

## Together Notes: Differences in sexuality between men and women

There are differences between men and women in the area of sexuality<sup>1</sup>. Understanding those differences and talking about them can improve sex in marriage. The table below sets out some generalisations and is designed to be used as a basis for discussion. There are also some questions to help you talk things through.

	Men	Women
<b>Point of View</b>	Physical Compartmentalised	Relational Holistic
<b>Stimulation</b>	Body – centred Sight Smell Actions	Person – centred Touch Attitudes Words
<b>Needs</b>	Respect To be physically needed Not to be put down	Security To be emotionally needed Emotional intimacy
<b>Sexual response</b>	A-cyclical Quick excitement Difficult to distract	Cyclical Slower excitement Easily distracted
<b>Orgasm</b>	Shorter, more intense More physically orientated	Longer, more in-depth More emotionally orientated

One journalist has commented, '*men use intimacy to get sex. Women use sex to get intimacy.*'<sup>2</sup>

Women tend to be more complex and emotional in their sexuality. For a woman sex is the culmination of love, romance and tenderness in the relationship. She views sex as part of the whole atmosphere in the marriage. If something has upset her earlier in the day it may take her a while to come around to the idea of sex. A woman has been compared to an electric ring on a cooker: excitement takes a while to heat up but lingers for a long time. A man, on the other hand, has been compared to a gas hob: it becomes hot instantly when turned on and is quick to cool down afterwards.

Men often have a strong physical need for sex and will frequently initiate it., but they also want to be desired and physically needed by their wives.

## Questions to help you talk about sex <sup>3</sup>

### Before you talk - some helpful pointers:

**Don't** demand perfection from each other... **do** be as affirming as possible

**Men:** put the relationship first and find ways to frequently show affection to your wife so she feels loved. Make time together a priority.

**Women:** don't criticise your husband for any failures or for all the things he hasn't done, but praise him for the positive. Encourage him. Make time in the bedroom a priority for your relationship.

1. Look at the 'Differences' table together.
  - Ask your partner to clarify anything from their side of the table that is not clear to you.
  - Tell each other one thing you especially appreciate about the other.
  - What are the areas of tension between you? Talk through your differences and try to reach a greater understanding.
  
2. Here are some possible reasons for sexual dissatisfaction. Which ones apply to you?
  - a. Disagreement about frequency
  - b. Pregnancy or new baby
  - c. Illness or fatigue
  - d. Job pressures or financial problems
  - e. Inability to talk about the subject
  - f. Personal hang-ups or fears
  - g. Husband ejaculates prematurely or has impotence problems
  - h. Wife doesn't experience orgasm
  - i. Pain during intercourse
  - j. Other...

Decide which one or two seem to be the most pressing and think if there are ways you can help one another overcome or improve the situation. You may find additional reading helpful<sup>4</sup> or support from a specialist counsellor.

3. Here are some specific suggestions partners have mentioned as ways to enhance their physical intimacy. Take a few moments individually to tick one or two which are important to you. Then discuss. As you talk, try to make specific, positive suggestions.
  - a) Be more responsive
  - b) Take the initiative more often
  - c) Dress differently
  - d) Be more careful to be clean
  - e) Take more time
  - f) Pay more attention to the atmosphere created in the bedroom (candles, locked door, etc.)
  - g) Let you know you desire me
  - h) Learn what pleases me
  - i) Be more creative in our lovemaking (try different positions, times and places?)

- j) Be more tender in foreplay
- k) Do not expect such a high standard of 'perfect performance' of me
- l) Other:..

4. Affirm each other: *I feel especially close to you when...*

Pray for each other: *Lord, thank you for our relationship. Help us not to demand perfection. Help us to know what we should accept right now, and what we should trust you to make better. We place our physical relationship in your hands. Thank you that we can talk about it openly...*

**Action point:** Agree one thing you are each going to do for the other, as a result of your discussion. Agree a date for your diaries to talk again on the subject, if necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from FamilyLife USA 'Weekend to Remember' conference manual, revised 01/04. Used with permission.

<sup>2</sup> John Leo, 'The Revolution is Over', Time Magazine (9 April 1984, p51)

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from 'Secrets of a Growing Marriage', Roger and Donna Vann, Hodder & Stoughton, ISBN 0-340-39989-9. Used with permission.

<sup>4</sup> Recommended reading: 'Intended for Pleasure', Wheat, published by Revell, ISBN 0-8007-1736-8