



JUMP-STARTING YOUR SEX LIFE by Arlen Keith Leight, Ph.D.

I'm often asked if there is a quick-fix for a couple wishing to jump-start a waning sexual connection. The answer is "it depends". The three most critical factors to consider are: (1) how long has the sex been infrequent, absent or passionless? (2) how erotically interested are the partners in each other and how sexually compatible are the partners with each other? and (3) how well and how often do the partners talk about their feelings particularly with regard to conflict?

If the couple has been together for many years with little or no passionate sex, it will be very difficult if not impossible to rekindle the flame. If the couple has recently become aware of a down-slide in the frequency or the erotic heat of the sexual connection, there is a whole lot better opportunity for jump-starting sex. Sometimes it simply takes talking about the problem; other times professional intervention is required. It should be noted that it is natural and normal for sexual passion to wane over time. However, it is NOT necessary for sex to become obligatory or die in a loving relationship. There are many ways to keep sex interesting and enjoyable, but we can come back to that in another issue of Guy.

It's common for men to meet and have a good sexual connection even when there is not a strong erotic attraction. This happens because men enjoy physical action with someone new. For example, many guys will have steam room sex at the health club with men that they would not be likely to pursue otherwise. It is quite common for two guys who like each other as people, despite a lack of erotic interest, to get together and have a good initial sexual experience. They will begin dating and, often times, find themselves in a sexless relationship. Also, it is not uncommon to find men with erotic interest in one another to be sexually incompatible. As they say, two tops don't make a bottom, and over time sex can become unsatisfactory or even impossible. If there is real sexual interest and compatibility by BOTH partners for one another, they are much more likely to be able to jump-start a waning sex life. If ONE or the other man never has or currently does not find his partner at all erotically interesting, or if the partners have insurmountably incompatible sexual interests, it will be difficult to find the spark necessary to move the sexual relationship forward.

The most important factor in a relationship, no matter what the challenge, is the ability for the partners to be able to discuss emotionally charged issues. Even when there is strong sexual interest, if ONE or the other man is not communicating his feelings, there is going to be a barrier to intimacy that can strongly affect that sexual connection. I am not just talking about talking about sex. If you are swallowing or denying feelings related to ANY aspect of the interaction in the partnership, the sex will likely wane or die. I have seen many men with very erotic feelings toward one another come in for therapy because they are not having sex. They are often defensive, sometimes withdrawn, and likely closed down emotionally. Sometimes in a single session of talking out feelings the sex will come alive. Consistent emotional dialogue is absolutely necessary for maintaining sexual intimacy. Avoiding conflict kills passion. When it feels too dangerous to explore feelings with your partner, it is time to come in for therapy.

Sustained sexual intimacy for two men generally requires a foundation of erotic interest and compatibility coupled with continuous communication of feelings. Early intervention is the necessary key to avoiding permanent bed death.

Having challenges in your sex life with your partner? Consider Communication for Intimate Couples