



If you've got no sex drive, you're not alone. One in three women reports a lack of interest in sex, and more than 40 million Americans in relationships are having no sex at all. Um, *what?* It sounds extreme, but there are many causes for not feeling in the mood—menopause, losing an emotional connection with your mate, dealing with stress or not feeling good about your body's changes, to name a few. There also are, thankfully, ways to recharge and reboot if you're suffering from no-sex-drive syndrome. Try this advice from Jill Blakeway, coauthor of *Sex Again: Recharging Your Libido*.

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Embrace your age. Twenty-year-olds may not have your wrinkles, but guess what? They are *decades* away from reaching their full sexual potential! You have maturity and experience on your side—both key factors in reaching true sexual intimacy. “In a long-term relationship, we have to shift more toward the substantive connections we have with a partner—our thoughts and emotions—to keep the flame lit,” says Blakeway, who notes many people report having the best sex of their lives in their 50s and 60s. Blakeway's advice? Nike's famous

advertising mantra: “Just do it.” She says, “Sometimes it works to get back into your body and out of your head.”

Try “The Loop.” Don’t avoid sex because of the five (or 10 or 15) pounds you may have put on over the last few years. “The best sex advice remains self-acceptance,” comments Blakeway, suggesting that you not put your sex life on hold for some future day when you’ll be at your ideal weight. If you have no sex drive, though, she recommends finding it again with a sexual-energy-boosting exercise designed by the Taoists that she calls The Loop. According to Chinese medicine, this exercise stirs up stagnant sexual energy in the body, and helps you find a place of peace and balance. Here’s how it goes (and don’t knock it ‘til you’ve tried it, O.K.):

- Sit comfortably with your eyes closed.
- Imagine a shallow bowl filled with warm oil nestled inside your pelvis.
- Now imagine a tube or straw running along your spine.
- Inhale, and as you do, imagine the warm oil coursing up the tube to the top of your head.
- Hold your breath for a count of three, and imagine circulating the energy around inside your head. You may notice a little “buzz” or sensation of warmth build.
- Exhale, imagining the warm oil flowing back down from your head, across the center of the front of your body, and back into the bowl at your pelvis.
- After three to five seconds, begin again with an inhale. Repeat The Loop about six times.

Get a massage. A glass of wine after a tough day at the office is fine, but try not to pour that second glass or it could spoil your sex drive. “Alcohol is a depressant and causes your system to slow down—taking your libido right along with it,”

Blakeway says. The same goes for cigarettes and caffeine (“a diuretic that intensifies the loss of moisture,” she says).

Instead, loosen up with a whole body massage—provided by your partner, perhaps—to get you relaxed and “induce a feeling of well-being that lasts even after the treatment ends,” Blakeway says. Try adding in some deep-breathing exercises, which Blakeway says is the most basic way to combat stress, get rid of feelings of irritability and start your sexual energy moving. Simply sit, stand or lie down quietly, taking some slow, deep breaths for one minute or more.

Adjust your diet. Too much red meat, Blakeway says, suppresses the production of estrogen—the lack of which is partly responsible for suppressed sex drive in menopausal and post-menopausal women. “Estrogen plays a specific and absolutely critical role in women’s sex lives: It is responsible for vaginal lubrication and provides an overall feeling of health and vitality—the best foundation for a strong libido,” says Blakeway. Your doctor may prescribe hormone therapy in the form of pills, patches, creams or gels, but Blakeway says that adjusting your diet can help, too. She suggests a diet based on whole foods, emphasizing vegetables, fruits and whole grains complemented with smaller servings of protein and healthy fats, and limiting processed foods, as they contain ingredients that can be inflammatory and reduce blood circulation.

“Inflammation and poor blood flow are both barriers to enjoying sex as we age,” says Blakeway. Next, take an essential fatty acid (EFA) supplement, such as fish oil or flaxseed oil to counter dryness. Blakeway also recommends getting plenty of potassium. “The amount in a multivitamin is fine as a supplement, but make sure you get some from foods, such as whole grains, legumes, fresh fruits and vegetables, because without enough of it, your body can’t make all the sex hormones it needs, including estrogen.”

Check your meds. Also don't forget to take a look at the drugs you're taking—everything from common over-the-counter antihistamines to blood pressure medication could cause you to have low or no sex drive. Work with your doctor to determine whether there are alternatives that could have less of an effect in that area.

Talk to your partner. Sex may be the last thing you want to do with your hubby if you guys haven't connected in other ways—emotionally and spiritually—in a while. Blakeway doesn't recommend engaging in intercourse if you and your partner are experiencing extreme negative emotions—anger, sadness, fear—and looking to sex as an escape from those emotions or the concerns about your relationship. Deal with those, first and foremost. “Open and honest communication is key to connecting, sexually and otherwise. Good communication is also important *during* sex.” Talking can also help you get out of a sexual rut with a longtime partner or spouse: Ask him what he needs and wants, and offer up what you need and want, too. That's a great place to start.

Get back to the basics. When was the last time you *kissed* each other? Like, *really* kissed each other. It can be more intimate than having sex, says Blakeway, and sets off intense physical and emotional reactions in the body.

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