better.

One thing I have found very helpful in difficult conversations is something Peggy and I learned in the *Fighting for Your Marriage* class. One person takes some object, and holds it in their hand. While they are holding the object, only they are allowed to speak. They are to state their comments in a somewhat abbreviated fashion (no five minute speeches, one or two minutes should be sufficient), and once they say they are finished, they pass the object to the other person. The first thing the second person does is to summarize what it was they heard. They

then hand the object back to the other person, who then states that they have been properly understood, or else they correct the other person's misinterpretation. Once the person agrees that the initial statement was properly heard and understood, the second person gets to state whatever it is they wish to say. This may seem like overkill, but it's pretty common for one person to think they heard what the other person was saying, and totally miss it. In fact, in the class this is exactly what happened to one couple the facilitator brought up to the front to demonstrate the procedure. The woman said what she wanted to say, and when the man repeated back what he heard, the class broke into spontaneous laughter. What the man heard, and what the woman said, could have come from two completely different conversations. It was a powerful demonstration of how easy it is to miss what another person has said.

It is hard to overestimate the role that sex plays in helping minimize some conversation difficulties between men and women, and this is why a good sex life is so beneficial to a couple's relationship. Out of the connection and intimacy that sex provides, even difficult conversations will become easier. Imagine if *both* partners so cherish their sexual relationship, neither wants anything to get in the way. Carol Cassell, author of *Put Passion First*, writes, "I believe that a passionate partnership offers you the best of all worlds because it combines two separate but equally important elements – sensual heat and friendship. At one level, it powers the mysterious energy and intimacy of falling in love. And at the same time, it has the same capacity for standing the test of time as a relationship in which two people are partners and friends, as well as lovers."

Unfortunately, in far too many relationships, sex is used – most often by the woman – as a form of punishment. If one of your partner’s favorite ways of punishing you is by withholding sex, it’s probably a good indicator that they’re not enjoying sex as much as you do.

Another often overlooked truism about sex is that it is something that takes place between the ears, as much as it does between the loins. This is why finger-pointing, blaming, and criticism is so harmful to a good sexual relationship, and why positive reinforcement is so beneficial. Marriage counselor Willard Harley uses the analogy of making deposits and withdrawals in our “love bank.”

Each of us has a Love Bank and everyone we know has a separate account. It's the way our emotions keep track of the way people treat us. When treated well by someone, and we associate that person with good feelings, love units are deposited into his or her account in our Love Bank. But when treated badly by that person, love units are withdrawn from the Love Bank. When a person's balance is high, we like that person. But if a person withdraws more love units than he or she deposits, and the balance is in the red, we dislike that person.

Almost everything that you and your spouse do is either depositing or withdrawing love units. Since most of what you do is by habit, repeated again and again, your habits either deposit love units continually, or they withdraw them continually. That's why your habits play such a crucial role in the creation or destruction of your love for each other.

So the feeling of love can last a lifetime for a couple if they apply two lessons: 1) avoid withdrawing love units and 2) keep depositing them.

It's just that simple. All it takes is maintaining Love Bank balances above the romantic love threshold.<sup>14</sup>

Show me a husband complaining about the lack of sex in his marriage, and I'll show you a man who is not making a lot of deposits in his wife's love bank. On the other hand, show me a woman who gets lots of compliments on her sexiness and desirability, and I'll show you a man who more than likely is getting all the sex he wants. Never forget – the biggest sex organ is our brain!

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<sup>14</sup> Research by Psychologist John Gottman has shown that there must be a minimum of five positive interactions, for each negative one, if the relationship is to survive.

## Chapter Keys

- A good lover is someone who is able to listen to what their partner states, and then responds reasonably and non-defensively.
- Talking about feelings, which is soothing to women, makes men physically uncomfortable.
- If a couple has difficulty communicating, use the “object holding” idea from *Fighting for Your Marriage*.
- Out of the connection and intimacy that sex provides, even difficult conversations will become easier.
- Make deposits in your partner’s Love Bank.





# Afterword

Recently, during the promotion of her new film *Bride Wars*, actress Anne Hathaway was embarrassed by her parent's revelation to a gossip columnist that "great sex" was the secret to their long marriage. According to reports, "Hathaway blushed when her parents indiscretion was revealed to her. 'Oh, please, I'm going to forget they talked about their great sex. I prefer to think they just blinked at one another and I was conceived.'" No doubt, some of my family members feel the same about some of my revelations in *The Sex Secret*. However, after going through my own divorce ten years ago, if I can do anything to help troubled marriages, then it's something I want to do.<sup>15</sup> Not only do half of all marriages end in divorce, but cheating, especially among women, is skyrocketing in these times. The reason, I believe, is because we are feeling disconnected in the very relationship that is meant to bring us the love our hearts so much yearn for, our marriages. There can be no true intimacy, without sex, and yet 40 million Americans are doing just that in their marriages.

I truly believe that great sex can be, just like Hathaway's parents said, the secret to a great marriage, and I just as firmly believe that "the sex secret" can be the foundation for great sex in any relationship.

For more information about the book, including a blog where you can submit questions or comments, please visit [www.thesexsecretbook.com](http://www.thesexsecretbook.com).

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<sup>15</sup> Because I am not a psychologist or marriage counselor, I had to rely on a lot of expert's quotes in the writing of this book. It is my hope that you did not find this too distracting, but rather appreciated the advice they offered.

