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LOWER DESIRE PARTNER GUIDE

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Desire discrepancy is a reality in every relationship, at least over time. One of you wants more and one wants less. Your roles can switch over time, and you may be in a different role in different relationships.

LOWER DESIRE

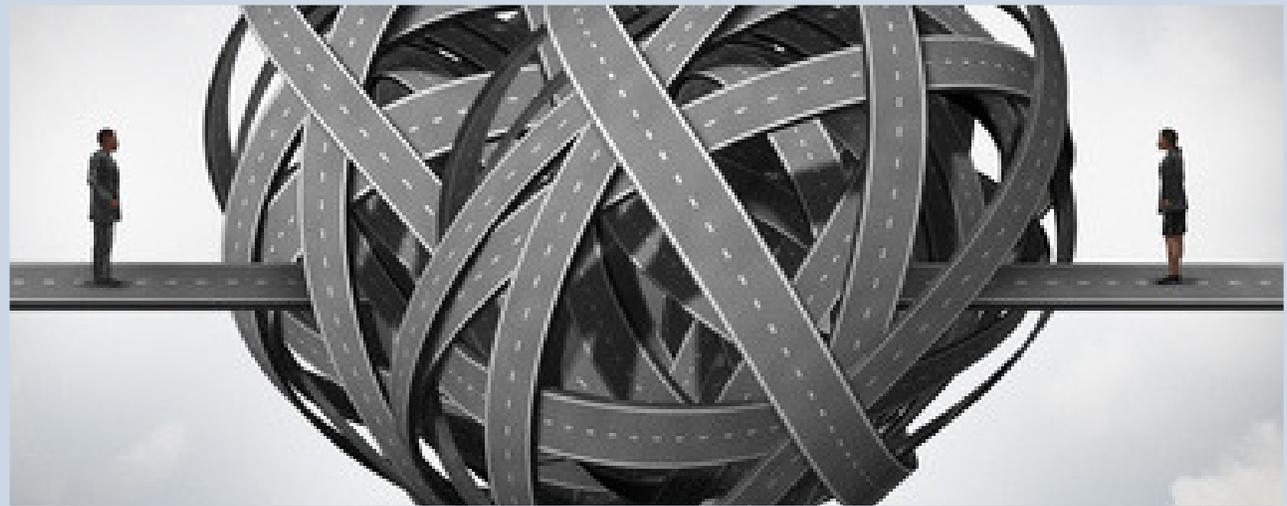
It's not that you have LOW desire; you have LOWER desire.

There is no "right" amount of sexual desire, and neither of you is wrong for wanting more or less sex. The difference in desire is not a problem by itself, but it can become one if you fall into what I call the "traps" of desire discrepancy.

YOUR TRAPS

These traps include:

- Succumbing to the pressure inherent in the situation
- Failing to identify and address obstacles that are in your way
- Resisting being an active part of the solution
- Pathologizing your partner



Here are some realities about desire discrepancy:

THE LOWER DESIRE PARTNER CONTROLS SEX.

The person who wants anything less has the control. You control the spigot. Typically, the person with higher desire will be initiating sex more (unless they have resigned that function by now). That means the person with less desire is the one saying yes/no, when and how. That's a natural function of wanting something less. You may or may not want that control, but you can't avoid it.

THE LOWER DESIRE PARTNER OFTEN CONTROLS THEIR PARTNER'S SENSE OF ADEQUACY

One of the traps for your partner is taking your level of desire personally. This usually results in them feeling unwanted, undesired, or unimportant when you want less sex. Which means that you have an impact on their sense of worth. This changes the meaning of sex you'd be having from a way to connect with each other in pleasure to a means of making them feel better. Over time, this can make sex unappealing.

Your Game Plan

TOLERATE THE PRESSURE

There is pressure in this system because your partner wants more sex than you do, not because they want to pressure you. Just like you can't escape having the control, there is no way to remove the pressure you feel. Sometimes people try a strategy of letting the lower desire partner initiate sex. This does not remove the pressure, as you well know if you've tried this. The fact is that there is pressure, and the solution involves working on it despite that. You'll need to step forward in the face of pressure (and anxiety) to make changes that improve the situation for both of you.

IDENTIFY AND OVERCOME OBSTACLES

You likely have some very good reasons not to want more sex.

It makes sense to be repelled by an overture for sex that feels like "neediness" and serves to prop up your partner's ego. It is also possible that your partner's "high desire" doesn't indicate an ability to connect during sex, to share moments of intensity, to create profound meaning with a partner. You may be showing the good sense not to be interested in this kind of sex and to refuse to participate in the sex that is being offered. You may also be standing your ground about how much sex you really want and where it falls as a priority in your life.

You may also face obstacles that relate to sexual functioning. If you experience pain with sex, of course you don't want it as much. If you experience dysfunction or don't meet your expectations of how you should "perform" during sex, of course you want it less.

You may have other obstacles related to stress, responsibilities, or relationship dynamics with your partner. All kinds of things can get in your way of accessing desire.

Whatever your obstacles, it's important for you to talk about them and work to remove them.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

You may be avoiding having to address your own anxiety or limitations by fending off your partner and their neediness, using their issues as a diversion so you don't have to look at yours. You may be letting your partner expend most of the energy to address your withering sex life without showing up at the table as a participant in the solution. You may be sitting back as if you are waiting for just the right invitation without stating your needs or even acknowledging that you have any. You may be perfectly happy sitting in your comfort zone and unwilling to stretch even though your partner is suffering.

Being in a successful relationship means that you need to be actively involved in solving things that matter to each other. Your sex life is no exception.

Your active role starts with identifying and addressing the obstacles discussed above. It also means taking part in exploring and understanding your own sexual interests and response.

You may very well experience "reactive desire," the type that needs to be evoked. This kind of sexual desire requires opportunity to emerge; it requires a willingness to start and an openness to becoming aroused. It needs input from you about what might make sexual encounters more engaging. It requires that you advocate for the things that set you up to respond. It also requires that you're both okay if those opportunities don't result in sexual interest.





DON'T PATHOLOGIZE YOUR PARTNER

Resist the urge to judge your partner's interest in sex. Just as your desire is just lower, theirs is just higher. Neither of you is right or wrong, and you need to work together to collaborate on a sex life that can be truly engaging for you both. A defensive response does not help you bridge the gap.

This process is not meant to get you to have more sex. It's meant to help you want as much sex as you naturally can. You don't need to want as much sex as your partner (and likely won't). Part of their work is to tolerate the difference between you and not expect that every desire will be met. But your role is to access as much desire as you might have, given your circumstances.