



**SEXUAL INTIMACY
BUILDS EMOTIONAL
CLOSENESS
AND A SENSE OF
PARTNERSHIP.**

Hot Stuff

*Has your love life lost its sizzle?
Relight the fire with your mate.*

by Heidi Smith Luedtke, Air Force spouse

You planned your reunion outfit for weeks: hot-pink bra and panties, dress that curves in all the right places, shoes that make your legs look lustworthy. You expected to see him and feel an instant flood of sexual desire. But it didn't happen.

If your marriage has lost that loving feeling, don't despair. Therapist Michele Weiner-Davis, author of *The Sex-Starved Marriage: Boosting Your Marriage Libido* (Simon and Schuster), said the absence of red-hot desire does not mean romance is gone for good. It is not unusual to go through a sexual slump, she said. Low desire is the No. 1 complaint brought to sex therapists.

Prolonged separations and intense work schedules can leave military couples disconnected and out of sync. Shared experiences like having coffee together in the morning or snuggling on the couch during the football game may seem trivial, but they are the glue that holds people together. Building a sense of togetherness takes extra effort when couple time is in short supply. You need to feel that you are important to your partner and that he or she cares about your needs. Sexual intimacy builds emotional closeness and a sense of partnership. When your sexual relationship is good, you are more attentive to each other's needs beyond the bedroom, too.



»» Guy Talk

Ken Morrow, our 2010 Army branch finalist for Military Spouse of the Year, offers a guy's advice for getting things going.

"TALK openly, honestly and directly with your man about sex: what you want, what he wants, what you like, what he likes, what turns you on about him, what turns him on about you. And do it in that order: you first, then him. Make it casual. This is love, not science! Do it over a bottle of wine or some margaritas to loosen up. Be fearless and open-minded. You will be amazed at where this takes your sex life and your relationship in general. The intimacy will blow you away.

"Guys want to please you. In fact, they want to be your rock star demigods of the bedroom! But we are too proud to ask you how. Most guys get into a routine and then become afraid of experimentation for fear of 'weirding' you out. Communicating with aggressive courage is the most important thing you can do to improve your sex life. No matter what the other person tells you, it has to be completely OK with you. There can be no fear of rejection or retaliation. It's about truly getting to know each other. Talking this way will open up the rest of the communications in your marriage. It is also an amazing aphrodisiac!"

IS YOUR MARRIAGE SEX-STARVED?

It isn't useful to focus on how often you have sex compared to the average married couple, cautioned Weiner-Davis. What matters is whether you both feel satisfied with the level of intimacy you experience.

We all expect to feel a bit sex-starved during deployment. But post-deployment dynamics can cause problems if you and your spouse have different levels of sexual desire. If one of you wants to feel connected before having sex and the other only feels connected after having sex, you may end up in a stalemate. This hurts both of you. The high-desire partner feels rejected and lonely; the low-desire partner feels misunderstood or even bullied. A chasm of hurt and resentment may develop.

Your marriage is sex-starved if one of you is deeply unhappy with the sexual relationship and has unaddressed concerns. Then, the relationship deteriorates, Weiner-Davis said.

WHAT'S A GIRL (OR GUY) TO DO?

Both women and men can struggle with low sexual desire, but it is easier for women to admit, said Weiner-Davis. The stereotype that men want sex all the time makes it threatening to face up to a lesser level of desire than one's wife. But it happens.

The low-desire spouse controls the relationship, Weiner-Davis explained. It's not malicious, but it is reality. What naysayers should know, she counseled, is that the high-desire spouse's need for sex is not merely physical — it is emo-»»

We asked. You answered.

Here are ladies' top tips for going from zero to sexy, fast.

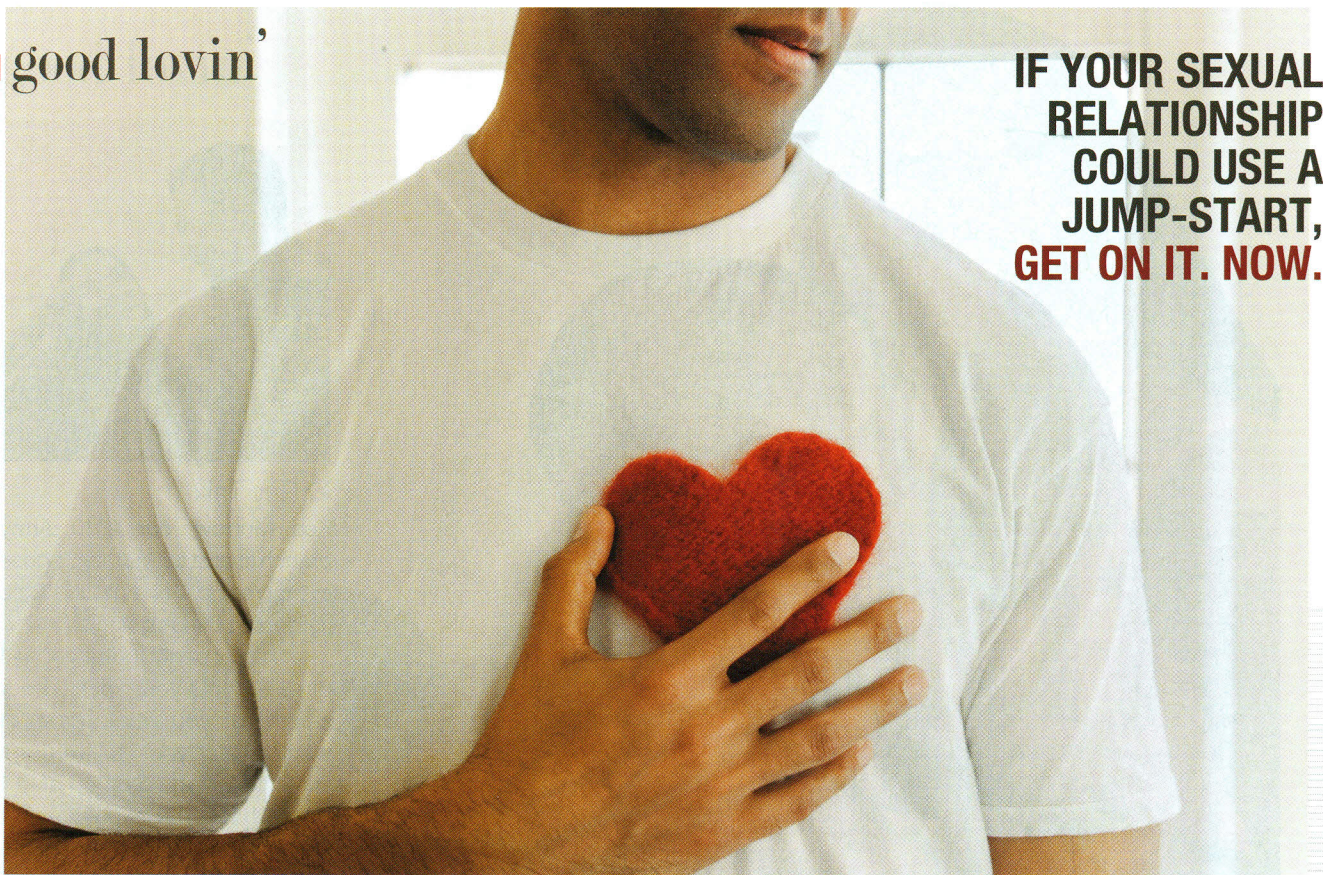
»»Take a Zumba class. Moving your body makes you feel sexier.

»»Curl your hair and put on heels. Heels instantly make you feel like a woman.

»»Wear your sexiest panties and bra, or (even hotter) go commando. No panties is super sexy.

»»Swipe on some red lipstick for an instant emotional makeover.

**IF YOUR SEXUAL
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ditional. The need for sex goes much deeper than scratching an itch. It is a need to be wanted and loved. When a low-desire spouse assumes his partner needs sex purely for physical gratification, he really misses the point, said Weiner-Davis.

There are many complex reasons why desire waxes and wanes. Diagnosing the problem — postpartum hormones, weight gain, kid chaos, low self-esteem, work stress, feeling underappreciated — isn't as important as doing something about it. Bringing sexy back requires a Nike-style approach, said Weiner-Davis: Just do it. Real giving means meeting your spouse's needs, even if they are very different from yours.

That doesn't mean you won't get something out of it, too. Often, low-desire spouses find sex fun and pleasurable once they get into it, Weiner-Davis said. Acting sexy sometimes leads to feelings of desire, not the other way around.

If your sexual relationship could use a jump-start, get on it. Now. Desire is a decision. ♥

Want More Sex? Wash Dishes.

"Choreplay" can be foreplay, it seems. Real romance means wooing your spouse in his or her personal love language, according to Dr. Gary Chapman, author of *The 5 Love Languages* (Northfield). Read the book together or go online for quickie explanations of these five:

- » Words of affirmation
- » Receiving gifts
- » Acts of service
- » Quality time
- » Physical touch

An Air Force spouse explained, "My love language is 'words of affirmation.'

"I like to be told that I am loved, and I need communication to feel secure in our relationship. His language is 'acts of service.' He feels appreciated when I keep up with the chores around the house. Since our languages are different, we have to go out of our way to express how much we care for each other."

For someone whose love language is physical touch, sex isn't just fun, it is soul food. It meets the deepest emotional need. If that describes you or your partner, get busy. When you consistently speak each other's love language, you'll fall in love again and again. Now that's sexy.