



Exploring sex play

By Jane Thomas

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1) So what do we mean exactly by sex play?

Sex play describes pleasuring that takes the emphasis off intercourse so that other activities play a more routine part in a sexual relationship. The trouble with focusing on intercourse and orgasm is that we overlook the more sensual aspects of pleasuring.

2) My work is difficult because men assume that women orgasm easily

No woman ever contradicts this misconception because the fantasy is a turn-on for men and promotes women's sexuality. But ego prevents women talking honestly about sex.

3) What is even worse: women who ask about orgasm are told they are abnormal

This approach intimidates women into silence. No woman can compete with porn movies where actresses are paid for putting on an act. For women to get more out of sex they need to know what is truly possible, which involves putting the fantasy aside.

4) Instead of suggesting that female orgasm 'just happens'

I explain how orgasm is achieved in explicit terms. I promote the idea that (just as men do) a woman needs **turn-ons** if she is to become aroused and **clitoral stimulation** if she wants to have an orgasm. Orgasm does not appear mysteriously out of nowhere.

5) So I want to help women who find orgasm elusive with a partner

Naturally we prefer upbeat discussions and we try to avoid dwelling on problems. Many people feel uncomfortable by an approach that questions and challenges. But my work provides alternative explanations for women who have not found answers elsewhere.

Misconceptions about female orgasm



- Orgasm only lasts seconds and ends sexual activity
- Women can enjoy pleasuring for longer because they are slow to arouse with a lover

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1) So, the big question. We all want to know how to please a lover

Everyone is embarrassed about sex but no one wants to admit it. Most of us are full of insecurities about pleasing a partner. We want to know how we can be 'good in bed'. Men ask (more than women) about how they can make sex 'orgasmic' for a lover.

2) Sadly orgasm has become synonymous with the only way to satisfy a woman

We tend to assume that women have sex - for the same reason men do - to enjoy orgasm. But we also assume that a woman can only enjoy sex if she has an orgasm.

3) So men spend their time talking about how to 'give a woman an orgasm'

On the web men suggest certain thrusting techniques will have a woman in 'ecstasy all night long'. But there is confusion here. Orgasm only lasts for seconds and it ends our ability to engage in sex. The stage we experience before orgasm is called arousal.

4) The truth is that women are naturally slow to arouse with a lover

But this means that they can spend longer pleasuring (and being pleased by) a partner because they are not so distracted by their own need for sexual release. This explains in part why women are paid for sexual pleasuring more often than men are.

5) Another misconception arises because orgasm is marketed as an instant fix

Orgasm is promoted as if it is a magic wand that will transform our sex lives overnight. It is easier to focus on fantasy rather than invest in aspects of the relationship we find difficult. It is vital that we appreciate the facts so we know what is possible in real life.

Sex is not just about orgasm



- Female orgasm is assumed to occur with a lover in a variety of ways
- But what happens when none of these orgasm techniques work?

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1) Some women are thought to orgasm through intercourse

Either the man's body rubs against the clitoris during intercourse. Or during intercourse there is internal stimulation of the G-spot or the clitoris. The clitoris is much bigger than what we see on the outside. It is an erectile organ that extends back into the pelvis.

2) Others are thought to need more direct clitoral stimulation for orgasm

Either the couple adopts a position for intercourse that allows the woman to stimulate herself by hand during sex. Or a lover stimulates her clitoris by hand or through oral sex.

3) But what happens when none of these work?

Sex has always been very important to my partner. So I have accepted the need to invest in my sex life because I cared about him. He has then repaid me in other ways. My partner makes effort to pleasure me because he enjoys being aroused by my body.

4) The point is to focus on improving what you already have

I talk about how couples can make sex more enjoyable for the woman **regardless of orgasm**. I reassure women that their experience is common and they are not alone. I enjoy my partner starting with a general massage that becomes more genitally focused.

5) I am talking honestly about my own experiences to promote better sharing

I hope to encourage other women to come forward and volunteer their experiences of how they enjoy sex and orgasm. As a more mature woman I do respond with a lover. But my response relies on stimulation techniques other than vaginal intercourse.

Women's desire for emotional intimacy



- Men tend to want sex regardless of the state of their relationship
- A woman needs to feel good about herself and her lover before she wants sex

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1) It seems to me that men find sex emotionally rewarding in itself

But my happiness derives from elsewhere in the relationship with sex being perhaps the 'cherry on the cake'. I need to feel emotionally fulfilled before I enjoy engaging in sex.

2) In the first place I need to feel good about myself

If I am unhappy or I feel stressed (or even just out of shape!) I don't feel sexy, which means that I don't feel desirable. And unfortunately having sex does not cheer me up. Sadly my state of mind is not necessarily something my partner can do anything about.

3) Next I need to feel good about my partner

Sex feels appropriate once my partner and I have spent some quality time together. I respond best when my partner demonstrates how much he cares about my well-being. The attention he pays me makes me feel generous in return and willing to pleasure him.

4) And respect is very important to me

It is difficult for men to understand that we live in a world dominated by male values. Men tend to respect money, power and status. They often struggle to recognise and appreciate that what women achieve (in relationships and families) has any importance.

5) And it helps if I feel tuned into eroticism

This can be quite random like a romantic movie sometimes turns me on. A more reliable approach is to build in some anticipation (such as planning a sex session). If I feel amenable then I appreciate being flattered by my partner's sexual interest in me.

Investing in your sex life



- Good sex involves an investment in communication
- Sexual pleasuring involves more than just intercourse
- Couples need to work on what they already have

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1) Let's face it intercourse can lack passion after decades together

It takes trust and a huge investment in communication for lovers to learn how to bring variety to their sex play. This is about managing an active sex life over decades together.

2) It really helps me if lovemaking starts before we get to the bedroom

Like many women I enjoy sex but I also enjoy the parts of a relationship that occur before and (hopefully!) after sex. I am flattered when a lover is aroused by my body but it is even more important to me to have attention from a man who is attracted to me.

3) I enjoy the intimacy of touching and being touched

I also enjoy kissing and being kissed. When I feel that a man cares for me as a person (by valuing my contribution to the relationship and by being interested in my concerns) then even intercourse can be pleasurable because of the reward of pleasuring a lover.

4) During sex I enjoy the turn-on of penetrative sex

I also enjoy the opportunity to explore sex play with my partner. When I am in the mood I enjoy the pleasure of my own arousal as my partner stimulates me. We use bathing, massage, porn movies and sex toys to bring some variety to our sex life.

5) I promote the realities of sex, which is positive because it is achievable

I am providing my experiences as well as those of other women I have talked to for the benefit of anyone who finds them helpful. I hope more women will volunteer their stories to help others. My work is for adults to get from it whatever they can.