**Low Libido?**

**By Sat Tara Kaur Khalsa, MS, LPC**

If you are like many women, you might sometimes experience “low libido” or diminished interest in sex. If you are lucky, this might be temporary or might be addressed quite simply with hormone replacement therapy. But for many women, there is more to it than that. There are many causes of low libido and it can be complicated to find what’s really causing the problem. **The important thing to remember is that this is a common problem. In fact, a 2006 study put the incidence at 68%, so you are not alone. There are solutions. You are worth it. Your sex life is worth it.**

As you read through this list, it’s important to remember that a physical cause may show up as feeling or aversion. Emotions can cause physical symptoms. What may seem like the obvious cause for low libido may or may not be the place to start to address it. For many women, it’s helpful to have some expert guidance and support in sorting it all out.

Physical causes can include:

* Hormone imbalance (low libido is common in menopause, as is vaginal dryness)
* Side effects from medications (to name a few: for anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, allergies)
* Stress (from your relationship, work, financial issues, child-rearing, etc.)
* Painful intercourse (perhaps related to low estrogen)
* Fatigue, whether from illness or lack of sleep
* Alcohol (it reduces inhibition but numbs sex drive) and some non-prescription drugs
* Various medical conditions (endocrine disorders, gynecological and urological difficulties, etc.)

Psychological causes can include:

* Lack of intimacy in the relationship (and not feeling emotionally safe)
* Unresolved anger or power struggles that get expressed in bed
* Trauma reactions to physical or emotional harm
* Depression (may be a symptom or a cause)
* Issues around body image
* Fear of pregnancy
* Messages about sex from family, religion or culture

Practical causes can include:

* Lack of privacy
* Overly busy lives
* Awkward contraception
* Lack of knowledge about your sexual responsiveness
* Differences in sexual styles or levels of interest

**More About Libido…**

Another way to think about sexuality is as a dance between relaxation and excitement. Both are important for sexual satisfaction and orgasm. Notice how these factors can change depending on your relationship with your partner, the phase you are in, or your mood. The balance can even change in the course of one sexual encounter.

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| **The Dance Between...** | |
| **Relaxation** | **Excitement** |
| \* Physical relaxation | \* Healthy hormones |
| \* Emotional trust | \* New relationship |
| \* Comfortable environment | \* Freshness of existing relationship |
| \* Stress management | \* Experimentation |
| \* Committed relationship | \* Exciting lover |
| \* Confidence in contraception | \* Physical vitality |
| \* Sexual knowledge of each other | \* "Forbidden fruit" |
| \* Surrender | \* Building and holding a sexual "charge" |

As you read this list, consider which factors could be enhancing or detracting from your sexual response.

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