Orgasm alone, but not with partner [1]

Alice,

Here's a question that I bet a lot of women have?I certainly do. As a relative newcomer to sexual experience, I don't seem to be having transcendental orgasms (like Sally in the coffee shop, or other such movie scenes). The guy seems to have it much easier?it's all he can do to keep from coming right away, but I can't focus enough to get there. I think it must be psychological, because I can masturbate to orgasm when I'm alone, but when I'm with my partner, I can get lots of good feelings, but never the "real thing." This problem is often a source of tension between the two of us?I resent that he can come, but he feels guilty that he's experiencing this pleasure, and I'm not, and it makes us both very sad. (I know it's not a relationship problem?we're definitely in love).

?Waiting for ecstasy

Answer

Dear Waiting for ecstasy,

You're certainly not alone in your experience of frustration with achieving orgasm during sex. In the search for ecstasy, there are endless ways to reach your own version of Sally's show-stopper. Exploring options with your partner (or further on your own) is often the key. You may be on the right track by guessing that your difficulty could, in part, be due to a disconnect between what's going on in your head and what you're feeling in your body. To bridge that gap, it might be worth reocusing what you hope to get out of a sexual experience with your partner, in addition to exploring areas of your body that, when stimulated, will be more likely to put you on the road to pleasure town.

Since you are able to orgasm through masturbation, have you thought about playing show and tell with your partner? Many couples enjoy masturbating in front of or with each other. Watching you pleasure yourself may be a big turn-on for your partner, and it gives him the opportunity to learn just how you like to be touched (and discover any other erogenous zones above and beyond the clitoris and/or g-spot that get your motor running). Like any new sexual activity, masturbating with your partner may feel risky or embarrassing at first, but you both have a lot to gain by showing him what makes you tick.

Mechanically speaking, many women have difficulty reaching orgasm from sex alone. This is not about failure; this is about anatomy. During sex, the vagina may be stimulated, but the clitoris may be getting little attention. It's also worth figuring out whether stimulating the g-spot [3]
If g-spot or clitoral stimulation gets you weak in the knees, consider talking to your partner about trying out some sex positions that stimulate those areas. Not sure which ones to try out? During vaginal sex, tilting your hips or shifting into a sexual position that increases contact with these sensitive areas might be a good place to start. If that doesn’t do the trick, you (or your partner) may need to take matters into your own hands. Rubbing, pressing, or massaging your clitoris or g-spot during penetrative sex may provide an extra dose of pleasure that sends you over the edge.

You also mention not being able to focus enough to reach orgasm with your partner. Would it help you both feel more relaxed if you slow down the pace during intercourse? One option for vaginal sex is a woman-on-top position; that way, you can control the speed and depth of penetration. You can also try an interlude of mutual masturbation or oral pleasure to prolong your lovemaking session — giving you more time to get acquainted with those transcendental sensations.

Lastly, have you considered just focusing on the pleasurable sensations you experience during sex, rather than having an end goal (of orgasm) in mind? Just letting go and enjoying the moment is easier said than done. However, you may find yourself pleasantly surprised if the end goal of having sex is just to have a good time, rather than a race to the finish. To delve further into the female orgasm, check out the Q&As in the Orgasms category in the Go Ask Alice! Sexual and Reproductive Health archive. And remember: sex is a learned art, so have fun practicing!

Alice!
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Published date:
Sep 01, 1993
Last reviewed on:
May 29, 2015
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