

# Scared about lack of sexual desire



*Jo Ann  
Volk Lederman*

**FAMILY MATTERS**

Dear Jo Ann,

*I love my husband with all my heart, but I don't feel desire for him now.*

*There's no one else. We have two small children. I'm so worried that I'm going to ruin my marriage. Is this normal?*

**Sandra S.**

Dear Sandra,

First of all, do not worry. Marriages do fall in and out of passion.

It's too bad our parents didn't warn us. If they did, it would be less disconcerting. But let's see what's going on with you and restore your sexual energy. You do not say whether you are a working mom. That adds to the mix.

In the past 20 years I've experienced a notable shift in the population I am treating for disorders of sexual desire to include young moms. Before that, gynecologist referrals of new moms were primarily for post partum depression. Disorders of sexual desire appeared to be clustered among my patients 45-60 years old.

Along with increased pressure on new moms, and working moms came

heightened awareness and more open discussions of sexual dysfunction. Many women think of their gynecologist as their primary care physician. These noble physicians, are entrusted with and become responsible for the emotional and physical well being of their constituency.

What I have seen is increased pressure on new moms, working or not, to create the highest standards for the intellectual development of their children. Those that do not have household help struggle with home care, child care, husband care. Add to the mix work-related issues, personal health care and exercise, and we have to increase days to 30 hours to accomplish what is now being compressed into 24.

Along with the sexual revolution, which helped women know they are entitled to enjoy sex as much as men do, came Bob Dole, whose endorsement of Viagra brought sexual dysfunction issues out of the closet for men, and women. The sense of sexual entitlement has increased the ability of women to disclose sexual concerns rather than to endure them silently.

I think it will help if you change your perspective somewhat and try to view desire as happening over a lifetime continuum, doing what it always does, waxing and waning during certain predictable periods. That will give us a context and make this period less stressful. You are going through one of these

moments now, but there is much you and your husband can do to re-ignite the sparks.

You have faced the normal post-birth challenges: Physical healing, huge reduction in hormones, moods that can bounce. Add some more ingredients to this mix: your household undergoing dramatic changes in scheduling, energy previously expended on the marital relationship diverted to the task of new parenting, focus previously on you and your husband shifts to welcome the newest family member. Although this long awaited event is a blessing, it can wreak havoc on sexual patterns of the young couple. Did that happen to you?

Desire overwhelmed by obligation? Days can be a series of endless tasks, followed by nights with little sleep. It can take time for the household to reestablish focus on the marriage, but it won't happen without your help. Some couples make the mistake of being child centered from this point on. They neglect themselves and their intimate moments for fear of taking energy away from their child or children. Has that happened to you? Your question indicates that you are conscious of the shift and want to regain the physical tenderness in your marriage. Being conscious of a problem is the first step in illuminating the path to solutions.

• Make private time for yourself and each other-no kids.

• Nourish and replenish yourself so that you have more to give. When you are emotionally bankrupt, there's nothing left to give.

• Pamper and recharge yourself with kind friends, a massage, exercise, new clothing, anything that seems right for you.

• When you feel well, you will be able to focus on your marital relationship, re-establish its primacy.

• Have more fun, just the two of you. Focus on yourselves.

• Play

Recent studies demonstrate that desire is a byproduct of arousal. That is a simple but revolutionary thought. Of course, somewhere inside of you, you probably knew it. Haven't you ever been too tired to make love, but wanted to please your husband? Suddenly in the midst of arousal, you feel your own desire returning. You probably haven't thought of it that way. But does it really matter whether desire precedes arousal or the other way around?

*Jo Ann Volk Lederman is executive director of South Miami Psychology Associates. In private clinical practice for 25 years, she specializes in marriage and family therapy, couples therapy, infertility issues, behavioral medicine and business consulting. To contact Volk Lederman, call 305-666-8833, send mail to 7800 Red Road, Suite 205A, Miami 33143; or address email to JoAnnVolkLederman1@juno.com.*