

# Claire's Tips and Tools for Relationships That Work

February 2008

## Love is Not Enough

A lot of people wonder what happened to the sexual revolution, especially around Valentine's Day. In a lot of homes today, the sexual temperature feels more like the 50's than the 70's.

Since I have a bird's eye view of this phenomenon, I thought I'd offer up my observations. After all, both men and women tell me their sexual woes all day long. A lot of people, and maybe therapists most of all, make the mistake of thinking that all you need for good sex is love.

**When it comes to desire, love is not enough.** Desire operates by its own natural laws and the chemistry fizzles if you don't obey them. What I see time after time, is that married people forget that the path to sex is--seduction.

### Seduction Tips for Men

#### Flirt a Little

What do women find seductive? First, for women, seduction starts in the mind, not the body. Your wife needs to feel cherished and special. And they need some pampering and playfulness, a zone of relaxation. Flirting, in other words. It's hard for her to switch from being a responsible adult, taking care of the chores and kids, to making love, unless she first switches her mindset.

Remember how you went about it in the early days of your relationship? I doubt very much that you initiated sex by just reaching over and grabbing your girlfriend when she was trying to fall asleep. But a lot of you seem to be using this approach now.

#### Seduction Through Housework

Housework is directly linked to sex in the mind of a woman, and not in a good way. You probably know that your wife has some resentment over you not helping enough with the housework. Instead of getting into interminable discussions about what's "fair," look at it this way: **Feeling like the maid and feeling like a sex kitten are mutually exclusive.** Ignore this truth at your own risk.

Also, a messy house is an anti- aphrodisiac for a lot of women. That's why they love to go away for romantic weekends. Relaxing in a beautiful room they didn't have to clean--now that's seductive!

#### Finesse It

Once you are in bed, do you know what to do? I'm not trying to be harsh, but I'm sorry, the plain truth is that a lot of you don't. This is not completely your fault.

Women are less demanding about the quality of sex in the beginning and you don't need to be as skilled. They get caught up in the romance and the newness of it all, and that makes sex fun and exciting.

But sex with you is not new anymore. Your wife has a mortgage and kids, and maybe more concerns about her health and body image. You have a lot more competition for her attention. **You've got to really know what pleases her to keep her interested.**

Maybe you never got into the habit of talking to each other about what you like. This is why a lot of couples are out of synch in bed. And it can be hard to start that conversation if it's been off the table for years. But you don't have to make a big deal out of it. Just a question here or there, and you can get to know each other all over again.

## **Seduction Tips for Women**

### **Take It Seriously**

If you're like a lot of women, you've started to treat sex as though it's optional. It's not. Taking the 30,000 foot view for a minute, marriage has taken a lot of different forms, but the one constant you'll find in all eras and cultures is that marriage is a sexual relationship.

You may be too tired to be interested. You may feel distant because of conflicts between the two of you. You may be completely absorbed in being a mom. But just because you don't have the same desire as your husband doesn't mean sex isn't important to you, too.

**If you stop having sex, the quality of your relationship will change.** It loses some of its color and warmth. Couples who come to see me say they feel like roommates or like co-presidents of a small corporation. Life together feels banal. It can make the enormous emotional work of marriage feel not worth it.

### **Respect His Sexuality**

It's no secret that men usually want more sex than women. And they approach it differently. Stress does not neutralize the male libido. As my husband once said, "If men gave birth, they'd want to have more sex after they had the baby, not less." And they don't always need to feel close before they have sex. They see sex as a way to feel closer.

This doesn't make men insensitive brutes or some kind of lower life form, but women often act like it does. In fairness, that's because we have had to deal with insensitive brutes. Very few of us come to marriage without having been treated like a sex object. Most of us have some experience with the classic jerk who "only wants one thing." Or worse—a lot of us have been abused. This makes it hard for us to distinguish between a man taking advantage of us and a man having a different sexual response. But making that distinction is crucial.

**Men feel really hurt when women show contempt for their natural way of being.** And they feel hurt when they're not wanted. They might not speak up about it. A lot of times they just go underground. This could be one of the reasons for that withdrawal that drives you crazy.

### **Be a Little Selfish**

A lot of guys tell me they are trying very hard to figure out how to please their wives, but the women just won't talk. You might be a giver, who tends to everyone's needs except your own. And sex feels like just one more way you take care of your husband.

So speak up a little. You know what you like. You know what your body needs. Maybe you think your husband isn't interested in your needs. It's possible. But maybe he just needs a little coaching.

I'm willing to bet you neglect your sensual needs outside the bedroom as well. That can put a damper on your desire. Ours is a very practical culture. We forget that care and feeding of our senses adds richness to our lives, whether it's with food, wine, scents, massage, or the arts.

**That's my two cents for Valentine's Day from the therapist's chair. Do with it what you will!**

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