

## INITIATING SEX

Somebody's got to do it, to get the show on the road. Somebody has to go out on the skinny branches and risk being rejected. Somebody simply has to go first, to make things happen. If sexual congress is going to take place, someone has to reach out towards the other person. There's no way around it. When I ask my clients who initiates, they often don't know...or they think they both do. Sometimes one person thinks they're the one who initiated, while the other person wants the credit for it.

Women do still buy into the myth that it's the man's job (assuming heterosexual couples) to start things. But women underestimate the role of inviting. When a man is reluctant to initiate for fear of being turned down, I tell his partner to say to him: "If you ask, I'll say 'yes'". Letting the other person know you won't turn them down is initiating, and empowers your partner to do it more, based on a track record of positive experiences.

And it's fraught with peril. Sex is vulnerable, and being rejected sexually is the worst kind of rejection. Some of us are more resilient than others. Some guys bounce back and just keep putting it out there, based on the law of probability they figure that eventually they'll get a green light. And some people pack up their toys and go home after one attempt.

There are many motivations for initiating sex. We may want validation that we're desirable, that if an attractive person wants to have sex with us that makes us attractive by association, or constitutes another notch in the bedpost. We may want to express love to our beloved. We may want him to stop nagging and pouting and get off our back, so to speak. We may want to connect physically and feel their skin, smell them, hold them... We may be anxious and use sex as a pacifier. We may just be horny. There's no right or wrong reason to initiate. I just encourage you be straight with yourself about where you're coming from.

How many of us have misread cues? Even if the other person is the brave one, we don't always know they're initiating. And then they're hurt and not in such a big hurry to do it again.

Sometimes initiating sex is making his favorite pot roast for dinner, or putting the kids to bed early, or lighting a candle. Women tend to be more subtle. She's thinking: "I lit a candle. Doesn't he get it?! What is he waiting for? Oh, well. I guess he's not into it. He doesn't find me attractive anymore." And then one day he complains that she never initiates, and she says: "But I lit the candle! Didn't you get it?!" With men, unless you stick your hand in their crotch they often don't get it. Men are more direct. They may rub up against you with their erection, or proudly show you that part of their anatomy & expect you to be enthusiastic and have you drop to your knees with desire. And then women complain that they feel like a piece of meat, that they don't feel desired for who they are, that he's not romantic enough.

A note on that, since I hear that complaint often: ladies, men want to please you. You have to set him up to win. You have to let him know how to seduce you. Invite him – don't demand in frustration and make him wrong. Invite him to do things that you would consider romantic. Spell it out clearly: "I'd love it if

you brought me flowers, lit some candles, turned the heat up (literally – it's winter, come on, who wants to get naked when it's cold?), lit the fire and spread out a blanket, took me dancing, rubbed my feet, fed me grapes, put the kids to bed" ... You get the idea.

And then there are codewords. You may have seen the Gary Larson cartoon with the various animal couples saying 'couac couac', 'miaow miaow', and the human couple where the man says: 'Hey baby, hey baby". That's code for: "Wanna have sex?" Couples all have codes. I've heard many in my career, such as "Wanna get lovey?", "Wanna play tonight?" Think about it: what's your code? And does your partner know that's the code?

If your partner doesn't get the cue nor know the codeword, what do you do with that? Do you assume you're no longer desirable? They're having an affair? They're flawed somehow, frigid, impotent? They're 'addicted' to web porn? I've heard so many hurt and angry women diagnose their husbands as such because they feel rejected. And yes, it is easier to masturbate to porn than deal with a real live woman on the other end of your penis. Sometimes these guys have given up, or they're withholding to yank her chain. I try to help them find a way back to their wife, to the love and connection, and to the courage to re-open their heart and risk. And I also talk to the wife about not making him wrong and pushing him away, and about being a soft place to land emotionally.

What we all want is to be loved and accepted just the way we are, and to be received. Getting laid is nice, but initiating sex is vulnerable because what we're asking for isn't just sex.

Happy Valentine's Day.

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