



31
DAYS
to great
SEX

For
Married
Couples

Sheila Wray Gregoire
Love. Friendship. Fun.

31 Days to Great Sex

Sheila Wray Gregoire

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by Sheila Wray Gregoire

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Smashwords Edition

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Introduction

Who doesn't want great sex?

To feel swept off your feet, to feel totally one with another person, to feel physical ecstasy—that sounds heavenly!

But not all of us experience that when we make love with our spouses. Some of us don't feel very much pleasure. Some of us have really low sex drives. Some of us feel rejected because our spouse doesn't seem to want sex very often.

No matter where you're coming from, I'm glad that you've decided to launch into the 31 Days to Great Sex. This book is intended for married couples who want to experience real intimacy and ecstasy in the bedroom.

The month starts with a week of challenges helping us to see sex in a more positive light, and then turns to challenges relating to the three aspects of intimacy: emotional intimacy in the bedroom, physical intimacy in the bedroom, and spiritual intimacy in the bedroom. As you move along in the 31 days, more and more of the challenges have to do with sexual technique and spicing things up. But not all of them do. And then at the end there's a week on how to make sure that the momentum keeps up, even when the challenges are over.

If you're eager to jump in to the “steamy” stuff, please don't. Do the challenges in order. Our biggest sex organ is our brain. We need to think the right things about sex and feel the right things about sex before our bodies will work properly when it comes to sex. And so often our biggest roadblocks aren't technique but communication. One of the biggest breakthroughs you may find this month is that you finally have the chance to really talk about important things.

How does it work? Each day has a new topic and a new challenge. Do the challenges! Actually putting principles into practice is far more effective than just reading about them.

Included in this 31 Days are three big “time outs”. Sometimes couples need a little bit of encouragement and some time to process what they’re learning, so it’s okay if you can’t get through this in one 31-day calendar month. Just work at your own pace. In fact, for many couples working through this series, sex has become a huge source of conflict, fear, or hurt. And some of the challenges may feel like you’re ripping a scab off of a wound. So some of you will need those time outs to re-evaluate, take stock, and keep going.

Note, too, that many of the challenges don’t actually involve making love. Many of them involve talking, or sorting out some big issues. While you’ll definitely have fireworks this month, often one of the barriers to those fireworks is that you’ve never actually sat down and discussed what you want your sex life to be like, or what you enjoy, or what makes you nervous. Taking this opportunity to open those lines of communication will make the physical side of your relationship that much better.

You will get the most out of these 31 days if you approach the challenges asking, “what can I do to make my marriage better?”, rather than thinking, “I really hope my spouse is listening to this so that they will change!” Instead of focusing on where your spouse is failing, look at what you can do to fuel intimacy in your marriage.

Finally, if you want to take a break while she’s having her period, that’s fine, too—although many of the challenges don’t need to involve intercourse. So play it by ear. There are no hard and fast rules.

Sex is the number one thing that couples fight over. It’s tied up in our identity, our feelings of self-worth, and our confidence in our marriage. It has the potential to either break you apart, or bring you closer than you ever thought you could be. My dream and prayer for each couple reading this is that you will achieve the latter: that you will feel closer, that you will feel truly intimate, that you will feel one. Let’s launch in!

Days 1-8

Turning Sex into Something Positive

Day One: Catching the Vision

The Act of Marriage

Sex is everywhere. It's used to sell cars. It's used to sell movies. It motivates clothing purchases, vacation destinations, and even car choices. You can't get away from it.

But what is sex really supposed to be about?

When I was thinking about that question, I was browsing the internet for a picture to match the blog post I would write (for this ebook originally began as a series of blog posts on my blog, <http://tolovehonorandvacuum.com>). I came across a picture of a man and a woman in their wedding attire: she in a flowing white gown, he in a tuxedo. And they were sitting together on a bed.

I don't know how many of us would have been gutsy enough to have a wedding photograph taken on a bed (or how many of us would hang such a picture on our wall), but I think it's refreshing, because it says:

This is important. This is a vital part of our relationship. And it all starts now—after the wedding.

Sex is the physical acting out of everything that marriage is. We become vulnerable with one another. We become naked with one another completely—and that means real intimacy, not just physical intimacy. We cherish each other. We protect each other. But we also have a ton of fun with each other!

Think about it: in marriage, we are fully committed to one another for life. We love each other and we cherish each other. We laugh together and we cry together. And in sex, we also do all of those things and express all of those things, because sex is uniquely created to do that. God made sex to feel great, but He also made it to be a deeply intimate experience.

But while sex is supposed to be stupendous, what if that's not what you're experiencing? I read this quotation on Twitter recently:

Satan's big marriage strategy: get people to have sex before they're married. Then get them to stop once they're married!

Now perhaps you don't believe in Satan—or even in God—and that's okay. You can still get everything out of these challenges. But hear me out just for a second. Here's the problem with so many of us having sex before we're committed for life: it makes sex all about the physical, and not about the spiritual or emotional connection. And then, because sex has come to mean mostly pleasure, it can lose its ability to really cement us together in other ways.

But the problem doesn't stop there. When we do finally get married and commit to someone, we often stop having sex. Or at least we have it rather infrequently. In surveys I took for my book, [The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#), I found that 40% of couples made love less than once a week. We're just not connecting that often.

So the “act of marriage”, that act that can be so wonderful, and so fun, and so significant, often isn't even happening.

Or maybe for you it *is* happening, but it just doesn't feel very pleasurable. You can't figure out what all the fuss is about, and you're worried that it was created for everyone but you. Or you're haunted by your past—maybe stuff that you did breathlessly in the backseat of a car, or something that was done to you by an uncle, or a baby-sitter, or a date. Or maybe you have a hard time staying “present” when you make love—you're haunted by images of porn, or movies, or TV shows. And that intimacy is absent.

This month we're going to walk through these issues and uncover ways to find the true freedom that sex is supposed to be! Sex is supposed to be wonderful:

Physically: we're supposed to feel wonderful together.

Emotionally: We're supposed to be able to laugh, have fun, and develop a deep friendship.

Spiritually: We're supposed to feel deeply intimate and like one.

We're going to start unpacking how we can increase the connection and the laughter during sex for the first week or so, and then we're going to look at specific strategies to make sex itself great.

Challenge for Her:

On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the best), our sex life is:

Physically _____

Spiritually _____

Emotionally _____

Say this as a prayer, or just journal it if you're not religious:

* I believe that sex was created to feel great physically, and that I am supposed to have a sex drive, and supposed to feel aroused, even if I don't feel that way right now.

* I believe that sex was created to make me feel loved.

* I believe that sex was created to make me feel like one with my husband.

Challenge for Him:

On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the best), our sex life is:

Physically _____

Spiritually _____

Emotionally _____

Say this as a prayer, or just journal it if you're not religious:

* I believe that sex was created to feel great physically not just for me but also for my wife. And I believe that God wants me to help her achieve that!

* I believe that sex was created to make me feel loved and cherished.

* I believe that sex was created to make me feel like one with my wife.

Wrap-Up Together:

Share with each other how you each rated your sex lives. Remember that if you have big discrepancies this isn't a bad thing; you're launching into 31 days together where you're going to grow closer and learn more about making this area of your life great. It's important to start by taking stock, but give each other grace, knowing that you both are aiming to grow. If

you're both heading in the same direction and are committed to the same goal, it doesn't really matter if you don't start at the same place!

Now talk to each other about what a great sex life in each of these three areas would look like practically for you. What are you aiming for? What would you both like? You don't have to understand how you're going to get there yet. That will come! The important thing is that you see that this was the way it was meant to be—and it was meant to be that way for **you, specifically**, too.

Whether you have major hang-ups, or lots of hurts, or fears or doubts; or whether things are just mediocre; or whether your marriage has scars; sex is supposed to be a big positive in your life and in your marriage. See it. Picture it. Believe it! If we can all start having a very positive and excited attitude about sex, sex would likely improve astronomically already. And now, over the next month, we'll look practically at how we're going to make it a reality!

Day 2: Challenging the Lies

Sex may be a beautiful thing, but that doesn't mean that we all feel wonderfully about it.

What do you do if you don't have a positive attitude about sex? What do you do if you're bringing baggage into your marriage which is making it difficult to get excited about sex? Or what do you do if sex has just never felt that great, and you've almost given up? Or if it seems impersonal and solely physical?

No matter where you're at today, your sex life can start fresh. But sometimes that fresh start is endangered because we keep believing things that aren't true. And, as we're going to learn throughout this month, our primary sex organ is our brain. What we think about sex completely determines whether or not we enjoy sex, or whether we're able to experience deep intimacy when we make love. So here's your challenge for today: we're going to confront any lies that you believe about sex, and replace them with truth.

Some of these truths I'm listing are from a Christian perspective. If that's not where you're coming from, you can skip over them. But I'd encourage you to read them, because we all need some assurance that we don't have to live with guilt and shame.

1. You are a new creation

Are you haunted by things you did before you were married? Do you have flashbacks from old boyfriends or girlfriends? Or even ex-spouses? Are you bothered by past porn use?

All of these things can intrude on our ability to think of sex as something sacred between you and your spouse.

So when you start to have doubts, and when thoughts of your old lovers start coming back, think about this verse instead:

If anyone is in Christ, she is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You are a new creation. You don't have to be that old person anymore. And that old person no longer has claims on you.

Perhaps you don't have much use for the Christian idea of a new creation, but you obviously do believe in marriage, because you did walk down that aisle. And when we marry, we start fresh. You are now one flesh with your spouse, not with anyone else. The two of you, together, are *also* a new creation.

So when you get these negative thoughts in your mind, replace them with the positive: *You are a new creation. You are one flesh. You were bought at a price.*

2. You are Pure

When God looks at you, He sees you as pure. Sometimes we have a hard time feeling like we're new creations because we know what we've done in the past. But other times we have difficulties because of *what was done to us*. We were abused, or raped, or fondled, or teased. And we feel like we're tainted, used, and dirty.

That is not the way God sees you. **God does not judge you in terms of what others did to you; He only sees you in terms of what Jesus did for you.** You are completely and utterly pure, once you believe in Him.

So the next time you start to feel dirty because of what was done to you; the next time you think that everyone else is healthy, but you never will be; the next time you feel like there is no hope for you; remember this verse:

He will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17)

Think of how you hold a baby and sing to it, so amazed at how new and precious it is. That is how God thinks of you. He rejoices over you! So when you start having negative thoughts about your identity, replace it with that positive one.

3. I Was Created for Pleasure

You were made to feel sexual pleasure. Men usually have an easier time believing this because they tend to be guaranteed pleasure when they make love. In fact, that's what usually ends a sexual encounter—when he reaches orgasm. But women were also created for pleasure, and I can prove it.

If you're a woman, you have a clitoris, a little knob of flesh just in front of your vagina, which has no other purpose in the body except to bring pleasure. Guys don't have that. Their primary sexual organs are multi-functional. That's not true for us. In fact, God put more nerve ends in the clitoris than he did in the entire penis! So God gave us a little piece of our bodies that was made simply to feel good—very good.

If you're a woman and sex isn't feeling great for you yet, and if you have started to believe, "I will never have an orgasm", or "I can't see what all the fuss is about", or "Everyone else may like sex, but I never will", stop it. Don't say those things to yourself. Instead, say this,

I was created to feel pleasure.

It's true. And wouldn't you rather say something true to yourself than to say a lie?

Some women reading this may not have experienced a lot of pleasure before. That's okay. In the surveys that I took for my book, I found that the best years for sexual pleasure for married women are between years 16-20. If you've only been married for a while, then, know this: women get more orgasmic with time and practice. So instead of doubting, or worrying, or giving up, get excited!

And a word to the husbands: perhaps you've started to doubt that your wife can ever feel pleasure. You need to believe this truth as well: she was created to feel pleasure. And her body is capable of it. You just need to learn how to both get in the right frame of mind, how to nurture your relationship, and then how to move together physically. That may sound like a tall order, but it's a fun one. And it is not just possible; with the right frame of mind, it's probable!

4. I Was Created for Intimacy

Not only were we created to feel wonderful during sex; we were also created to feel intimate. Sex is supposed to unite us together not just with

our genitals, but also our hearts.

Unfortunately, sex often becomes something which is more pornographic than intimate. When we think of sex, we think of something almost impersonal. What's sexy is the idea of what our bodies are doing, not the idea of who we're doing it with.

That's a function of living in our society. We've taken sex out of the context of marriage and so it's become only physical. And then, once you get married, it's hard to make that mental switch so that sex becomes something so much more than just physical. Pornography just adds to the confusion.

If you're wondering if you'll ever be able to feel love, and not just arousal, when it comes to the bedroom, then repeat this to yourself:

I was created for intimacy.

And over this month I'm going to give you tools to experience that!

5. Sex is a Beautiful Thing

Sex is rather awkward. It's messy. You're all sweaty, and there's stuff to clean up afterwards. And sometimes it just doesn't seem, well, *proper*. And so it's easy for all too many of us to think, "sex is something we have to do to make babies, but it's really best not to dwell on it too much." Women, especially, like feeling in control, clean, and organized. Sex doesn't fit into that mold.

Maybe it's time to throw out the mold. Sex is supposed to be a little messy. Sex is supposed to make you vulnerable, and a little out of control. It's not supposed to be clinical!

But some of us were raised to think that it was something never to be spoken of or thought of, and then we get married, and that transition is really hard to make. And so we start to wonder if there really is something dirty or wrong with the whole thing.

That is another lie. I'm not saying you're bad for believing it; I'm just saying that it's holding you back.

When God finished creating Adam and Eve, He pronounced them, naked as jay birds, "very good". Sex is very good. So if you start doubting it, repeat

that, over and over:

Sex is beautiful. Sex is very good.

6. Sex Benefits Me

Finally, here's the most common one: **many of us have come to see sex as an obligation.** When we think about sex, we tend to think, "do I have to tonight?". We figure we *should*, because our spouses need it. If you're the spouse with the lower libido, you probably have come to see sex as one more thing on your to do list that makes your spouse aggravated at you—hardly a sexy thought.

But sex helps you, too! If you're really tired, sex will help you get to sleep faster and sleep more deeply. If you're anxious, making love will help calm you down. Making love boosts your immunity, makes you less depressed, and best of all, it makes you feel far more connected to your spouse.

Next time you think, "I guess I have to tonight, even if I don't want to", stop yourself, and replace it with this:

Sex helps ME.

I know many of you would like to move on to the nitty gritty of sex, and don't worry: we're going to get there really soon! But before we can work at making the practicalities of sex work wonderfully, we need to make sure that we're believing the right things about sex. Sex isn't magically going to work if you're still walking around feeling slightly dirty, embarrassed, guilty, or obligated. We need to get our heads in the game, because when our heads aren't there, our bodies won't follow.

Great Sex Challenge 2:

To do Individually:

If you start to say negative things about sex in your head, stop! Take those thoughts captive, and tell yourself the truth instead. Repeat it if necessary. And if you really want to make this challenge stick, journal some of the negative things you believe about sex, and then write the truth underneath. Sometimes just writing and thinking and praying helps us to see our own negative thought patterns, and then reject them.

To Do Together:

Talk about this question: Of all the lies listed today, which do you have the most trouble defeating? Have you given up hope that sex will ever feel good for you—or for your spouse? Do you still feel like sex is a little creepy, or wrong? Or do you see it mostly in pornographic rather than intimate terms? Talk about your roadblocks, and then talk about strategies that you can work on together so that when you slip into patterns of believing lies, your spouse can help you.

For instance, if your spouse has difficulty believing that sex can feel good, ask her (or him), when you start feeling hopeless, what can I do to help redirect you? Can I hug you and say, “You are created for pleasure, and one day we will get there, I promise?” Or can I say, “You are beautiful to me, and I love you, and you are meant for so much more?”

Alternatively, if he has trouble believing that one day he can feel like sex is intimate, rather than just pornographic, could she hug him and say, “You show me everyday in little things that you love me. You were created to love me in bed, and I know that we will get there.”

Talk about which affirmation would be most effective for the top lies that you each struggle with. And then start practicing them everyday!

Day 3: Embracing the Skin She's In

Women: Are you beautiful?

Even asking that question has probably laid a whole pile of guilt at your feet. You feel ugly. You feel too big. You don't measure up.

And guys, you may look at your wife and think she's beautiful, but I can practically guarantee that she doesn't think so. Everywhere she turns she sees images that she'll never measure up to. And so she feels ugly. And when we women feel ugly, we feel distinctly unsexy. So today's challenge is going to be about helping her celebrate the skin she's in!

Let's look first at the root of the problem. Women have always wanted to "Be the Beauty", as John and Stasi Eldredge say in their book *Captivating*. Men tend to be the ones who pursue; women tend to be the ones who are pursued. And so we have to have something about us that is worth pursuing in order to feel sexy! So beauty becomes important.

Add to that our culture's obsession with sex outside of a committed relationship, and beauty takes on even more of an exaggerated importance. When sex is taken outside of marriage, all that you have is physical attraction. And so "sexiness" becomes of vital importance. Even if you're married, and you do value the other aspects of sex, our culture's obsession with sexiness still impacts us.

Picture in your mind the covers of *Maxim* and *Cosmo*, for instance. *Maxim* is for men and *Cosmo* is for women. *Maxim* may be black and *Cosmo* pink, but other than that they're pretty much the same. Both feature semi-naked women looking as if they're on the prowl. This ideal of super-sexed voluptuous females has taken over.

Most of us, however, don't look like that. In fact, supermodels don't even look like that. They're all airbrushed. And so all women go through life feeling inferior. And when we don't feel sexy, it's hard to feel in the mood. Part of feeling sexy is feeling comfortable in our own skin, and many women are so embarrassed and ashamed of our bodies that we do our

utmost not to think about them. We hide them in oversized clothes, and try to ignore their cues. Anything that reminds us of our physical bodies also reminds us that we're inadequate. That's why we women often become quite dissociated from our bodies. We don't want to feel fat.

One of the most frustrating things for my husband was when he would proposition me, and I would reply, "I just don't feel attractive." His response: "if I want you, you are, by definition, attractive!" He was attracted to me. But I didn't feel attractive.

Note for Women:

Here's today's question: given that supermodels are photoshopped, and that our whole culture's emphasis on beauty is overkill, are we going to allow our culture to set our sexual self-esteem? Are we going to allow our culture to make us feel ugly—and thus rob us of the pleasure we're supposed to feel in marriage?

Ladies, if you're like me, you're tired of all the negative messages coming out of our media about how we should look. But if you're tired, then why not just say no? Tell yourself:

I will not let our culture dictate how I should think about my body. I was designed for pleasure—no matter what I look like—and I am going to feel it!

Ironically, as you embrace your body and accept it, it actually becomes easier to take care of it and lose some of the extra weight. Women who have more self-confidence have an easier time shedding pounds than those who don't. If you are packing an extra 60 or 80 pounds, then, the answer isn't to berate yourself about it. It's to embrace the body you do have and have as much fun with it as you can. Love your body, and you'll treat it better.

Note for Men:

Now, a word to you men for a moment: I receive many emails from women who say to me,

My husband is upset that my body doesn't look like it did before I had kids. He tells me that he's not attracted to me anymore. He doesn't want to hurt

me, but he feels like he should be honest. But I just can't lose the weight. What do I do?

Men, maybe your wife has gained some weight. She probably doesn't look like the women in movies or in magazines (although those women don't look like that, either). So here's your choice: you can further demoralize her and wreck her self-esteem, which will cause her to flee from sex even more, or you can embrace her, show her you love her, show her you want to have a great time with her, and boost her self-esteem.

And studies show that women who appreciate their bodies have a much easier time losing weight than women who feel lousy about their bodies.

You are in a unique position to help your wife get over her insecurities and embrace her body. Will you do it?

Challenge For Her:

Name the 5 Features you Like Best About Your Body. And you must name 5! 3 or 4 aren't good enough. All of us can name 5 that we hate; today, name 5 that you love. And don't ask your husband to help!

Once you've come up with the 5, share them with your husband, and ask him to give them some special attention. Then have some fun dressing up those parts of your body. Do you like your breasts? Stand naked in front of your husband, wearing nothing but a long, dangly necklace. Do you like your hips? Take some lipstick and draw a little heart tattoo to surprise your husband. Do you like your eyes? Put on some mascara. Have fun with your body. And for the next week, tell yourself, over and over again, "I love my breasts. I love my eyes. I have amazing feet." Let's say something positive, rather than something negative!

Challenge For Him:

Your wife is insecure. It doesn't matter if she looks like a supermodel to you or if she's packing an extra 100 pounds. She is insecure. All women are.

Today your goal is to help her feel beautiful. And that means that you need to commit to letting her be the beauty in your life. Your eyes must be entirely for her. Like Proverbs says, "Let her breasts satisfy you at all

times.” This isn’t directed at women—make sure you stay in shape so you’re always pretty! This is directed at men, married to women who are past their prime and who have nursed many babies. And it’s a command!

Sure lots of women are more attractive than your wife. But you are called to love your wife, not them. And she needs you to find her beautiful. Desperately.

So tonight, tell her what five things you love most about her body (after she has revealed her own list). Touch them. Tell her what’s so great about them. Show her that she makes you excited—even more excited than any supermodel. Touch her. Caress her. Reassure her. And show her that she is sexy!

Day 4: Pucker Up!

Do you remember your dreams of a first kiss? You watched all those after school specials on TV, and you could hardly wait until it happened to you. You pictured it. You practiced it in your mind. You imagined who it would be with. And in those heady days when you were pre-pubescent, kissing was likely as far as those fantasies went.

And then, for so many couples, you got married and kissing almost came to a halt.

I think it's because of a misunderstanding of what kissing is for. Men, for instance, often think kissing is foreplay—as in, it's necessarily going somewhere. Because many women *are reluctant to put a downpayment on something they may not want to purchase later*, so to speak, they stop kissing, so that he doesn't get the wrong idea.

Kissing then becomes something that she may actually avoid unless you're about to have sex. And he may avoid it, too, thinking that it's not really necessary except in the bedroom. But that's too bad, because kissing actually makes us women feel closer to our men! It's fun. It's intimate. And it grosses out the kids (in a good way).

Just because you're not sure you're going to want to make love in the evening is no reason to avoid kissing earlier in the day (now if you women always turn your husband down, that's a problem, but we're going to get to that later in this series). If you avoid kissing, then you deprive women of one of our primary ways to get your libido up—and almost guarantee she WON'T want to make love later.

Most couples only kiss today as foreplay—not throughout the day. Or if they do kiss, it's just a quick peck. So I want you to start kissing—really kissing—everyday!

Quick kissing tips:

* Saliva: some like it. Some don't. Find out what preference your spouse has (and tell your spouse yours!).

* Tongue: Same thing. Some really like it. Some don't. Keep it light! If your spouse is too tongue-happy, say, "Let me kiss you for thirty seconds and show you how I like it". And then do so enthusiastically!

* Breath mints are your friend. Have some in your purse and use them throughout the day. Toothbrushes are your friend, too!

* Use your hands. Caress your spouse's back, arms, head, or wherever you like!

* Savor it. Here's a tip especially for the guys: don't rush to turn kissing into something else. What will rev her engines is the romance of it. If you hurry things, and start groping her, or touching her breasts every time she walks by, or slip your hand under her shirt every time you kiss, chances are you'll turn her off. Think of kissing like an amazing appetizer before a meal. You don't gorge it down so you can get to the meal; you enjoy it for itself. So just kiss her! It helps her feel loved and wanted.

Great Sex Challenge Day 4:

Set the kitchen timer and kiss for at least 15 seconds straight. It's amazing how long 15 seconds actually seems. Start repeating this, everyday, during the day (not just at night while you're lying in bed). You'll find yourself feeling more warmly towards your spouse, and sex will feel a lot more intimate.

Day 5: Awaken Her Body

When I wrote this study, I decided that I should work on it, too. And I have to admit that Day 3 was a difficult challenge for me. I decided that if I was going to challenge you women to name five things they like about their bodies, I should play along, too. So I sat in bed with my husband and tried to come up with five. And it was surprisingly hard! Naming five things I hate is easy. But what are we actually proud of?

Many women just don't like our bodies, and because of that we're often disconnected from them. And if we're disconnected from our bodies, we aren't going to feel a whole lot of pleasure. That disconnect could be because we feel embarrassed about our bodies, or embarrassed about sex in general. It could be because you as a couple have never really figured out how to make sex feel good. And it could be because she's starting to doubt if she actually CAN feel good.

Today we're going to focus on reassuring her that her body can indeed feel pleasure, and showing him that he can actually provide that. While in movies people may grope each other and then fall into bed in rapturous pleasure automatically, most women don't work that way. They take far more time. But on the big screen arousal is instantaneous, and we women start to worry that there's something wrong us if two minutes of ripping off clothes isn't enough to arouse us. Men may start to wonder if their wives actually do enjoy sex at all.

For those of you who have seen *The Notebook*, you'll know that Allie, who's a virgin, has the best sex ever her first time out the gate. She makes mad passionate love with Noah, and everything goes so amazingly wonderfully. She orgasms. She feels great.

Women watch that sort of thing, and we think: *That's what sex is like for everyone but me. I'm a freak. I have to work so hard to feel aroused, and I'm not even sure that I can get aroused. It will never work for me.* And men watch that and may think: *what's wrong with my wife? Why doesn't she respond like that?*

Hold it right there.

Remember Day 2, when we talked about some of the lies we believe? And one of the most common lies for women is, “I will never feel pleasure”. It’s not true.

Women were made with body parts specifically designed to feel pleasure—and we’re going to talk about the clitoris more throughout the month. But just because women have that little body part does not mean that it gets stimulated enough in a few minutes to make sex wonderful. Movies are not accurate representation of reality.

Instead, here’s what happens with so many couples:

He fumbles a bit trying to make her feel good, but he may not know the right way to touch her, because men and women like to be touched differently. Men like a firm touch; women like it much more lightly. If a man touches a woman the way he wants to be touched, it’s not going to be pleasurable.

So he does that, and she’s too embarrassed to speak up. She thinks, “*I guess I just don’t like my breasts touched,*” or “*I guess I’m just not sensitive.*”

She gets increasingly anxious about why she’s not feeling pleasure, and so she tries to force herself.

That makes it even worse, because when we’re anxious, we can’t relax, and when we can’t relax, we won’t feel very good.

Are you on that vicious circle? Maybe you’re not, and you’re here for tips on how to make sex even more wonderful. It’s okay right now, but you’d like to ramp it up. That’s wonderful, and I think you’ll get a lot out of this month!

But some couples are having some serious problems in the bedroom, and going through these 31 days is a difficult process for you. I received this email when I was working through this series on my blog:

Sex has long been a really really hard part of my marriage since we got married. No matter what we’ve tried – it’s not getting better. It’s worse. Yesterday’s blog post about lies was painful. It felt like you’d listened in on

my internal monologue and aired it to everyone. I was really upset – and thankful.

I might have to make cue cards to remind me of the truths you shared.

I asked hubby to do this [series] with me. He jumped at the chance – because he knows how much of a struggle this is with me. And tonight we started.

Wow – we haven't talked like that in so long. It was amazing. Although we have a long way to go, thank you for making it possible for us to open the lines of communication.

Tonight, I want to cry because I feel like maybe, just maybe, there's hope I'll become the woman that God intends me to be, the woman that my DH prayed for, the woman I should be.

BTW, I couldn't think of 5. DH suggested some of his top parts, but I had a hard time accepting them. I really did. I could only come up with one. And that was a hard one to think of. It's much easier to like the inside me. The outside me – I don't know how. But thank you for making me think of it – to start looking at myself.

I'm so glad that she feels like they're finally able to communicate, and that there may be light at the end of the tunnel. Today I want to give you a challenge that will hopefully give both of you even more confidence and encouragement. Here's what you're going to do, and I'll give special instructions for him and for her afterwards:

Great Sex Challenge 5:

Light some candles, get a space heater to make sure your bedroom is comfortable, and put some massage oil on the bed. Now take a timer and set it for 15 minutes. For the next 15 minutes, while she lies still, he will explore her body, without any expectation that she will actually orgasm. And you can't make love! This isn't foreplay. This is just *play*. He can touch her where he wants. Now some special direction for both of you:

Challenge for Her:

* If he's doing it too roughly, tell him gently (or take his hand and show him how to do it better).

* If it honestly is giving you the willies (if you have anxiety from previous abuse, for instance) you can ask him to move on to a different body part—but you must let him keep touching you!

* Do your utmost to concentrate on what he's doing. Don't worry about the timer. Don't worry that he's grossed out, or that he doesn't want to do this, or that he thinks this is silly. Instead, I want you to think specifically about what he's doing. Pay attention to your body. And start asking yourself, "what wants to be touched now?" That may sound silly, but I'm asking you to do it not to issue him a report card. Instead, it's because if you ask yourself the question, "where does my body want to be touched?", you start paying attention to what your body is feeling. And you may just realize you *do* want to be touched!

* Don't worry about having an orgasm! Honestly. Sometimes the reason we can't experience pleasure is that we get too goal oriented. Just relax and treat it like a gift.

* Since he's probably going to be pretty worked up afterwards, you can always make love "for him", if you'd like. Get on top and give him a gift where he doesn't have to worry about you feeling good. The purpose here is to get away from anything goal oriented, and just learn that your body can, indeed, feel something. And that's easier to do when there's no pressure and when you're relaxed!

* It could be that you're really nervous, and you have a hard time relaxing during those fifteen minutes. Try it in the bathtub if that's easier. And if this first time doesn't go well, don't fret. Sometimes we need to repeat this exercise a few times before we start feeling good. Use lots of massage oil and encourage your husband to concentrate on your legs and back, too, only slowly working his way to your more traditional erogenous zones, if you're really nervous. The goal is to learn to relax and to learn to just FEEL. And if that takes a couple of sessions, that really is okay.

Challenge For Him:

* Start slowly. Don't go straight for her breasts or her clitoris. Rub her back, or the backs of her thighs. It's usually much more arousing if you build up to something than if you launch straight in, especially if she's nervous.

* Don't let her turn this into something for you! If she's nervous about feeling good, or about getting all this attention, she may try to say, "that's enough, now let's make love!" Don't give in. Give her the full 15 minutes. Many women are embarrassed or scared to truly feel their bodies. Give your wife this gift.

* This is the hardest part: agree in your heart and mind before you start that tonight may not go anywhere else. Yes, she may want to make love afterwards. But the best gift you can give her is to say, "there are no expectations. I want this night to be for you." And then touch her without expecting or demanding anything else. For so many women sex has become an obligation, and that is *not* sexy. The purpose of this exercise is to help her see that her body can actually experience pleasure, too. If you turn this into an obligation, you risk this lesson (if she decides to do something else, of course, that's fine, but don't expect it). And don't worry; your turn is coming! But let tonight be her gift and her awakening, even if it's frustrating for you.

Day 6: Appreciate His Body

We've been looking at how to help her feel sexy, since she can't feel sexual if she doesn't feel sexy. But what about him?

Body image doesn't have quite the hold on men as it does on women, but it still matters. And many men naturally wonder if their wives find them attractive at all, especially if their wives have lower sex drives than he does. Does she really want me?

A Note to Wives

Maybe his body has changed. He made your knees wobbly when you married him, but the years have taken their toll. And now it's hard to look at him and say, "hubba hubba!" And he senses this. He's worried about it, too.

Certainly women are held to a ridiculous standard of beauty, but increasingly men are, too. We watch movies like The Bourne trilogy, where a great looking guy with major muscles can take out any bad guy with a simple chop to the neck. Our guy, on the other hand, is sitting beside us on the couch, watching the movie while balancing a bowl of chips on a beer belly.

Look, ladies, if we're going to complain about how women always feel like we have to live up to a crazy ideal, then let's not ask the same of our men! Watch where your eyes go. I've seen many married women on Pinterest, for instance, who keep a "board" of "eye candy", or good looking male stars. That isn't acceptable. You're married, and you should rejoice in your husband, not in anyone else.

Maybe your husband is a little heavier now, and he isn't in the same shape as he was when you walked down the aisle towards him. But over the time you've had together you've also shared memories, intimacies, and confidences. You've built a life together. And sex is more than physical; it also unites us emotionally and spiritually, too. Let's concentrate on that amazing connection, and maybe the fact that he's gained some weight won't matter so much.

Recently, though, a commenter did mention that sex was really a challenge because her husband was heavy, and she didn't like feeling like she was

suffocating. Very good point.

If your husband is heavy, try being on top! That gives you more control, too, so you can line up the position better and hopefully find it more pleasurable (more on that later this month).

Remember, too, that even in marriages where the husband keeps a rock solid body, that infatuation feeling does fade. We won't always feel weak-kneed at our husbands. What becomes attractive and sexy doesn't need to be six pack abs; it could simply be that you know he loves you and protects you, and that he spends time figuring out how to make you feel good. A lover who is interested in making you feel pleasure is much better than one who may look awesome but who doesn't learn how your body works.

So spend some time tracing his body, but encourage him to trace yours, too. Let him figure out how you work (and maybe you need to figure that out yourself). Because if he can learn to play you like a violin, then any extra weight won't really be such a big deal!

A Note to Husbands

Sex is more than physical; it does unite us emotionally and spiritually, too. And women are far more emotionally tuned into sex than they are visually tuned into sex. They really do approach sex differently than the way most men do. If you have a close relationship, usually the libido still falls into place.

Nevertheless, there are some things that you can do to help. Both spouses owe it to each other to work on their appearance. If your body belongs to your wife, and hers to you, then you should be keeping it in good shape. So watch what you eat, and get out and get moving, even if it's only taking a walk after dinner. Packing an extra forty pounds is one thing; packing an extra 120 is another. You can still have a good sex life, but the loving thing to do, for both of you, is to treat your body well.

Also, present your body nicely to your wife. You may enjoy her wearing lingerie; the biggest turn on she may have is soap. Or toothpaste. So make it a habit of jumping in the shower after a long day at work, or brushing your teeth well before bed.

And finally, like I said to the women, what really makes a man a good lover is how he treats his wife in bed, not what his ab muscles look like. It doesn't matter what your body is like; you can still make her feel wonderful. So set that as your goal! If you're on the heavier side, make sure that you hold your weight on your forearms if you're on top, or that you encourage her to be on top. And when you do make love, use lots of foreplay and get to know her body really well. Show her affection, and take time giving her pleasure. That's what will boost her libido!

Great Sex Challenge 6:

Ladies, share with your husband what you find sexy about him. Earlier this month you had to name five things you loved about your own body; now name 5 sexy things about your hubby. They don't all need to be physical (I find my husband's job kinda sexy, and I find his voice sexy), but come up with five things—and some should be physical! Share them your hubby, and then explore his body and make him believe it.

Day 7: Understanding Each Other's Sexual Drives

Is that all he ever thinks about? Will she just stop bugging me?

Libido differences are the biggest source of conflict when it comes to sex. One spouse wants sex more than the other. Then one spouse starts to feel like they're begging, and the other spouse starts to feel like sex has become an obligation.

Usually it's the woman who feels like sex is an obligation, and the man who feels like he's begging. But that's not always the case. In the surveys I did when I wrote [The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#), I found that in about one quarter of all marriages the woman actually has the higher sex drive. She's the one who's begging.

Today we're going to try to put ourselves in the shoes of the higher libido spouse, and understand why sex is so important to him or her. I'm going to speak in generalities here, as if it's the husband who wants sex more. If it's actually reversed for you, then just switch around what I've written so it fits with your experience. I'm not trying to leave anyone out; it's just that it's easier to use "he" and "she" pronouns than to always say "him or her".

So what happens when you're the lower libido spouse? Many women feel as if sex is an obligation. If only he didn't want it so much, all the problems would go away. But he's sex-obsessed, which makes me always feel guilty. And that's why sex has become a problem.

Or if it's him with the lower libido, he may think, "why is she always pressuring me? Does she think I'm not enough of a man for her? What is wrong with her, anyway?" We start defining the problem as *my spouse wants it too much*.

Let's try looking at it in a different way.

Here's how I often explain it: **men make love to feel loved, while women need to feel loved to make love**. It seems like a recipe for disaster! But perhaps it makes sense. For us each to get our deepest need met, we have to

reach out to the other. It's one of God's primary vehicles through which marriage brings holiness; it teaches us to think about the other.

I think women have a tendency to think that we are the superior sex, because we care about important things, like relationships, while men care about shallow things, like breasts. But let's not forget that this is the way that men were made, and it is for a purpose. Men like to feel as if they can chase a woman and win her. It's part of their identity. When we don't let him "win" us, then he starts to feel like there's something wrong with him.

So what do you do? Recognize that the circle works both ways. Yes, when we're tired, and we say no, he feels distant. That makes him avoid us, which makes us angry and guilty, which drives a wedge. But when you're tired, and you say yes, he feels close to us. That makes him release oxytocin (the bonding hormone), which makes him feel lovey-dovey towards us. That helps us sleep well, and then the next day he's often much more affectionate.

If you long to feel close to your spouse, then, the power is in your hands. I think what many of us women want is for our husbands to love us and act all affectionate EVEN IF we don't make love, and in an ideal world, perhaps they would be able to. But that's asking an awful lot of a guy. Sex is so tied up in his ability to feel loved, that you're basically saying to him: *"I want you to shower me with affection and love me completely even if I don't show you any love at all."* That's rough.

So today's challenge is to change the way we look at sex. Let's stop:

- * Thinking that our husbands (or our wives, if they have the higher libido) are pathetic for wanting sex so much, because they were made that way.
- * Thinking that life would be better if sex didn't interfere, because sex bonds us together (there are even hormones for that!)
- * Thinking that we are morally superior for liking to cuddle, because we need to recognize that we were simply made with different priorities
- * Thinking that he should make the first move and show us affection regardless of whether or not we have sex (because then we're setting up an unfair double standard).

Here's how we're going to do that: we're going to reverse the exercise from Day 5. I asked the husband to touch his wife to show her that she could feel pleasure. Today I challenge the wife to make him lie still while she spends at least 15 minutes feeling him and touching him, any way she wants to. Shower him with some sexual attention! He'll feel really loved!

But here's something else: she'll feel really powerful. Sometimes we women become passive in bed, letting him make most of the moves. Then we miss out and don't see what effect we can actually have on our guys! Take that 15 minutes and look at how you can reduce him to a whimpering mess as he begs you for some release. That's power, girls. And that's how much he wants you.

At the end of those 15 minutes, you can do whatever you like (or he may have some very definite ideas of something he'd like to do). But take the full time to just touch him, because men are often so worried about whether or not their wives feel pleasure, that to have a sexual interlude dedicated simply to making them feel good takes the pressure off and puts them on Cloud Nine.

And if it's the husband in the relationship that has the lower libido, this can also be an important challenge, because it can help build your intimacy and help ignite his sex drive. For both of us, libido is largely a "use it or lose it" phenomenon. The longer you go without sex, the harder it is to feel aroused. But the more we make love, the easier arousal becomes. Our bodies become accustomed to it. If the husband, then, rarely wants sex, then spending some time reawakening his body can start to rev those engines.

To sum up, here's your challenge:

Great Sex Challenge 7:

Ladies, explore your husband's for fifteen minutes straight, without letting him move! Concentrate on how his body responds, on what he likes, and on the effect you have on him. Watch how he feels really loved during this—and try to start seeing that desire he has for you as a very positive thing.

Day 8: Hitting the Reset Button on Your Sex Life

Do you need a reset button for your sex life?

The emphasis during this first week of our 31-Day Challenge is to start seeing sex in a new way. Next week we'll turn to how to have more fun as a couple, but this week we're laying down the fundamentals: becoming affectionate again, getting rid of the lies we believe, dealing with our insecurities, seeing our spouses in a different light.

Sometimes, though, that's not enough. Some of us have trunkloads of sexual baggage—whether it's lies that we've believed, or abuse that we've suffered, or even things that we've done that we're not proud of. Maybe we had some sexual partners before we were married, and we wish we could get them out of our heads. Maybe at one point one or both of you were into porn. Maybe you even have a hard time getting over what you know your spouse did before you were married.

Today we're going to symbolically hit the reset button on our sex life. What went on before doesn't matter.

Embrace Your New Identity

In Genesis 3:24 God said, “for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” When you're married, you became something new. What happened before does not matter; you are a new identity together now.

This can be difficult to accept, especially if you have been really hurt sexually in the past through abuse or sexual assault. For many people, sex seems dirty, and seeing it as something beautiful and new seems insurmountable. But I do not believe that God wants you to allow that person, or persons, to rob you of the abundant life and abundant marriage He has prepared for you. He wants you to achieve healing! So pray with your spouse that you can see sex as very different today than it was then. Make an appointment to talk to a counselor or a pastor if this is a longstanding problem, because we aren't meant to deal with everything alone.

Forgive Each Other

Sometimes, though, our problems don't predate marriage. We messed up after we walked down the aisle. Perhaps it's as damaging as an affair, or perhaps it's dabbling in pornography. These things break trust horribly with a spouse, and make intimacy so much more difficult to obtain.

You must deal with these things honestly, and that includes putting some accountability in place. It is not just enough to say, for instance, "I used to use porn a lot, but I promise not to again, just please don't tell anyone else about it." If you are truly sorry, then you will get accountability.

We are not meant to struggle through this life alone. And if you have been tempted by porn, or an emotional affair, or an actual affair, you need a same-sex accountability partner. You don't have to tell everyone under the sun, but telling one person is a way to show your spouse that you're serious about moving on and changing.

Once you've done this, however, the ball is now in your spouse's court. If your husband or wife has broken trust, at some point you will have to forgive, or you cannot move on. There really is nothing that he or she can do to make it up to you. It's not fair, but that's how it is. And so Jesus asks, "can you let me pay the price instead?" You will never achieve true intimacy until you also extend forgiveness. Once your spouse has set up accountability systems, it is now up to you to forgive and move on.

Take Every Thought Captive

We don't have to entertain every thought that comes into our heads. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, "*and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*" When you have a thought, take it out, examine it, and then dismiss it if it doesn't line up with truth.

So if you're haunted by memories of abuse, learn to take those thoughts out and reject them. If you're haunted by thoughts of what your spouse has done, learn how to throw them out, too. You don't have to rehash everything multiple times. And that also means that you don't need to know in detail everything your spouse did, either. Asking for specifics so that you have more vivid visual pictures isn't going to help, and it's also going to hurt your spouse as your spouse tries to move forward.

What may help you, especially if the issue is that you're haunted by what your spouse may have done before you were married with someone else (or after you were married through an affair), is to affirm this truth:

Making love is not a matter of understanding everything about sex; it's understanding everything about each other. And it's about how two people work together. What we have is unique and beautiful, and doesn't warrant being compared with anything else.

Even if your spouse was married previously, you need to remember that sex is not something that is interchangeable with any two people; what you have is unique because you both are unique. And that's a good thing! So don't focus on "did he enjoy it more before?" or "did she like it better with him?" Focus on, "we are unique and beautiful together."

Great Sex Challenge 8:

Pray through your reset together. Ask for forgiveness if you need to, and offer forgiveness if you need to. Thank God that you are both new creations and "one flesh" now. And here's the fun part: Have a special dinner where you commit to starting over. Then make your reset visible! Buy new bedding (or commit to buying new bedding soon if you're reading this at night). Change the position of the bed in your bedroom. Buy new candles or new pillows. Do something different so that you can see "we are different now".

It may even help add some humor to this struggle by getting a "buzzer" that you can hit whenever you bring up past hurts or baggage. Some board games, like Taboo, have buzzers. Keep one in your bedside table. From now on, if you feel antsy and like you're being drawn back into old arguments or old suspicions or old hurts, dig out that buzzer and say, "I need to hit this reset button again!" And then hit it, shake it off, laugh, and start again.

Time Out #1

The last few days have been BIG challenges (don't worry; the next few days aren't quite as intense). And I know some of you have problems with them. When running this series on my blog, one woman left this comment after Day 7:

This one seems impossible for me. I have a history of abuse – guys forcing me to touch them – and so I have this aversion to touching my husband sexually. I enjoy sex, but I don't do much touching during it. Will I ever get through this?

Other women emailed me saying that they found it really scary to ask their husbands to touch them for fifteen minutes. It meant being so vulnerable.

But then there were others who have already experienced breakthroughs, like this woman:

The kissing thing has been a big issue in our lives because my hubby had a lot of problems with his teeth so we just did not do it. So when he got his teeth worked on we just were not doing it anymore. I always missed it but any time I brought it up we ended up fighting. So I was a little nervous when the blog about kissing came up. But we did it and last night we kissed like we haven't kissed in years. I am about to start crying while I type this. It was so wonderful and I feel closer to my husband today than I have in forever. It just opened something up in me. And as a side note, it did lead to the first big O I have had in about 6 months.

Thank you and can't wait to see what is in store for the rest of the month.

Some of you working through these 31 Days are just looking for a tune up, or a way to turn the knob up from 9 to a 10. That's wonderful! But a lot of you have some major issues when it comes to sex, either because you've brought baggage into your marriage, or because marriage has given you baggage. It's the one area you fight about a lot, and it's just never clicked. And you find yourself really worried about whether you can get better.

That's why today I want to give you a time out to get some perspective, relax, and take stock.

I firmly believe that with most things in life what matters is not so much where we are but the direction that we are going. If you have enjoyed a great sex life in the past, but right now you barely talk to each other and you're super busy, you're probably in worse shape than a woman who has never experienced an orgasm but who is enthusiastic about trying to work through any issues that are there and trying to connect with her husband. In the long run, the person with the right attitude and goals will come out better than the person who started in a better place but isn't putting in the effort to maintain anything.

So the purpose during these 31 days is not to compare yourself to anyone else, and it's not to force yourself to achieve something. **It's instead simply to start moving in the right direction.** This is the fork in the road, and you've decided to walk along the road that will bring you closer to real intimacy you can enjoy on all levels. That doesn't mean you're going to arrive—nor do you have to! But you're going in that direction.

Here, then, are some things to remember to make this 31-Day Challenge really work for you:

1. Don't be Goal-Oriented. Be Direction Oriented.

You want to feel more relaxed, more confident, and more positive about sex. Not COMPLETELY relaxed, COMPLETELY confident, or COMPLETELY positive about sex. Don't put pressure on yourself. Just commit to keeping an open mind, a positive attitude, and an "I'll try anything once" spirit!

2. Adapt to Fit Your Circumstances

After Day 7 I told the woman who had emailed about being abused in the past to change the challenge so that instead of sexually stimulating her husband, she just got used to enjoying feeling him naked—even if all she was doing was giving him a massage. You know yourself best; if you have to adapt, adapt.

But do TRY to do the challenges, because what you'll find is that the way I've set them up, they're not as intimidating. I'm not trying to get you to do a particular thing; I'm more trying to urge you to explore. With the Day 7 challenge, for instance, she was the one in control, which is much less scary

for many women with baggage. If she can be in control, and she sets the parameters, it's sometimes easier to understand how something can be enjoyable!

One more thing: sometime this month she's going to get her period. That may mean that you choose to forego the challenges over those days, or you can choose to keep reading and trying (not all of them, after all, involve intercourse!). Whatever happens, don't fret about it. This isn't a race. You haven't fallen behind.

3. Be Patient with Your Spouse

If your spouse isn't embracing this as much as you would like, or is acting nervous, be patient. You can't force intimacy. And many of us do have genuine baggage that is holding us back. Gentleness is the best way to deal with that baggage. Exasperation or impatience often drives people further away.

If your spouse is struggling, keep reassuring him or her of your love and acceptance and dedication to making sure that you BOTH feel intimacy in your marriage. And you can start by showing patience now. So, yes, please try to do the projects. But reassure your spouse that you can take your time, and that you can ease into it.

And remember: marriage is a lifetime commitment! You have time to get this right.

Now, if you're ready to go on to another challenge tonight, by all means start Day 9. But if you've been struggling, it may be a better idea to redo one of the previous ones—especially the touching ones--or just spend the night snuggling, before you start something else!

Heads up: The next challenge includes some ideas that you do during the day, so it may be best to read it together in the morning.

Days 9-12

Laughter

(Emotional Intimacy)

Day 9: 14 Ways to Play as a Couple

When my oldest daughter was 8, she asked what I wanted for Christmas. When I didn't mention any toys, she felt so sorry for me. "Why don't you like to play anymore, Mommy?"

That's a good question. Why do we stop playing? Maybe Polly Pockets and Barbies aren't your cup of tea, but laughing and giggling and joking should be—because it's good for the marriage, and the soul!

Up until now we've been looking at some of the roadblocks to enjoying a good sex life, and for many of you this has brought up issues of low self-esteem, baggage from sexual pasts, and more.

So today, before we get to more "sexual" challenges, I want to address something at the root of many of our marriage problems: we stop having fun together. And when we stop having fun, marriage becomes so, well, *serious*.

It is ever so much easier to address problems in our marriages—whether they're related to sex, or parenting, or finances, or time, or whatever—if we also find time to laugh together. **A couple that is laughing together is also a couple who enjoys being together, and who will find navigating all the difficulties of marriage much easier.**

So today I want to present you with a list of 14 ways to play together as a couple. These aren't necessarily sexual—although you can certainly put a sexual spin on them if you want to. Later in the week we'll look at how to flirt together, but today I just want to focus on laughter—and laughter inspired by physical fun. When we have "physical" fun together, the more sexual fun often follows.

Before you launch into these "play" ideas, though, set the mood. If you're wanting to have fun with your spouse, make sure he or she is in the right frame of mind, and knows there's something playful coming. Don't just spring something on your spouse when he or she is worried about work or preoccupied. Send texts throughout the day, kiss lots when you're home, and laugh a lot beforehand. Then go for it, like this:

1. Have a waterfight.

When you do the dishes, flick some water on your spouse, and see what happens! Or, to turn it up a notch, give each other water guns, and go for it! (May work better when it's not winter for those of us in the Great White North).

2. Throw a Snowball

If snow is plentiful, text your spouse to warn him or her to be on guard when he or she pulls in the driveway tonight. Then set up an ambush! And you can ask the kids to join in the fun, too. Physical play doesn't have to exclude the kids, and having all of you laugh together while you end up breathless still is a great preview of what could happen later that night.

3. Wrestle

I often win wrestling matches, because we make a deal. I have to move my husband (if he's standing) or push him off the bed (if he's lying down). He's not allowed to use anything to stop me except his body and perhaps two fingers. I can do anything I want. And even with those concessions, I still can't move him! But he laughs so hard that he often loses.

But sometimes I let him win quickly, because what hubby doesn't like to get his wife pinned down? We always have fun with it and it almost always leads to "other" things.

4. Pillow fight!

Ambush your spouse on the way out of the bathroom with a pillow. Then run while he or she goes to get one to hit you back!

5. "Pie in the Face"

Eating chocolate cake tonight? Or making chocolate cake? Smear it on him—and be prepared for it to be returned—just like in this scene from the movie *Family Man*, which you can see here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByWtvp02v-A>

6. Act Out a Scene From a Movie

Speaking of movies, my friend J from the blog Hot, Holy and Humorous (<http://hotholyhumorous.com>) recommends acting out dancing scenes or

romantic scenes from movies. She says, “turn off the sound, and have the two of you provide the audio. See what fun or sexy lines you can come up with!” Or take the approach that Steve Carrell and Tina Fey did in the movie *Date Night*: when you’re out in public, watch a couple talking and make up dialogue for them, or a funny scenario of what they’re doing together. Just laugh!

7. Dance

Turn your kitchen floor or your living room floor into a dance floor! Turn up the music and dip and swing to your heart’s content! Even if you don’t know what you’re doing, moving together can lead to lots of laughs.

Gina Parris from [Winning at Romance](#) agrees. “Have you SEEN Dancing with the Stars? Whew. We’d hate to have all that erotic energy wasted on some silly competition. Get in the game!” So watch some clips and try to copy them. You’ll either roll around on the floor from laughter or from something else!

8. Box

If you own a Wii system, try the boxing game! You’ll raise your heart rate, and she may just be able to knock him out! Then try to wrestle in real life and see who really is stronger.

9. Hit The Courts

Play squash, badminton, tennis, or another racquet sport. Make him play with his left hand (or right hand if he’s left-handed) if he’s a lot better (or make her play handicapped if she’s awesome!).

10. Play Solitaire to the Death

You’ll be slapping down those cards so hard you’ll work up a sweat! Winner gets something of their choice—could be something sexual, or something like getting out of doing the dishes, or getting to take a bath while the other puts the kids in bed.

11. Indoor Volleyball—in the Buff!

Blow up some balloons and play volleyball over the bed—while you’re nude!

12. Tickling Contest

Who will cry uncle first?

13. Turn Chores into a Game

One of my followers on my Facebook page gave me this idea:

When we change the sheets on the bed, we have a race to see who can finish putting the pillowcase on the pillow and get the pillow on the bed in its place first. We do things like hide the opponent's pillowcase, throw pillows downstairs, grab opponent's pillow, yank the pillowcase off and toss it in the hall, lock each in the bathroom, and wrestle each other for our own pillowcase that the other is hoarding, hiding or trying to throw out the window. Much laughter, much tickling, much running through the house and acting like children. It's fun!

14. Food Fight

Finally, there's the staple from the high school cafeteria: food fight. If you're cooking with your hubby, and you "accidentally" get flour on his nose, what will he do back?

There's something about play fighting that often ends in an embrace, and isn't that most of the fun?

Today's challenge is really simple:

Great Sex Challenge 9:

Play! Pick an item—and do it!

Heads up: The next challenge includes some ideas that you do during the day, so it may be best to read it together in the morning—or read it tomorrow night, assuming that you'll do it the next day.

Day 10: Preparing for Sex Throughout the Day

I hope you all had fun yesterday going over fourteen ways to play as a couple! All of those things will make intimacy more natural. Now we've got ourselves thinking in the right direction, and laughing together to smooth over issues and increase goodwill. But what about actually getting in a frisky frame of mind?

For most men that's not much of a challenge. You just start thinking about sex and you're ready to go!

For many women, though, the mere thought of sex isn't enough to rev our engines, especially if there are other things on our minds. That's why it's important to lay the groundwork so that when you are together at night, sex seems like an attractive proposition.

Today, then, I'm going to talk mostly to the wives, though I will have some special words of wisdom to the guys at the end, too. However, if you are a guy with a lower libido than your wife, then I'd recommend reading through some of these and applying those you can to your life, too (and excuse me for using feminine pronouns! Just switch them in your head).

Getting in the right frame of mind doesn't mean that you have to be actively thinking about sex throughout the day. No one wants to be trying to get excited while talking to the boss, or while taking toddlers out on a walk. That seems kind of, well, *icky*.

But there's more to being sexual than just thinking or fantasizing. There's also feeling comfortable in your own skin, feeling comfortable with your spouse, and getting rid of roadblocks to enjoying sex tonight. Here's a game plan to help you use your day well:

1. Prepare Your Body

I live in the Great White North, where there are two seasons: winter and construction. And winter is substantially longer, so many northern gals throw those razors away in the winter. What's the point in shaving when no one can see your legs anyway?

No one, that is, except you and your husband. And let's face it: how sexy are you going to feel with "man legs"? Honestly, it doesn't take that long to shave (if you do shave; if you don't, that really is okay). But if you're someone who shaves in summer and feels good about it, and then you stop in the winter, how sexy do you think you'll feel when in the middle of January when you're nude? There's something about shaving that can make us feel pretty and prepared. So don't let yourself get too hairy! (If you never do shave, then the hairiness probably won't matter as much to you because you're used to it. But if you start shaving and then stop, you'll feel distinctly unattractive when you let yourself go).

So make your body itself feel great! Shave and use lots of lotion to keep your skin soft and smooth. When you feel better in your skin, you'll enjoy feeling skin on skin far more.

2. Prepare Your Clothes

Kiss frump good-bye. Even if you are dedicated to modesty, that doesn't mean you need to be dedicated to frumpy. Wear clothes that make you feel attractive and that flatter your shape—whatever shape that is! If you think it's impossible, start watching episodes of *What Not to Wear*. They can dress any body shape and the women always end up looking incredible. If you just don't have clothes that make you feel confident, then go buy some. It is better to have six outfits that make you feel amazing than it is to have 50 T-shirts and 7 pairs of mom jeans that make you feel dowdy.

If you spend your day looking and feeling attractive, it will boost your confidence level at night. And don't forget our Day 3 Challenge from last week: concentrate on those five areas of your body that you're proud of. Don't think about the things you don't like about your body; think about the things you do.

I personally think I have nice feet. Feet may not normally be the first thing people think of when they think "pretty", but I like my feet. And so I'm going to make more of an effort to pamper my feet and put on some nice toenail polish, because it makes me feel prettier.

So dress your body attractively, and play up those features that you love!

Note to the guys: You can still boost your libido by feeling more attractive and more like a man, too! Try to ditch the sloppy T-shirts at night and buy some attractive pyjamas. When you get home from work, especially if you work at an active job, head to the shower first and suds up and brush your teeth. When you're clean, she'll be more receptive, and you'll feel more like it, too.

3. Carve Out Some “Me” Time

One of the biggest impediments to female libido is exhaustion. When I took surveys of 2000 women for my [Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#), the number one thing that women reported that was wrecking their sex lives was simply being tired. When we feel like everybody is hanging off of us and everything is on our plates, we're going to absolutely crave time to ourselves. And when do we take that time? When the kids are in bed—right when we could be being romantic with your husband!

If you just need 45 minutes on your own everyday, find a way to build it into your routine. It honestly is okay to stick the kids in front of a video for 45 minutes so you can work on a scrapbook page if you have to. It is more important to have a great marriage than it is to spend every waking minute stimulating your children. If you work outside the home, don't have lunch with co-workers if you can help it. If you need time just to read a novel, then read a novel.

Make a list of some things which would help to center you and make you feel sane—whether it's doing a hobby for half an hour, or reading a book, or soaking in a bath, or going for a jog. And now figure out: how can I make this a reality? If you can take that time to yourself during the day, you really will be more rejuvenated at night.

If you just can't see where that time is going to come from, then talk to your hubby and explain why you need it. Maybe he'll volunteer to put the kids in bed just so that you can take a bubble bath!

Note to the guys: This is just as important if you have a high-stress job during the day. Try to resist the urge to bring work home, or, if you have to, put a time limit on it. And don't let that time limit be, “I'll stop at bedtime”. Stop a good two hours before you plan to turn in with your wife, so that you have some time to decompress. One of the leading causes of low libidos is

high stress. When you're stressed, you're not as productive. Carving out time to relax is key to your productivity at work, but also to your intimacy in marriage.

4. Plan Regular Times to Imagine Sex

Women don't tend to have biological cues that remind us about sex the way men do. Men are very visually oriented, and so even if they don't mean to think about sex, when they see a pretty woman their minds often turn that way. And if they haven't had sex in a while, their body actually feels it. Most women don't experience this.

So you need a reminder, or a trigger, to think sexy! What about choosing one common activity, or one trigger point, that makes you smile or think about the last great encounter you had? Say, every time you do the dishes, you think about your favorite sexual memory. Or perhaps every time you're at a Stop sign, or every time you hear a siren. Then you can even text your husband and say, "Remember when...."

5. Sleep

This may not sound very exciting, but it is awfully important: get some shut eye! If exhaustion is a big culprit in killing our libidos, then we have to treat sleep seriously. Most of us need at least 8 hours of sleep. If the kids wake you up at 6:30, or if your alarm for work goes off at 6:30, then you need to be getting to sleep at 10:30. That's getting to sleep—not crawling into bed and turning on the TV in your bedroom, or playing on Facebook, or even having sex. It means lights out—which also means that you should be crawling into bed closer to 9:45 if you want to have some cuddle and talk and fun time with your spouse.

Great Sex Challenge 10:

Challenge for Her:

Put all that together, and what do you have? Spend your morning making sure you feel attractive. Find some me time throughout the day. Think about sex, even if it's just fleeting—a few times regularly throughout the day. And then make sure you get some sleep at night, so that you don't collapse when you are together. That's a lot of things for one challenge, so what I'd

suggest is that you pick one or two that you know would really help you, and decide to implement them tonight—or tomorrow.

Challenge for Him:

Feeling attractive and feeling energetic are two keys to a woman's sex drive. If she feels frumpy and if she feels tired, it really doesn't matter how much she loves you; she likely will not feel overly sexy. So help her out here! If she needs new clothes to make her feel pretty, make that a priority in your budget. Even just one or two outfits can make a huge difference. And if she needs time to herself, help her figure out a way to get it.

Finally, prioritize sleep. Don't watch TV in your bedroom too late and keep her awake. And don't watch TV or play video games yourself until midnight, and then hope that she's still energetic. Think about making love as an early evening activity, if your work schedule allows it (or a morning activity if necessary!). Work together at helping her get rid of some roadblocks for making love, and you'll find you both feel more confident and feel more intimate.

Day 11: Show Affection

Remember our 15-second kiss a day? I hope you're still smooching away! It's so important to help us feel connected.

Now we've talked about how to play together, and how to think and prepare for sex throughout the day. Tomorrow we're going to turn to how to flirt! But before we get there, let's talk about affection.

For most men, sex is the need, and affection is the choice. For most women, affection is the need and sex is the choice.

Really think about that statement for a moment. Whichever one is your biggest need, realize that your spouse feels the need for the other with exactly the same intensity.

One of the problems in our culture is that affection has largely been separated from sex. Sex is no longer about a connection between two people as much as it is about a quest for an orgasm (not that there's anything wrong with orgasms!). But it becomes about the body, and not about the soul, or the relationship, or the love. And for women, especially, that's a stretch. If sex in your marriage has become something which is tacked on at the end of a day when you didn't touch, didn't say sweet words to each other, and didn't laugh together, then it can easily feel as if you are being used.

But women also need to understand that men may have difficulty showing affection when they do not feel loved. And to a man, a big part of feeling loved is knowing that his wife desires him and wants him.

We're going to be working throughout this month on how to turn the notch up on our sex lives. But I think it's fitting to first turn the notch up on affection, because affection really conveys the message: *I cherish you*. Sex, then, is not only about the joining of two bodies; it becomes about the joining of two hearts.

Here are some ideas of how to be affectionate with one another:

Take a Hand

Whenever you're walking with each other, or sitting beside each other, hold hands.

Touch

As you walk by each other, make it a habit to reach out and brush a shoulder, or pat an arm, or ruffle some hair. Especially if your spouse's love language is touch, it's so important to reach out and make that quick connection—a connection that isn't overtly sexual!

Say Kind Things

When my husband and I speak at marriage conferences, my husband tells the story of a couple who had been married for 45 years. In desperation one day the wife announced they needed counseling. He was flabbergasted. "Why?" he asked. She replied, "You never talk to me. You never touch me. I don't even think you love me anymore." He rolled his eyes and replied, "Look, on our wedding day I told you that I loved you. If that ever changes, I will let you know."

Don't be like that guy. Make it a habit, every day, to tell your wife you love her.

And women, make it a habit, everyday, to tell your husband WHY you love him. Don't just say, "I love you." Say, "I appreciate so much how you provide for the family," or "the way you play with Jeffy makes me so happy. He loves you so much," or "the way you handled that disagreement at church made me so proud to be your wife." Note the things that he does well, and tell him what those things are.

That's it. Just hold hands, touch, and say kind things. It's amazing how those three little things can change the whole atmosphere of a marriage!

Great Sex Challenge 11:

Hold hands while you talk through tonight's challenge. Talk about how doing these three things regularly would change the dynamic of your relationship. Now share with each other two or three things that most

attracted you to your spouse when you both met. What did you love about him? What did you love about her? Tell each other—in great detail!

Day 12: Flirt with Your Spouse!

When we're dating we flirt. She winks at him. He takes her hand. She gives him that "come hither" look. But when we're married, too often we stop flirting. Why flirt when you've already got her? And if she flirts, she may worry that she'll give him the impression that she's definitely going to deliver tonight. You wouldn't want to promise anything like that.

But there's a problem with that strategy. Women's primary sex organs are our brains. For us to get in the mood, our brains have to be engaged. Take flirting out of the equation, and you take away one of your primary tools for boosting your libido! And feeling desired by our spouses is another big libido boost, as long as it's done in the right way.

We're 1/3 of the way through our 31 Days to Great Sex, and yesterday we looked at how to prepare your mind for sex throughout the day. We weren't looking at anything particularly frisky; just things to make you feel more at ease, more confident, and less tired.

Today we're going to turn it up a notch, and learn to flirt! Just as playing together helps you laugh together, flirting helps you to laugh—and binds you together because you share a relationship with your spouse that is totally unique. Here are some ideas to get the fun rolling:

1. Leave a love note on the mirror

Using a dry erase marker (or even lipstick!), leave a love note on your honey's bathroom mirror. To be even bolder, draw a picture of what you want to do later.

2. Kiss in the car at stoplights

That never gets old. And don't forget at least one 15 second kiss a day!

3. Have a secret code phrase

Want to tell him you think he's hot? Try a secret code phrase, like "*Are we due for an oil change?*" No one else will know what you really mean but him, so you can say it in front of the kids, in front of your parents, in front of anybody!

4. Play the fortune cookie game

Whenever you get a fortune cookie, mentally add the words “*in bed*” to the end of it. You’ll giggle together at a Chinese restaurant as you pass them to your husband, but no one else will know why you’re laughing!

5. Grab some flesh

When he’s walking by, smack his butt! Now, here’s where things may differ for the guys. If she’s doing the dishes, and you walk up behind her and squeeze her breasts, she’s likely to get a little ticked off. Many women write to me saying, “my husband is always grabbing me! It makes me feel so used!” Men may not mean it that way, and many men actually enjoy being grabbed. But women don’t in the same way.

While women can be bolder, then, it’s often better for men to start off with a lighter touch. Instead of grabbing her breast, stroke her shoulder. If you’re sitting on the couch next to her, run your fingers through her hair. Hold her hand as often as you can. If she giggles and returns the attention, then by all means try something a little friskier!

6. Set up a cozy love nest for watching movies

Want to watch a flick tonight? Share pillows and a blanket and play footsie. One respondent on my survey for [The Good Girl’s Guide to Great Sex](#) says that she and her husband have “topless movies” where they snuggle up under the blankets minus any tops. Tons of fun!

7. Wives, ask your husband to choose your panties for the day

If he chooses them, he’ll be picturing you in nothing but them—all day, advises Paul Byerley, [The Generous Husband](#).

8. Leave sticky notes in unexpected places

And try to always use the same color so he knows they’re from you! If you are near her place of work during the day, stick under her windshield wiper. Get the waitress to put one on his plate when you are eating out. Get the kids in on it too! (from [The Generous Husband](#)).

9. Text, text, text each other

Text about anything—song lyrics, memories of fun times you’ve had, what you’re wearing, what you’re thinking about.

10. Stick Notes in his lunch

One fan on my [Facebook Page](#) shared this idea:

I also write stuff on his brown bag lunch. For a while, I thought it might embarrass him. But when I stopped, he pouted. They aren’t always “sexy”. Some are just sweet. But tomorrow’s lunch has written in red letters: For my Red Hot Lover! *grins*

11. Flirt in a crowd

Catch your husband’s eye in a crowded room and wink at him. Pass him a note that says you’re available and you think he’s cute, says [Gina Parris](#). Or walk up to her and try a cheesy pick up line!

12. Flash him—but not in public

“Yes, this is ridiculously forward, but if you do it, while he’s watching TV, and then just walk away, at least you will have raised his blood pressure – and raised your own sexual energy for a greater chance of engaging in a little more fun,” says Gina Parris of *Winning at Romance*.

One of my commenters on my blog also recommended doing chores vigorously—and bralessly—so he can appreciate the bounce! When you mop the floor, wear a skirt but go commando and get down on all fours to see if he notices.

13. Stick a surprise somewhere interesting

Another [Facebook Page](#) reader emailed me this tidbit:

My husband recently got back from a long out of state trip. It was late when he got home but I was expecting him. He quickly showered and came to our room in new underwear (that was a color! something I had been longing for in a long time). He said “I have something for you” I thought it was the underwear and I commented on how nice they were between smooching. “No I have a gift for you in them.” I thought he was just being cheeky, of course he is a gift! So I reached on in and there was a jewelry box!!!! That was not what I expected! It was a sweet gift, and his creativity was so

memorable! He has inspired my own games of hide and seek, may it be a note written with a wash off marker under my panty line or some little item in my bra...it is a fun way to play every now and then.

14. Go commando

Forget donning knickers under that dress or skirt for your date, then whisper to him in the restaurant what you're doing tonight. (from J at [Hot, Holy and Humorous](#)).

15. Play "Strip" Anything

Turn any board game in your home into a sexy time by adding "strip" to the beginning: Strip Battleship (an item of clothing for each sunk ship), Strip Scrabble (for every word worth 20-30 points), Strip Monopoly (every time you pass go or an item of clothing to get out of jail), etc.

16. Play Footsie

When you're at a restaurant with tablecloths, slip your shoe off and let your toes explore his legs. Get him all worked up while you carry on a normal conversation!

Flirting Rules of Engagement for Her:

A few ground rules. When you flirt, you're telling your husband, "*I'm interested. I find you attractive. I want you.*" So if you do start adding flirting into your relationship, you're going to have to make sure you add some sex in there, too, or else your guy is going to be getting very mixed messages (and he'll be very frustrated).

Does flirting mean that you have to follow through each and every time? No, not necessarily. But allow me to let you in on a little insight. Men don't just want sex because it physically feels good. They want to feel wanted. Flirting is one of those ways that they feel wanted. And if it's followed up by regular and frequent sex—say a few times a week—most guys won't mind if you don't have sex one night, even if you did flirt. When men get regular and frequent sex, they become much more secure and confident in the fact that we love them.

One of the reasons that men often seem desperate for sex is because they're desperate to know that they actually are desired. It's not only the physical

release they need; it's that emotional and even spiritual validation that says, "I value and want you." When they're getting that from you regularly, then you have a lot more room to play, and kiss, and flirt, without necessarily having to make love right then and there. When you're not making love with your husband frequently and regularly, though, he'll be much less able to let these little things go.

So if you're thinking to yourself, "*every time I kiss my husband he wants it to go somewhere*", or "*every time I flirt he wants something else*", that may be because your husband is insecure about whether you really want him, because sex is infrequent, or perhaps because you never initiate.

We're going to talk more this month about how to get you more in the mood and how to make it more fun and less stressful for you so that you do desire sex more often. But for right now, here's the message: flirting is a fun way to play with your husband, to boost your own libido, to get you thinking along those lines, and to make your husband feel wanted. And if it's combined with regular sex, you'll feel much more confident in your relationship if you throw in some of these fun ideas!

Flirting Rules of Engagement for Him:

Flirting is a ton of fun, but instead of thinking of flirting as saying to her, "let's have sex!", think of flirting as a way to communicate to her, "I love you. I value you. I think you're a ton of fun." Think of it as something that will make you giggle together, rather than necessarily as a prelude for something right away. It's an extension of the affection exercise we did yesterday, just turned up a notch.

I know that can be a tall order, but many women feel objectified: he only wants me for one thing. But taking flirting out of a marriage entirely then takes a lot of the fun out! So add affection, add lots of touch, and add lots of giggles. And then take your cues from her. If she gets racier, feel free to turn up the notch, too!

Great Sex Challenge 12:

Sprinkle these ideas into your next few days, until they become natural. And think of some of your own! Throw yourself into them. Have fun with

them. Get in a truly flirty frame of mind, and you may find that your own libido goes up because the fun quotient in your marriage goes up.

Time Out #2

My plan for this month was to lay out a strategy to help you get the most out of your marriage. Why settle for mediocre, when sex is a vital part of your relationship—one that God designed to bind you together, to give you great pleasure, and to add fun and sparks to your life?

This week is going to be a good one coming up: we're going to explore (if that's the right word) how to make sex feel stupendous. But when I published a version of this 31 Day Challenge on my blog, right about now I started receiving plenty of emails from people who were just finding it too difficult.

Many wrote saying that for the first time they felt like they were connecting.

But others wrote with basically no hope. How can anyone tell you sex can be good when it obviously is not?

I know many of you think that this is hopeless. But please, hear me out. **Don't you wish it were different?** Don't you wish that sex could be good? Do you really want to live your life with this distance between you? Your kids, and your spouse, need you to try: to believe that it can get better. And one way you can do this is just to try these things that I'm suggesting with an open mind. Now, I'm not the answer to all your problems, and if you have a better way, that's fine. But please, try *something*.

When you have children, you owe it to them to make sure that your marriage is rock solid, and that includes having a close, intimate relationship with your spouse. If sex is a huge roadblock, that's okay. But please, imagine that it's not. Believe that it doesn't have to stay this way. Your main sex organ is your brain. What you think about sex will determine your arousal level, the pleasure you get from sex, and your attitude. So can you just try? Just take little baby steps?

And if you go back to the beginning of these challenges, you'll find that's what I'm recommending: baby steps. Just little things, everyday. It is a good place to start. So please don't give up. You were made for more than this.

You were made to truly experience intimacy. You may not see how that can happen, but can you try?

Pray about your sex life, together if you can. Pray that God will give you His mind about sex, and repair some of the lies, if you've believed any. If you don't think you've believed lies, but you just hate sex, then pray about it anyway and ask God to show you how things can be better, and where you may be sabotaging yourself.

Please try. Thank you.

Day 13-19

Making Sex Feel Wonderful

(Physical Intimacy)

Day 13: Getting Her Head in the Game

We've looked at how to reframe how think about sex, how to reframe how we think about our bodies and about pleasure, and even how to think of our spouses differently. We're looked at how to get in the right frame of mind during the day by flirting, and playing, and preparing for the evening. Now we're going to turn to what to do when the evening finally arrives. Today we've going to look at how to get her head in the game, and then we'll turn to foreplay, orgasm, and more!

Let me start with some basics that many men and women don't understand about female libido, and it goes like this: **if her head isn't in the game, her body won't follow.** If she is distracted by anything, then it's difficult to get aroused. This is the exact opposite of men, whose bodies often react to visual stimuli even if they ARE distracted and don't want to be thinking about sex. Most men react almost automatically; women need to decide to react.

I've often heard it said that men are like microwaves and women are like slow cookers, insinuating that men can heat up and be done quickly, while women take more time. But I think that analogy is false because it implies that women will, eventually, heat up. The truth is there is no guarantee. A guy can do exactly the same thing to his wife that yesterday had her in raptures, and today he can tell she's lying there thinking, "will you just get it over with because I want to get to sleep." **While women certainly can heat up, men can't do it completely for us. We control the switch.** We're the ones who need to decide to participate, and that's not always easy.

Consider this scenario:

She walks into the bedroom to find her husband giving her that "Y'wanna?" look. She smiles and begins to undress while he looks on appreciatively. She climbs into bed and they start kissing. And then suddenly, out of nowhere, she pushes him away and says:

"Do you think Michelle should drop piano? She just isn't enjoying it and it's costing us \$20 a week in lessons, and a whole Tuesday night. We could take that money and go to a movie as a family and spend quality time together instead!"

What just happened? Did she decide she really didn't want to have sex? Chances are her husband was pretty ticked, because he thought the evening was going in a certain direction, and now she's erected a big "Detour" sign.

I used to think that when I launched into a big monologue right in the middle of foreplay that subconsciously I was trying to push my husband away. But over the years I've realized that the opposite is the case. I can't really get into making love if I have a lot of unprocessed thoughts in my head, because they end up bouncing around in there, like a huge pinball game. And my body doesn't suddenly spring into action the way my husband's does. I have to get myself in the mood, anticipate what we're doing, and concentrate if it's going to feel good. Like most women, **sex for me is mostly in my head.**

And if there's too much other stuff rolling around in my head, my body won't be able to get in the game. Part of women getting ready for the big event, then, is to empty their heads of all the stuff that's rattling around in there. When she can get that out, she can let other stuff in.

There's another element to this urge to talk, too. As we've talked about before, men make love to feel loved, while women need to feel loved to make love. For men, making love is a way of checking in on the relationship, and making sure that everything is good. When they make love with their wives, they feel as if their wives accept them and want to be with them.

Women, though, need to feel that acceptance first, and part of that is feeling as if our men understand our hearts. That's why conversation is key to a woman's libido. She needs to feel as if she's understood, but she also needs to feel as if all the details in her head that are bouncing around about her to-do list tomorrow, and her worries about the kids, are out in the open so that she isn't distracted.

So if you want sex to be great, TALK. Talk earlier in the evening so that she feels loved, and also so that she has a chance to process all the things that are in her head. And women, if you have a lot of "logistic" type worries—like how am I going to manage my time and get everything done?—discuss these with your husband, too, because he may be able to figure out some things you can say no to, or some other strategy of dealing with everything.

Guys, understand that your wife's urge to talk is not a rejection of you or a rejection of sex; it's her way of getting her mind in gear and emptied out of all her concerns so that she can actually concentrate and enjoy sex.

Great Sex Challenge 13:

Strategize with each other about developing new habits of talking earlier in the evening and checking in with each other about your day. Can you go for a walk after dinner? Can you curl up on the couch for 15 minutes? Even keep a day planner near the bed so that together you can go over her schedule and fit errands in it so that she's not worried. It takes 21 days for a habit to become ingrained, but start this one today: find regular, scheduled time just to TALK.

This may not sound sexy, but before we can move on to how to really enjoy sex, she absolutely must be able to get her head in the game, and that means dealing with the day's stresses. Make this a habit; it will benefit both of you!

Day 14: Jump In!

In movies, the couple is usually totally hot for each other, and so they fall into bed together. They're both "in the mood". They're both aroused. And so they make love.

That seems honest. They make love because they want to make love.

But is it true? Most women just are not "in the mood" at the drop of a hat, panting and waiting to fall into bed. A [Psychology Today article](#) explained this well:

That's what University of British Columbia psychiatrist Rosemary Basson, M.D., discovered in interviews with hundreds of women. Contrary to the conventional model, for many women, desire is not the cause of lovemaking, but rather, its result. "Women," Basson explains, "often begin sexual experiences feeling sexually neutral." But as things heat up, so do they, and they eventually experience desire.

We women need to rethink what being "in the mood" actually means. Men were designed to need very little stimulation. They see something and they're ready to go. Women, on the other hand, need to relax, be able to concentrate on what's going on, and slowly heat up. Some men react more like women; they don't feel the urge for sex in the same way, either. **But feeling the urge first, whether you're male or female, is not a necessary ingredient for making love.** Instead, if you just jump in and embrace the thought of showing love and having fun with your spouse, chances are your body will follow.

To make love when you aren't currently "in the mood" isn't lying or being dishonest. It's just responding to your spouse. He pursues you, and tries to arouse you, and then you respond. That actually makes perfect sense. Men, after all, tend to be the pursuer, and women tend to be the responder. That's the way we were made. And so our bodies are made to respond to theirs; they weren't made to necessarily be ready before the pursuit is actually begun.

If you're the male and you're the lower desire spouse, this is even more important. Your wife needs to feel pursued; if you wait until you feel the need for sex, even if you don't feel it very often, she's going to feel as if something is desperately missing from your relationship. You owe her more than that.

I'm afraid that many women are missing out on how great sex can be, and what a great sex life they can have, because they think they aren't "in the mood" so they can't make love, or it would be somehow akin to faking. But to start to kiss him when he wants to make love, and to start to let your hands wander, and to respond to his hands wandering, is not faking. *It's responding.* And when you put your head in the game, as Rosemary Basson found, women do tend to heat up.

Now, if you never heat up, you could have low testosterone, and if you never have sexy dreams, never get aroused, and never seem to desire sex, you should be checked for this. He could simply not have learned how to properly stimulate you, or perhaps because you don't know yourself, and we'll look more at that this week. Or you could have some issues with sex, such as past abuse, which you need to seek healing from. But in general, if your husband has learned what your body likes, and you make a decision to respond, your body will indeed follow.

It's this decision part that's so important. If you don't make that mental leap that says, "I'm going to throw myself into this and enjoy it", then you likely won't. You have to turn on your own switch. No matter what he does, he can't arouse you unless you decide to become aroused, because we control our own sex drive.

And this, too, makes sense. If women automatically could become aroused no matter who they were with, then the pursuit really wouldn't be as big a deal, would it? But women don't automatically become aroused; *we have to choose to let ourselves*, which means that we are choosing to enjoy our husbands. He's pursuing, and we're choosing to be caught. Incidentally, this is what men often wish women understood. They desire sex not just for physical release, or even primarily for physical release. Sex is their way of seeing if we actually will respond to them and accept them. It's their way of seeing whether we would choose them again. So what really interests a man

is not his orgasm nearly as much as it is his wife's ability—or choice—to respond sexually.

So how do you actually heat up? This is going to sound really strange, but trust me on this. When you're making love and he's touching you, keep asking yourself, over and over, "*where do I want him to touch now? What feels good?*" If you ask "where do I want him to touch now?", then you're paying attention to your body and you're thinking about what it's feeling. And that, in and of itself, is the key to arousal. You're not letting yourself become distracted; you're thinking about your physical body. And as you do, you'll likely find that some body part does want to be touched. Just move his hand there and show him! And then the arousal will likely start!

And guys, if you're the lower libido spouse, when you decide to initiate and to focus on sex, and invite her touch, chances are your body will respond, too. Give yourself time to heat up, and spend a lot of time touching, paying attention to your body's cues. Don't forsake sex, though, just because you don't have the same urge you felt when you were 16. She needs to feel like she's desirable, so jump in!

Great Sex Challenge 14:

If you're the lower desire spouse, jump in and initiate sex, even if you don't think you're in the mood. Make a decision to have a fun time, and throw yourself into it. Decide to enjoy it. Pay attention to what your body is feeling, and what your body wants, and your body will likely respond!

Day 15: Putting the “Play” in Foreplay!

Yesterday we talked about how most women don’t necessarily feel “in the mood” before they start making love—it’s more a by-product of making love. But what if you’re a woman and you never actually get aroused? That’s a problem.

And it’s likely because you’re not doing enough of the things that arouse you. So today, let’s talk today about foreplay: what it is, how to make it great, and how to figure out what you like. Before we do that, let’s go over some misconceptions about foreplay:

1. Foreplay can get too clinical

If there’s too much “spend two minutes touching her breasts and then four minutes between her legs” while she lies there, it’s hardly going to be fun. It can seem like it’s rote—like he’s doing it just to get going, sort of like you prime an engine before it actually turns on. And if he aims for an especially sensitive area before you’ve spent any time kissing or holding each other, it can seem very intrusive to her.

For foreplay to be pleasurable, it needs to be part of the whole experience—not just something you have to do and want to get over with so that you can get to the main event.

Touching and exploring each others’ bodies should be fun. Foreplay, then, doesn’t always have to involve the same actions for the same amount of time. And if you spend a lot of time in foreplay, it can seem much more intimate, and it can make actual intercourse that much more intense.

2. Foreplay can be too much of a one-way street

If foreplay consists entirely of him touching her (because he’s already in the mood, and she’s not), then it can make a lot of women feel somehow inferior. What’s wrong with me that I’m not ready?

Instead, make it about both of you. Women, touch him, too, so that it’s about feeling each other and experiencing each other, not just him making

her try to catch up to where he's already at.

3. Foreplay can become routine

While there are certain things that feel good to women, if you do too much of the same thing it can get boring. What really arouses a person is a whole combination of things—feeling loved, feeling a little bit teased, having all the nerves firing. One can do that in different ways. One of the sexiest things sometimes is to have him touch everything, very slowly, EXCEPT her real erogenous zones. That makes those zones ever so much more sensitive. So you don't always have to do the same thing every night. And you don't always have to use just fingers, either. Kiss each other. Feel with the whole hand. Rub your hair over him. Be creative. The more you get involved, the more exciting and fun it will be.

4. Foreplay can be too rough

Men like to be touched intimately much more firmly than women do. Men like to be squeezed, but if a guy touches a woman's erogenous zones the way he likes to be touched, it's going to hurt—or at least be very uncomfortable. Many women, when they're new to sex, experience this and think, “I guess I don't like my breasts touched”, or “I guess I don't like foreplay.” That's not true. Perhaps he just never touched them the way she needs to be touched!

How to Make Foreplay Wonderful

1. Women: Tell Him What You Like

Here's the hardest part, ladies: you're going to have to communicate. If you've been married for quite some time and you've never told him that something that he does turns you right off, it can be even harder, because will you be hurting his feelings?

I know this is a sensitive subject, but you must let him know. He likely would love to give you pleasure, but he can't know how you feel unless you tell him. So if he's doing something a little bit too roughly, or not hitting exactly the right place, move his hand and show him. If you're a little brave, you can even touch yourself and show him what you like.

Sometimes showing him how to touch you is easier if you begin by asking him how he likes to be touched. Experiment a bit and say, “Harder? Softer?”

More? Less?” If you’re asking the questions, he may then return the favour.

But please tell him! Do it sensitively and you won’t wreck his ego. But you may end up enhancing it if he can feel like he can actually give you pleasure.

2. Women: Be an Active Participant

Feel him. Touch him. Change positions. Don’t only lie there, waiting for him to turn you on. If you’re active, the experience is more intimate, and you’ll enjoy it more.

3. Drag it Out to Relax You

Start with a bath or a massage to help you relax. Enjoy being naked together.

4. Don’t Rush It

Finally, don’t rush it. Give her proper time to get aroused, and for many women that takes a good 15 or 20 minutes. If you’re each doing things, and you’re relaxed, and you’re laughing together, too, that’s much better than feeling like “after he’s been touching me for 2 minutes I should be ready to go, so I guess we’ll just start”, or “I’ve been touching her for a few minutes so that ought to do it.”

And ladies, if you’re not sure what you like, and you’ve always been nervous about having all the attention on you during foreplay, I’d challenge you to redo the challenge from Day 5 and let him touch your body for 15 minutes, while you don’t move. In fact, this is a great assignment to do over and over again! It takes the pressure off of you feeling like you should be ready, and it teaches him to figure out what you like (while also showing *you* what you like).

Remember, foreplay isn’t optional. Most women are not “wet” enough to make love comfortably without some stimulation first. It’s not like intercourse is the main event, and everything else is sub-optimal. The whole experience is part of sex, not just intercourse. And foreplay is vitally important, because it helps focus you not just on your genitals, but on your hands, your eyes, your mouth—everything. In many ways, it’s actually more personal, and even more intimate, than intercourse. So try to ramp up foreplay, and you’ll find sex more exciting!

Great Sex Challenge 15:

Spend at least 15 minutes in foreplay. Seriously. Set the timer and don't let yourself start intercourse until you've been kissing and exploring for at least 15 minutes. Throw yourself into it, touch each other, and have fun! Your bodies are yours to explore. Don't shortchange the time!

Day 16: Turning Foreplay Up a Notch

Yesterday was foreplay day, but it's such an important subject it deserves another go around! Here's an email I received from a reader after my initial foreplay challenge:

My husband really doesn't "get" foreplay. He thinks foreplay is "just for me", while sex is for "both of us", and so if I want foreplay I'm being selfish, and I should do what's best for "both of us". He doesn't understand that I can't really enjoy intercourse if I don't warm up first.

That's extremely common. But part of the reason that we often rush foreplay is that it seems awkward. She's lying there, and he's just touching her, and everybody feels like they're watching the clock, secretly saying, "why is this taking so long?" The woman feels as if she's being judged if she doesn't get aroused (though it's hard to get aroused when you feel rushed), and the man is feeling like this is really stupid because we should be getting to the main event.

We looked yesterday at some ways to make foreplay work better for her. But here are some ways to make him excited about it, too, so that both of you can embrace it as a vital part of making love!

1. Let Him Watch

Men are highly visual, and foreplay can begin with the way that you women beckon him upstairs, or undress, or crawl into bed. Push him onto the bed and then make him watch as you take off your clothes. I know some women are very sensitive to how their bodies look, but remember that he gets pleasure from it, and your body is the only naked woman's body he's allowed to see. Let him see it!

Besides, what's sexy is often not just how your body looks but what you do with it. Ladies, tease him about by taking off your underclothes slowly—or even while you're leaning over him. Run your hands over your body before you let him touch you. That's the kind of thing that will get him going!

One other thought: often the reason that we women like to get into our flannel pyjamas, rush under the covers, and then get undressed under the covers is because the bedroom is SO COLD, especially in winter. That's

certainly the case in Canada, where I'm from! It's good budgeting to keep the heat in the house down at night. Absolutely. But guys,

*If you want to turn the heat up in the bedroom, you might want to actually **TURN THE HEAT UP.***

And here's a simple way to do it that will still help your budget bottom line: Buy a space heater and put it on her side of the bed. Yes, electric heaters are very costly to run. But compared to heating a whole house, they're nothing. And if you just have to have it on for 15 or 20 minutes while you make love, it's worth it!

2. Touch Him, Too

Foreplay doesn't have to just be for her; it can and should also involve her touching him. And touch him everywhere, not **JUST** in his genitals. Tease him a bit. And then ask him to show you just how he likes to be touched or stroked. Men tend to like things with a firmer hand than women do, which is why women are often too soft when we touch the guys, and they're often too rough with women. Just ask him to guide your hand.

Now, touching him the whole time that he's stimulating her may not be the best idea, since he may not do a thorough job if he's distracted. But doing it a little bit shows that you care about his pleasure, too. And it can also be highly arousing! Touch him and realize the power that you have over him. He wants you. Revel in that.

3. Women: Don't Stay Still

One reason that we often feel like we should rush during foreplay is because she is just lying there, making the whole thing seem a little boring. But there's no reason that you both have to lie that way. **In fact, there's no reason why you have to be in any ONE position for extended periods of time during foreplay.** He could sit up, for instance, and then she could sit against him, so you're both facing the same direction. Then he can still reach around and stimulate various parts of her body, but it psychologically feels different. Many women find this a little more comfortable, too, because he isn't looking directly at her face.

4. Rub His Body

He'll enjoy this one: if you need to be stimulated a certain way, stimulate yourself. But not with your hand. Use his body instead. Find a way to grind against his leg, or even against his penis without him entering you, that feels delicious. This requires a lot of moving on the woman's part, which is what he'll really enjoy. It makes it seem as if you are eager for his body and as if you are really enjoying it, which will excite him, too. And if you keep changing positions to get an even better angle, then he's going to get stimulated, too.

You can add some tension to it by grabbing his hands and forcing him onto his back where he has to stay there, and then say something like, "*Now, I'm going to use you.*" I guarantee there are few guys who wouldn't appreciate that. Then find ways that work, and forbid him from moving. He'll feel the sexual tension build, right as you're really enjoying yourself.

5. Kiss

Don't forget to kiss! If you're kissing, then it won't seem as if there's a ticking clock in the background. And you don't have to just kiss each other's mouth, either. Kiss anything! You can even kiss something innocuous, like his neck or her ears, but try to tease and drive each other crazy like that.

6. Talk

Tell each other what feels good—and this is especially important for women! Tell him you love him. Comment on what great muscles he has. Remind him of a great time you had last year on your anniversary. Say something sexy! If you're talking, again you're showing him that you are enjoying this. You're into this. You're excited about participating. And to men, that's a real turn-on: to know that their wives want to be doing this.

Remember: *What stimulates a man is often visual and psychological even more than physical.* If she lets him watch her, he'll be excited. And if he feels as if she's excited, having a good time, and working hard to make this wonderful, then he'll be excited, too. So foreplay doesn't have to be just about getting her physically stimulated. It can be about getting her in the mood, but doing it in a way that she also reassures her husband that she's excited about being together. If you do all of those things, sex won't seem

like the main event anymore. It will all seem like it's part of the whole package!

Great Sex Challenge 16:

Turn foreplay up a notch! Choose at least three of these things and do them during foreplay tonight. And I'd recommend the one about rubbing against him to stimulate her. She'll get exactly what she needs, but he'll really enjoy all the action!

Day 17: Helping Her Reach the Big “O”

Last year, after my husband and I gave the “sex talk” at a FamilyLife marriage conference, I was approached by a very determined woman.

“I have a question, and I’ve never found anyone I could ask. What is an orgasm? And how do I know if I’ve had one?”

Many women do not experience orgasm during sex. In the surveys that I took for [The Good Girl’s Guide to Great Sex](#), around 65% regularly orgasm during intercourse, but that leaves 35% who don’t. And some of those 35% have never had an orgasm at all.

An orgasm is the height of sexual pleasure. While a man’s orgasm is rather obvious, a woman’s is not quite as dramatic—though it feels even better, according to some researchers. Women tend to climax right after an exquisite tension when, if your husband stopped doing whatever he was doing, you’d likely burst out into tears. When women orgasm, waves pass over them. Their legs tend to stiffen up. Their head often goes from side to side. And their vaginal muscles contract. Plus it feels very good.

Most women find it easier to orgasm to their husbands touching them than they do during intercourse, because the stimulation is more direct (we’ll talk about why this is tomorrow). But what do you do if you’ve never experienced an orgasm, or if they tend to be rather rare?

First, that’s perfectly natural. Women are more likely to orgasm once they’ve been married for a few years, so if it takes a while for things to work, that’s okay. Orgasm is the ultimate letting go; when you’re still shy early in your marriage, that can be difficult. Don’t worry about it. The more you worry about it, the less likely you are to get there.

Here are some tips to making it more likely:

Relax

To orgasm you really need to be swept away by the moment and the feeling. If there’s something distracting you, it’s hard to be swept away. And that’s

why if you're tense it's unlikely to happen.

The best thing that you can do is relax! Don't worry about it; it will happen one day once your body is used to pleasure.

Move

Don't lie there, waiting for it to come upon you. Remain an active participant as you make love. Switch positions, even a little bit, so that it feels good. Tilt your body. Move on top sometimes. Take his hand and move it where you'd like to be stimulated, even during intercourse. The more that you take the initiative, the sexier you'll feel.

Concentrate on "Feeling Good"

Here's the most important tip: concentrate on "feeling good", not on reaching orgasm. Make pleasure your goal. As you're making love, concentrate on the pleasure you're feeling. Ask yourself, "what feels good?", or "where do I want my husband to touch now?" That helps you zero in on anything arousing. And then slowly let it carry you away.

Breathe

Just like they say in exercise class, don't forget to breathe! Orgasm needs oxygen, and it's easier to relax if you breathe.

Often we have a hard time relaxing, and we stop breathing, because we feel like we're oh-so-close. Believe me, breathing won't stop the orgasm. It will actually help you feel the pleasure more and the waves are more likely to start. If you tense up, waiting for that orgasm that feels so close, sometimes you start aiming for it too much and it becomes even more elusive.

Concentrate on pleasure first, and then on learning to relax, and it's more likely to happen.

A Note to Him:

If you put too much pressure on your wife to orgasm, and feel like a failure if she doesn't, then she's less likely to want to make love if she thinks she may not reach climax. It's great to want to pleasure her; to pressure her, though, can often backfire. Just take things slowly, laugh a lot, leave time to explore, and let things happen as they happen.

Now, if you're consistently reaching climax before she does, please don't leave her hanging. Make it a habit to help her afterwards, by stimulating her clitoris or anything else she finds pleasurable. If she's consistently frustrated, that will increase her tension about not being able to reach orgasm, and may make it more difficult to achieve this.

Great Sex Challenge 17:

Redo yesterday's challenge to concentrate on foreplay, and then take it one step further. If she's never experienced an orgasm, try to prolong foreplay to see if it happens. In fact, if you're up for it, don't give up until it happens! Some couples have tried this, even if it takes hours, and the relief is so immense. Women, concentrate on the pleasure, concentrate on what your body is feeling, and relax. If she has experienced orgasm through ways other than intercourse, but has a hard time experiencing one through intercourse, then spend a ton of time on foreplay, and only start making love when she's very excited. And ladies, keep concentrating on what your body is feeling, and learn to revel in the pleasure.

If orgasm is still elusive in your marriage, I have three chapters in [The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#) on how to make sex feel great—including what to do if that orgasm just isn't occurring.

Day 18: The Pleasure Center

“I just don’t understand what the big deal is about sex.” I hear that from women all the time. People may look breathless in movies, but sex sure doesn’t take their breath away.

When women have that kind of attitude, though, men can feel completely deflated. They want to be wanted, not just placated.

So today we’re going to try to show her what the big deal is! Many women simply have not experienced sex as feeling very physically wonderful. After all, it’s kind of tricky for us, because we’re not guaranteed pleasure in the way men are.

Once women experience real passion, frequency does increase. But the passion itself is what the husbands often crave. It’s not just the release; it’s seeing her receive and experience pleasure.

So how can we experience pleasure? We’ve talked about more foreplay and how to relax and experience orgasm, but let’s get a little more technical (which will end up meaning we’ll have more fun!)

Here’s the thing about orgasm for women: *pretty much all orgasms are caused by the clitoris (that little knob of flesh in front of the vagina) being stimulated or pressed.* The vagina itself doesn’t have that many nerves; the clitoris, as tiny as it is, actually has more nerves than the penis. It’s the clitoris that is the little bundle of pleasure.

But because it’s little, it often doesn’t get a lot of stimulation once intercourse starts. So here are a few tips for making sure your clitoris gets the attention that it needs to experience real pleasure:

1. Change up the missionary position

Ladies, tilt your pelvis up when you’re on the bottom. If he’s on top, and you just lie there, you won’t actually experience a lot of stimulation. Tilt up, though, and you’re putting pressure on the clitoris and changing the angle so that his pelvic bone comes in contact with you there during intercourse.

So try tilting up (just by squeezing your butt muscles, so to speak). It's a little change, but it does a lot! Just by squeezing your muscles, too, you'll engage the clitoris, and it will feel better in and of itself.

2. Put her on top

Make love with her on top. Then have her very slowly try to change the angle so that she can hit him at the right spot that makes her feel good. Just keep rotating gradually bit until it feels good.

3. Touch her during intercourse

If you're trying other positions, have him put a finger or two on her clitoris, so that she's receiving stimulation during intercourse.

What often happens is that during foreplay she may feel great because he's directly stimulating her where it feels good. But then you start actual intercourse, and the stimulation almost stops, depending upon your position. That's often why women have a hard time reaching orgasm. Instead, try to vary the angle (even if you don't really vary the position) so that her clitoris does get that sensation. A small change like tilting your hips can do wonders.

And if you make love in different positions—like rear entry, or spooning—he can still put his fingers on her clitoris to provide pressure at the same time. One little tip for guys about this: don't concentrate on rubbing her clitoris if you do this; just put your finger there. The pressure is all she needs, and with you thrusting so much, you're likely to rub a little bit too roughly. It's better to just provide pressure than to try to do much else.

I have many more tips in [The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#), but here's one that hopefully will help you quickly! Many women feel as if something must be wrong with them because intercourse itself just doesn't feel that wonderful. But that's actually quite normal. Because the vagina doesn't have many nerves, unless you're making an effort to have her clitoris line up with the base of his pelvis, she isn't not going to get the pleasurable feelings that she needs. There is nothing wrong with her. You both just need to adjust your position a little bit!

I received an email from a woman lately that said this:

I'm always hearing about all kinds of different positions, and I do want to have a fun and varied sex life! But to tell you the truth, there's really only one position that works for me. I can't orgasm any other way. What's wrong with me?

Absolutely nothing. She's very normal! We've had to rotate and tilt and try to get the angle just right, and with the shape of his body, and the shape of hers, there's one position that tends to be more conducive to orgasm. And it's not the same position for each woman, either! If you enjoy other positions, but you find that only one lets her orgasm, that's really okay. You can always use the others as a type of foreplay, and then always finish in one. It doesn't mean that she's inferior if she doesn't benefit from sexual gymnastics!

Incidentally, as you women try to find the right position, it also means that you'll have to be more active while you make love. You won't be able to just "lie there". You'll have to shift a bit, or tilt a bit, and that means you'll be more engaged. Your husband will likely appreciate this, because it will show that you want to make love, and that you are choosing to receive pleasure. That's a big deal to a man. So even if it takes you a few tries (or a lot of tries) to get it right, he'll really enjoy your effort (and likely so will you).

Great Sex Challenge 18:

Tonight, try a position or two, but stop him from moving. Instead, give her time to rotate to experiment about getting the angle right. This takes some courage and assertiveness. She'll have to speak up! And if it doesn't feel just right, keep trying. Change positions if you have to. But don't just "settle" for something. Ladies, tell him what feels good, and keep working at it until you find it!

Day 19: Little Changes that Feel Amazing For Her

Sometimes the smallest changes can make the biggest impact! Yesterday we talked about tilting your pelvis; today we're going to list some things men can do to make sex feel that much better for her. Guys, here we go:

Let The Tension Build

Teasing and building tension often makes sex far more pleasurable for women than just jumping in, because the teasing helps her to anticipate what's coming next. Since sex for women is so much in our heads, we need that chance to look forward!

When you're making love, then, don't thrust all the way in at the start. Start shallow and slow, growing more deliberate and deeper as she starts to feel more aroused. Sometimes, of course, she'll like things more quickly, but encourage her to set the pace. If you start right in before she's ready, she often will never have a chance to catch up.

Use Lubrication When Needed

Some women have a harder time "getting wet". And sex, when you're not well-lubricated, doesn't feel that good. But if you add some lubrication, such as Astro-Glide or K-Y Jelly, she'll feel more pleasure. This should never replace foreplay, but at times it can be very handy, such as when trying a new position, when enjoying a "quickie", or even when going through menopause when hormones are all over the place. When she is well-lubricated, her body will also respond better to intercourse.

Breast attention

Breasts are funny things; some women enjoy their nipples being stimulated and some do not. But just because she doesn't like it during foreplay does not mean that she won't like it later on. Often women whose nipples are very sensitive when they aren't very aroused actually enjoy being pinched a bit right before orgasm. So experiment a little. The best way to tell is for her to start being aware of her own body. Ladies, pay attention to your body's cues. If something will feel pleasurable, chances are it will start to give you signals. So ask yourself, "what wants to be touched now"? You may find that your breasts do respond later, near the end of the encounter.

Locate Her G-spot

Finally we have that elusive G-spot. Yesterday I said that what triggers almost all orgasms is clitoral stimulation, and that's mostly true. But many women also swear by the "G-spot", a little oval of knobby flesh located about 1 ½ - 3 inches up the front wall of the vagina (the wall that's against your stomach, not against your back). It's not right on the surface, but about 1 cm below, so it's a little difficult to stimulate. Also, because it's on the front wall, it's on the top when you're in the missionary position, which can make it a little more difficult to find. Some researchers believe that it is simply an extension of the clitoris, and so they're one and the same thing. Others think that it doesn't exist at all.

My feeling is that we should never feel dysfunctional if we can't find it, since large scale studies have failed to consistently show a definite anatomical location for it. But many women swear by it, and since the research is bound to be fun, why not try? It will feel good even if you don't find the G-spot.

You can attempt to locate it either by having him insert his fingers (after applying lubricant!) or through intercourse. Some people find that the "spooning" position, where you're lying on your sides facing the same direction, or the woman-on-top position so that she can vary her movement, work best. And you'll know when you find it; it's often a very intense rush, with orgasm soon afterward.

Great Sex Challenge 19:

Pick one or two new things and try to do them tonight. And don't limit yourself to what's here. Guys, ask her what she thinks would make sex feel amazing for her, because she may have some ideas she's been afraid to share. Don't take it personally if she asks you to do something differently; just take it to mean that she's committed to improving your sex life. And ladies, open up and let him know what you want, or what item appeals to you that you want to try. The sky's the limit!

Day 20: Little Changes that Feel Amazing for Him

Guys don't usually have as much trouble feeling physical pleasure from sex as women do. But that doesn't mean that there aren't small changes that we can make to help him feel even more amazing! So ladies, here are a few tips to make sex extra-special for him:

Move

Too often we women can fall into the trap of thinking that what really matters to a guy is sexual release. He needs his orgasm, and then he's fine. But remember that to a man, sexuality is wrapped up into his whole identity. And it isn't just sexual release that he needs; it's the feeling of acceptance and love that he gets from knowing that his wife actually wants to make love to him. She doesn't just "let" him; she wants him.

For a guy to feel great, then, you just need to show him that you are enjoying this, too! So much of his pleasure is wrapped up in the idea that he can give you pleasure—and that you are enjoying it.

So don't just lie there. Move! Run your hands over his back. Try a new position. Respond to him thrusting by moving your hips. Just show that you're into it, too.

Vocalize

And don't just move; moan. Or talk. Or say something! Guys love hearing feedback that what they're doing feels good.

Remember His Erogenous Zones

Women have lots of sensitive areas. We tend to focus on more areas of a woman's body during sex than on a man's, because she needs the attention to get aroused during foreplay. But in so doing we can shortchange the guys. Contrary to common practice, they actually do have more than one erogenous zone. Many men find their nipples sensitive, and their necks, and earlobes, or behind their knees. So pay attention to other parts of his body, too, especially his ears and neck when you're actually making love. This will make it more intimate and intense for him.

Squeeze him

While the ego boost of showing him you're enjoying it is awesome, a few physical things can send him to ecstasy as well. One of the most pleasurable things that you can do is to squeeze him while he's inside you, using your Kegel muscles. Those are the muscles of your pelvic floor, which can open and contract your vagina. You may not have noticed them before, but if you stop the flow of urine when you're peeing, you'll be activating the same muscles.

When you're making love, then, just do that same movement and squeeze him. You can hold the squeeze, or, if your muscles are strong, you can squeeze rhythmically to him thrusting. To get used to the idea at first, have him enter you but then stay still, and you can practice trying to squeeze and relax, squeeze and relax, and see if he notices the difference.

Let him go deeper

Another thing that's especially pleasurable is to find a position that lets him thrust even more deeply. This isn't something to try when you're just getting used to making love, or when you're sore. But if you're ready, wrap your legs around his back, or even rest your feet on his shoulders (if you're flexible enough).

Now, guys, if she's doing this, she's making herself really vulnerable (which, of course, is part of what is making it exciting). Treat her well, and make sure that she isn't uncomfortable. Go slowly at first!

Great Sex Challenge 20:

Talk together about which of these he'd like to try (and if he wants to try the more adventurous physical ones, let this challenge last two days!). Guys, here's the night to let her know what it means to you that she is enjoying sex, too. Explain to her how you feel when you know that she's excited to make love. And let her know what sorts of things she can do or say to reassure you when you are making love.

And if you want to try the physical ones, take it slowly and learn together. Then show her some appreciation for stretching her limits!

Time Out #3:

Feeling Alive Again

When I posted this series online, about this time of the challenge I began to receive a series of quite distressing emails. For so many people, sex had become such a difficult part of their lives. It's become twisted, or dirty, or shameful, or simply non-existent. And I read these emails, and I thought: why are we letting something that God made to be beautiful become a negative thing in our lives? Why are we settling for that? We mustn't let something beautiful be stolen from us anymore.

If you're not having any of these thoughts, feel free to move on to Day 21. But if you are having these doubts, I understand. But I ache for you.

When the beauty of making love is stolen from you, it is so sad, and so barren. One of the telltale signs that something is from God is that something is *alive*. Life is from God. Being *teeming* with life is from God.

And so the opposite—death—is not from God. Think about this: when evil triumphs, it's not usually categorized by luscious trees or plants or beautiful things. It's ugly. And even if it starts out beautiful, the ugliness takes over.

When the Mongols rampaged across Asia and the Middle East in the thirteenth century, they left behind them devastation--and desert. Many places that were not formerly deserts became deserts over the next few decades because the Mongols burned everything. And without plants, the land dried up. Destruction kills what was alive.

Or, if you're not a history buff, think about *Lord of the Rings*, and compare Mordor with the Shire. The Shire is alive; when Sauron took over Mordor, he made sure everything that was living died (except for his minions also bent on destruction).

I noticed this phenomenon in 1989 when I visited East Berlin. West Berlin was beautiful, with trees, and parks, and art, and lovely buildings; East Berlin was Spartan. Everything was utilitarian. Joy was gone.

Evil doesn't just propagate evil, you see; it also tries to destroy that which is beautiful.

This morning I was reading in my devotions the story of Ezekiel and the dry bones, found in Ezekiel chapter 37. God calls on Ezekiel to prophecy over dead bones, and as he does the bones begin to rattle. They form together. Sinews grow on them. Then flesh. But they're still dead until God breathes into them.

I think that's a picture of where many of us are today when it comes to sex. We feel dead. We're not excited about it. It doesn't grow our relationship; it eats away at it. So what's our response?

I think this story shows two things: one, those bones listened to Ezekiel's prophecy and joined together and grew. But second, they weren't fully alive until God breathed into them (I know I'm taking liberties with it here, but bear with me!)

So what does that mean for you?

1. Listen to the Truth

God wants you to be ALIVE. With God, life is teeming, abundant, lush, tropical, beautiful. If your sex life is not like that, then listen to the fact that this is how God wants it.

Then agree with God. You're not agreeing because you're experiencing it; you may very well not be experiencing much of anything. But agree with God that this is the way He meant it to be.

Agree with your spouse, the two of you together, that this is how God wants it to be. And let me say a word to the spouse, whether it's the husband or wife, who has the low libido: you need to believe this, too. God does not want you this way. He did not design you this way. He wants your marriage to be alive and fun and passionate. If you feel inadequate, don't shrug your shoulders and say, "Oh, well, there's nothing I can do. That's just the way I am." That is a cop out.

If you are severely overweight, you don't just say, "that's just the way I am." You say, "I need to lose some weight, even if it's hard." If you are consumed by nightmares because of things done to you in the past, you

don't just say, "I guess I'll never sleep again," you get help. And yet somehow, when it comes to sex, we seem content to say, "*I guess this is just the way I am.*"

No, it's not! God wants you to be fully alive and passionate. If you're not there, at least agree with God that this is His design.

2. Move Together to Make it Happen

Once you've agreed, you've got to actually take steps forward. Those bones started joining together. Sinews were formed. So DO something! That may mean going back to the beginning of this series and rereading some of the challenges. It may mean going over some of the more challenging ones and really putting your heart into it. Instead of balking and saying, "*that's not for me*", it may mean admitting, "*It scares me a little; it pushes me out of my comfort zone; but I know God wants me to experience passion, so I'm going to try.*"

3. Let God In

But here's the final one, and really the most important one: You can agree with God all you want. You can try to get things going in the right direction. But ultimately you cannot do this by yourself. You can't WILL yourself to be passionate.

It is God who breathed life into those dry bones.

All of us need a breath from God today—even those of us who don't feel particularly bad about our sex life. All of us need more passion. And when we let God in, and feel closer to Him, and let Him work, we will feel so much more alive, both spiritually and sexually. When we feel dry spiritually, we often feel dry sexually. And the opposite is also true.

If you want to be fully alive and fully passionate, you need to be passionate about God first, and let Him move. And that will have major ripple effects in the bedroom.

Time Out Challenge:

Pray as a couple. Take each others' hands and earnestly pray together for your sex and your spiritual life. Pray that God will breathe passion into you

that will be felt in the bedroom but also outside the bedroom. Pray that you will know what it is to feel fully alive in Him. And don't just pray quick prayers; really wrestle in prayer before God. Maybe you have a hard time praying as a couple. That's okay! But try to pray for at least a few minutes. Pray about your kids. Pray about your friends. As you come together spiritually, you will feel your spirits more connected. And as you ask God together, united, for Him to bless your sex life, that prayer will be powerful. So pray! And see God work.

If you're not comfortable praying, or just aren't religious, you can journal together, or talk together, or take a walk in nature together. Even write a mission statement of what you want your marriage to be. But if you can pray, please do so. The God who created sex is also the One who can make it stupendous!

Days 21-25

True Oneness in the Bedroom

(Spiritual Intimacy)

Day 21: Experiencing Spiritual Oneness when You Make Love

In many ways today's post is the most important of this series: sex is supposed to be a true spiritual union. Let me explain.

If you grew up in the church, chances are you grew up with the King James Version. And do you remember hearing Genesis read out loud?

And Adam knew his wife Eve, and they conceived unto them a son...

And we'd sit there and giggle and elbow our friends, because we thought it was so funny. Instead of saying a word that meant "sex", the Bible said "knew". Because obviously God was embarrassed.

But hold on a second. What if there was something else going on?

You see, in Psalm 139:23, David says, "*search me and know me*". In fact, that theme, begging God to dig deep inside our hearts and really "know" us, is throughout Scripture. And the same Hebrew word is used to represent our deep longing for a union with God and the sexual union between a husband and a wife.

What if there's actually a connection? What if sex isn't just supposed to be a physical union, but is supposed to also encompass this deep longing to be known, the way that David yearns for God?

I think that's actually part of God's plan for sex. Think about it: in sex we bare ourselves physically. But for sex to really work well, we also have to bare ourselves emotionally. We have to be able to be vulnerable. We have to be willing to "let go". Women have to emotionally let him in for us to even get aroused. And men have to let their guard down, too, in order to experience the kind of love they long for.

God created people with a desperate longing for relationship. We long to know and be known, and in that knowing to be accepted. It's our deepest need. God gave us this drive to know Him and be known by Him, but He also gave us these sexual longings which mirror how we long to be truly united with our husbands and with God—to be truly and wonderfully KNOWN.

I talk about this at great length in [The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#), and look at how we can make this spiritual longing and spiritual intimacy part of the sexual experience, because I truly believe that it's the spiritual intimacy that people actually crave the most. **When we focus only on the physical, sex too often can seem shallow.** When we combine the physical with the emotional and the spiritual, sex is stupendous, because it encompasses all that we are. One of the reasons that our culture has become more pornographic—and why things that were once considered sexually taboo are now pretty much mainstream—is that our culture has made sex into something only physical because they don't have anything else. And yet they know they're missing something, so they try more and more extreme things.

We, who are married, have the real deal. We have the ingredients for an amazing sexual relationship, because it's real intimacy, not just orgasm. (And, by the way, that makes orgasm even greater!). In fact, the women who were the most likely to orgasm in the surveys I took were Christian women. When you're in a lifetime committed relationship, you're more likely to experience all the great aspects of sex—and not just the physical.

That spiritual union that is part of sex isn't something out of the Kama Sutra or some eastern thing. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about that deep hunger to connect that is part of sex—not just a desire for orgasm, but a desire to be joined. And to me, that's actually more profound, and more of an aphrodisiac, than the thought of something specifically physical.

But how, practically, can we experience “spiritual intimacy” while making love? Here are some thoughts:

1. Take time being naked.

I don't just mean taking your clothes off to make love. I mean actually be naked together. Hold each other. Take a bath together. Even pray naked together! Redo that exercise where you just take time touching each others' bodies. Really feel as if you completely know the other person. It's actually more vulnerable to be naked while someone touches you than just to be naked while you “have sex”. And so take that time to explore!

2. Take time to be **spiritually** naked.

This may sound weird, but trust me on it: pray before sex. Or at least read a Psalm or something. When we unite together spiritually first, it's as if our souls are drawn together. And when our souls are drawn together, we want to draw together in a deeper way. So keep a Bible by the bed and just read passages at nighttime together. Try to pray together. If you're uncomfortable with freeform prayer, buy a book of prayers, or use the Anglican prayer book. The words don't matter; the heart does. When you mean it, and you bow before God together, you really are drawn towards each other in a much more intense way.

3. Look into each others' eyes

The eyes are windows, and yet how often do we close our eyes, as if we're trying to shut the other person out, and concentrate on ourselves? I know sometimes you have to close your eyes to feel everything, but sometimes open up and look into each other's eyes. To actually see your spouse—and to let your spouse see into you—is very intimate, especially at the height of passion.

4. Say "I love you"

It's such a little thing, but while you're making love, or even when you orgasm, say "I love you". Make sex about not just feeling good, but expressing love. Say your spouse's name. Show him or her that you're completely captivated.

5. Desire Your Spouse

Spiritual intimacy during sex ultimately depends on that desire to be united with your spouse. And that desire is fed throughout the day—by concentrating on what you love about each other, by thinking about each other, by flirting and playing together, with him, by saying positive things about each other to friends. It isn't something that "just happens". It's something that is the culmination of a relationship that you already have.

I truly believe that for many couples this is THE major roadblock to sex being everything it can be. Tomorrow we'll be dissecting some of the problems with spiritual intimacy and sex a little more, but I think many people have bought into this idea that sex is only physical, when really sex

is the physical expression of a deep drive we have to be connected to one another.

I received a comment recently from a woman who said this:

I always thought “Oh sex is just something that HE needs, I can do fine without it”. So not true. I need it too! We have connected in amazing ways, in and out of the bedroom and I am so excited to have my old husband back!

For you women who are reading this, sex ISN'T something that he needs just for physical release; it's that he needs to feel really intimate. And we need that, too! Many of us push sex out of the way because it seems like a chore, but what we're really doing, then, is denying ourselves one of the most powerful tools we have to feel truly connected and accepted by another individual.

If sex makes you feel dirty, or is a constant source of conflict, then wait until tomorrow's post. But if it's simply that you've never experienced sex this way, then try those steps. Concentrate on what you love about each other. Pray together. Memorize each other's bodies. Say I love you. Look into each other's eyes. Truly be joined. There really is nothing else like it.

Great Sex Challenge Day 21:

Make love, don't just have sex. Tonight, while you're together, do your best to show your spouse how much you love him or her. While you're making love, actually concentrate on all the things you love about your spouse. Be passionate about it! And see what happens.

Day 22: Being Mentally Present While You Make Love

Feeling totally one with your spouse is a beautiful thing. It's an intense thing, and that intensity often makes the physical side even better.

Yet just because sex physically feels good does not mean that it's going to feel like we're one, and that's because many people, when they make love, aren't mentally present. They're thinking of something else in their heads, and so their bodies are responding to fantasy, not to reality. It isn't your spouse who is capturing your attention; it's an image from a movie, or a book, or pornography, or even a memory. And that will wreck your chances of experiencing intimacy.

Unfortunately, though, in our pornographic culture sex has often been reduced to the physical. What's arousing isn't a person; it's an image. And so we find it very difficult to get aroused during sex without first concentrating on an image. In fact, psychologists have even coined a new term, Sexual Attention Deficit Disorder, for those who can't maintain an erection, or who can't stay aroused, with their spouse, but require additional stimulus, like porn or erotica.

My husband's a physician, and when he was in medical school, he was taught that when you're counseling a couple having sexual problems, you should recommend that they watch porn together. Porn has become mainstream. Yet it is not harmless. The more that our bodies become aroused by an external stimulus, like pornography, the more our bodies start to require that stimulus in order to become aroused. The feeling—arousal—is now associated primarily with that stimulus. And so just being with your spouse and touching your spouse isn't enough anymore.

To compound the problem, when people use pornography (and it's not just men; 30% of porn users are female), they usually masturbate as well. They're spending their sexual energy on pornography rather than on their marriage. That diminishes their desire for their spouse, and is actually one of the leading causes of lack of libido. You're getting your satisfaction elsewhere, and so your spouse isn't enough anymore. That's going to hurt your spouse. Women, especially, will feel ugly and unwanted. Even if guys who use porn swear that it has nothing to do with their wives, and that they still love their wives, women will interpret this—rightly—as a form of

cheating. When you get aroused by an image of someone else, and then you masturbate to that image, it's virtually the same as cheating.

While many women also use porn, our weakness tends to be erotica. Novels like *50 Shades of Grey* sell like hotcakes to sexually frustrated moms, and people think of it as harmless. It's simply getting her in the mood! And that's a good thing, right?

Nope. Because while she may be in the mood, she's in the mood because of a fantasy, not because of her husband. And when she makes love, it's that fantasy that is going to be turning her on, not her husband. The more that we use something else to get aroused, the less our spouse will be able to arouse us, and the more difficulty we will have staying "mentally present" while we're making love.

What does being mentally present look like?

We Won't Focus on Something Else

We'll make the decision not to think about a pornographic image or a storyline or a past lover. We'll concentrate on how much we love our spouse and on how exciting our spouse is. And that will be virtually impossible to do if we are still filling our mind with porn or erotica. So you must give that up. Just like an alcoholic has to say no to alcohol, say no to what is stealing your sexual energy.

For many people that means accountability. Get controls on your computer. Share your account on your ereader so that your spouse can see what you're reading. Get a same sex accountability partner that you can have coffee with who will challenge you to remain faithful in every way—and you do the same for him or her.

We'll Think Sexy Thoughts about Our Spouse

Personally, I don't think there's anything wrong with remembering something wonderful that you did together that was stupendous, or imaging being on a beach, or whatever it may be for you. But to fantasize about someone who isn't your spouse, or to bring up pornographic images to get aroused, isn't right. And it hinders your ability to really bond with your spouse.

We'll Give Ourselves Grace

Remaining mentally present is tricky when we have a history with porn. If either of you is short-cutting the arousal cycle by pulling up pornographic images, ask God to help you stop, and then practice just being present. Think about your body. Think about your spouse. Trace your fingers along your spouse's body. Think specifically about what is feeling good and what you love about your spouse, and say some of these things out loud. Keep your mind focused on the here and now, and you'll find it a much more intimate, and intense, experience.

And if you do find the images start to interfere, stop what you're doing for a minute and just talk and kiss again, until you find that your mind is back where it should be.

If your spouse is the one dealing with this, then extend that grace. Sure it hurts to know that your spouse struggles with fantasy, but it's so much better to give him or her a safe place to admit when they're struggling than it is to humiliate them and make them afraid to tell you when they struggle. If you want honesty and intimacy in the bedroom, you have to give your spouse room to admit when they're having problems—and you have to dedicate yourself to helping them get over them. Remember, the point is the direction you are going, not the place you have come from. So don't get mad at the past, just join together to head towards a better sex life in the future.

Great Sex Challenge Day 22:

Make love, but if you feel your mind wandering, stop and start talking to your spouse. Think to yourself, "what feels good? What do I want him/her to do now?" Concentrate on your spouse's body, and on what your own body is experiencing. And tell your spouse if you need to stop and start over. Practice being mentally present. It makes sex so much more intense!

Day 23: Trying New Positions

It may seem strange to be talking about positions in the section on “spiritual intimacy”, but for the next few days I want to explore how we decide what’s okay to do, and how we can add more fun to the bedroom without compromising intimacy.

One of the problems many couples have is that they see sex almost solely in physical terms. It’s not about bringing you close as much as it is about bringing you pleasure.

I think it should be both. And yet when couples discuss their sexual boundaries, they often enter a landmine. If you forget that sex is supposed to be an intimate thing, and not only an orgasmic thing (and, in fact, it’s actually more orgasmic because it’s intimate), then we can go astray and actually cheapen sex. So I’d like to put these few challenges within the spiritual intimacy section to remind us that when we do try new things, it should be to increase the fun quotient and to feel closer, not to humiliate anyone or to act selfish.

So let’s talk today about positions. I’ve heard it said that the man-on-top, woman-on-bottom position is called “the missionary position” because missionaries taught that it was the only “proper” position. But that’s really a myth that makes missionaries sound uptight!

Is there really a “holy” position? And if we’re talking about experiencing spiritual intimacy, and not just physical intimacy, are some positions “wrong” and some positions “right”?

I only want to look at positions for vaginal intercourse today, but I firmly believe that any way that two married adults choose to engage in intercourse is perfectly fine. You’re just joining your bodies, and it’s not like only one position is ordained by God. In fact, it’s never even talked about in the Bible.

The missionary position is often thought to be “holier” because it allows the couple to kiss and look into each other’s eyes at the same time. But so does the woman on top position, or the making love while sitting (or even standing) position. So that argument doesn’t really hold water.

I think the reason that the position is thought of as “holy” is because sex is often thought of as shameful (especially for women). And so any position that involves a woman being active is often thought of as a little bit wrong (or even a lot wrong). It’s somehow unseemly. A man can thrust, because males are supposed to feel sexual pleasure. But for a woman to want to move—well, that may mean that she’s enjoying herself too much.

And that’s why I think the missionary position developed the reputation of being the “proper” position!

That doesn’t mean that I’m against it—not at all! For many women it’s actually quite pleasurable, especially if they’re able to achieve the right angle by tilting their pelvis. And it is very romantic.

Nevertheless, it has some drawbacks. It’s difficult if there’s a big weight discrepancy between the two of you, or if she’s pregnant. If she’s nervous, feeling in control by being on top often relieves some stress. And stimulating the G-spot (that little round bumpy bit of flesh on the inside wall of the vagina, between 1 ½ and 3 inches up) is usually easier using other positions.

Often a couple will find that one or two positions tend to be their favorites, because it’s easier for her to reach orgasm using them. Yet trying and using new positions has benefits other than just orgasm. It makes sex more active and less routine. It requires a bit of extra effort, which tells your spouse, “I’m excited about doing this tonight.” It can even increase intimacy because you say to your spouse, “I really want to explore you and know everything I can about how you work.” It’s a new level of vulnerability, which can also increase our feeling of closeness.

One couple I know uses the “Rule of 3” when making love—they can’t make love more than three times in a row in the same position. They must switch it up, so that it doesn’t get boring. If you find it easier to orgasm in one particular position, that’s okay. Just use the other positions as foreplay. And here are the 6 most typical positions to try. Every other position is really a variant of one of these:

1. Man-on-Top

The “missionary position”: you lie together, him on top, nose to nose, breast to breast.

Make it feel great: Tilt her hips up. Use a pillow if you want, but the important thing is to engage her muscles to apply pressure to the clitoris, not just to raise her hips.

Variations: She can put her legs on his back (or, if she’s flexible, on his shoulders. This allows deeper penetration).

2. Woman-on-Top

He lies down in bed, and she climbs on top of him in a sitting position.

Make it Feel Great: Let her determine the depth of thrusting and let her vary the angle until she gets the most contact with her clitoris. This position is best for women who are more nervous.

Variations: She can lie down against him, similar to missionary position but with her on top. The thrusting will then take more energy (and likely burn more calories). She can also vary how she sits. If she sits instead of kneels, she’ll get deeper penetration, too. For the really adventurous, she can turn around so she’s facing his feet, leaning backwards against him. That way he can touch her breasts and her clitoris easily while she does the thrusting.

3. Sitting position

He sits, either against the bed or in a chair, and she straddles him.

Make it feel great: Lean backwards to change the angle a bit. Find an angle that works best for stimulating her.

Variations: Don’t lean against anything, but lock your legs around each other for stability. This one’s a little more challenging, but the extra effort can be intense.

4. Woman lying down, man standing up

She lies down, with her legs hanging off of the bed. He stands between her legs. This allows for deeper penetration as well.

Make it feel great: Use lubrication! In this position he can thrust much more deeply than usual, and so make sure that it's comfortable for her.

Variations: She lies down, he kneels on the bed between her legs.

5. Standing against a wall

She leans herself against a wall and wraps her legs around his torso for support. He stands facing her. This requires a lot of balance and strength, and often that detracts from the pleasure.

Make it feel great: This is more of a fun rip-your-clothes-off-I-can't-wait-another-minute position rather than it is a position for the whole encounter. It's fun sometimes to start out this way, but you'll likely want to head over to the bed or a chair soon or you'll run out of steam.

Variations: She's on the kitchen counter or dresser, and he's standing. This is similar, although again, this is more of a position for a breathless encounter than it is a drawn out one that feels pleasurable for her.

6. Rear entry

She kneels on all fours on the bed. He kneels behind her, facing in the same direction. This position is the most difficult to get right, because sometimes you have to play around with the angle in order to achieve penetration. This isn't a position to try early on your honeymoon, if you're a virgin on your wedding day. Get comfortable fitting together first. However, once you do fit together, some couples swear that this feels the most pleasurable.

Make it feel great: he can reach around and put a finger or two on her clitoris to increase stimulation for her. She can also vary the angle of her body so that the penis hits her at different angles. Some women find this is the best way to find the G-spot. And how do you know when you find it? He'll be thrusting, and you'll suddenly feel like you're about to orgasm, even if you hadn't been that aroused yet already.

Variations: Lie in bed on your sides, facing the same direction, with him behind. This one is often the easiest during the latter stages of pregnancy.

Great Sex Challenge 23:

Pick at least three positions and try all of them tonight! Start with one and then move on to the others. And then, afterwards, talk about this: would you like to implement something like the “rule of 3”, where you use different positions? Is there a position that you like best or find most pleasurable? Share that with your spouse.

Day 24: Deciding Your Sexual Boundaries

In any marriage, one spouse is going to feel more adventurous in the bedroom than the other.

Last week we were concentrating primarily on how to create fireworks. Then this week we turned to how to experience spiritual intimacy, and complete oneness, when we make love. It's good to have both of those things as the context for what we're going to talk about today:

How do you decide what's okay to do and what's not?

Over the last few years, the vast majority of anonymous questions I've received have been about that sort of thing: my husband (or my wife) wants to try something in bed, and I'm not comfortable with it. What do I do? So let's look at some basic ground rules that can help us:

1. Our Whole Body is for Sex

Sex is supposed to be fun. God made our bodies to feel great during sex—and he didn't create it so that only certain body parts feel good. As we looked this week on the pieces about foreplay, the more you involve other body parts, the better! When you read Song of Solomon, you'll find tributes to just about everything. Sometimes, however, we get hung up and think that only certain positions are holy, and everything else is somehow wrong.

I don't buy that. We're supposed to get lost in each other, and to enjoy all of each other. That's part of the celebration of being intimate and naked together.

2. Sex is More than Physical

At the same time, sex is more than just a physical connection. It's also a spiritual and emotional connection. One of the reasons, I believe, that married Christians tend to enjoy sex more than those who aren't married is that we know that it isn't just about the physical. When we make love, we're also expressing our commitment for one another, and our hunger for true intimacy.

The world doesn't understand that because our culture has divorced sex from relationship and commitment, and so all they have is the physical. And that's why our culture has become increasingly pornographic. When the physical is all you have, eventually the physical feels empty. To get the same high, you have to do more and more extreme things physically (in the same way that an alcoholic needs to take more drinks to get the same buzz). So why are things that are once taboo now talked about openly on sitcoms? Because our culture is getting more pornographic.

And that is going to impact our own idea of sexuality. If what is portrayed as sexy are these extreme things—threesomes, sex toys, etc. etc.—then some of us will get very enticed by that.

My caution is this:

While there is freedom in the marriage bed, and while the whole body is good, if you start seeing sex in terms of riskier and more perverse things, you may lessen its ability to truly bring you and your spouse together intimately. You've lost the spiritual connection.

So be careful that you always experience sex, first and foremost, as a way to say "I love you", and not just as a way to get selfish fantasies met.

3. There is Great Freedom

Nevertheless, there is great freedom in the marriage bed, and I'd be hesitant to pronounce anything that does not involve a third party—or fantasizing specifically about a third party (like pornography)—as sinful. That being said, just because something isn't sinful doesn't mean it's good to do. Like 1 Corinthians 6:12 says, "Everything is permissible, not everything is beneficial."

4. While Acts May Not Be Sinful, Selfishness Is

One more caveat, and I'm going to use oral sex as an example. I don't believe this is sinful, and I do believe that it can be argued that Song of Solomon alludes to it. Kissing is fine, and the mouth has more germs than most other parts of the body, so if you'll kiss a mouth, I don't think there's a big problem with kissing other parts of the body—if you're comfortable with that.

However, I received an email from a woman recently who said that her husband demands that they start every encounter this way—and often do this in place of intercourse. There were other issues as well, but the simple fact was that he preferred this to kissing her mouth or even to any shared physical pleasure, like intercourse. That’s just pure and simple selfishness.

There is nothing wrong with being “giving” during a particular sexual encounter and concentrating on one of you for a time. But if that becomes the majority of your sex life together, there is a huge problem. That’s not real intimacy; that’s just being selfish. *And it needs to stop.*

And let me say something specifically to those of you who are the more adventurous spouse: It’s also being selfish to demand something that your spouse is truly not comfortable giving. While I don’t think there’s anything wrong with oral sex, for instance, if a spouse really doesn’t want to do it, then you should never, ever push them. Why would you break trust with someone you love over this? Is it worth wrecking the ability that sex has to bring you together? The marriage bed is meant to be an extremely safe place. If you turn it into something that isn’t safe because you’re insisting on something that your spouse doesn’t want to do, then you’re wrecking something precious.

Besides, if it is something that isn’t really sinful—or even that extreme—you’ll likely find that if you spend time being really giving and helping your spouse to relax and feel wonderful in bed, then he or she will be far more willing, and even eager, to try other things later on.

5. Dare Yourself

Now a word to the spouse who isn’t as adventurous. I do think it’s okay to say no to some things that you really find distasteful. However, if they are not sinful, I’d encourage you to ask yourself *why* you think they’re distasteful. There may be some ways that you can incorporate some of these things into your love life in a non-threatening way, and I’ll look at some of them tomorrow.

But some spouses—and let’s be honest, it’s usually men—do enjoy trying different positions and different things more often than women do. This is logical. Women are far more physically vulnerable in sex. Changing positions can be difficult to get used to. Some can make us feel even more

vulnerable. And once we find a position that does work for us with an angle that makes us feel great, we're often less willing to try other things.

It's okay to say no to some things. But then dare yourself to make what you do enjoy absolutely amazing for your spouse! And dare yourself to make sure that you really connect on an emotional and spiritual level, too. If you're doing that, and you're making love with regular frequency, you'll likely find that trying some of these other things becomes less of an issue in your marriage, for both of you.

Great Sex Challenge 24:

Today's Challenge actually has three parts!

Part 1: Feel each other's whole bodies. Start at one foot, and go up the one side of your spouse's body, touching and licking or squeezing or whatever you want, all the way to the top of the head, and then all the way down the other side. Really see how amazing each other's bodies are.

Part 2: Once you've done that, have an honest discussion about some of the things you'd like to try, you're scared of trying, or that you have already done but you really didn't like. Some couples find it easier to talk about this with the lights off so they can't see each other's faces, or while spooning so you're not facing each other.

Part 3: At the end, both of you affirm to each other how much you love and cherish each other—whatever you do in the bedroom. It's that spiritual connection that is always most important!

Day 25: 8 Ways to Spice Things Up

For the last two days we've been talking about stretching the boundaries of what we do during sex—and how we negotiate these boundaries. Today I want to turn this into a more practical, smorgasbord-style post and look at different ways that you can become more adventurous in your marriage while still remaining comfortable.

Remember the guidelines we set yesterday, though: no one should ever be pressured to do something they're uncomfortable with or feel is sinful. It is never worth jeopardizing the safety of the marriage bed by pushing something on your spouse!

That being said, sometimes it's not a matter of feeling that it's wrong. More often, we hesitate because:

1. We're a little scared of something new
2. We think we may not be able to do it right
3. We're embarrassed
4. We're afraid that if we try something new, our spouse will want it all the time
5. We don't think it's sinful, and we don't think it's wrong, it's just not our cup of tea

Today I am ONLY speaking to people in one of those categories. I am not speaking to anyone who is saying “no” based on moral reservations or being completely and utterly grossed out. If that describes you, then it is perfectly fine to say no. But again, make sure that you're not saying something is morally wrong just because it isn't “the missionary position”. Sometimes we're too quick to label things as morally wrong (though, of course, some things, like porn, definitely are).

Here are some ideas to help you play games to become more adventurous, without violating your sense of decorum:

1. Give “love coupons”

Sometimes the idea of having to be at someone's mercy is enticing. We often hesitate sexually because we ask ourselves, “do I really want to do

this? Is this too wild for me?” And we get so caught up analyzing it we’re not able to make a decision.

Emailing your spouse a coupon saying, “tonight you own me for an hour”, or “anything you want is yours tonight” can get around that hesitancy.

And if you’re going to do this, set up a safe word, like “uncle”, that you can say when you feel like it’s too much. Yes, even if you give coupons, you still have a will and you still have autonomy and can say no.

2. Give each other "veto" chips

At the beginning of the month, each person gets two veto chips, under these conditions: throughout the month, when you are making love, you can use a veto chip on something that you've already done before. If it's something you've never tried, you can ALWAYS veto it—you don’t lose a chip over this. But if you have tried it before, use your chips to veto. And you can't veto a veto!

That way you each feel as if you're getting your needs met, but you also know that you aren't imposing because the other person can say no.

3. Create “his” and “hers” nights

One woman who answered one of my surveys for [The Good Girl’s Guide to Great Sex](#) explained how she and her husband handled this. Her husband tends to be more adventurous than she is. So one evening a week is for him, where they do things that he wants. One evening a week is for her, where they do things the way she wants—like starting with a long back massage and then being very gentle. And then the other evenings are just “normal”. This way each of them feels as if their needs are met, and they both go out of their way to make things fun for the other person on that person’s night, because they know it will be reciprocated!

4. Write Down Fantasies

At the beginning of the year, both of you write down 12 things that you would like to do that are special. Maybe you’ve already done them before, or maybe you haven’t. Don’t show your spouse what’s on your sheet of paper. Fold up the papers and put them in a jar, and once a month, on different nights, you each draw a piece of paper and do what’s on the paper.

Again, the rules about saying “uncle” still apply. You never HAVE to do anything. But if you each have things written down, and you know it’s a give and take, then your spouse can feel like you’re going out of your way to meet his needs without feeling like you have to do it every night. This saves the special things for special nights!

5. Play Match-the-Dice

Get two dice of different colors, and write on a sheet of paper what each dice means.

Red Dice – Actions

Choose six actions, like kiss, stroke, lick, rub, flick, suck, and assign them to 1-6.

Blue Dice – Parts of the Body

Choose six body parts and assign them to 1-6, like mouth, fingers, ears, toes, genitals, breasts.

Take turns throwing the dice, and do whatever combination comes up! You can make the game as adventurous or as tame as you want by varying the actions or body parts. Make sure you give enough time—let’s say at least a minute—to each task.

6. Play Match-An-Activity

A variation on the dice game above, this time, instead of matching an action with a body part, assign a specific activity to each number (either 1-6 or 1-12, depending on how many activities you want to use). Have each of you choose half of the activities that drive you wild. Examples could be mild things, like deep kissing, or blowing and teasing and sucking his ear, to more adventurous things, like watching her rub lotion on her breasts, performing oral sex, or using a specific sexual position. Then get a timer and you must do each thing for two minutes. This constant start-and-stopping means that you delay orgasm for quite a while, so when it does finally happen it’s much more intense.

Sometimes the things that we want each other to do stretch our boundaries a bit. So write out your list yourself, with a few extras, and then read your lists together. You can veto ones that you’re very uncomfortable with, but

try to keep at least one that stretches you. If you only have to do it for a maximum of two minutes, that makes it less intimidating while making your spouse feel loved because you're willing to try something new.

7. Create a Multi-Sensory Experience

We have five senses: sight, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Write down each of the senses on a piece of paper and put them in a jar. Alternate nights, so that you're each responsible for a different night. On your night, pick out three pieces of paper, and create a sexual experience that uses those three senses.

Often we really only use one—touch. We make love with the lights off, we don't say much, and we don't really even taste. So figure out way to engage the different senses! For sight, she can wear something pretty to bed. For taste, use flavored lip balm, or feed her some chocolate, or whatever you'd like! For hearing, you can tell her a story. For smelling, you can put perfume somewhere and ask him to find it. Be creative!

Challenge yourself, though, to come up with different things for each sense when it's your night, so that you're always changing things up a little bit.

8. Play Pick-a-Position

For this one you'll need a dice and a kitchen timer.

Each of you write down your three favorite positions, and then assign them to numbers on the dice. If you each pick the same position, then you can add variations to it (like sitting or standing, or in a chair, or legs up or legs down). Then roll the dice, and do whatever it says for two minutes, until the timer goes off. Set the timer for two minutes again and roll the dice again.

Incidentally, this often helps men to last a little longer because the stimulation is start-and-stop, which can help prolong the experience.

There you have it! Eight ways to try new things and spice things up that are perhaps less intimidating than feeling like you have to always do one particular thing. Sometimes a man (or a woman) will get fixated on one particular sexual thing they want to try. It is okay to say no. But if you are regularly doing at least one of these ideas, and making love with relative frequency, you'll likely find that this request becomes less and less

important. Do things slightly differently, and your spouse will feel as if your sex life is really exciting, which is what you want—for both of you.

Great Sex Challenge Day 25:

Pick one idea and do it! If you're uncomfortable by all of them, start with the dice game, and take away the options that you're uncomfortable with and replace them with slightly tamer things. Sometimes just challenging ourselves to try something—anything—will help us see that sex can be a fun celebration we share with one another.

If you're having a lot of fun with this particular challenge, it's okay to make it last several days. Choose one option one night, and then try another option the next night. Lather, rinse, repeat! Then move on to the next challenge when you're ready.

Days 26-31

Keep the Momentum Going!

Day 26: Deciding on Frequency

We've looked at how to have more fun together, how to see sex in a more positive light, how to make sex feel stupendous, and how to feel intimate. I hope that by this time in the challenge you've experienced some breakthroughs!

However, if you want to keep the momentum going, and keep those breakthroughs coming, then you need to set things up so that once this 31 day challenge is over, and you don't have something prompting you to work on your sex life regularly, your intimate life remains a priority. These last few challenges will focus on how to keep these changes alive in your marriage.

When I was writing [The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex](#), I conducted two surveys of over 1000 women each, looking into all kinds of questions, including how much they enjoyed sex, how often they had sex, and how sex had improved since they got married. I was only planning on interviewing women.

But then I started to analyze the results. **What floored me was that 40% of women reported making love less than once a week.**

So I decided that I had better survey some guys, too, to find out how they felt about this. And the results weren't pretty. I've got it divided into age group, and religion, and years married, and everything—but suffice it to say that there are a lot of rather miserable men. Many women are quite miserable, too, since about 25% of women reported that their husbands rarely wanted to make love, which made them feel very undesirable.

Making love tells a spouse: I value you. I love you. I desire you. I accept you. When you don't make love, it's as if you're saying the opposite. That may not seem fair, because you may think: why does everything have to do with sex? Why can't he just love me for who I am? But men were created to feel affirmation through sex. When we don't want them, they feel as if they aren't loved, either, even if that's not what we intend. And women were created to feel pursued. If she isn't pursued, she will feel as if there's something wrong with her, too.

I do not believe that we women understand how devastating it is to men to be constantly turned down by their wives. Over and over again, I heard men say, *“I get rejected so often that I’ve just stopped asking. It’s humiliating.”*

If you feel like he demands sex too much, you can get mad at him and say that he should just grow up and not need it so much, but then you’re imposing your views on him. **You’re asking him to change, but you’re not willing to change.** And you know something, girls? It really doesn’t take much. Just decide to jump in! It doesn’t have to take two hours. It likely will take less than half an hour. And if you put your mind to it, your body will likely follow.

And men, feeling stressed or not feeling in the mood isn’t an excuse for you, either. Your wife needs to feel connected to you, even if you’re tired, or overworked, or worried. You must put a priority on this if you want to have an intimate, fun, close marriage.

So how often is enough? **I would say at least twice a week, if I were forced to pick a number.** But for some couples, especially when they’re younger, more would probably be good. And the happiest couples I found were those who were making love 3-4 times a week. When you connect like that, it has repercussions on how you feel about each other.

Maybe we should stop asking *“what’s the minimum I can get away with?”*, and start asking, *“how can I get in the right frame of mind so I can show my spouse how much I love him (or her)?”*. Make the second into a habit, and I guarantee your marriage will get better!

Great Sex Challenge 26:

Talk to your spouse about how frequently you each would like to make love. Decide how you’re going to come to a compromise which makes you both feel loved and cherished. How can you make this a reality? Does it mean watching less TV at night so you’re not as tired? Putting the video games aside so that you can spend some time with her and make her feel desired? Making love first thing in the morning?

Figure out what amount is reasonable given your work schedules, kids, and stage of life, and then figure out what practical steps you can take to make that easier to achieve—even if you have to schedule sex!

***Heads up: tomorrow's challenge is one that is easier done during the day.
So either read the challenge together in the morning, or commit to doing
it together the next day.***

Day 27: Quickies Can Be Fun!

Today I want to continue talking about frequency by throwing out an idea: there's nothing wrong with a quickie.

We've talked about how to "spice things up" in bed by trying different positions or stretching our comfort zone a bit in safe ways. But there's another way to spice things up, and that's a "quickie"—a sexual interlude where the goal is usually just to have him reach climax as fast as possible.

Now I know I've been arguing that sex should be wonderful for both of you, and that it should connect us on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level. How does a quickie fit into that? Doesn't that sound like it's the exact opposite of what I'm talking about?

I don't think so. While I think the sum total of the relationship should be one where you both experience tremendous sexual pleasure, and where you both connect on a profound level, not every single encounter needs to be like that. And in fact, having an encounter where you're just laughing and it's almost like a game can connect you in a profound way, too, because learning how to play with each other is so important.

So why a quickie? After all, if we women need foreplay to feel good, then quickies aren't going to do much for us, are they? Here are some benefits:

1. You laugh

If you've ever run upstairs while the kids are in front of a DVD, knowing that you have very little time, it's funny. And then you finish, go back downstairs, and pretend like nothing happened. It's like you both share a little secret now.

2. She sees how much he wants her

Ladies, do you feel insecure about your body? Feel like you're not really attractive? A quickie is often the cure. Most men go to great lengths to make themselves last while you're making love normally because they want you to have a good time, too. But tell him, "go as fast as you can because we have to beat the clock, or the DVD, or the school bus, or whatever it might be", and suddenly you see how much he really does love and desire

you. It can be a big ego boost—and that ego boost is also an aphrodisiac, since a large part of the female libido is feeling desired.

3. She boosts her libido while calming his down

If it's often been a problem in your relationship that he can't last long enough for her to get real satisfaction, this can be the cure! If you have a quickie early in the day, he satisfies the physical buildup he's feeling. But she rarely does (although some women, of course, do find quickies satisfying, but that's the minority). Instead, she starts her libido charging. Then, the next time you make love, he's more likely to last longer, and she's more likely not to take as long.

4. You add variety

It's always good to do things differently sometimes. It shows both of you that you care about the relationship and that you want to keep it fun.

5. You lower his stress

Because many men are worried about their wives receiving pleasure they often don't get to relax during an encounter. This lets them just focus on the pleasure, which can be very intense.

6. You lower her stress

Men aren't the only ones often nervous about women receiving pleasure. We often get quite nervous about it, too, especially if we're trying to orgasm. Take the pressure off, and ironically a quickie can be the most pleasurable for many women! (which just shows that we really have to help ourselves relax, and focus on pleasure rather than on goals).

So how does a quickie work best?

Grab 5 minutes—any 5 minutes.

If he's stressed about work today, try a quickie right before he leaves. Or maybe right when he gets home, or right before you head out for a date night.

Have lubricant on hand

Quickies are no fun if you're not lubricated, so here's where Astro Glide or KY Jelly can help.

Just go with it

Don't worry about doing it right. Just laugh through it! You'll feel emotionally closer because you've shared the experience. And you'll both feel desired.

Great Sex Challenge 27:

(I'm directing this one at the ladies, since it usually works best if she initiates quickies if you're just starting with them.) Grab him, during the day, when he's least expecting it, and take him upstairs! This one can be hard to do if you're reading this at night together, so save this challenge until a time when you can actually do it spontaneously during the day. But try to incorporate quickies into your life more often!

Day 28: Why You've Got to Initiate

Today I want to continue our discussion of how to make sex something that unites you, rather than something that drives a wedge between you. And so let's talk about an issue that I've touched on a number of times in this series:

What really matters in a marriage is not so much the frequency of sex (though that is important) as the enthusiasm and the passion.

So much of a man's self-esteem especially is tied into whether or not his wife desires him sexually. It's not just that she'll acquiesce to have sex with him; it's that she actually wants to. And, in fact, if a woman decides to placate her husband and "lie there and think of England", so to speak, he'll experience that as rejection, even though she's "letting him". For many men, that actually leads to erectile dysfunction. They have a difficult time "completing the deed" if they feel like she isn't really there for it.

Now, women who are married to men who don't have very high sex drives have problems in this area, too, though it often manifests itself in slightly different ways. But the message to take home is this: **your spouse needs to feel like you actually desire and want sex, and not just that you are willing to go through the motions.** You've already talked to your spouse about how frequently you're hoping to make love, but it isn't enough to just say, "okay, we can if you want." You have to show your spouse that you're truly interested.

In fact, many women (and I'm going to talk about women here, because the opposite isn't quite true since men can't do the deed if they're not interested) complain that when they start "letting" him make love more frequently, he gets even more demanding. So they just give up. They think, "*I'll never satisfy him, so why bother?*" But the problem is that you haven't met his basic need, which is to feel desired. In fact, if you just lie there and don't really participate, you've reinforced the idea that you don't enjoy sex and really don't want to do it. That's going to cause him to desperately want to make sure that you do desire him, and so he will actually become more

urgent about wanting sex. His most basic need, you see, is not to actually have sex. It's to feel as if he's wanted.

At this point some women are just about ready to give up. So it's not enough that I have sex? You ask. I actually have to want it? How can I force myself to want it?

Allow me to give you an idea: **Initiate it.** Really. You be the one to give him a big kiss and say, "let's go upstairs." Take him by the hand after you watch a movie together and lead him to the bedroom. You start the whole process, rather than waiting to see if your spouse is "going to want to tonight". What's in it for you, you ask? Here are just a few benefits:

1. If you initiate, you have more control over what you do

We talked earlier about how important angle and foreplay is to women. If you initiate, you can take more care that you get the right position and the attention you need.

Also, if you're uncomfortable about certain things (or even uncomfortable about certain parts of your body), then you can steer things in a more comfortable direction for you.

2. If you initiate, you throw yourself into it more

You're automatically more active, and that often means that your body will follow more readily because your mind is more engaged.

3. You create a goodwill circle

When you initiate, you show your spouse that you really love do desire him (or her). That makes your spouse feel better about you and about the relationship, and is going to make both of you feel closer to each other.

In a marriage, if one person is doing all the initiating, you have a problem. That person, whether male or female, will feel as if the other spouse doesn't really desire that kind of intimacy, and that's a very lonely feeling.

If you know you're likely going to make love anyway tonight, why not make the extra effort—and it really takes so little effort—to be the one to suggest it, or to try to seduce your spouse? When it's a two-way street, you each feel desired, you each feel loved, and you each feel close to one

another. When one is always doing the asking, it's humiliating. You feel as if your spouse doesn't really love you or value being close to you. You feel as if you're constantly begging. And eventually, what some survey respondents told me, is that they stop asking, and sex comes to a standstill.

Healthy couples both initiate. If you are in a situation where one spouse initiates 80-90% of the time, you have an imbalance that can cause problems. One spouse should back off a bit, but the other spouse also needs to fill in those gaps.

So take a deep breath, take your spouse's hand, and say, "let's do it!" That one little change can make such a tremendous difference in your marriage.

Great Sex Challenge 28:

Without showing your spouse, write down how many times, out of 10, you initiate, how many times your spouse initiates, and how many it's mutual. Then compare notes. Do you agree? Does one of you obviously initiate more than the other? Talk to each other about how this makes you feel. Then ask each other, "what would be a good way to initiate? What would be fun for you?" See how many ideas you can each come up with! And now, for the lower desire spouse, pick one and do it!

Day 29: Keeping Your Bedroom Inviting

When our children were babies we were living in a tiny two-bedroom apartment. Our computer was in our bedroom. Our duvet was old and rather ugly. In fact, everything in that room was old and rather ugly.

One winter, after a particularly grueling year during which we were grieving the loss of our little boy, we decided to head south for a vacation and recoup. When we came home, my mother and a friend had redone our bedroom, with new bedding, plump new pillows, and a new lamp.

Unfortunately, they couldn't move the computer and all the excess stuff out of our room, but even the small effort they made created such a transformation. When I walked into our bedroom I wasn't depressed anymore. I was happy!

If you're going to keep the changes in your sex life moving forward, you need to have a fun place to connect, and that means having an inviting bedroom. If your dresser is covered with old VISA receipts, if craft boxes are stacked up in a corner, if your bedding is threadbare and ugly and your pillows are lumpy, then climbing into bed isn't fun. And if you figure your bed is the best place to fold laundry—it's so big, and just the right height!—but then that laundry never gets put away, and every night you sweep it onto the floor again, then jumping into bed isn't going to seem stress free.

We tend to make it a priority to keep the kitchen and living room clean, because that's what other people see when they come into our homes (though, if we're honest, many of us rarely have company). But the bedroom is just for us, so if it's a mess, no one ever sees it.

I remember baby-sitting for a couple when I was fourteen years old. They had four children, in three different bedrooms. Their house was fairly tidy, if loud and rather chaotic. But one night a toddler wandered into her parents' bedroom, and I followed to corral her back to the rest of us. And I was astounded by what I saw. Mountains of clothes were on the floor. Every drawer was opened, with clothing hanging out. The bed was a mess and covered with papers. It looked like a cyclone had hit, unlike the rest of the house.

Twenty-eight years have passed since that day, but I found out just two weeks ago through the grapevine that this couple just divorced.

I'm sure that's not the main cause, but it can't have helped, either. If you're scared to step into your bedroom because it's a mess, or if it's just so ugly that you sigh when you walk in, then it's time to change things!

Yet mess and laundry are not the only things that can make our bedrooms unromantic. What about computers and televisions? Bring a screen into the bedroom, and you're likely to stare at it rather than your spouse. Instead of talking and snuggling, you'll catch the ending of CSI. That's hardly conducive to romance.

Work isn't all that romantic, either. Flipping through files in bed doesn't help you in the relationship department.

So let's try to banish screens, mess, and work from the bedroom, and keep the bedroom an inviting oasis, away from the rest of the world. Let it be a haven where you can escape, just the two of you.

Great Sex Challenge 29:

Look around at your bedroom. Is it inviting? Why or why not? Do you have a TV in the bedroom? Do you often bring computers or smart phones in? What about work? Discuss with each other how that makes you both feel, and what you would each like your bedroom to feel like.

Now, how can you bring peace and fun to your bedroom? Do you need new bedding? New rules about what is allowed in?

Once you've decided what you'd like to do, make a date to actually do it. If your bedroom needs to be cleaned up, set the date by which that will be done. If you need to buy new bedding or new pillows, decide when you're going to do that. Put it in the calendar so that it will get done. Spending money on your bedroom is not a selfish extravagance; the best thing you can do for your family is to build a strong marriage. Prioritize that, and everything else falls into place.

Day 30: Sex After Parenthood

Sex is obviously the start of parenthood, but for many couples, parenthood is often the end of sex. How can you keep your sex life fresh when kids are hanging off of you, you're exhausted, and you need some time to yourself? For the last 29 days you've been concentrating on sex, and making it a priority. But for these new habits to become "sticky" you have to change your patterns so that the roadblocks to a healthy sex life are minimized. And for those of us with kids at home, parenting can be one of the biggest roadblocks.

Today's challenge is designed for those with children of any age at home. If you don't have kids at home, you can skip ahead. But if your parenting days are still ahead of you, read on so that you can talk now and plan now about how you would like to handle some of these challenges.

Prioritize Marriage

When I speak at women's conferences I often ask the women, are you a better wife or a better mom? Around 80% of the room believes that they are better moms. It makes sense. These little beings need us so much, and we love them so much, that children quickly snatch the vast majority of our energy. Our husbands get the leftovers. Men, too, can pour so much into their kids, too, that there's little left for their wives.

Once you have children, though, your marriage is now even more important, not less. Other people are counting on you two being rock solid together. You are the foundation for their little lives. So you owe it to each other and to your children to put the marriage before the kids

You can probably all think of couples who prioritized the kids and ignored the marriage relationship. How did that turn out for them? Don't do that. Your children do not need all of your energy all the time. You need to be replenished, and a great way to do that is to build a great marriage.

Keep the Bedroom Safe

If you're going to build a great marriage, you need a safe place in the house when you can be alone, just the two of you.

When my youngest daughter was six, my husband and I were once both enjoying a rather good time in bed when we heard that familiar pitter-patter down the hall. We froze, pulled up the sheets, and were grateful when she jiggled the doorknob and realized it was locked. “It’s okay!” she yelled, and we heard her go back down the hall. Relieved, we resumed, until about three minutes later the door burst open and the flurry of sheets began again. It turns out that six is old enough to know how to pick a lock, but not old enough to know that you don’t want to be picking that lock.

Keep a good lock on your bedroom door!

The problems, however, do not end when the children get older. Life with teenagers is often even more trying, because teens tend to stay up much later than you do. And they know what’s going on. One friend shared her teen story with me. She and her husband had been enjoying a good time, and when it was over they were lying there talking. But their daughter’s music was so loud they couldn’t hear each other. He got out of bed, opened the door, and yelled, “Jen, how many times do I have to tell you to turn that music down?” She yelled back, “Dad, it’s this loud for a reason! Ick!”

You need a safe place for the two of you. One couple I know told their teenagers, “you want to be in your room at 9:00 pm. I don’t care what you do after that, but you don’t want to be wandering the halls.” The kids got the message, and they cooperated. As much as we may be embarrassed by our kids knowing what we’re doing, it’s actually modeling a healthy relationship. And it gives them a sense of stability.

We’ve also encouraged our own girls to be gone the same night of the week to give ourselves a “date night” at home. They both work part-time jobs with similar shifts, and they both go to youth group together.

Don’t stop your sex life because you’re embarrassed of what the kids may hear. Learn to be silent if you need to. Turn the radio on to muffle the noise if you need to. But most of all, remember that your marriage comes first, and children will not be scarred by learning that their parents are still hot for each other.

Keep the Bedroom Kid-Free

If you have smaller children, I'd also recommend keeping the bedroom kid-free. When babies are first born, pediatricians recommend sleeping them in a bassinet or a crib beside your bed. But as they grow, I believe that it's best to move children into their own bedrooms, certainly by six months of age. Children can learn to sleep through the night at that age, and learning to self-soothe is an important skill that actually gives them security.

I know that not all parents agree on this, and many families swear by the "co-sleeping" arrangement where babies and toddlers pile in the bed with the parents. If that is what you both agree is best, that is your prerogative.

I would like, however, to offer a few warnings. First, quite often one spouse is committed to this arrangement while the other is not. That's not fair. If one spouse really wants the bedroom for the couple, that desire matters.

The second caveat is that it's very difficult to have an active, healthy sex life when children are in the bed. Some moms have said to me in frustration, "Sheila, you don't need to have sex in the bedroom! We just make it a point of having great sex elsewhere in the house!" That's wonderful. But here's the thing: often couples start making love when they didn't plan on it beforehand because they're lying in bed just talking, and things happen. If you have kids in the bed, that easy, low-key spontaneity is gone. Anytime you put up a barrier for something, you make it less likely to occur.

This doesn't mean that you can't have a great sex life if your kids sleep with you. It simply means that you will never have as good a sex life as you could have if your kids were out of the bed. Please, think carefully about your marriage before you decide to let the children sleep with you with no end in sight. And if you're at the point where you'd like to get them out of the bed, but you don't know how, buy some books on how to help children develop good sleep habits. There are some wonderful ones available, and the techniques do work!

Set Up "Couple Time" Evenings—Or Mornings

Carving out time as parents when you can just be a couple is so vital. Schedule this in regularly, it's easier to make sure it happens. When the kids know to expect it, it's not a big deal.

So set up once a week “couple evenings” where the children eat a hurried dinner and then play in their rooms, when you can have a more relaxed dinner, just the two of you. Or set up a “couple morning” on Saturday mornings, when the kids can watch as much TV as they want for a few hours so that you can stay with each other. Find time that is yours, when the kids know to expect it.

Great Sex Challenge 30:

Have an honest talk with each other about how much the kids are hampering your sex life. Commit together that your marriage comes first, and figure out ways to find some alone time, no matter what the ages of the kids. Ask each other: do you think I put too much emphasis on the kids, and not enough on you? Listen humbly at the answer. Then brainstorm together: how can we carve out couple time? How can we make our bedroom a safe place for us? Identify some concrete steps you can take to keep your couple time sacred and safe.

Day 31: Celebrate

You're at the last day of our 31-Day challenge! I hope that you've found it helpful in opening the lines of communication, discovering new things about your spouse (and yourself), and reaching new fireworks.

In this, our last day, I want both of you to celebrate your relationship and how far you've traveled together. And I invite both of you to look forward, not backwards. That mindset is key if the growth and success you've had so far is going to continue.

Imagine this scenario: a wife realizes that over most of their marriage she hasn't been generous sexually with her husband. She wants things to be different. At the same time, he's been withholding affection because he doesn't feel loved. They both confess this to each other and resolve to go forward together. They're excited about it!

And for a few nights things go wonderfully. But then one night she's extra tired and she has a headache. She wants to just go to sleep. He thinks to himself, "Oh, great, here we go again. She said she wanted to change, but she won't. It will never last." And he gets angry. She knows he's angry, and she thinks to herself, "he doesn't care what I've done all week. That really is all he thinks about!" And they're back to old patterns.

Don't let that become your story! If your spouse has said that he or she wants to change, then from this time forward, commit to seeing your spouse through these new lenses, not your old ones. If she's said she wants to change, and she is changing, then a few nights when she has a headache shouldn't really be a big deal. But if you're obsessing on the past, they will be.

Perhaps you've always doubted whether or not your wife really wants you. Perhaps you've always doubted whether or not he truly loves you. Perhaps you've always doubted whether or not he's still thinking about the porn, and not about you. You have to put these things behind you. If your spouse says they want a new start, believe it! You've had a reset button on your intimate life and your marriage this month, and keep walking forward.

Walking forward is easier to do if you actually change your patterns. Remember way back at the beginning of the 31 Days when I suggested learning how to reawaken your body and rediscover each other? That's actually a wonderful exercise to do every so often, and when you're starting again, do it VERY often! It helps you to discover new things about both of you, but it also prevents you from doing the "typical"—either rushing through sex, or touching each other in ways that perhaps you thought were pleasurable but which really aren't. Starting in a new way, and reacquainting yourselves with each other's bodies as if you're doing so for the first time helps you to trust each other that you are trying something new.

And then do new things! If you have tended to make love in a certain way, try something else. Use a different position, a different room, even a different time of day. Just change things up for a while so that it feels different, and you don't start assuming bad motives of the other. When there has been hurt, or distrust, it's difficult to put that behind you. Change things so that you're saying to each other: this is a new beginning. We're walking forward in a different way now, with a different outlook.

You've learned some new things this month. You've had some great experiences. And perhaps one of the most important elements is that you've talked together about things that are important. Carry that forward, too. So tonight, in our challenge, we'll celebrate where we've come, what we've enjoyed, and plan to keep moving forward.

Great Sex Challenge 31:

First, the practical side of the challenge. What are two or three small things that you can put in place to make sure that you don't lose the momentum you've built? Maybe it's habits like getting the TV out of the bedroom, or going for a walk after dinner. Or perhaps it's adopting the "Rule of 3" with positions, where you change things up at least every third time. Write down your ideas and share them with each other.

Now the romantic side. Write a letter to your spouse, in detail, covering these four areas:

- * Here's what I love about sex with you
- * Here's what I found most sexy that we did this month

- * Here's when I felt closest to you this month
- * Here's what I'm looking forward to in our sex life.

Share those with each other. Writing them down has the benefit that you can save it and look at it again later. If you're just not a writing person, talk through the questions. But remember: extra effort always pays off!

My Last Word:

I'm so glad that you embarked on this journey together. My passion is to see marriages thrive so that families and communities can thrive, too. And sex is at the center of all of that. We express true intimacy best when our sex lives are healthy, intimate, and exciting. That's how we were made. I pray that this has been a positive experience in your marriage, and I pray that your marriage will only grow stronger from here!

Extras:

Love Coupons to Give Your Spouse

If you'd like to present your spouse with this 31 Days as a gift, download some coupons (including Stocking Stuffers for Christmas) right here:

<http://sheilawraygregoire.com/love-coupon-downloads-p887.php>

You can also find love coupons to give to your spouse on the same page, as mentioned on Day 25.

The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex

By Sheila Wray Gregoire

Billions of people have had sex. Far fewer have made love. In *The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex*, author Sheila Wray Gregoire helps women see how sexual intimacy was designed to be physically stupendous but also incredibly intimate.

Whether you're about to walk down the aisle or you've been married for decades, *The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex* will lead you on a wonderful journey of discovery towards the amazing sex life God designed you for.

With humor, research, and lots of anecdotes, author Sheila Wray Gregoire helps women see how our culture's version of sex, which concentrates on the physical above all else, makes sex shallow. God, on the other hand, intended sex to unite us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Gregoire walks through these three aspects of sex, showing how to make each amazing, and how to overcome the roadblocks in each area we often encounter.

Drawing on survey results from over 2,000 people, she also includes lots of voices from other Good Girls, giving insight into how other women have learned to truly enjoy sex in marriage.

“Like a funny big sister...” World Magazine

Published March 2012.

About the Author

Sheila Wray Gregoire speaks around North America teaching women how to create relationships that thrive. An author of six books and a syndicated parenting columnist, she started writing when her children were young and she wanted something to do from home. Growing up in a single parent home gave her a passion to see marriages succeed, and together with her husband, Keith, she speaks at FamilyLife marriage conferences and other marriage outreaches. She also is a sought after keynote speaker for women's events.

When she's not writing and speaking, you can find her at home in Belleville, Ontario, where she homeschools her two teenage daughters, and she knits. Even in line at the grocery store.

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