

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 1 - Where Did Our Confidence Go?

...issues such as extreme body inhibition, shame from past sexual abuse, guilt over pre-marital sexual activity, fear of intimacy, or lack of knowledge about male and female sexuality are just some of the many hurdles that hold us back in the bedroom.

If you could overcome all of the hurdles holding you back, could you become a sexually confident wife? Absolutely! If that is your desire, let's figure out how to overcome these hurdles and get on the right track toward sexual confidence.

1. Are there particular issues that have robbed you (in the past or present) of your sexual confidence? If so, what are they?
2. Do you believe such issues can be overcome and sexual confidence can be regained? Why or why not?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 2 - Getting on the Right Track

Hopefully you've experienced it - that erotic feeling of abandoning all our inhibitions and just going with the sexual flow. That supernatural, euphoric feeling of slowly ascending to the highest peak of physical pleasure. That wave of complete satisfaction that suddenly washes over you - a wave that is absolutely impossible to verbalize, regardless of how creative your vocabulary may be. And the overwhelming joy of witnessing your partner's eyes roll back in his head and the guttural sounds emitting from his mouth, indicating that he's going over the top, and it's you who is ushering him there. Of all the physical pleasures known to man and woman, none compare with sexual arousal and climax.

...oxytocin production (or the lack thereof) can also work against your sex drive. If this hormone isn't being released in your system regularly, you may feel an overwhelming temptation to withdraw emotionally and physically, creating a downward spiral in the relationship. Perhaps you or your husband are not satisfied with how often you experience "the big O" (orgasm) or how often you desire to engage in any sort of sexual activity, but the real culprit may be that you don't get enough of the "big O" hormone (oxytocin). If a woman isn't touched regularly enough outside the bedroom, she may find that she is violently opposed to being touched inside the bedroom. A vicious cycle is created, as she is no longer open to the very touch she needs.¹ The remedy for not feeling like you want to touch or be touched by your husband, therefore, is to touch anyway. Go through the actions, and your feelings quickly catch up. Oxytocin production ensures this will be the case.

I would never be so cold as to say to a woman struggling with her sexuality, "Get over it, and get naked!" But I'll let you do the math. One naked, oxytocin-producing man plus one naked, oxytocin-producing woman equals one intimately connected couple.

3. As you read this chapter, did you experience any new revelations about healthy sexuality? If so, what were they?
4. Do you feel there are things you're missing out on in your marriage, or things you want to recapture? What exactly might some of those things be, and how can you achieve those goals?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 3 - Rewinding our Childhood Tapes

The second step to recording a new "I am worthy!" tape was to basically "reparent" myself for a season. I could mourn all of the things I missed out on as a girl, or I could recreate opportunities to fill my own "worthiness" cup. Instead of being angry over the fact that Dad failed to invest time or energy in taking me places or doing things with me, I decided to do them for myself. I took myself to the zoo and fed the animals. I took myself to the movies and ate the whole bucket of popcorn. I went for walks at the Dallas Arboretum, smelling all of my favorite flowers. I took myself out to lunch at my favorite restaurants. I bought myself a pretty scarf, or a gourmet chocolate truffle, or a new CD. I listened to music and danced alone in my living room. I enjoyed myself without inhibition. And I felt sorry for the men in my life that had never learned to enjoy these simple pleasures with me.

What effect did this have on my marriage and sex life? I was no longer angry with my husband for not filling the void left by my father and brother. These experiences helped me take the weight of responsibility off of his shoulders to be my emotional all-in-all. Any attention and affection Greg gave me became just an extra layer of icing on my cake. And our sex life thrived, because not only did I feel love for the man I was with, but I also felt love for myself, which doubled my passion quotient.

5. Are there wounds from your childhood that you recognize have negatively affected your sexual confidence? If so, how might you rewind those childhood tapes and record new, healthier messages?
6. What affect could doing so have on your marriage? Your family? Your future generations?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 4 - Healing the Scars of Sexual Abuse

With approximately one-third of women experiencing some sort of sexual abuse in their lifetime, it's a question many of us wrestle with - How can we heal the scars of sexual abuse? Our bodies naturally heal from physical wounds given time, but how can we heal emotional wounds? Although we may have experienced physical pain, sexual abuse is ultimately an offensive attack on our dignity, self-esteem, and sense of sexuality. And what effects do such abuses have on our lives? The most common symptoms of sexual abuse are:

- *avoiding or being afraid of sex*
- *approaching sex as an obligation*
- *experiencing negative feelings such as anger, disgust, or guilt with touch*
- *having difficulty becoming aroused or feeling sexual sensation*
- *feeling emotionally distant or not present during sex*
- *experiencing intrusive or disturbing sexual thoughts and images*
- *engaging in compulsive or inappropriate sexual behaviors*
- *experiencing difficulty establishing or maintaining an intimate relationship*
- *experiencing vaginal pain or orgasmic difficulties²*

7. Do any of these symptoms sound familiar to you? If so, do you still need healing from past sexually abusive experiences?
8. Did any of the survival secrets presented in this chapter catch your attention as a positive step you can take in your journey toward sexual wholeness?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 5 - Cutting Soul Ties that Bind

Making a List, Checking It Twice

Shannon: 50+

Greg: 0

That's how the scorecard would have read, had there been one. I'd walked into marriage at twenty-two years old with more than fifty sexual partners in my past. Greg, at twenty-six, was still a virgin. Together, we flew in the face of conventional stereotypes of the sexually-experienced macho male and the pure-as-the-driven-snow female. As I entered counseling several years into our marriage, my main goals were to get the scarlet letter off my sweater, cut the soul ties that had bound me for too long, and rid my mind of the relational ghosts that continued to haunt me.

My counselor's challenge was simple enough. Make a list of all your sexual partners, and figure out what each of them have in common. Sounds easy, right? Not if your scorecard is as full as mine. It took several weeks, and the floodgates of emotion burst wide open as I began digging for answers to the question, "And why did I sleep with him?" over and over. However, a distinct pattern soon surfaced. Over 95% of these men had been older than me, and most had been in some type of authority over me.

9. Are there ghosts from your sexual past that still haunt you to this day? If so, do you believe you can cut soul ties such that you're no longer bound to those painful memories?
10. If you were to make a list of every man you've had pre-marital or extra-marital relationships with, would there be a common thread? If so, what is that common thread, and what can you learn about yourself from it?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 6 - Harnessing Your Sexual Power

While one might imagine that a woman who pursues or gets involved in an extramarital affair is a “sexually confident” woman, I beg to differ. I’ve attempted to drink from that stream and it wasn’t because I was sexually confident. It was because I lacked confidence, and had to look elsewhere for the affirmation that I couldn’t find within myself and my own marriage. Besides, simply being a sexually confident woman isn’t the goal. The goal is to be a sexually confident wife. Our aim is to create a mad, passionate romance and fulfilling love relationship with the man we currently live with and have committed to grow old with. Making love is easy. Making love last is far more challenging.

11. How can a wife use the power of her sexuality not just to make love, but to make love last?
12. While some believe that having an extra-marital affair will enhance their life in a positive way, what negative ripple effects also come along with that decision?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 7 - Befriending the Body Image Bear

My mental stereotype of “sexy” was shattered when I was working on a master’s degree in counseling and human relations. In the textbook for my Human Sexuality class, I discovered the most beautifully erotic picture I’ve ever laid eyes upon. This wasn’t the typical Abercrombe & Fitch-type photo of a young stud muffin with six pack abs and a beautiful blonde who went through puberty two hours earlier. Rather, an elderly couple, most likely in their seventies or eighties, were fully disrobed (naked!) and freely engaging in passionate foreplay. While a teenager may have barfed to imagine that Grandma and Grandpa might still do such a thing, I was encouraged. I thought, Wow! She’s gorgeous! And like her, I never have to “outgrow” my sexual confidence, regardless of how old, flabby, or wrinkled I become. And I was right. I don’t intend to outgrow my sexuality -- ever. And I hope you don’t either.

13. Are you guilty of comparing yourself to the images you see in the media of the “perfect woman” and thinking of all the ways you don’t measure up? Why or why not?
14. What impact do such unhealthy comparisons have on a woman’s sexual confidence? What impact would it have to avoid such comparisons and simply celebrate the skin we’re in?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 8 - Experiencing the Big "Oh!"

One tidbit of good news, however, is that 90% of orgasmic problems are psychological in nature.³ In other words, most of the problem isn't between our legs, but rather, between our ears. The "stinking thinking" we often engage in translates into sexual insecurities, and those insecurities gravitate from our heads to our pelvises. By allowing this to happen, we rob ourselves of that which is our birthright as females - sexual pleasure and fulfillment.

15. How knowledgeable are you about your own body and what you find pleasurable? Have you discovered plenty of "hot spots" which make sexual intimacy not just tolerable, but enjoyable and desirable?
16. If orgasm has been something that's a challenge for you to achieve in the past, why might that be? And why do you think this is **this** such a common problem among women?
17. What kind of tips did you glean from this chapter that might help you (or other women) experience orgasm more easily and more often?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 9 - Developing a Girl Scout Mentality

If you're ready to develop a Girl Scout mentality and make sure you are prepared to enjoy the most phenomenal sex life possible, let's recap these confidence busters and confidence boosters, shall we?

SEXUAL CONFIDENCE BUSTERS

1. *Burning the Candle at Both Ends*
2. *Neglecting Personal Hygiene*
3. *Wearing Granny Panties*
4. *Fearing Intrusive Children*
5. *Getting Distracted by the Room*
6. *Letting the Well Run Dry*
7. *Feeling Like a Piece of Meat*

SEXUAL CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

1. *Reserving Energy for Life's Priorities*
2. *Showering and Shaving*
3. *Wearing Comfortable, Sexy Lingerie*
4. *Claiming a Parental "Time Out"*
5. *Creating a Peaceful Sanctuary*
6. *Keeping Lotions and Potions Nearby*
7. *Feeling Like a Sexual Goddess*

18. Are there particular confidence busters listed that you recognize as being the culprit behind any sexual inhibitions you've experienced in the past? If so, which ones, and why?
19. Are there other intimacy busters in your marriage that you can think of? Where might these come from?
20. What would it take to turn such intimacy busters into intimacy boosters? What specifically do you need to do in order to overcome stumbling blocks to sexual confidence?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 10 - Tantalizing Sexual Techniques

One teenager asked recently, "Doesn't it get boring doing the same thing with the same person over and over?" Sure, things can get stale if we let them, but the sexually confident wife doesn't let that happen for long before she develops new strategies to turn up the heat once again. The fun thing about sex in a lifelong committed marriage is that you're never too old to learn some new tricks that will add joy and delight to your relationship.

The ideas discussed in this chapter are merely a fraction of all the sexual activities and positions we could enjoy as we expand our sexual repertoire far beyond the missionary position. I encourage you to seek out more creative ideas in other books as well. We're amazed at how even after 18 years of marriage (and an active sex life during the vast majority of that time together), we still occasionally stumble on a new position and realize, Hey! We've never done it this way before, have we? Greg says that in those moments, he feels like Christopher Columbus, sailing into uncharted territory. I feel like a kid in a candy store, discovering new delights that are sure to become future favorites as I indulge in them again and again.

And I hope that in the years ahead, you'll discover many uncharted territories and indulge in many delightful flavors of sexual pleasure as well.

21. Do you ever feel as if you are stuck in a sexual rut? If so, did any of the tantalizing sexual techniques and positions pique your interest as something you're interested in trying?
22. How did the illustrations of "every day" women rather than supermodels strike you? Regardless of your size or shape, can you see yourself indulging in any of these pleasurable positions or activities without extreme inhibition or shame? Why or why not?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 11 - Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

When no boundaries exist between a husband and wife, fear is often present. We fear they might hurt us physically, or wound us emotionally. We worry that they may ask us to do something degrading, embarrassing, or even life-threatening. We don't feel comfortable completely letting loose because trust isn't fully established. How can a woman experience and exude sexual confidence if she is fearful, worrisome, uncomfortable, or untrusting? She can't. And that's why establishing and maintaining safe and healthy boundaries is key to fully enjoying the wonder of your sexuality.

23. How common do you think it is that one spouse feels comfortable with a particular sexual activity, but the other does not? Why might such differences of opinion occur between men and women?
24. Do you think it's possible to handle such differences of opinion without guilt, manipulation, or insults? If so, how?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 12 - Redefining "Normal"

*We've probably all wondered at some point in our lives, Am I normal, or am I kinky? Is my husband normal? Is what we like to do normal? When it comes to sexual expression, "normal" can be extremely difficult and even detrimental to define. What is normal or pleasurable to one person or couple isn't necessary normal or pleasurable for another. I agree with Dr. Alex Comfort, sexologist and author of *The Joy of Sex*, when he said, "There is no norm in sex. Norm is the name of a guy who lives in Brooklyn."*

Indeed, our sexuality is as unique as our fingerprint. No two people have ever had identical sexual experiences, desires, repulsions, fantasies, etc.

25. Do you ever wonder if your sexual relationship with your husband is "normal?" Why do you answer the way that you do?
26. Was there a particular "blue issue" or "pink thing" that you were relieved to see addressed in this chapter? If so, what was it, and how did you feel about the response given?
27. If you were to add yet another "blue issue" (a question about what's normal for a man) or "pink thing" (a question about what's normal for a woman), what would it be?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 13 - Rising to the Challenge

What kind of love do you long to receive? What kind of love do you long to give? The kind Joe had with his wife? I doubt it. Most likely, the kind of love Ralph and Alma, Dana and Christopher Reeve, and this other couple shared is what you aspire to as well. These relationships give us a glimpse into what "in sickness and in health, until death do us part" really means.

Hopefully you're not facing trials as severe as the ones I've described, but realize that most every marriage will eventually experience some physical challenges or perhaps some sort of sexual dysfunction. The question is, "Are you committed to overcoming such physical hurdles when they appear?"

28. What went through your mind as you were reading some of these true stories about the physical challenges that other couples have faced in their marriage?
29. Have you and your husband had to face any physical challenges in your relationship? If so, do you believe you've handled them in the best way possible? Why or why not?
30. Are you determined to doing whatever is necessary to overcome future challenges and connect intimately as best you can? How, specifically, can you make this a priority as the years go by and new challenges arise?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 14 - Refueling that Lovin' Feeling

Can you remember a time when you were putty in your husband's hands? I do. I couldn't get enough of Greg's big, strong arms wrapped around me or his soft lips gently caressing mine. I wanted to gaze into his eyes forever and just watch him as he watched my every move, both of us completely mesmerized by the sight of one another. Each time we made love, I melted like a Creamsicle on a hot summer day.

However, as we fast forwarded the tape several years into marriage, we learned that Creamsicles don't always melt. Sometimes they remain frozen, especially when a man's romantic tactics (or lack thereof) don't impress us much anymore. The "putty in his hands" season is a thing of the past, because putty hardens when it isn't kneaded regularly. We lose that loving feeling, or he loses it, or we both lose it. We begin to feel more like roommates than soul mates.

31. Have you and your husband ever felt more like roommates than soul mates? If so, how did it affect your sexual confidence as a woman? How did you overcome your emotional hardness and soften toward him once again?
32. If you are currently in a season of needing your love relationship refueled, were there any ideas in this chapter that sparked hope in you? If so, which ones, and what do you intend to do with these revelations?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 15 - Overcoming the "Church Lady" Syndrome

Imagine this scenario. I know my daughter absolutely loves sushi. So to show her how much I love her, I make an entire tray of the most exquisite California Rolls you've ever seen or tasted. I leave them on the top shelf of the fridge with a note that says, "Enjoy! I love you!"

But days later, I notice she hasn't touched them. I inquire, "Erin, why have you not enjoyed the sushi I made for you?"

She replies, "I was afraid you'd judge me if I enjoyed them too much."

I respond, "What? But I made them especially for you - for your pleasure! Why in the world would you fear I'd judge you for indulging in them?" If anything, I feel hurt that she hasn't allowed herself to enjoy them at all.

Doesn't make sense, does it? Nor does it make sense for us to fear indulging in sexual intimacy within marriage when this is the exact exquisite gift God has created especially for our enjoyment. Perhaps rather than fear offending God with our sexual expression, we should fear offending God by our lack of it.

33. Do you think of "God" and "sex" as contradictory concepts, or corollary concepts? In other words, does God approve of sex, or disapprove? Have you always felt this way? Why or why not?
34. Do you think that a woman who truly enjoys her sexual relationship with her husband is any less spiritual, or more spiritual? Why do you answer the way you do?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 16 - Passing the Baton

Whenever I ask an audience to raise their hands if their parents educated them about their sexuality, I'm saddened at the response. Maybe two or three hands out of one hundred go up. How can we feel comfortable talking to our children if we have no model to go by? Granted, it's hard to talk to your children if your parents never talked to you. But there must be one generation that draws the line in the sand and says, "The buck stops here. I'll not allow my child to grow up sexually ignorant and self-conscious. I'm going to raise sexually confident sons and daughters!" And if you're like me, I don't just want my children to be sexually confident spouses. I want that for my grandchildren, too, and for every female and male in my family for generations to come! If that's what we want, there's only one way to get it. Demonstrate what it looks like to pass the baton of sexual confidence from one generation to the next. Then encourage her to do the same with your grandchildren someday.

35. When you were growing up, going through puberty, and experiencing longings for sexual and emotional intimacy as a young adult, how did you feel about yourself? Good or bad? Why?
36. How do you want your children and grandchildren to feel about their own sexuality? What part are you willing to play to help them feel that way?

The Sexually Confident Wife

Reader's Guide

Chapter 17 - Whip Cream and a Cherry

After reading the first draft of this manuscript, my twenty-something research assistant, Terrica, emailed me saying, "By just reading the first few chapters, I experienced a seismic shift in my whole attitude about my body, my sexuality, and my marriage. Whereas I've preferred the comfort of a long cotton t-shirt or fuzzy robe after the honeymoon five years ago, I now prefer to walk around the house in as little as possible. My husband says I strut around like a sex goddess, and that he loves it!"

Terrica's right. Underneath every woman's frumpy façade lies an "inner sex goddess" just waiting to be unleashed. Use the fuzzy robes for fetching the paper off the front lawn or packing the children's lunchboxes first thing in the morning, but don't hesitate to slip into something sexier when it's just you and hubby around.

37. Have you experienced any "seismic shifts" in your attitudes about sexuality as a result of reading this book? If so, describe them and the effect they've had on your life and marriage.
38. If you were to write your own personal "whip cream and a cherry" story about how you embraced your inner sex goddess and became an even more sexually confident wife, how would that story go? If you're not there yet, where would you like for that story to unfold in the future?

¹ Found at www.themarriagebed.com/pages/biology/emale/female-oxytocin.shtml

² Wendy Maltz, Sexual Healing from Sexual Abuse: Advice for Adult Survivors, Selfhelp Magazine, www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/sex/healing.html

³ Orgasmic Dysfunction, Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia, September 2002.