Lack of, and lackluster, lovemaking [1]

(1) Alice,

My wife never liked sex when she was younger even though she had about a dozen partners. When she met me all that changed and she loved making love every night for about a year. Her sex drive then began to lessen until she finally does not like it at all. She believes it is a physical act that she can do without, whereas I believe it is the ultimate form of intimacy. Do you have any suggestions for her to revitalize her sex drive since right now we are not making love at all?

(2) Dear Alice,

I've been with my girlfriend for almost five years and love her dearly. The difficulty I'm having is she is not very imaginative about our sexual interactions. Although I don't mind adding the spontaneity and variety, I eventually feel pressure to be the one to do it all the time. After a while I get frustrated because it seems like she is never willing to take the risk of giving our intercourse some sparkle. It seems that she prefers a very predictable pattern of foreplay and intercourse that I've come to find less than arousing (unless I haven't seen her for a long time). I've also tried repeatedly to talk with her about it but she is not very responsive to me on this issue.

Thanks,
"Being as Patient as I can"

Answer

Dear Reader #1 and Being as Patient as I can,

It seems like there is a pretty big difference in the way you and your respective partners are viewing the role of sexuality in your relationship. Having an open, non-judgmental conversation about how to make your lives together fulfilling for both of you might help bring both couples back into sexual harmony.
Reader #1, while sex may be the ultimate form of intimacy for you, do you know what your wife considers intimate? It might be interesting to learn what activities make her feel close to you. You could try doing those things with her, and then seeing how she feels about sex. Also, and perhaps most critically, does your wife want to revitalize her sex drive? If she's perfectly happy with the way things are, or if there's an emotional or physical reason she hasn't enjoyed sex in the past and doesn't need it now, it could be difficult for her to motivate to change.

Sometimes a couple's sexual challenges can have roots in other aspects of the relationship that could benefit from some in-depth exploration. You may find it helpful to talk with a mental health professional. You could see a counselor with a general practice or one who specializes in couple's therapy.

For Being as Patient as I can, it's great that you have tried to talk to your girlfriend about craving something imaginative, novel, and initiated-by-her, and it must be disappointing when she doesn't respond. Have you let her know how important this is for you? Can you share with your girlfriend some of your wildest fantasies, and encourage her to share hers? Or perhaps a halfway compromise would be to stick with your regular sexual "routine," but improvise to make it a little bit more innovative (think: masks, shoes, chocolate syrup). Lonnie Barbach's book, For Each Other: Sharing Sexual Intimacy might be useful to you. In the book, actual couples describe creative solutions to their own sexual roadblocks. In general, the trust that's built from honest, open-hearted, clear communication can be a major turn-on, and just might turn things around.

Sexuality can be a large factor in the long-term compatibility of two people, and both men and women naturally go through phases in their lives of feeling more or less sexual. You both sound like wonderfully loving and supportive partners. It might take some brainstorming and conversation, but perhaps, with those qualities of love and support intact, you can find ways to help your partners explore and delight in their sexuality, and then share it with you!

Alice!

Related questions

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Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [9]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [10]

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