

NEW MEANING  
OF DOING  
THE FLOORS  
pg. 160

HOW TO HAVE  
GREAT SEX  
pg. 156

# Sex over 40

Illustrations by  
ZOHAR LAZAR

SEX & DRUGS  
(HOLD THE  
ROCK & ROLL)  
pg. 162

# It ain't

THE DUTY  
BOOTY CALL  
pg. 153

Rx  
RESCUE  
pg. 164

# over

Memo to:  
WOMEN  
EVERYWHERE  
From:  
MEN  
EVERYWHERE  
Re:  
THE PROBLEM  
ISN'T YOU—  
IT'S US!  
pg. 166

IN PRAISE  
OF THE  
BIG 4-00H  
pg. 152

# 'til it's over

---

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW  
ABOUT OVER-40 SEX \*BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

---



## The Big 4-Ooh

How, even in the face of less estrogen and more distractions, not to mention a snoozing clitoris, the thrill of midlife sex most definitely ain't gone >> *by* NORINE DWORKIN-MCDANIEL

**I love sex.** L-o-v-e it. I've been an enthusiastic aficionado since I was 16 and lost my virginity on a pool-side chaise lounge to my high school boyfriend. For some 27 years, I've thought of myself as a highly sexed individual, basically walking around in a constant state of, shall we say, readiness. So I was somewhat puzzled when it suddenly dawned on me that, hmm . . . lately, things have been awfully quiet down there. I haven't felt the urge to have sex with my husband in ages. Come to think of it, I haven't even thought about sex in . . . well, if I couldn't remember, then clearly it had been too long. What gives? Where oh where had my sex drive gone?

"At age 40, women tend to reach a fork in the sexual road," Lauri Romanzi, MD, a urogynecologist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical College, tells me. "You either head down the path of 'Oh my god! It's never been better.' Or you're walking the way of a waning libido."

Why the shrinking sex drive? There are the usual big-ticket derailers of desire: chronic medical conditions such as thyroid disease, hypertension and diabetes that start to show up as we move further into middle age. To the best of my knowledge, I was clear on those counts. But there are also the garden-variety wet blankets, things like not sleeping well and feeling stressed or depressed.

Plus, we can't forget that great big buzzkill: declining hormones. At first, the change took place so quietly, I never noticed. "At 35, your hormones start sliding down the bunny slope of decline," Romanzi explains. "As you get into your forties, they're heading down more of an intermediate slope, and there's less estrogen coming out of your ovaries every month. When you reach your fifties—and menopause—it's like hitting the black diamond slope. Your estrogen drops to almost nothing."

This has some not-so-nice effects on our womanly parts. "Your vulva and vaginal skin are chockablock with estrogen

## Duty Booty and Other Acts of Sexual Diplomacy

Bedfellows make strange politics: Sometimes he's hot and you're not; sometimes the vice is versa. Such disparities call for deft strategies.

**DUTY BOOTY** In college we called it a charity ball—the deed done not out of lust, but just because you took pity on a guy. That coinage suggests bestowing bounty, while the term *duty booty* emphasizes obligation. Whichever you favor, the point is your generosity: Occasionally you get in the groove when you're not in the mood because he works hard, you love him, and he'd do the same for you. Praise the lord and pass the Astro-glide. (Er, he would do the same for you, wouldn't he?) To rev your motor under such circumstances, a friend suggests, reframe the situation by playing a quick mental game of *Death Is Not an Option*. (Unfamiliar

with the rules? You're given a heinous pair of potential partners, then forced to choose: "Would you rather sleep with Dick Cheney or Bernie Madoff? Death is not an option.") A few rounds of DINAQ, and your mate looks pretty damn good. Frankly, *Duty Booty* doesn't require a *9½ Weeks*-level of erotic enthusiasm; you're not evil if you phone it in. In fact, if you find you just don't have it in you to have it in you, how about *actually* phoning it in? You can multitask—talk dirty while you fold laundry or make a pie. Fake and bake!

**Where's My Stimulus Package?** If nearly half of women over 40 are experiencing low libido, then more than half are not. And men have headaches, too. Scientists now talk about "andropause" or ADAM (Androgen Deficiency of the Aging Male)—a testosterone drop in men over 40 that lowers libido. What to do when you're the one who wants a little sumpin' and he wants nuttin', honey? When you want to get busy and he wants to get takeout?

When a Facebook poke is no substitute for the real thing? For starters, you can (a) seduce him with a mix-tape of baby-makin' music (one bar of Barry White has been known to elicit a sexual response in the comatose); (b) announce, "Octo-Mom or me. Death is not an option" (c) send him to an endocrinologist.

### Pass Incomplete (But Deeply Appreciated)

You want him to want you. But you also want him to let you sleep. So when he initiates foreplay that goes nowhere—or even dozes off mid-maneuver—don't take it personally. You acknowledge that neither of you has the yen or the pep to proceed and give thanks that you don't have to make the beast with two backaches.

In fact, you feel the same delicious combination of accomplishment and relief that comes when your lunch date cancels and the whole afternoon is suddenly free. Hey, you tried to connect, but through no fault of your own it didn't work out. How clever of him to find your Zzz-spot. —JUDITH STONE

and bitching that sex is the absolute last thing she wants right now, there's a postmenopausal 55-year-old having hot pool-boy sex with her husband (or pool guy).

So if hormone decline doesn't spell certain death to the libido, why was I suddenly a sexual slacker? Turns out there are other, nonbiological causes too. "The demands of kids, aging parents, career, your home—they all peak in your forties and fifties, and can interfere with desire," says Hilda Hutcherson, MD, clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University. Plus, if you want to get all Charles Darwin about it, we're not as fertile in our middle years, and so from a purely evolutionary perspective, sex becomes a lot less necessary.

Of course, when your relationship is 10 years old and counting, and has amassed a mortgage, two cars, one child, three cats and some sizable credit card debt, it's hard to tease out what's actually the result of downshifting hormones and what's simply been dulled by the domestic grind (not to mention morning breath and an open bathroom door). In other words, my waning desire could stem from any of those causes, and more likely from all of the above. "You add a little thing here and a little thing there, and it starts to add up," says Bruce Rosenzweig, MD, director of urogynecology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. "When you're 20 or 25, a 15 percent drop in sexual interest and arousal isn't something that's going to be as noticeable as when you're 45 or 50."

OK, so we're all experiencing a perfect storm of medical, emotional, psychological and practical sex-drive sappers. But here's my perhaps surprising bottom line: For me, over-40 sex is a lot better than the sex I had at 23 or even 33. Sure, I had more of it back then. But I was also needy and insecure and required a lot of self-validation. I used sex to assure myself that I was wanted and desired, and as a way to

receptors. The hormone helps the skin stay elastic and resilient; it also keeps the capillaries plump and healthy so they can easily engorge. Women don't get erections, but we have our own hydraulics going on down there, and all of that can be terribly muted by estrogen deficiency," Romanzi says. The net result? "You may find you don't lubricate as much as you once did. Your clitoris, which used to be unbelievably, exquisitely sensitive, becomes much less so."

That was certainly sounding familiar. But while these changes can make sex less entertaining, it's the plunge in

testosterone that affects our mind-set—meaning that as our desire wanes, we don't necessarily miss sex. "At 45, a woman has about 50 percent of the testosterone she had at 25," Romanzi explains. "Women have, say, a bucket of estrogen and tablespoon of testosterone. But that tablespoon is very powerful. And for some women, losing half of it just turns the switch off."

Still, please note that key qualifier: *some*. Not every case of sex drive gone AWOL can be blamed on evaporating hormones. Indeed, for every 45-year-old immersed in perimenopause

clarify where I stood with whatever guy I happened to be sleeping with at the time: If we're having a lot of rock-and-roll sex, we must be OK.

Yes, I desire sex less than I used to. And occasionally my husband has to gently remind me that (a) I like it and (b) we haven't done it in a while. But you know what? When we do, it's pretty frickin' spectacular. Lucky me, I married the best lover I've ever had, a patient man who's taken the time to learn my body and how I want to be touched. For my part, I'd spent a lifetime exploring what feels good, what feels great, what was like "no way, no how." But when I was in bed with someone who needed me to articulate these lessons, I often clammed up, settling for sex that may have sent my partner into the stratosphere but left

The orgasms I have with my husband now are even better than the ones we had when we first met.

Even so, ours is a passion that waxes and wanes. It's been a long time since we skipped dinner to Have Sex Now! Or since we made out on the couch while watching a movie. My younger self might have misinterpreted that as a sign that something is wrong. Or that I needed to move on to a new guy in search of that Crazy for You lustiness. But that change is natural, because those feelings aren't meant to last, according to Ellen Barnard, a sex educator and counselor and co-owner of A Woman's Touch, an erotic toy shop and information center in Madison, Wisconsin. "When we first meet someone and fall in love, our bodies basically put out all these hormones

**"At 43, with tons of sex under my belt, so to speak, I'm now very comfortable directing the action."**

me very definitely still on earth. I just figured that the orgasms I had with partners couldn't possibly be as good as the ones I was giving myself.

All that has changed in the course of my marriage. The connection I have with my husband, the trust that we've developed, the way we talk frankly about what really turns us on—all that has helped me relax and let my inner vixen show. One night recently, I stopped in the middle. "Wait," I said, scrambling off the bed and into my closet, in pursuit of a sudden fantasy. I found what I needed, then sauntered back in my shortest skirt and highest heels. "This'll be more fun," I said to my startled, but pleased, husband as I bent over the bed. At 43, with tons of sex under my belt, so to speak, I'm now very comfortable directing the action. But the point is, without years of experience and self-knowledge, and, yes, age, none of this would have happened for me. The obvious reward:

to help us bond, increase our attraction to that person and make us want to be really sexual with them," she explains. "But that goes away. After six months, a year, maybe a year and a half, it naturally dies down to kind of a slow boil that perks up once in a while. It has to, because you can't possibly live at full boil."

Which makes total sense. Otherwise, the bills wouldn't get paid, the laundry would pile up, the kid's school lunch wouldn't get packed. Wanting less sex, I do get more done. But maybe I'm too busy to get busy. Recently, my husband asked, only half jokingly, if he could make an appointment with me for sex (which is actually a strategy that sex therapists recommend to busy, long-married couples). I blocked out time tonight in my Palm—after the kid goes to bed and before *The Daily Show*. Hey, we may not be constantly having rock star sex. But when we do, we rock the stars. 🌟

vitamins  
straight from  
nature

VitaFusion® Multi Vites™ are tasty daily vitamins packed with an excellent source of antioxidant vitamins A & C in every delicious gummy serving.

enjoy  
your  
vitamins™

AVAILABLE in  
the vitamin  
section at  
Target® and  
other fine  
retailers.



vitafusion

©2009 VitaFusion, Inc. All rights reserved. VitaFusion, Multi Vites, and the VitaFusion logo are trademarks of VitaFusion, Inc. in the U.S. and other countries. Target and the Target logo are trademarks of Target Brands, Inc. in the U.S. and other countries.