

10 things about sex we shouldn't worry about.

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We stress over our jobs, our relationships, our finances and our friendships and unfortunately, even our bedrooms can become a breeding ground for anxiety.

Sex may be touted as one of the most effective (and pleasurable) forms of stress relief, but it can also be a major source of insecurity for women. Performance anxiety isn't limited to men, and if your sex life isn't as mind-blowing as it could be, it's possible that your own worries are getting in the way.

Body image issues, orgasm obstacles and STD woes are just a few of the concerns that can keep women from letting go and enjoying their time between the sheets. If you suspect that your anxiety about sex might be preventing you from optimizing your pleasure, it might be worth taking a look at some of your own sexual insecurities.

Scroll through the list below for 10 common worries about sex and why they're not worth the stress.

1. I can't orgasm from intercourse.

The inability to climax is arguably the most universal female sexual problem: Recent studies have suggested that roughly 75 percent of women can't orgasm through penetrative sex, and 10 to 15 percent *can't orgasm* under any circumstances.

And in fact, until recently, the sheer existence of the vaginal orgasm was questioned. If you're one of the 25 percent of women who consistently orgasm during intercourse, congratulations!

But if orgasms elude you, bear in mind that the inability to climax makes you *normal*, not abnormal, and it doesn't mean that you can't still enjoy a fulfilling sex life. Experiment with other ways of achieving orgasm, and make sure you have a partner who's willing to try a whole range of techniques to give you pleasure.

2. I don't look good naked.

Body image isn't solely a self-esteem issue: It can also significantly impact your sex life. According to psychologist Dr. Jennifer Hartstein, 61 percent of women are thinking about what their bodies look like during sex, and a Fitness Magazine study found that 51 percent of women would give up sex for a year to be skinny.

Needless to say, feeling unattractive (and trying to avoid positions that you fear may be unflattering) tends to kill the mood.

So instead of forcing yourself to have sex when you're not feeling up for it, try to do something that *does* make you feel sexy, whether that's a night out with friends, taking a yoga class or treating yourself to a deep-tissue massage. Giving yourself pleasure can also be a great way to **boost your body confidence**.

A good partner will be willing to wait until you're in the mood, so don't push yourself if you'd rather curl up with a movie than hop into bed. When you are ready to have sex again, focus on the sensations -- and remind yourself that you, like anyone else, deserve pleasure.

And consider this: While you're worrying about all the things you think are wrong with your body, your partner is probably appreciating everything he or she loves about it.

3. I don't have a "normal" vagina.

Like negative body image, worry that your ladyparts are unattractive can seriously undermine your sexual confidence, and it's led many women to undergo **surgical procedures** to attain a more "desirable" vagina.

The porn industry in particular has been instrumental in changing cultural conceptions of what a vagina "should" look like in order for it to be sexually appealing. (Heaven forbid any part of the female body escape evaluation by today's often unrealistic beauty standards.)

This anxiety about vaginal appearance was the inspiration behind the **Large Labia Project**, a Tumblr that encourages women to celebrate the beauty of their vulvas by submitting "vagina selfies." Collectively, the photos deliver a message we all need to hear: Whether you're shaven or unshaven, have large labia or small, there's nothing wrong with your vagina. Try to appreciate it as much as your partner(s) already do(es).

4. I'm bad at sex.

Let's face it: Mediocre sex is no fun for anyone involved. But before you start berating yourself for your lack of sexual prowess, bear in mind that good sex has more to do with how committed two people are to giving each other pleasure than how advanced their moves are.

There are a lot of factors that go into creating a less-than-steamy sex session, so if you're feeling unsatisfied, consider the other conditions that may be putting a damper on your sex life. Sub-par sex could be the result of feeling uncomfortable with your partner, or it could be that you're still learning what really turns you on. With the right person and a little experimenting, you can have stellar sex -- it's just a matter of build up your confidence (see #2) and comfort level with your partner. And of course, as with anything else in life, practice makes perfect.

5. Sex with my partner will eventually get boring/routine.

Contrary to popular belief, married couples actually report having more regular sex and higher levels of sexual satisfaction than those who are single or in unmarried relationships. As many married couples can tell you, sex within a committed relationship doesn't have to be monotonous -- in fact, it can be the best kind of sex. There's a high level of comfort and intimacy, not to mention that your partner knows what you want and exactly how to give it to you.

Women's levels of desire have been shown to gradually decrease over time in committed relationships. If your sex routine is getting a little stale, experts recommend talking openly to your partner about your sexual needs and trying new things (role play? sex toys?) to turn the heat back up.

6. My sex drive is too low.

If you're suffering from a lack of desire, you're not alone: A 2008 survey of over 30,000 women found that increasing numbers of women report sexual problems, including 10 percent of women ages 18 to 44 who reported low sexual desire.

What you need to know is that it's not your fault: Low sex drive could be the result of certain forms of birth control, lack of sleep or taking antidepressants. Stress, depression and relationship issues can also be the culprits. If you're not sure what's dampening your desire, talk to your gynaecologist -- the good news is that there are many ways to boost a low libido.

7. I've had too many (or not enough) sexual partners.

Some of us will experience many different types of sex, while others will only experience one type of sex with one partner. When it comes to sexual experience, there is no "normal." You've grown and learned from your experiences, whatever and however many they may be, so don't stress about which end of the spectrum (women aged 30-44 report an average of four sexual partners, according to the Kinsey Institute) your number of partners falls on. As Entertainment Weekly critic Lisa Schwarzbaum put it in a review of the flop 2011 "What's Your Number?", "Who in this day and age is counting?"

8. My STD is going to ruin my sex life.

Finding out that you have an STD is difficult, but it isn't a death sentence for your sex life. **Eighty percent** of sexually-active singles will contract HPV at some point in their lives, and approximately **one in four** adults living in New York City has genital herpes. Your STD might feel like a scarlet "A," but the stigma around these diseases is fading. If you're nervous about telling prospective partners about your situation, try a dating site like positivesingles.com, which is exclusively for individuals with sexually transmitted diseases.

9. I'm not having sex right now.

If it seems like everyone around you is having multiple orgasms and getting it on in public bathrooms while you're stuck in sexual limbo, think again: Half of Americans are unsatisfied with their sex lives, [according to a 2012 survey](#). If you're going through a dry spell (and please note: we all do), try to remember that when spring inevitably comes again, having taken a break will mean that you have a better understanding of your sexual and relationship needs -- *and* be in a better position to ask for them.

10. I get turned on by things I don't actually want to do in real life.

Despite the wealth of research that's been done on the subject, there are many aspects of female sexual desire that we still don't understand. What we do know is that a woman's capacity for arousal is generally far more fluid than a man's.

In an [often-cited 2009 study](#), men and women were shown clips of a variety of sexual activities -- sex between men and women, homosexual sex, animal sex, and more -- and found that while straight men were aroused by heterosexual and lesbian sex, women were more aroused across the board. However, although women experienced physical arousal, they didn't report being turned on.

Their conclusion? When it comes to sex, our minds and bodies are frequently in disagreement.

If you're a straight woman having lesbian fantasies, or you have domination fantasies that may not be in line with your feminist values, remember that desire isn't always logical, moral, or politically correct. Fantasizing about something doesn't necessarily mean you want to act it out in reality. And if you find that you do, it's possible to act out fantasies in a safe way. The important thing is not to berate yourself for your desires.

