

42. Is My Desire Too High or Too Low?

I am happy to report that Q and A episodes are back. It's been a while since I recorded one, but you guys have been sending in such great questions. I just had to get some of them answered and we've got some good ones today.

I am going to help a guy who is feeling stuck about how to help his wife enjoy sex more. Then I have two more questions about desire, but on opposite ends, one person worries they don't desire sex enough while the other worries he desires sex too much. So without further ado, let's dive in.

Here's our first question. My wife does not like clitoral stimulation in any way we have tried. She also feels a lot of pressure and discomfort during sex.

How can I help her and make sex more pleasurable? We have been married eight months. Okay. This is a great question.

First of all, congratulations on your marriage. Eight months is not that long. And I think it's great that you are really interested in making sex more pleasurable for her.

A lot of people aren't really that invested in their partner's pleasure. And so first of all, kudos to you for actually caring. I think that that is wonderful.

So I'm going to kind of answer your question in reverse. You ask about the fact that she doesn't like clitoral stimulation in any way you have tried, but you also say that she feels a lot of pressure and discomfort during sex. So we need to talk about that first.

I don't know if you are referring to emotional pressure and discomfort or physical pressure and discomfort. I want to talk about both because I think they're both relevant and really important. And I think anyone listening can probably learn a thing or two.

So first of all, if she is feeling any emotional pressure or discomfort, it's going to make it really hard for her body to become aroused. That's number one. Our minds and our bodies are, for the most part, pretty aligned.

I think that our arousal, we have cognitive arousal and we also have physical arousal and we also have emotional arousal. So arousal does not just happen between the legs. It's also a process that happens in the brain and in the heart.

And it happens most effectively when the brain, the heart and the body are aligned. Now I'm not going to get too far into a tangent, but I do want to caveat this by saying women more so than men tend to have a larger discordance in their arousal, meaning sometimes they don't think they're very aroused mentally, but their bodies actually are aroused. And you always listen to what a person is saying that they feel as opposed to how their body is responding.

Men on the other hand, tend to be a little more aligned and there's a lot of different theories and reasons why there might be a little bit of a difference, but I'm not going to go too far into that today because I want to be sure to answer your question. So back to that, if she is feeling any emotional discomfort or pressure from you, that is definitely going to impede her ability to become aroused, which is going to make it unlikely that she can experience pleasure when you stimulate her clitoris or any other part of her body. However, given the fact that you seem interested in helping her make sex more pleasurable, I'm thinking you might be referring more to physical pressure and discomfort.

So there are a lot of different reasons why someone might experience pain with intercourse. The umbrella term for this is dyspareunia. And the most common reason that people experience this is from a phenomenon known as, um, pause because I have to look it up.

So there are a lot of reasons why someone might experience pain during intercourse. Probably the most common reason is due to a disorder referred to as genito-pelvic pain or penetration disorder. And essentially what this means is that someone experienced pain in their genital or pelvic region.

Um, when someone is trying to penetrate them sexually, most often this is the case, or this happens with people who are vulva owners. And there are a lot of reasons why people can experience this. And there are different degrees of pain that people can experience.

So some people experience such significant pain that, um, inserting a tampon is impossible. Getting through a pelvic exam at the gynecologist is impossible. They cannot even tolerate a person's finger, let alone a penis inside of them.

So penetration is basically impossible because the pelvic floor muscles go into such a tight spasm that nothing can get inside. Um, and then there are people who can tolerate some degrees of penetration, but not without discomfort, which is the word you use or without pain, which is a little bit more of a serious word. So these people can maybe tolerate some intercourse, but it's not comfortable for them, which makes it really hard for it to be pleasurable for them because you kind of can't enjoy something if it hurts.

Um, now there are people who like to mix a little bit of pleasure and pain, but that's not what we're talking about here. So assuming that she may have this going on, this is going to need to be treated first. Now, how do you treat it? You work with a sex therapist who hopefully can address what emotional or psychological factors may be contributing to her body responding this way during sex.

I see this very commonly in people who grow up in very rigid religious or cultural backgrounds. Um, and then it's also great to work with, or, oh, I'll add to that also people

who have a history of sexual trauma. Um, sometimes they may feel like they've moved on emotionally or psychologically from the trauma, but their body is still holding onto the memory and the body is saying, no, this is not safe.

This is not going to feel good. And so it shuts down. Um, so a good therapist can help a client work through those elements of the problem.

And then it's also really great to work with a pelvic floor physical therapist. So there's a lot that they can do to help train a person to start relaxing those muscles. And they can use biofeedback techniques.

They can sometimes use manual stimulation. Um, another great tool you can use at home are graduated dilators. So these start off very small about the size of your pinky and then gradually increase in size.

And so it's sort of a systematic desensitization to something being inside the vagina. So that is how that issue is treated. Now, that is not to say that you guys can't explore each other in ways that, you know, do feel good during this process, um, you know, kissing, touching other parts of the body, just enjoying that skin to skin contact is something I always encourage people to maintain as they're treating this disorder.

Um, and then it's really going to be a matter of moving really slowly, um, until you are mutually building a sense of safety, comfort. And it may be that she hangs out in kind of a neutral feeling with sex for a while before the pleasure pathways kick in. So don't feel discouraged if it feels like you plateau for a period of time.

I see that very commonly. Um, I want to jump now to the first part of your question though, which is that she does not like clitoral stimulation in any way we have tried. So let's assume just based on what you've shared, that sex is uncomfortable or painful for her, which makes it hard to get aroused.

That is going to, if a woman is not adequately aroused and someone starts stimulating their clitoris, it can be uncomfortable. So assuming that's, what's going on, don't touch her clitoris. The answer is kind of simple.

You, you can touch other parts of the vulva. Um, and really you have to ask her what she is comfortable with and only do the things that she is comfortable with. That's going to be really important because it might take a long time for her to move into feeling more safe with you.

Not that you are inherently an unsafe person, but for whatever reason, maybe sexuality has become this thing that is uncomfortable or something that she has felt pressured to do in the past. And so her body is responding. That takes a while to undo.

So try not to take it personally, but you do have to be a partner and move at her pace.

That's going to be super important. So let's say that after a period of time, she is starting to feel better about things.

Her body is starting to relax. A lot of women can feel uncomfortable when someone immediately starts stimulating the clitoris at the very beginning of sexual activity. You have to think of the clitoris as like a mini penis.

So just imagine how you would feel if someone like went to town on your flaccid penis. It would be kind of overwhelming to you physically and probably emotionally. So it's really important to go slow.

And this is especially true when you have a partner who has a vulva. So I always encourage people to do is start with kissing and total body caressing. And then you can touch each other and other parts of the vulva or touch her rather in other parts of the vulva. And then you may even try stimulating her over her underwear and see how that feels until she begins to relax and hopefully gradually can become more aroused and hopefully get to a place where maybe she can enjoy some clitoral stimulation. That doesn't mean that every woman does, and she may not.

And that doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with her. It's just that that is how her body works. Um, so you may at the end of this, find that stimulating her there just doesn't really do anything for her and that's okay.

What you do need to do is maintain a very curious and open mind about what does bring pleasure to her. And that is going to come. You're going to discover that basically through a lot of conversations, trial and error and exploration.

So, you had a short question, but I had a lot to say about it. So I hope that that helps. And I wish you both the best of luck.

Okay. Here is our next question. Hi, doctor.

I'm a woman with no sex drive. I've never been highly sexually motivated. I've been married twice.

I'm sure one of the reasons in my marriage is a lack of sex drive. One of these, sorry. Let me start that over. And now to our second question.

Hi, doctor. I'm a woman with no sex drive. I've never been highly sexually motivated.

I've been married twice. And I'm sure one of the issues in my marriages is a lack of sex drive. I've tried supplements, look at porn and used to read books regarding lovemaking.

However, I've never changed to be better in that area of my life. I would love to know what else is there that I can try. Okay, great question.

So first of all, we have to move away from using the word drive as a replacement for desire. I do like that you said you've never been highly sexually motivated because really, at the end of the day, sexual desire is more about motivation than it is about this like innate drive in the same way something like hunger or thirst is a biological drive. A lot of times sex feels like a drive for some people or like it's not happening at all for other people like what you say, but it's really not a drive. So I want to get rid of that word.

But let's talk about the fact that you don't experience much sexual desire. There may be absolutely nothing wrong with you. I'm just going to cut to the chase.

There are people who have a really high sexual desire. And then there are people who, as you say, just aren't very sexually motivated and that's okay. People run into trouble when they pair up with someone who has a much different level of desire than they do.

Refer to this as experiencing discrepancy in sexual desire. We really try to avoid pathologizing the person with lower desire because the low desire in and of itself is not a problem. It may be that in your previous marriages, you paired up in a lot of ways, but sex just wasn't one of the domains in which you aligned.

And that maybe did end up causing problems because we know that there's a pretty strong link between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. So if you were paired up with someone, even if you connected in a lot of ways, but they continuously felt sexually dissatisfied because of the discrepancy in your desire, that may have led to some conflict in the marriage and ultimately been a component in your divorces. I imagine there was a lot more going on than just that, but that's not to say that that wasn't a component.

What I want to get across to you though, is that there might not be anything wrong with you. It really is more about in your future relationships, picking people who more closely align with the way that you feel about sexuality. I think we live in a culture that tells people there's something wrong with them if they're not hyper-sexual or super-sexual or sexually positive or whatever, and not everybody is super in touch with sexuality and that's okay. We understand that there's a percentage of people now who identify as asexual, meaning they really value, or some do, some don't really value the romantic component of relationships, but not so much the sexual component. There are people who just have more friendships and really aren't interested in sex or romance.

So there are, of course, different kinds of ways that asexuality is expressed. Now, I guess what's interesting here is that it sounds like you have done a lot to try to explore your sexuality, to try to turn it on and nothing is happening. I don't know if that's just because, again, maybe at the end of the day, you are just not sexually motivated, as you say.

If this is something you really want to experience, what I want you to ask yourself is, do

you want to be more sexual because you think that's what society expects of you? Or is this maybe just who you are? That's really, I think, the question that becomes the most important as you are exploring this part of your life. So I hope that helps and I wish you good luck. And now for our third question.

Hi, my name is Austin. Okay. I'm going to start that over because I don't want to say his name.

Hi, my name is Dallas and I'm 22 years old. I know you must receive hundreds of messages a day, but I was curious and wanted to ask you if it's normal to have a high sex drive. I don't have sex with a partner often.

So I masturbate about three to four times a day. Is this normal? Also, when I do have sex with a partner, I can't last very long, maybe less than two minutes. And I always feel bad for my partner because I'm not able to satisfy her.

Thanks for your time. Okay. Well, let's talk about this.

You asked a great question. So the last question I answered had to do with someone who felt like their desire was too low. And I hear you expressing some concerns that maybe your desire is too high.

So you asked the question, is it normal to have a high sex drive? In short, there's very little normal when it comes to sexuality. In other words, there's a very wide range of sexual preferences, acts, behaviors, feelings that are considered within the scope of quote unquote normal. So I really don't like that word.

And you guys will see I'm a pretty big stickler for words, but I really don't like that word as it relates to sexuality, that word normal. Really, it's about discovering your sexuality in a way that is healthy and meaningful to you as an individual, and eventually pairing up with someone who you feel relatively aligned sexually in terms of the kinds of things you want to do sexually, the amount of sex you want to have, and the value that you place on it overall in your relationship. That's what's really important at the end of the day.

So you say that you don't have sex with a partner often. So I don't know if maybe you're not in a relationship right now, or you are paired up with someone who for whatever reason, you're just not having that much partnered sex. But I will say that masturbation is a great way to bridge the gap when you have a higher level of sexual desire than your partner does. We are big proponents of self-pleasure. And if you are feeling like you want to express yourself sexually a lot more than your partner and self-pleasure is a way to experience that release of sexual tension, then that isn't inherently wrong or abnormal or anything to be concerned about. I do want you to ask yourself kind of what's motivating your desire to self-pleasure.

Is it one of few coping skills, maybe for anxiety or to help you fall asleep or to relieve tension? I always just want to make sure that people have more than one tool in their toolbox for those sorts of things. So if you're finding that this is the only tool in your toolbox to help alleviate stress, then you may just want to look into some other ways of coping just so you can kind of balance things up. Now, I hear you saying that when you do have sex with your partner, you don't last very long.

And if you are masturbating this much, you are probably very used to whatever you're using to stimulate yourself, whether it's porn or fantasy or just the way that you touch yourself and experience sensation. You are used to your grip. You are used to your pace.

You are used to yourself. I mean, it's easy because it's your own body. And so, you know exactly what to do to control things.

That's not the case when you're with a partner. So my advice in these situations is to switch up the way you masturbate so that you can start experiencing it in different ways and maybe in a way that more closely matches what you would experience with an actual partner. So using something like a masturbatory aid, like a sleeve or a fleshlight is a great place to start.

A lot of times these are designed so that they kind of feel like a real vagina. The fleshlights even look like a real vagina. So that is a great thing to do.

And then what you want to do is practice something called a stop start technique. So this is tuning into the body. So I don't recommend using porn when you're doing this.

Tuning into the body, becoming very aware of your sensation, noticing as your arousal begins to increase and then slowing down, stopping or backing off so that it starts to decrease again. And this will help you develop an awareness over the changes in your body sensations as your arousal goes up and down and also help you more finely attune when you're getting closer to that point of no return right before you reach orgasm. So this will help you develop your ejaculatory control.

And then when you're with a partner, you're going to have to put it into practice. So this may mean noticing when you're becoming aroused and then stopping for a second and switching positions or focusing on your partner's pleasure for a while. So there are a lot of things you can do to elongate the process and tuning into your body is a really good place to start.

So I hope that helps answer your question. And I also wish you nothing but the best of luck. That concludes this week's Q and A episode. You guys submit such great questions. Please don't stop emailing me. I especially love it when you record your questions.

So please don't be shy about using that option. I always disguise everyone's voice a little bit, so it's not recognizable. So no worries there.

Visit loveandlibido.com and submit your questions so that we can keep these episodes going. And I look forward to answering more of your questions and talking with you all very soon. Thanks for tuning in.