



## Find Out What You Can Do to Fix Your Sex Life

**Breakthrough Research Offers Explanations, Examples and Advice for Getting Better Sex**

**Jan. 16, 2008 —**

An estimated 20 million couples have stopped being sexually intimate.

In their new book, "He's Just Not Up for It Anymore," best-selling authors Bob Berkowitz and his wife, Susan Yaeger-Berkowitz, offer explanations and advice for getting your sex life back.

From surveys and interviews with more than 4,000 men and women in this situation, they identified various psychological, physical and emotional causes. Their book provides helpful insight, individual examples and tips for solving your personal problems.

You can read the first chapter of their book below:



### WHY MEN STOP HAVING SEX

Most women are raised to believe men want sex all the time, a belief the media consistently reinforces. So when a woman suddenly finds herself in a sexless marriage, it not only hurts a lot, it's bewildering.

It seems irrational. That same man, the one who couldn't wait to get you alone, couldn't wait to make love to you, now acts either annoyed or exhausted if you even hint at intimacy. Sex should be such a natural, pleasurable, loving, simple thing, shouldn't it? How did this happen?

Sex, of course, isn't simple at all. It may be an expression of love, a whole lot of fun, irresistibly

sublime, and the high point of your day, but simple it's not. Some anthropologists suggest it was, once upon a time. When the objective was procreation and a male perhaps shared meat with a female in exchange for as much sex as he wanted, both were far too busy hunting, gathering, and outrunning what ever creature might hunt and gather them first to worry about whether or not sex was happening on a regular basis. And, after all, who knew what a regular basis was, anyway?

Today we know, or at least we think we do. Women's magazines seem to constantly be giving results to polls that ask the inevitable question: "If you are married or in a committed relationship, how often do you have sex?" The average is one to two times a week, a figure that hasn't changed since Kinsey first published his data on men in 1948 and women in 1953. Data are data, but what about all the couples who wouldn't score quite so high on this test? If you are in a relationship where once a month is the norm, or for that matter, once a year, do you even want to take the test?

### **Why is it that so many married couples find themselves living a life of celibacy?**

Today we live in a world where every available form of media seems to scream out that people, and men in particular, want sex, and more sex. That trite and hackneyed expression "sex sells" still seems to be the mantra for pushing everything from soda to cars, to, well, sex. And the majority of us buy into this. We want to be those elusive things—desirable and sexy. The ultimate goal, what most of us really want, or think we really want, is to fall so much in love, to be in a relationship so committed that we become one special person's own private sex symbol. We get a house together, and maybe a family, and lots of sex. Forever.

### **So why is it that so many married couples, those very people able to have as much sex as they want, find themselves living a life of celibacy?**

These same couples probably once had sex on a regular basis. They thought each other interesting, attractive, and desirable enough to commit to sharing a bed forever. What stopped the passion?

### **IF YOU'RE IN A SEXLESS MARRIAGE, YOU'RE NOT ALONE**

**"It's good to know there are other women who experience this. I thought it was really rare."** (Female, 35)

Surveys tell us that 40 million Americans live in a no-sex or low-sex marriage. Some believe the number might be even higher. After all, we live in a culture where everyone, or at least everyone in a committed relationship, is supposed to be having sex, and lots of it. Not having sex equals failure, a lack of desirability. Who wants to check the "never" box on that magazine quiz?

A sexless marriage is defined by experts as making love ten times a year or less. Whether or not that is a problem, of course, depends on the couple. If both are content, if "ten times a year or less" meets their needs and expectations, then they have no problem.

Unfortunately, this usually is not the case. Often the loss of sexual pleasure and intimacy results in depression, suspicion, anger, resentment, and sometimes, infidelity and divorce. Although it is clear that this issue is rarely one-sided, it is nevertheless surprising to many that it is just as often the man who puts the brakes on sexuality as the woman. The late Dr. Bernie Zilbergeld, who was one of America's leading sex therapists, suggested it was more often the man when he wrote, "&in the vast amount of couples consulting me about desire complaints it's the women who want more and the man who always has a headache." These same men who used to do what ever it took to get their fiancées or new brides into bed no longer desire them. What happened?

### **WHAT STOPS THE PASSION?**

Why do men stop having sex with their wives? The reason is seldom simple and may have a physiological, psychological, or cultural foundation; recent studies add a genetic component. Often these elements combine.

We looked at the statistical reasons our male survey respondents, who self-identified as choosing not to have sex with their spouses, gave us for no longer being intimate, and we studied their comments carefully. Let's first take a look at some statistics. We asked men to rate a list of reasons on a scale that went from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The following table lists in descending order the percentage of men who agreed with each of the causes.

## WHY MEN SAID THEY STOPPED

reason percentage (%)

She isn't sexually adventurous enough for me – 68

She doesn't seem to enjoy sex – 61

I am interested in sex with others, but not with my wife – 48

I am angry at her – 44

I'm bored – 41

She is depressed – 40

She has gained a significant amount of weight – 38

I am depressed – 34

I no longer find her physically attractive – 32

I suffer from erectile dysfunction – 30

I lost interest and I don't know why – 28

I prefer to masturbate, but not online – 25\*

I prefer to watch pornography online and masturbate – 25\*

I am on medication that lowered my libido – 21

I am/was having an affair - 20

I suffer from premature ejaculation - 16

I have difficulty achieving orgasm - 15

I am too tired - 14

She is/was having an affair - 9

I don't have the time - 6

I wasn't interested in sex to begin with - 3

I am gay - <1

\*These figures may overlap.

Even an anonymous online survey might cause some people to reshape or shade the truth. Although the men know (or at least think they know) the reasons for their voluntary celibacy but the women are only guessing, either way the situation is embarrassing and painful. It is therefore not surprising that both men and women agree most with statements that shift responsibility away from themselves. Indeed, men indicate a lack of sexual adventure (hers, not his) as primary. It is difficult to believe that this lack of erotic excitement is completely one-sided, and that these men who identify their wives as unadventurous are themselves imaginatively passionate guys, just somehow mysteriously unable to inspire the one woman they chose to marry.

Both men and women agree most with statements that shift responsibility away from themselves. After all, they probably knew her acceptable level of tolerance for erotic exploration before the vows were exchanged. We suspect that boredom or other factors is closer to the truth, or they are confusing the pornography they see on DVDs or the Internet with reality.

### **STOP THE PRESSES! THESE MEN REALLY DO WANT SEX!**

The overwhelming majority of men who responded to our survey seem to indicate that they are still sexually active beings, or would like to be. The few exceptions are those with seriously debilitating medical conditions, and the 3 percent who said they never wanted sex to begin with. Slightly less than half say they are interested in sex, but not with their partners, which might be valid but could also mean boredom, anger, or performance anxiety. The majority masturbates, online or off, indicating a possible predilection for solitary over partnered sex. And although only 25 percent indicated a preference for masturbating to online porn, 58 percent said yes, they looked at it.

For many of these men, a fantasy world is replacing an actual sex life with their spouse, bringing to mind the Oscar Wilde quote: "One's real life is often the life one does not lead."

### **THEN WHY AREN'T THEY MAKING LOVE TO THEIR WIVES?**

Here are some of the main reasons we believe men in partnered relationships choose celibacy or solitary sex. The issues are rarely one-sided or stand alone; indeed, they often combine. This is an overview, and all will be discussed in greater depth later on in the book. It should be mentioned here that the following list is by no means complete, it just represents the majority. A few men appear to come from backgrounds so traumatic (e.g., sexual, physical, or emotional abuse) that a fear of intimacy or dependency makes sustaining an intimate partnered relationship impossible without extensive psychological counseling. Others are alcohol or drug dependent to a degree that disallows a satisfactory sexual relationship, and still others suffer from physical illness and disease that precludes sex.

#### **He's Bored/She's Bored**

Drs. Max and Della Fitzgerald are clinical sex therapists who studied with William Masters and Virginia Johnson and are founders of The Fitzgerald Institute in North Carolina. We asked them why they believed some men stop having sex with their wives. Max replied that the main reason is boredom. "Same place, same station. We do it the same way every time. Men like variety, and when a couple gets stuck in a routine, the man is the first one to get dissatisfied with it." Della agreed, saying, "Definitely, boredom."

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results is that wonderful definition of insanity attributed to Albert Einstein. It often is what happens in the conjugal bed. What seemed exciting once upon a time now seems just plain dull. Some men may not be having sex with their wives because sex simply isn't worth the effort. They'd rather watch television. Their wives may feel the same way, not really missing mediocre sex, just missing that feeling of being desired.

#### **Why does sex become predictable and boring?**

This lack of newness, energy, and emotion translates for many men into a lack of adventure and sexual enjoyment on the part of their partners, transferring the problem and ignoring the fact that they're not bringing any originality to bed, either. What they are really feeling here is rejection, thinking, "My spouse lacks enthusiasm for, and is apathetic about me! She doesn't care about me anymore. If she did, she would be more passionate!"

Why does married sex become predictable and boring? Dr. Helen Fisher, a research professor of

anthropology at Rutgers University, divides love into three categories—lust, romantic love, and attachment—and considers these to be evolved drives associated with different brain chemicals. Lust inspires us to seek a range of partners.

Romantic love drives us, instead, to focus on a specific romantic partner. We often fall romantically in love with someone we perceive, perhaps subconsciously, to be a good provider and to father the type of children we want (if we are female), and likely to conceive and nurture the type of children we want (if we are male). In those exhilarating early days of romance, our beloved seems fascinating, irresistible, and red hot. These are the glory days long-term married couples wistfully remember—the "honeymoon" stage (that sometimes doesn't even last until the honeymoon) when desire for each other was a constant, rather than a sometime, thing. Most couples made love every day, some multiple times a day; at any rate, when two people fall into lust that leads to love, the brain chemicals necessary to best ensure propagation of the species are distributed in just the right amounts to make them want to make love all the time. However, Dr. Fisher believes that "it is not adaptive to be intensely romantically in love for twenty years....[And] we would all die of sexual exhaustion." In a good relationship, brain chemicals shift and attachment emerges.

This is the sense of calm and peace, a Sunday kind of love that is the foundation of a stable, long-term partnership, enabling the pair to raise their offspring. It trumps lust, at least most of the time. Ironically, hormones that allow attachment to thrive (oxytocin and vasopressin) suppress lust and romantic love. It would appear to be a catch-22—great marriage, or great sex.

Clinical psychologist and sex therapist David Schnarch agrees that marriage, and the readily available sex that goes along with it, frequently results in partners wanting less instead of more. Schnarch makes a psychological rather than biological case for decreased passion, arguing that "the person with the least desire for sex always controls the frequency of sexual contact between spouses." Thus, if a man stops wanting sex because of fear (erectile dysfunction [ED], premature ejaculation, inhibited orgasm, fathering a child, intimacy issues), anger, or depression, and his wife becomes accustomed to and distressed by what she experiences as his rejection of herself, she will ultimately stop trying to reverse the trend. The converse is true as well.

The wife may be refusing the husband for her own reasons, until he no longer feels the effort is worthwhile. They might even be on a sexual seesaw, each taking turns being the one pursuing or turning away. Dr. Schnarch believes that there is a clear correlation between the increasing importance of one's partner to oneself and the unsettling discomfort of being vulnerable. The fear of losing a spouse, or having a spouse choose to leave, can result in decreased desire as a protective mechanism. The more complete the relationship, the greater the loss if it ends. That's why, he suggests, some people find it easier to experiment in one-night stands or emotionally disposable affairs—there's no risk of being exposed, rejected, or considered deviant when the other person can't hurt you. Schnarch states: "We demand stability in marriage—and when we get it we complain things are always the same."

### **Familiarity Breeds Contentment**

These are intriguing theories, but can anything be done to alleviate the boredom? There are no easy solutions to the monotonous sex that evolves in many marriages, but if the problem is just fatigue with the sex-by-numbers, don't-do-anything-surprising or don't-take-any-chances routine that married sex often becomes, then anything different usually works. (That's why so many couples have sex the minute they get to their vacation hotel room, jet lag or no jet lag. It's not the free time or the lack of day-to-day pressure; it's the change of venue, the different bed, sheets, and pajamas that liberate.) All those magazine solutions—lingerie, massages, erotica, fantasies, and sex toys—can help, for a short time, at least. There's a lot to be said for a silk camisole and high heels instead of a torn T-shirt and socks. The problem is, eventually you run out of ideas and money. Dr. Schnarch (and others) makes a strong case for differentiation, which is holding on to your own identity and

looking to yourself for approval and validation, and not your spouse. We concur.

The constant, relentless, delicious sex of those first few months or years will probably never return. Individuality and separateness encourages passion and is probably imperative in retaining heat in your marriage, or restarting the fire. But we want to make an important point here: The constant, relentless, delicious sex of those first few months or years will probably never return.

For the majority of people fortunate enough to be in loving long-term committed relationships, fantasies, vacations, and lacy underwear aren't going to reverse those brain chemicals back to the good old days, or exorcise every last one of those vulnerability demons. They might jumpstart things a bit, and probably will, as long as both partners are open to change, and there are no other issues to deal with, which is often not the case. And even in the most optimal of relationships there are, apart from the workday itself, the mundane routines necessary to keep the household going: bills to be paid, groceries shopped for, meals prepared and dishes washed, garbage taken out, not to mention the kids. Even if these chores are shared reasonably, married life is still very different from those early months of dating. The everyday aspects of a well-functioning marriage are not to be trivialized; they can in fact be calming and build contentment and security, but sexy they're not. And all the magazine articles in the world telling you to light a bunch of candles and run an aromatic bath can't explain how to transition from a steamy hot soak to a steamy hot night of sex.

### **Sexual Novocain**

Anger is a powerful sexual Novocain, and 44 percent of the men said they were furious. They felt criticized and controlled, undervalued and insignificant, yet many couldn't, or wouldn't, talk about it with their partners. Afraid of yet another fight, or a long list of things they're doing wrong, they shut down emotionally and sexually.

"My wife is so overly critical, in every possible way, starting with my work, telling me what I should or shouldn't be doing and telling me how I should be living my life. She treats me like a child, saying things like "If you don't put your shoes away, I'm going to throw them outside the door." (Male, 47)

Clearly, the marriage described in the preceding quote is filled with bitterness and disappointment. The wife has become an annoying bully; he has shut down completely and withholds the only thing he thinks might hurt her. They probably both feel underappreciated. Couples need to learn how to discuss their issues with respect, and to really listen to each other.

We have to wonder what benefit each is getting from this seemingly unhappy partnership. Do they find comfort in their assigned roles of nagging wife and henpecked husband, reenacting unpleasant yet familiar scenes from their childhood? Does the wife's constant criticism give her husband the needed psychological ammunition to withdraw from her sexually? Is that something he would want to do anyway?

**"I'm angry at her because she knows it all and always has to be right. She wants to keep talking about things until I'm sick of it." (Male, 49)**

This comment interested us because it seemed to indicate an unfortunate but common marital problem. She keeps talking, but he stopped listening. He may feel like the junior partner and since she "always has to be right," he believes there is no room for his opinion or feelings. At this point, negative communication appeals to her more than none at all. The problem is there's no real conversation going on here. Her plan is to keep speaking until she gets him to agree with her: she's desperate for his understanding and support and this is unlikely because, to him, it's all nagging and he tuned out long ago. His plan is to communicate silently, by withholding sex. Couples need to learn how to discuss their issues with respect, and to really listen to each other. She has to begin by trying to explain what's really bothering her, and he has to try to slow down, stop, and hear what

she's saying.

**"I'm just plain mad. I do so much more around the house than my father ever did: I vacuum, wash dishes, do the laundry, and change the diapers. I want what women have been saying they want for years, thanks and respect. I want to feel wanted. And until I get it, there isn't going to be any sex."** (Male, 50s)

We strongly believe egalitarian marriages work best, and we also think partners should thank each other for doing those little, usually unpleasant, boring, and, yes, thankless, jobs. This guy feels not only unappreciated, but unwanted. Sadly, he has become a twenty-first century-male Lysistrata, withholding sex until his personal battle for respect is won.

**"For my own amusement, I took to counting the seconds between arriving home from work every day and the first negative comment. It was generally significantly less than a minute."** (Male, 50s)

Most men tie their self-worth into two things: their sexuality and their jobs. Unfortunately for them, this is the very foundation of their validation, and it easily gets cracked and eroded. If a woman shows a man no passion (in spite of the fact that he may not have any himself), he will feel rejected, and the rejection will, often, turn into anger, apathy, or depression. A little bit of flattery might go a long way in the situation described in the previous quote, but any kind of positive reinforcement tends to be one of the first things to exit from an anger-based marriage. What remains is an emotional void, a relationship where intimacy becomes foreign and distasteful, and not to be trusted because the risk is far greater than the reward. An angry man may be a raging bull, or he may just sit quietly, secretly consumed by fury.

### **No Erection = No Sex**

Forty percent of men over the age of 40 suffer from impotence at least on occasion, and the percentage increases with age. It is estimated that more than 30 million men in the United States have this problem. Certain medical conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, can result in difficulty getting or maintaining an erection. Depression and anxiety can have the same result, as can many and various medications (including some used for treating depression and anxiety).

Losing the ability to get and maintain an erection goes to the very core of masculinity, and it can be easier to just stop having (partnered) sex than risk embarrassment. And, by the way, only a small percentage of men who could benefit from Viagra, Cialis, or Levitra get prescriptions. Impotence is that difficult to discuss, even with a doctor. It seems probable that it is underreported even in an anonymous online survey.

Although 30 percent of the male respondents acknowledged problems with ED, 39 percent of the women thought it was a problem. The men who were willing to admit it was an issue rarely commented further, and when they did it was often to transfer the source of their "problem" to the woman they married, suggesting that her lack of adventure, interest, or even her appearance was the real reason.

Later in the book we will explain the physiological and psychological reasons for erectile dysfunction, as well as the closely related problems of premature ejaculation and inhibited orgasm, and explore ways to approach and solve this problem with compassion and tact and help you or your partner stop suffering in silence. It is an extremely common problem, and, importantly, one that usually can be easily resolved.

### **Depression and Libido-Lowering Medications**

Clinical sex therapist Della Fitzgerald believes depression is one of the main reasons men stop being sexual with their wives, and the majority of our female respondents agree. Dr. Fitzgerald states: "Many times the man may not even be aware that he is depressed over the stressful things in life economic stress, career stress, not achieving the things he wants. He is not even aware he has responded [to the stress] with anger, and the anger has gone underground and moved into depression. He is not enthusiastic about anything at all." He is not enthusiastic about having sex with his wife if he thinks she's depressed, either. That was the case with almost four out of ten men.

Ironically, just as depression lowers libido, so do many antidepressants. There are new ones on the market now that are supposed to have less of a libido- lowering effect; however, everyone reacts individually to these drugs, or combination of drugs. It is imperative they be prescribed by a specialist such as a psychiatrist or psychopharmacologist.

Often, if a drug reduces sexual desire, it can be switched with one that won't. It is extremely important that you inquire about any negative side effects that may occur, and discuss them fully with the physician, pharmacist, and your spouse.

### **SSRI = So Sorry, Romance Impossible?**

Dr. Helen Fisher believes that some of these drugs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, such as, for example, Zoloft and Prozac) may not only lower libido, but also prevent the development of romantic love and attachment. They may even eliminate the ability to have those feelings, making a person in a committed long- term relationship suddenly and inexplicably feel no longer in love with his or her partner.

We are in no way suggesting that a depressed person should not get help (nor did anyone we interviewed); we think that these medications can make life worth living again and even save lives. However, we do believe antidepressants are sometimes prescribed for specious reasons, or without full disclosure, or, as an absolute worst- case scenario, just borrowed from a friend, and used without any medical supervision at all. Depression, like impotence, can be a sign of masculinity gone astray, and difficult to admit, even to oneself.

### **Virtual Sex**

Men have used various forms of erotica for partnered enhancement and solitary pleasure for centuries. Erotic artifacts, some dating back thousands of years, have been found in archaeological digs. However, until very recently, pornography was limited to printed material (which allowed for rich fantasies) and seedy movie houses. The VCR made privacy possible, but content was limited and not readily accessible.

The Internet irrevocably changed all that. Now every type of exotic erotica is available, and it's private, cheap, and virtually infinite. This is the biggest, newest, and most versatile sex toy of them all.

Why would a guy spend so much time online looking at naked women when he has one in bed, ready, willing, and able?

Some men view porn as a way to have imaginary sex with other women without actually cheating on their wives. There are also examples of chat rooms leading to virtual adultery and online infidelity; whether these are crimes or misdemeanors can only be determined by the couple involved. Others use the stimulation to enhance their offline experiences, and sometimes ask their partners to join in. And clearly, some guys are using porn as a complete substitute for marital sex, like this 45- year- old male who wrote:



**"When I was a kid, I used to love Penthouse and Playboy. What guy didn't? But the Internet has opened up this whole world of endless pornographic experiences, beyond my wildest dreams. I feel guilty, but after the first few years of marriage, my wife just can't compete. I still love her, but I have no desire to have sex with her anymore."**

If a woman is married to a man like this, it's bewildering:

**"I really can't figure out why it happened. I was willing to have sex with him at any given time, but he just kept watching [porn] more and more. He would tell me it was going to stop. He would hide it from me and I would catch him. I keep getting angrier and more resentful. We are on a downward spiral, and the madder I get, the more he rejects me and watches porn. I think he enjoys it more than he enjoys it with real women, certainly more than with this real woman."** (Female, 40s)

Why would a guy spend so much time online looking at naked women when he has one in bed, ready, willing, and able? Well, there's the variety, of course, and he knows for sure that he'll get lucky. There's no pressure of any kind, no performance anxiety, no emotion, no talk, no criticism, no foreplay. Anyone else's pleasure is irrelevant. He's insulated from rejection and perceived inadequacies. It may be light-years away from connected, committed, hot (or spiritual) sex, but it's quick, it's easy, and it doesn't require an erection. (Male sexual pleasure and ejaculation are most definitely possible without one.) If getting or maintaining an erection is problematical, online porn can be a refuge.

He's into You, He's Just Not That into Sex Inhibited sexual desire (ISD, also termed "asexual") affects about 1 percent of the population. It is a rare condition where desire is, and always has been, completely absent. Hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD) is more widespread and is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as any "deficiency" or "absence of sexual fantasies and desire for sexual activity," producing "personal or interpersonal distress," that is not a result of a psychological illness such as depression, a medical condition, or libido-lowering medications, alcohol, or drug abuse. This definition is intentionally broad, omitting qualifiers such as age, physical condition, and whether or not there is any "normal" level of desire, suggesting that "normal" would be whatever is necessary not to produce distress. In many cases of HSDD, appetite for physical intimacy is low, but once aroused, satisfactory performance and pleasure follow. In other words, a significant number of guys do want sex, just not a lot of it.

### She Gained a Lot of Weight

There is no getting around the fact that 32 percent of our male respondents claimed they stopped having sex with their wives because they no longer found them attractive, and 38 percent said the reason was weight gain. Clearly, these may be cover-ups for depression, anger, or impotence. It is always easier to obfuscate blame, especially when the problem is, at least in part, yourself. So, let us make this clear before we write another sentence—we aren't talking about a few extra pounds, which, without question, are an excuse, not a reason.

However, if a woman is more than around thirty pounds overweight, her partner may be telling the truth. Men are visual, perhaps even more so than women, so excessive weight gain may indeed be a problem for them. Mysteriously, whether or not they themselves have added extra pounds, too, is irrelevant.

### More Weight, Less Want

Obesity also diminishes libido, so an overweight person may not be as responsive a partner as he or she once was. There is also new evidence that correlates male obesity and impotence. Mix obesity, ED, and low libido together and it may be easier to just stop trying. (Conversely, a few men said the

problem was that their wives lost weight.) Interestingly, only one guy mentioned that he would prefer a younger woman.

With obesity at an all-time high in America, it is not a surprise that weight gain is an issue. Some men might interpret it as just one more rejection—another example that she no longer loves and respects him. If he looks a bit deeper, of course, he'll realize that she no longer respects herself, either.

### **He's Not Too Tired, and He's Got the Time**

A Newsweek cover (June 30, 2003) photographs an attractive heterosexual couple in bed. She's visibly confused and distressed, soothing her pain by spooning chocolate Häagen-Dazs straight from the carton; her guy is intently at work on his laptop, barely aware of her presence.

She might as well be alone, as suggested by the headline "No Sex Please, We're Married—Are Stress, Kids and Work Killing Romance?" Women's magazines often reinforce this theory of DINS (dual income, no sex) couples. They say that for many of us, long hours at work, child care, and other responsibilities leave little time or energy left over for lovemaking. We are stressed out, or just plain exhausted, and have forgotten how to make time for love. This seems like a convincing argument, and often goes on to suggest ways to fit your spouse back into your life, culminating, usually, with the inevitable idea of "date nights"; in other words, penciling romance into your schedule and trying hard not to cross it off for something more appealing—as if sex were just one more tedious chore to check off your "to do" list.

Forcing sex back into your life won't work. However, it is important to make time for each other, and not forget why you fell in love in the first place; indeed, to remember when you could always find time to be with your partner, because when you first met that was a top priority. A walk in the park, a movie, dinner out, and any time alone, especially away from the kids, is critical. It will bring you closer, it will be different, and no matter what happens, you both win.

Now, is he too tired or not? Although 44 percent of our female respondents thought that their husbands were too tired to be intimate, a mere 14 percent of the men agreed with this. Neither women (18%) nor men (6%) bought into the worn-out excuse of not enough time, perhaps remembering that if you want to do something badly enough, you can always figure out a way to pencil it in.

Why do women think guys are tired when they aren't? Well, it can be another shift of responsibility, a belief that if he wasn't tired, everything would be fine. Or the men's fatigue might be an indicator of depression, something, as we mentioned earlier, guys are often reluctant to admit. It can also be a convenient cover-up for impotence, anger, boredom, or the unfortunate fact that he masturbated to online porn right before going to bed.

### **He's Having an Affair**

"Has this happened because he is having an affair, or is he just not in love with me? How do you know when your husband will not talk to you about it?" (Woman, 40s)

Another woman? Not likely. Only 20 percent of the men said they had, or were currently having, an affair. This number is slightly lower than the one published by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (21.2%), or the 2006 Elle Magazine/MSNBC survey dealing with long-term relationships and sex in America (21%).

Curiously, most men who were unfaithful did not seem to indicate any desire to leave their wives. This man (61) has been married to his wife (56) for thirty years:

**"I have had many affairs with other women. One of those is long-term. Yes, I've replaced my wife's role as my sex partner, but I haven't replaced her emotionally."**

He indicates that he loves his wife, and wants to share his life with no one else, but is no longer aroused by her. While it's possible that he needs new partners, and/or the excitement of cheating to perform, it's equally possible that a fear of intimacy is preventing him from committing fully to the woman he loves. He doesn't say if his wife has a sexual surrogate of her own, but we strongly doubt he thinks she does.

And this man has been married for sixteen years:

**"I was faithful for the first fifteen years of our marriage, even though she stopped being intimate emotionally, not sexually with me after five or six years. About a year ago I started having an affair with a woman I met on a business trip. I really like her, but I'm so afraid if I remarry the whole thing will happen all over again. Also, I don't want to leave my 13- year- old son." (Male, 46)**

The man in the preceding quote is interesting for a variety of reasons. He breaks the stereotype that men want sex and women want love; he is openly admitting that he wants more of an emotional connection than he believes his wife is capable of giving.

However, he doesn't seem to have discussed this with her, or explored why their fifteen- year marriage has been, at least to him, emotionally starved for the last nine or ten years. What happened after year five? Instead of looking for causatives, he's using the problem as an excuse for an affair shifting responsibility for his behavior from himself to his wife. And now he wants it all wife, son, and mistress.

Of course, this guy will likely have to leave his captain's paradise, one way or the other. His empty promises may transform the mistress into a less available woman, giving him a convenient reason to reject her, too. Or she may just get tired of his false promises and leave. His wife may discover his secret, and, if so, he stands a good chance of losing his son's respect along with his marriage.

It is theorized that many if not most couples do not survive the revelation of an affair, even if it is dealt with in couple's therapy, probably because it is the most often cited reason for divorce. However, it seems clear that honest and controlled statistics are difficult to obtain, and that the couples who choose not to divorce but work through their painful issues privately cannot be quantified. It is possible, perhaps, with counseling and definitely with hard work, to use the pain of infidelity as a catalyst for change, that is, as a way of finding out what is preventing a real relationship.

The vast majority of men, even if they aren't making love to their wives, aren't making love to anyone else, either.

At the end of our survey, the question was phrased differently. We asked "Did you have an affair after [italics ours] you stopped having sex with your wife?" and the percentage increased to 27 percent.

Those men seemed to be longing for validation someone to say that they were lovable, acceptable, and, above all, desirable.

**"I had forgotten what it was like to have a woman actually desire me and want to be with me**

**physically. We talked on the phone daily for at least two hours. When we had our weekly trysts, we would spend as much time talking as making love."** (Man, 50)

Of course, there are men who can't be validated enough no matter what their wife, lover, girlfriend, virtual pen pal, or anyone else tells them. There simply isn't enough love in the world to make them feel worthwhile. They need therapy to exist within a committed relationship.

The thing to focus on is this: The vast majority of men, even if they aren't making love to their wives, aren't making love to anyone else, either. They may say their wives lack adventure, but they aren't, for the most part, looking elsewhere to find it.

### **He's Gay&or Is He?**

**"Is our marriage just a cover for homosexuality?"** (Female, 59)

Sometimes a woman in a sexless marriage thinks that maybe, just maybe, her husband is gay. It would explain a lot, and take the responsibility off her completely. There would be no "other woman" to contend with. Divorce might be inevitable, but guilt free. In our survey, some women even expressed hope that this was the case.

About 4 percent of the male population is homosexual; this percentage goes up to an average of 9 percent in the twelve- largest American cities. Of course, the vast majority of gay men choose same-sex partners, making it possible, but highly improbable, that your husband is gay. So, we'll say it again. He probably has no other sex partner than his imagination.

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