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# Is Equality the Answer to Better Sex?

by Dresden Graf



“Women don’t want sex and men can’t get enough! Why do some women not want sex as much as most men?” Sound familiar? The message that men want sex and women “put up with it” is a well-known narrative.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the number one complaint women brought to health-care professionals in 2016, according to researchers from the University of Florida, was their low sexual desire.<sup>2</sup>

Sexual desire is a complex issue. In fact, unhappy couples go as far as to say that 70% of the issues in their relationship come from sex while happy couples report sex is about 20% responsible for their good relationship.<sup>3</sup> Though sexual satisfaction plays a large role in relationship satisfaction for both men and women,<sup>4</sup> some gender differences have been noted in the research.

For example, though women’s level of sexual desire differs from one woman to another<sup>4</sup>—and may change frequently<sup>1</sup> throughout her life—women’s desire is typically more strongly tied to the quality of their relationship than men’s.<sup>5</sup> If women are happy in their relationship, they also tend to feel more desire to have sex and are more satisfied with their sexual relationship.

An element that creates a high-quality relationship for both husbands and wives and is linked to higher

sexual frequency is equality in the relationship.<sup>6</sup> Creating equal opportunities for both spouses to have a voice in family decisions can create the kind of equality that translates into egalitarian relationships.

So, we might be asking the wrong questions when it comes to sexual relationships. Instead of wondering why women don’t want sex as much as men, maybe it’s more important to ask how a partnership can become more equal to create an environment where both people want to have more sex.

Following these three research-based steps can help couples establish more equality in their relationship and ultimately improve sex:

1. **Practice egalitarianism in your relationship.** These patterns of interaction will bring higher relationship happiness and greater overall life quality.<sup>5</sup> This means both spouses experience equal rights, roles, voices, and responsibilities.
2. **Engage in mindful sexual experiences where both spouses are learning to be present without judgment.**<sup>7</sup> Learning to practice sexual mindfulness will aid in feelings of connection and intimacy.<sup>8</sup> Giving space so that both partners can slow down thoughts, become fully aware, and learn to listen to their body can greatly increase the quality of sex.
3. **Slow down the pace of sex.** Women often need more time to feel arousal. Slowing down the pace of sex helps women feel a greater emotional connection.

Don’t shortchange that part of the sexual experience. It is particularly important for women to not judge the success of their sex by orgasm alone because focusing on orgasm as the “sole indicator” of a great experience can create anxiety and hurt a partner’s ability to enjoy the current moment.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, both men and women say they experience more relationship satisfaction when they have more equality in their relationship.<sup>5</sup> And research has shown those in happier relationships consequently tend to have more sex.<sup>3</sup>

By creating more equality within a relationship, women can feel more equally empowered to embrace their sexuality and step more fully into their role as a sexual being and sexual partner. When each partner feels valued and loved in an egalitarian relationship, the desire for sex especially for women increases—ultimately raising the satisfaction for both partners.

***Dresden Graf** is a recent BYU Family Studies graduate who plans to attend graduate school to study Marriage & Family Therapy. She also performed and competed with the BYU Cougarettes and plans to continue dancing and teaching.*

## Endnotes

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