

The Fire Is Gone Out

When The Sex Drive is Dead

By Barrington H. Brennen

Meeting each other's sexual needs in a relationship is often a challenge to couples. Sometimes, however, it is just a matter of understanding each other and a willingness to talk frankly about it. As we are about to begin a new millennium, we should re-examine our married lives and the way we treat each other. We should commit ourselves not to take negative patterns of behavior into the new millennium, thus enriching our marriages. Let me share with you a letter a husband wrote his wife about the same subject. Then, I will share her response. These letters are from an unknown source.

HIS LETTER: "To My Dear Loving Wife: During the past year, I have attempted to seduce you 365 times. I succeeded 12 times. This averaged once every 30 days. The following are the reasons and numbers of times I did not succeed:

Reason	No. Of Times
We'll wake up the children	7
It's too hot	15
It's too cold	5
I'm tired	39
It's too early	23
It's too late	18
Pretending to sleep	60
Windows open -- neighbors will hear	9
Backache	16
Headache	10
Giggles	4
I'm too full	4
I'm hungry	8
Not in the mood	8
Baby crying	50
Watched late show	19
Watched early show	7
Not now -- later	5
Mud Pack	2
Grease on face	1
Reading Sunday papers	24
You're too drunk	20
TOTAL	353

Do you think you could improve our record in the coming year? Your Loving Husband."

HER LETTER: A few days later the wife gave the following response:

"To My Darling Husband: I am quite aware that you attempted to seduce me 365 times last year (and the score of twelve times is probably right). But being a fair and broad-minded husband, I am sure you will read and consider some of my complaints also. To begin with, those excuses I have were meant to inspire you, not necessarily to stop you. Let's consider your first reason for my repulsing you: "We'll wake up the children." My, you sure have changed. When we first married and we lived at my parents' home, we sometimes did not use the davenport because we were afraid of awaking my parents--but you didn't take "NO" for an answer then--you suggested we go for a ride or use pillows on the floor.

What's the problem now? We still have a car and pillows. Second reason: "It's too cold." Remember in our early marriage, during sub-zero nights in your convertible with cold leather seats? Why you even offered to lay your coat on the seat for me, and NOW you accept "too hot or too cold" as excuses.

All the other excuses are only superficial, except the one I believe you really underrated: "Not in the mood." During our first several years, you'd spent hours and even days just getting me in the "mood." But now you just pat my "cheeks" and say, "How about a little tonight?" WHAT ELSE DO YOU EXPECT, BUT AN EXCUSE? When we were dating, you came to see me all shined up, clean shaven, and you spent money to entertain me. Now we stay home, you seldom bathe, and expect me to accept love from a cactus bed.

Yes, honey, I think we can improve our score this year if we both spend more time thinking about each other and what we do for each other rather than what we can get from each other. If you will spend the time it took to prepare your report, and spend that time combing my hair, or bathing with me (like you used to do when we first married), you will see that I still remember where to hide the soap and hang the wash rag. Hopefully, Your Loving Wife."

EXAMINE YOUR MARRIAGE

Do these letters strike a familiar cord in your relationship? Do you want to rekindle the fire in your relationship? Maybe you can start by being honest with yourself and your spouse. Like this couple, sit down in a quiet place and meditatively write a similar letter to your spouse. Sometimes, writing letters can help open doors for healthy, productive discussions, even between husband and wife.

There are many reasons why couples lose the sexual fire in their relationship. Some men and women go about courtship and dating like they would of a special project they enjoy. When the project is completed (that is when they get married), they go on to other projects: Building a house, establishing a career, playing with the boys, mixing with the girls. In other words, the roses, sweet words, gentleness, are a normal part of the relationship before the marriage, but not after they say "I do." They take for granted the love they have for each other.

Believe it or not, some couples only have sex when they want to have children. Usually this is when one of the spouses believe that sex is only for procreation, or deep down inside he or she believes that sex is dirty, or one partner is only using marriage as a cover-up for her sexual orientation (homosexuality). Interestingly, in my years of counseling, I've discovered that many of these individuals grew up in strong religious homes with rigid rules. Also, many of these homes considered sex-talk a taboo, and public expression of affection was distasteful.

Many women lose interest in sex because of hormonal imbalances, such as low levels of estrogen or even thyroxin. This is a biological problem, not an emotional one. However, the side effects can be emotional and psychological. Sometimes these hormonal problems make it difficult or impossible to conceive. Some individuals who cannot conceive do not feel like whole persons. This kind of mentality can affect one's sexual drive. Some wives are treated with disdain by husbands and other family members if they cannot bare a child. To other individuals, giving birth to that dream child matters more than keeping a spouse sexually happy.

Dear friend, as I mentioned earlier, you must be honest with yourself and your spouse. Both you and your wife should get thorough medical examinations to ascertain whether any hormonal imbalances or physical problems are contributing to the low sexual drive. Another option is to review the family background and philosophical ideologies of your spouse toward sex. These may also contribute to the dull sexual moments. You may need to get professional help from a psychotherapist to help you both through this dilemma.

REASONS FOR SEXUAL FRIGIDITY

Other reasons for sexual frigidity are: sexual abuse during childhood (which could include incest), adult sexual trauma, negative parental attitude toward sex, unresolved or mishandled conflicts and tension in the relationship, poor

communication, lost of a loved one, lost of a career or job, partner's poor hygiene, partner's avoidance or minimization of a spouse's intimate needs, misunderstanding of sexual arousal messages and functions, and comparing or keeping an eye on the partner's sexual performance, just to name a few. Couples can work through all of these challenges, if they are open and honest with themselves and each other.

There is a practical Biblical principle that sets the foundation for healing sexual frigidity in a relationship. "Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:3-4). As Chuck Swindoll puts it, " the picture here is one of total unselfishness, two persons actively engaged in fulfilling his/her duty . . . to the partner. A proper understanding of this will begin to heal the wounds of sexual frigidity.

ENHANCE SEXUAL INTIMACY

To further enhance sexual intimacy, it is important to

- (1) separate sexuality from sensuality,
- (2) protect physical intimacy from anxiety and conflict, and
- (3) communicate clearly your sensual or sexual desires. (*Markman, Stanley, Blumberg, 1994*).

Sexuality would include sexual intercourse and all pleasurable acts and thoughts that may come before or after. Sensuality would be a pleasant experience that involves touching, seeing, smelling, or feeling; for example, walking on the beach, the chocolate smell or your partner after a shower, etc. Chocolate? You get the idea.

After you would have honestly discussed the matter and have the willingness to work things out, then it is time to move sex from out of the bedroom and into the living room. By that I mean add a little novelty to your love relationship. Too many couples are only affectionate behind closed doors. Let the sun shine through your relationship. The living room is a good place to start warming up the hearts for bedroom action. The kitchen also has great potential. In other words as Gloria Pitzer said: "Marriage is made in heaven, but a lot of work must be done down here on earth."

Dear husband, be gentle, loving, patient, and tender toward your wife. Listen to her and try to understand her world, her feelings her needs. Remember that lovemaking is not a single event. It is an experience, a developmental process that can last a lifetime.