



Three Keys to Awakening Sexual Desire for Women

By Sonya Brewer, MA

Introduction

Have you ever thought, “women just aren’t as sexual as men” or “well when you reach menopause, you just stop wanting sex” or “sex just isn’t that big a deal”?

Well... congratulations! You’re normal. A lot of women feel this way. But... it doesn’t have to be that way.

These time honored statements happen because what we’re taught about women’s sexuality doesn’t prepare us to manage our sexual energy well over the course of our lifetimes. So for many women, particularly in long term relationships, your access to feelings of sexual desire and attraction feels like a mystery, something you have no control over. You, then, end up feeling like something is wrong with you for not being able to spontaneously feel sexual. But, once you understand more about how desire function for women, you will no longer beat yourself up for experiencing variations in your levels of sexual desire.

For women, there are three keys to understanding how to awaken your sexual desire (Write this down):

1. There’s nothing wrong with you! It’s normal for levels of sexual desire to fluctuate over the course of one’s lifetime and relationships, and the more you understand about what increases and decreases your libido, the easier it will be able both to ride the waves of changing desire levels with grace, and generate desire when it feels right for you.
2. Context is the key. So we’ll talk about how to manage your contexts to improve your libido.
3. Spontaneous desire is a myth, and I’m going to show you how that myth sets women up for feelings of failure around your sexuality, and what you can do about it.

My intention today is to give you as much as I can in the short time we have, and I promise that before we leave I’ll tell you how you can go deeper, if you want to.

But first, may I tell you a little bit about why I'm so passionate about this?

My name is Sonya Brewer. I'm a relationship expert, and the creator of Reclaiming Your Erotic Power: A Course in the Art of Sexual Freedom for Visionary Women. I want you to know that it is absolutely possible for you to rediscover sexual desire and have a fully passionate intimate life. I know this because I began this journey myself nearly twenty-two years ago, as a way to learn how to heal from a history of sexual trauma, and reclaim my own erotic power. Over the years, with the help of many mentors and teachers, I learned many of the techniques that I now teach, and saw that it was possible to have a vibrant, juicy sex life and sustain it for years. Since then, I've helped many women reclaim their sexual selves, and just as many couples rediscover their passion for one another. And I want to help you do the same.

If you leave with nothing else, I want you to understand that there is nothing wrong with you. You are not broken, and there's nothing that needs to be fixed. There may, however, be things that need to be understood: about you, your body and your needs. And once you give yourself permission to get curious about what YOU want, a whole new world of possibility will open for you.

The First Key: There's Nothing Wrong With You!

What do we mean when we say "low sexual desire"? Usually when people (often women) talk about their struggles with "low desire", they're usually talking about "desire discrepancy".

"Desire discrepancy" means there's a chronic difference between the levels of desire you are experiencing and the levels of desire that your partner is experiencing. Low desire may also refer to the difference between how you felt before and how you feel now (you'll sometimes hear this from menopausal women or women struggling with depression or other medical issues). So, usually, "low desire" involves making a comparison to some standard.

The reason I think it's important to acknowledge the comparison because I think it can help us shift our thinking. Desire discrepancy doesn't mean that somethings *wrong*. It just means that something is *different*.

When couples frame desire discrepancies as "something is wrong", it's easy to get stuck in the blame game. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle of blame creating stress which dampens desire which generates more blame which creates more stress, and so on and so forth. I want to help couples get out of that negative cycle!

So the first thing to understand is... of course desire levels fluctuate! That's completely normal. Of course there are differences between you. That's completely normal. And if we can approach those changes from a place of curiosity and openness rather than a sense that something's broken or it's somebody's fault, then it's much easier to figure out how to reawaken your passion for one other.

The reality is that there is no set threshold for what constitutes a "normal" level of sexual desire. Desire fluctuates in response to our moods, health conditions, relationship dynamics, and levels of stress. Women stop wanting sex for a variety of reasons, and THAT is what's normal.

With that, I want to clear up a big myth that's circulating about women's libido. Marcia, in our earlier conversation, you mentioned that low testosterone could be a reason for low desire, and I totally disagree. Most evidence suggests that, while there are some physical conditions and medications that can negatively impact desire, hormones do not have a huge impact on women's sexual desire. So the idea that low libido is due to low testosterone is actually another one of those myths used to perpetuate the idea that something is broken.

The Second Key: It's All About Context!

So, the next question is, 'if it's not hormones, what is it?' I think it's more that for most women (but not all), context is the single most important driver of our ability to access sexual desire. This takes us to the second key to awakening desire: Context! What do I mean by context? I mean both what's happening in our environments and what's happening inside us, in our minds and bodies. So things like relationship satisfaction, stress, body image and our feelings about our sexuality are way more highly correlated to a reduction in sexual desire, than hormones.

There are so many good reasons for a woman to struggle with feeling both sexy and sexual. Your level of sexual desire is, most likely, a reasonable response to your life circumstances in a given moment. In other words, it is normal, for you, in that moment. And that's okay.

All that said, you might still really want to increase your level of desire. You love your partner, and wish you felt more attraction. You actually really miss having ready access to that sexy feeling, and you want to want sex.

I say, "Bravo!" It's wonderful to decide that you'd like to feel more desire and have more sexy times. In fact, I believe you deserve it. You deserve to have pleasure. You deserve to feel good in your body. You deserve to feel adored.

And that leads me to my next point: What DOES lead to sexy times? So you know how I just said that, for most women, context is the key? Well... change your context, change your sex life (thank you, Louise Hay!).

Now... context can mean all kinds of things. First, there's what's going on in your head... Are you distracted? Are you stressed out? Are you angry? Are you scared? Are you ashamed? All of these feelings will impact your ability to feel sexy. So you'll want to identify ways to shift your headspace. How you do that is different for everyone, and in my program we spend a lot of time helping people identify ways that work to help them get into the right frame of mind for juicy lovin'.

Second, there's what's going on in your environment. Is your house a mess? Are you and your partner getting along? Is there an open door policy for your kids to come in and out of your bedroom at all hours, day or night? Do you generally need something sexy going on in your environment to get you going (erotica, a sexy movie, some slow jams)? What helps YOU relax, sink in, and connect with your desire?

The Third Key: Let Go of the Myth Spontaneous Desire

Most people think that they're supposed to feel desire spontaneously. Centuries of romantic novels and decades of movies and television shows have convinced us that if we really love someone, desire will just appear. You're supposed to look across the room, see that sexy hunk of deliciousness, and wham! Fireworks! You can't wait to get your clothes off. And that's supposed to keep happening, over and over again, for the next fifty years of your marriage.

That initial spark does happen for many of us... at some point in our lives... mostly with people we don't know very well or earlier in our sexual relationships. And there are reasons for that. However, for most women, desire is not actually spontaneous (even though it seems that way sometimes). And that becomes abundantly clear within the context of long term relationships.

For most women, desire is "responsive and context dependent", meaning, most women need some sort of positive romantic or erotic stimuli to evoke a desire response (Nagoski 226). That's why it's so hard to shift from childcare headspace, for example, to sexy times headspace without attending, in some way, to context.

So the first step to shifting context is to tell yourself why desire matters to you, why good sex matters to you. Say it aloud, 'Getting in touch with desire is important to me because... fill in the blank... it will help me feel closer to my partner. I know I feel much better after we have sex. I love how good I feel in my body after sex...' Whatever

your reasons, get clear about why it matters to you and make a commitment to take action.

The second step to shifting context is to decide: I want to create a context that moves me towards feeling desire. Read my lips (well imagine you're reading my lips):

Don't wait until you feel desire to move towards creating the context.

Let me say this again:

Don't wait until you feel desire to move towards creating the context.

Because... for most women, that's too late... It's like you're running a race, but you're not starting at the start line, you're starting a half a mile behind. Don't wait. Decide you want to create some space for feeling sexy and then you can figure out how to create the context that's going to get you there.

Then, you can get curious about 1) what will help you get in the right headspace and 2) What changes need to happen in your environment to support that shift? Again, we go really deep into helping you answer these questions in *Reclaiming Your Erotic Power*. But here is one important tip.

For some couples, you might actually need to leave your house and go somewhere new. This is why the weekend getaway can be such a winner. There's just one caveat though. For most people, pressure and stress kill desire. So if you go away together with the intention to get sexy, and you're both anxiously feeling like "We have to have sex. We spent money on a hotel room. We have to have sex!" That's gonna kill your sexy.

Your time away needs to be about connecting. Being sensual. Delighting in your bodies. It does NOT need to be about a GOAL of intercourse or orgasm. Let go of the goal, and just enjoy one another's company and bodies without pressure or urgency.

Katie McCall and Cindy Meston conducted research on cues for sexual desire factors for women, and they found that what helps most women shift into desire mode are:

- Love and emotional bonding cues (e.g. signs that your honey is really considering you and taking care of you and your bond, thoughtful gestures, quality time together)
- Explicit erotic cues (e.g. watching a sexy movie together, giving one another sensual massage, reading erotica together).
- Visual proximity cues (e.g. I just love it when he wears that tux! Isn't she delicious in that dress?)
- Romantic cues (e.g. a bathtub filled with bubbles... a romantic evening out...)

As Emily Nagoski suggests, "For most people, the best context for sex is low stress plus highly affectionate plus explicitly erotic (p. 94)."

So What's Next?

When you are overwhelmed, tired, and under nourished, it can be very difficult to find your turn on. If you feel neglected or disrespected, or like your partner is a whiny baby that you have to mother, it can be very difficult to find your turn on. If you feel like sex is yet another obligation, something you do to satisfy your partner, regardless of how YOU feel, it can be very hard to find your turn on.

So start by prioritizing YOU. Look at the journey towards awakening desire as an adventure. An opportunity to learn more about yourself... your body... your mind... and your heart...

Let sex be **for you!** Not to satisfy something outside of yourself, not to respond to someone else's demands, or to thoughts about what you should do. Let this journey be about learning how sex can nourish something deep within you.

That is my wish for you. That sex becomes something that feeds and nourishes you, and that desire becomes **a source** of creativity, inspiration and strength for you. Let desire be your guide to a life more beautiful and abundant. Let desire awaken you to a world of new possibilities for yourself and your relationship!

If you're curious about how to go deeper, I invite you to schedule a complementary consultation with me by visiting www.sonyabrewer.com.

Reference (a great place to start if you want to do some self study): Nagoski, Emily. [Come As You Are: The Surprising New Science that Will Transform Your Sex Life](#). New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015



Sonya Brewer, MA, is a body-centered psychotherapist and relationship expert in Albany, CA, where she specializes in helping women, couples, and partners of all sorts create extraordinary relationships. She loves helping people feel more alive, connected and authentic in their lives and relationships, while also bringing their gifts to the world. Sonya brings a wide breadth of experience including in-depth training in somatic psychology at the California Institute for Integral Studies, training in relational psychotherapy at the Women’s Therapy Center, and extensive training in trauma recovery through Generative Somatics, Somatic Experiencing and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy. Sonya’s work is also deeply influenced by training and experience in bodywork, dance, and mindfulness meditation as well as almost 20 years of study and explorations in the realm of sacred sexuality. She has taught workshops on embodied living and sacred sexuality, and appears in the film “Hearts Cracked Open: Tantra for Women Who Love Women” by Betsy Kalin. To learn more, visit www.sonyabrewer.com.