

29. Q&A How Long Does She Really Want You to Last? AD 05:16

Okay, let's dive into our first question. I'm a 40-year-old male and feel like I'm finding it harder to control my sexual performance with my wife of 11 years. I have never been able to have sex for more than a few minutes before ejaculation unless we take breaks, but recently I feel like it's gotten worse, which then increases my anxiety around it.

I've tried sildenafil and lidocaine wipes but still find the problem persists and fear this is the end of intimacy with my wife. I feel sad and frustrated after sex these days, which I fear is driving a wedge between us. Any light you can shine on things to try would be really appreciated.

Okay, so first of all, I want to thank you for your candor and honesty and for sharing your question. You know, what you're describing is such a common concern for my male clients. There is so much emphasis on this word performance and that is the first word that I push my clients strike from their vocabulary.

You'll find that I'm a pretty big stickler for language and vocabulary and we always have to consider how the words we're using are making us feel and what emotions they're evoking within us and really what meanings we attach to them. I want to encourage everyone to stop and think for a second what comes up for you when you hear the word performance. What comes up for me is feeling like I'm sitting in an audience watching someone who's up on stage putting on a show and I don't know about you, but I don't think that's what anyone wants to feel during sex.

A good replacement for that word is in most cases experience. So you may be having issues with your sexual experience or in this guy's case, I would say that, you know, he could replace it with that he's finding it harder to control how long he lasts during intercourse with his wife. As much as possible, we have to move away from that word performance.

It is not helpful, it is not accurate, and using it seems to only intensify the problems that we're having and intensify the negative feeling we have about problems we're experiencing. So that's my first piece of advice. It may sound like a little thing, but I promise you when you start changing your vocabulary, the emotion you have about your problem is going to shift and that's a big part of the solution.

So much of our problems is not the problem itself, but it's how we feel about the problem. It's the collaboration we feel like we have from our partner and working through the issue and ultimately it's about our mindset, which we're going to talk about in a minute. So that's number one, strike the word performance.

Now, you say that you've never been able to have sex for more than a few minutes

before ejaculation. So I'm assuming what you mean is intercourse. I want to throw some stats out there.

I don't love throwing out stats because I feel like people get too hung up on them and especially when it comes to sex, there is so much variability. But for most penis owners, ejaculation is going to happen within four or five to 10 minutes after rapid stimulation of the penis begins. And that rapid stimulation could be through intercourse, it could be through manual stimulation, it could be through oral sex or some combination of the two, but that's how long the average penis owner lasts before reaching ejaculation.

So in the grand scheme of things, that's not very long. And you say a few minutes, so I wonder if maybe for you it's like two, three, four minutes, which really isn't that much shorter than what's typical. Now, what my advice to you is to develop a really good awareness of when you're approaching that point of no return.

When you're approaching that point of no return, that is when you slow down. You have already noticed that when you take breaks, you're able to control your arousal. In sex therapy, we refer to this as the stop-start technique.

And it's probably the most tried and true method for controlling ejaculation. What that means is that when you're starting to approach that point of no return, that you slow down or you stop or you switch to something else for a while until the intensity of your arousal subsides a little bit, and then you can go back to the experience. That really is the best thing that you can do.

And I think that what a lot of guys find is as they develop a really strong mind-body connection and awareness of when they're approaching that point of no return, that their confidence then builds. I'm really not a huge fan of like lidocaine wipes or really any like desensitization sprays and that kind of thing, just because I feel like what that does is it's training your body to numb out, which is pleasure reducing. And that's really not the idea of sex.

I mean, we have sex for a lot of reasons, and one of them is to experience physical pleasure. And so anything that you're doing that might numb your physical sensations, I think is going to detract from the sexual experience. You know what I am not hearing in your question is what the conversation has been with your wife around this issue, as you see.

What are her feelings about it? What does she think about it? My sense is that you're getting really caught up in your own emotional experience, which is intensifying your anxiety, and you're getting stuck in your head. But I have no idea what she's thinking and feeling about it. And I think that that is going to be the next biggest piece of advice I can give to you is to have a really open and honest conversation with her.

You know, I can't speak for her because I can't, you know, I don't know what she's experiencing specifically, but a lot of vulva owners really enjoy the outer course type sexual activity like oral sex and manual stimulation more than they enjoy the inner course. In other words, what helps her intensify arousal and ultimately have an orgasm might be different than what intensifies your arousal and leads you to have an orgasm. So you may have an orgasm through intercourse and through rapid, you know, stimulation, as I was discussing earlier, but what may help her arousal is going to be you going down on her or you stimulating her clitoris externally, or, you know, touching her all over her body, stimulating her breast.

And so it may be that there's nothing wrong. She may be perfectly happy with you stopping intercourse for a while to focus on her pleasure throughout the experience and then coming back to intercourse. I think that that's going to be really key is to find out what she enjoys the most about the sexual experience as a whole.

I would not be surprised at all if she said that while she does enjoy intercourse with you, that that may not be the highlight of the sexual experience for her. And I imagine that when you hear that, the worry that you're having about how long you're lasting is going to go down. Anytime we start ruminating or obsessing or getting in our head about something, obviously the more anxious we're going to feel.

And we call that anticipatory anxiety, meaning that you are anticipating you're going to feel anxious about something before that something has even happened. And I hear that you are very much in your head about this and that your anxiety is so high that it's detracting from the sexual experience. Now you say that you fear this whole thing is driving a wedge between you.

Well, actually what you say is that your sadness and frustration after sex is what's driving a wedge between you. Again, I come back to not the fact that maybe you don't last as long as you would like to last being the problem, but maybe your reaction to the problem is what's driving the wedge. If she sees you as overly worrying or feeling anxious or insecure or frustrated every time you have sex, that's going to create frustration for her.

I think that as you learn some of the skills and techniques that I described, and hopefully your confidence goes down a little bit, that the sadness and frustration you feel about this will diminish. And then you can get back to having sex for the reasons you probably started having sex to begin with, which is because you love your wife and sex is an expression of the love that you have for her. And it's an opportunity for emotional connection.

I think a lot of people are super guilty of over focusing on what is happening physically in the body or between two bodies and lose sight of what makes human sex so unique. And that is the emotional connection that we have with another person when we're having

sex. And so you never want to forget that.

As one of my first sex therapists, sex therapy mentors told me, Ruth Sherman, she said one thing she always told her clients is that when you're making love, you can't go wrong. I'll say that again, just so that it sinks in. When you're making love, you can't go wrong.

When it's about love and connection, then how long you last during intercourse is not going to be as big of a deal. So to summarize, strengthen your awareness of when you're reaching that point of no return, the stop start technique, which is what you're already doing actually goes a long way. And the more you do that, the more confident you're going to feel and the more relaxed you'll feel.

Talk to your wife about what her experience is. I want to really encourage you to trust her when she most likely says that while yes, she enjoys intercourse, that there are probably a lot of other components about the sexual experience that are equally, if not more pleasurable for her. And that's going to take the over concern about the intercourse component, I think, off or the pressure that you feel about that part of the sexual experience.

It's going to reduce that pressure a lot. And then finally, remember that most likely what's driving a wedge is your reaction to what's happening rather than what's happening itself. And when you're making love, you can't go wrong.

I hope that helps. Okay, let's get started on our next question. I love my wife and we have been married for over 25 years, but I have had thoughts throughout my marriage of wanting to be with another man in the bedroom.

I have not gone that far yet, but should I tell her that I have that desire to be with another man? Okay, that is a great question. And actually your sexual interest is a lot more common than you might think. It's something that is coming up a lot more these days.

And I think that's because we're finally starting to shed some of the taboo and stigma that comes with sexual fantasies that might not have really been accepted previously. So thank you so much for sharing your question because I know that a lot of people probably relate to what you're describing. So I'm wondering if what you're wanting is to be with another man separate from your wife, or if what you're wanting is a threesome.

If it's that you're wanting to be with another man separate from her, I think that you guys are going to have to have a really long conversation about non-monogamy and what experimenting like that would mean for your relationship. You know, this is something that she's going to have to agree to if you want to be open and honest, which is what I always encourage. And so you need to talk to her about that.

Before we go on though, I want everyone to take a deep breath because my guess is that a lot of you think, okay, if he's wanting to be with another man, that must mean he's gay. That is not the case. Could it mean that he is maybe a little more fluid with his sexual orientation? Possibly.

Could it just mean that this is something he is interested in sexually, but as more like an erotic orientation and less as a sexual orientation, which there is a difference. And check your biases because I think a lot of people are coming in with probably a big gender bias. Ask yourself if your wife or girlfriend said they were curious about experimenting with another woman, what would your immediate reaction be? Would it be, oh, that sounds kind of hot, or would you maybe feel more open and permissive with it? Versus when we hear another man describe that same sexual curiosity, a lot of people jump to, oh, he must be gay.

Women express that curiosity. Most people don't assume that she's gay. So just check any gender biases at the door as we are exploring this sensitive topic.

Okay. That being said, I do think that you're going have to have a conversation with your wife about consensual non-monogamy and agree to some terms if this is something that you actually do want to explore. I never condone cheating or infidelity, so I wouldn't encourage you to explore it without talking to her first if you guys are, if she's assuming that you're in a monogamous relationship.

You also want to spend some time thinking about whether this is just a sexual fantasy for you, and maybe it just stays kind of in your mind as a fantasy, something you think about, get turned on by from time to time, versus something you definitely want to explore in real life. A lot of people fantasize about things they don't actually want to do in real life. Other times people fantasize about things that they really are interested in trying in real life and find that once they experiment with that, it's something they really enjoy and they want to incorporate into their regular sexual routine.

Other times people try something and they realize, you know, maybe this was better just as a fantasy. So you have to kind of assess how sure you are that this is something that you want to explore. Now, whether or not to tell your wife about this fantasy you're having, if it's not something you actually want to do, is really up to you.

A lot of people think that they like owe their partner full transparency when it comes to every sexual thought or feeling that they might have, and I disagree with that. I think that sexual fantasies, if we want them to, can remain totally private. Again, if this is something you actually want to do, I would encourage a conversation.

Make sure you're both on the same page about everything. But if your question is whether or not to share with her this is a fantasy that stays in your mind, really that is up to you. You could choose to keep it to yourself.

You could choose to share it with her. Maybe you guys first experiment with kind of talking about it while you're having sex so that she can kind of try on what her feelings about it are before you actually experiment with it in real life. So I hope that helps.

I have an episode coming out in June that is exploring this topic in a lot of depth. We're going to talk all about the difference between sexual orientation and erotic orientation, so be sure and subscribe so that you don't miss that if you're interested in a more in-depth discussion on this. But I want to thank you again for sharing your question.

I know it's something that a lot of people can relate to. Okay, here comes our last question of the day. I am a husband who always wants sex.

My wife tells me, quote, you can have sex with me whenever you want. Just do it. However, I know she has a traumatic past.

I don't see her telling me to just have sex with her as inviting, but rather a form of further perpetuating the abuse by men dichotomy she had to grow up with. Sometimes we go weeks without it. Given how she grew up, talking or initiating sex was taboo, but she loves sex.

We both do. And it always ends with soaked sheets. So am I just overthinking it? What should I do? This is a great question.

So first of all, I think it's awesome that you are so cognizant about how her sexual past might affect her sexual feelings. But the key word here is might. Have you asked her directly how she perceives your sexual advances? Remember that sex that's mutually consensual and mutually pleasurable is not perpetuating the abuse by men dichotomy that she grew up with.

In fact, I would argue that tender sex within a loving relationship can be a wonderful and beautiful way to heal old wounds. So I also think it's really good news that you think that she enjoys sex. But again, a key word here is think.

We need to talk for just a second about a phenomenon known as arousal non-concordance. I talked a lot about this in one of my earlier episodes with Dr. Cindy Meston. The title of the episode is Why Women Have Sex.

So definitely go back and check that out if you want more information on this. But essentially what arousal non-concordance is, is that this happens for both men and women, but a lot more so for women. What this means is that how turned on the body is doesn't necessarily match with how turned on the mind is.

So you could have a woman who says that she is super turned on, but she might be really dry. Or you could have a woman who says that she is not turned on at all, but be super wet and even orgasmic. So you can't just measure her pleasure and satisfaction

and enjoyment of sex with how soaked the sheets are.

You need to talk to her and the subjective or what she tells you is happening between her ears or in her brain is a lot more important than what's happening between her legs. So always remember that. But assuming that she says that she does in fact enjoy sex, what I'm coming back to is that when she's saying that she wants you to just do it, I'm wondering if what she's saying is that she just wants you to initiate more and that she is open when you initiate or if she means have sex with her even if she's not really open to it.

So definitely if it's the latter, then you guys need to talk about that a little bit more because it really can negatively impact sexual satisfaction and create a lot of relationship problems if she's continuing to have sex with you even if she doesn't want to. Now if what she's saying is that she's not going to initiate sex but she's totally open to it, if you initiate sex that is something totally different. A lot of couples have one person in the relationship who initiates more frequently or even all the time compared to the other person.

I know that it can feel like she doesn't desire you if she doesn't initiate sex but that is not necessarily the case. You need to ask her that to know for sure and it could be that after having a conversation if you communicate to her that it would be really meaningful to you if she would initiate sex a little bit more because by her doing so it makes you feel desired, it makes you feel loved, so on and so forth. Maybe she assesses whether or not she's open to sex and she can take steps to initiate but let's say she doesn't.

I mean you said that she grew up in a home where talking about or initiating sex was really taboo. Unless she does some of her own therapeutic work that may continue to be the case but if she's okay with you initiating then I want to encourage you to move away from the idea that you are perpetuating something that's abusive. So I hope that helps.

For anyone listening if you have a sex or relationship question that you'd like answered here on the podcast go to emilyjamea.com You can record your question and I'll air it and answer it on the episode or you can do like these folks did and type in your question and I will read it and provide a response. So I want to thank you all for tuning in. Have a great day and I will see you next time!