



Relight your ● passion

Modern life is taking a toll on our sex lives.
Here's how to reignite the fire

WORDS: Joanna Ebsworth

Are you one of 5.3 million Brits who have bought a copy – or a more discreet e-book version – of EL James's erotic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*? If so, it's likely you'll have wondered whether your own sex life leaves something to be desired.

Whether the dominant/submissive element of *Fifty Shades...* Christian Gray and Anastasia Steele's relationship leaves you feeling intrigued or uncomfortable, there's no denying these fictional lovers share a level of intimacy and openness that many of us long for. Modern life is taking its toll on our sexual relationships. A recent survey found that 35 per cent of people or their spouses bring their work to bed, and a third of us now surf the internet from between the sheets. How can having a laptop in bed be conducive to intimacy, let alone love-making?

But if you still lust for sexy liaisons and earth-shattering orgasms, there are ways to nurture your sex life back to rude health. 'The most positive impact of *Fifty Shades...* is that it's now more acceptable for women to ask for what they want in bed,' says counsellor and

‘There's too much thinking attached to sex – instead we need to feel more’

hypnotherapist, Susan Leigh (lifestyletherapy.net). 'Women are taking more ownership and responsibility in realising they can improve their sex lives.' But while seeing characters express themselves sexually in literature might inspire you, it doesn't always mean you'll have the confidence to put it into action. Try keeping a journal to record your feelings (in all areas of your life) and note the patterns that emerge. Then, commit to being more compassionate towards yourself, maybe taking a small step each day to honour your feelings and needs that, in turn, will boost your self-esteem.

Another issue, according to sex and relationship psychologist, Dr Massimo Stocchi (harleystreetpsychology.com), is that society now puts far too much emphasis on achieving orgasm. 'Men and women have become focused on all the types of orgasm women can have and trying to achieve them, while the whole act and connection of making love has diminished,' he says.

'Rather than feeling our way through life, we now over-think everything. But the most important factor is that there has to be some feeling. Sex has become about ticking boxes, not feeling emotions connected with your partner.'

Happily, there's plenty you can do to overcome these obstacles, so you can develop and enjoy the kind of intimate, intense sex you've always dreamt of. Read on and start putting our expert advice into action tonight! You'll definitely be thanking us tomorrow...

1. EXPLORE TOGETHER

There's a right and wrong way to introduce new ideas into your sex life. Just saying you want to 'spice things up' – whether that's trying a new position or introducing a vibrator – could leave your partner feeling insecure and inadequate.

Try it this way instead: 'Explain to your partner that you believe your sexual relationship should be constantly evolving, and that the biggest mistake is to think that you'll always be happy with your sex life,' says Stocchi. 'Your sexuality is very different as an 18-year-old to how it is when you're 30, and then when you're 45, so it's obvious you need to keep working at your relationship and trying new things, so you can grow together. If exploring your sexuality together means you get closer together, you're likely to experience far more intimacy and openness, and your relationship will become stronger outside the bedroom, and less likely to fail.'

2. SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE

Communicating your desires can be a problem if you don't have the right sexual vocabulary at your disposal. 'Establish which words you both like using, so you're more comfortable talking about your sex life in and out of bed,' says Stocchi.

'Decide whether you want to use the word 'cock' or 'pussy' or whatever (penis and vagina isn't so sexy).' It's also essential you feel able to communicate what you like and dislike in bed. Stocchi says many of us shut down if we feel embarrassed by something during sex. If so, try this instead: the moment you feel anxious, tell your partner how you're feeling. By doing so, you put the spotlight on you straight away, which means you have to face up to your fear and anxiety. Once you get through it, you'll hopefully realise it wasn't actually that bad. This can help open up better communication with your partner, so you feel more relaxed about trying new things.

3. LOVE YOURSELF

Even the most confident women can have problems expressing their sexual desires and needs to their partners.

'Men get comfortable handling their sex every day, women don't have that,' says Stocchi. 'Explore yourself with your hands or with a vibrator; connect with the beauty you have there, and you'll be able to show it to someone else.' Also, rather than feeling self-conscious that it can take you up to 45 minutes to reach orgasm, be proud of it, says Stocchi. 'Many men are jealous of women as their own arousal response is so quick. They're lucky if they manage three to five minutes of constant thrusting – seven minutes is a serious bonus! If you are both aiming for a G-spot orgasm, he will need to arouse you for at least half an hour, but your response will be so great, he'll be ecstatic he can help you achieve that, so simply explain to your partner what it takes.'

4. BECOME THE TEACHER

If you want a great sex life, it's your responsibility to educate your man. 'These days, men don't always know what's expected of them,' says Stocchi. 'They don't know whether to be metrosexual or ultra-male, or dominating or dominated. So it's easy for them to get things wrong. But if you actually tell them 'this is how you should be, with me', and show them what you like, you'll educate them, and you shouldn't be afraid of doing so. If a woman turned round to a man and said 'I want to show you the ways to pleasure me, so you can make me the happiest woman on earth', I'd be very surprised if the man rejected the idea. Men want to know and they want to learn.' You and your partner also need to realise that you shouldn't go into sex with the aim of achieving an orgasm every time, or you will put unnecessary pressure on each other. That can lead to frustration and resentment for both parties. ➤



MORE HONESTY,
FLEXIBILITY AND
OPENNESS – IT ALL ADDS
UP TO BETTER SEX

5. TRY A NEW ANGLE

Stocchi says it's not helpful that our society has become so focused on penetration and hitting the G-spot, when you consider that 80 per cent of women only reach orgasm through clitoral stimulation. 'Using penetration as your main method of reaching orgasm as a couple is a huge gamble,' he says. 'If you want to achieve G-spot orgasms, you'll need plenty of clitoral stimulation, so your G-spot becomes more inflamed and more easily accessible.' While people joke about the missionary position, ironically it is one of the best at helping to arouse you, because your man's pelvic bone can rub your clitoris while you're being penetrated. But the key here is for your partner to 'rock and roll' against your clitoris once he's fully inside

you, not thrust in and out. Technique and the correct positioning are also essential if your partner wants to bring you orgasm with his hands. 'Too many men automatically approach women from the front in what I call the 'attacking mode', so they're never able to emulate the angle or give the same sort of feel a woman is used to when she masturbates herself,' says Stocchi. Instead, get your partner to lie with his back against the headboard, and sit between his legs with your back against his chest. If you're right handed, get him to use his right hand in the pattern or circular motion you like to use, internally or externally, so it feels as though you're doing it yourself. You'll also experience a deeper intimacy in this position, and your man is still free to stroke (or pull) your hair, tease your nipples, kiss your neck and pin your legs open with his own, so the intensity increases. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: Corbis

SHAPE UP FOR SEX

Improve your strength, stamina and flexibility for sex, with these feel-good moves from National Pilates presenter, Carroll Crook, creator of Fierce Pilates for RaunchUK (raunchuk.com).

SEXY SHOULDER BRIDGE

Why do it? It helps strengthen your glutes and thighs; great for helping you to lift your pelvis up to meet your partner in certain positions.

How Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Lift your hips off the floor and squeeze your bottom at the top as you exhale. Do eight reps, rest, then do another set. Progress by lifting your pelvis, circling it clockwise for eight reps, and repeat anti-clockwise.

PASSION PRESS-UPS

Why do it? It strengthens your core to help improve stability in 'rear entry' moves and gives you the strength to be more intimate with your partner when you're 'on top'.

How Perform 10 press-ups, then lower yourself down to a half-way position with your arms. Hold, then raise up a little bit; lower down further and hold again to 'tease' and raise up a little bit again.

OPEN-LEG INVITATION

Why do it? Strengthens and develops flexibility in your inner thighs, while the added crunch tones and strengthens your core stability.

How: Lie on your back, with your legs in the air at 90° to your body. Exhale as you open your legs wide, then close them, repeating for 10 reps. Develop this move further by curling up and forward with your abs as your legs widen (as if reaching for your partner between your legs).

GIRLS-ON-TOP HIP THRUST

Why do it? It helps strengthen your quads, glutes and triceps – it's great if you like to be 'on top'.

How On your hands and knees, sit back so your bottom rests on your heels. Then exhale and squeeze your glutes to raise yourself up to a kneeling position, pressing your arms behind you. Do two sets of 10 reps.



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