

Personal Pleasure Session

Forward

For many years as the Director of a large integrative and functional medical practice, and as a practicing physician, I have had the honor of listening to and treating women's health concerns. Some of the most common concerns that women deal with are those in the area of sexual health. This can express itself in terms of low interest, difficulty in getting aroused, and delayed orgasm or inability to reach orgasm. These problems may then result in issues of frustration, and low self-esteem for the woman, as well as relationship problems for the woman and her partner.

After hearing this same concern repeated by the majority of women who visit my practice, I dedicated myself and my practice to be accountable to these women's concerns. It occurred to me that physicians are quick to hand out "the little blue pill" to the guys, and address their problems of erectile dysfunction, but as a profession, we are slow to respond to women's legitimate sexual health concerns. At McMinn Clinic we provided a sex positive culture, where women could freely express their concerns, without fear of judgement or shame. They knew that their voices would be heard, they would be taken seriously, and that their problems would be addressed in a professional, and evidence-based manner.

Most experts agree that self-understanding, exploration, and self-pleasuring are essential to optimizing a woman's orgasmic potential. First, she must understand her body, starting with some basic anatomy. Second, she has to discover her arousal triggers. Next, she must remove any obstacles to success. Finally, she may undertake a process of sensual and sexual discovery, which in most cases will lead to orgasm and fulfillment. For some women, she may find a greater chance of success if she pursues this discovery phase on her own, without the pressure from and awkwardness with a partner. Once she discovers what brings her success in this area, she can then bring this knowledge and these skills back into the relationship to share and explore with her partner.

This journey of self exploration is a process. It takes time and requires a commitment. Most women find this discovery process to be empowering. At the end of the day, each person is responsible for her own sexuality, and by addressing these issues directly, a woman empowers herself to achieve a lifetime of sexual satisfaction.

Background and some Basic Principles

-Understand that it is your birthright to experience sexual pleasure.

-Congratulate yourself for addressing these issues head on. Many women never do, and they go on to live an unfulfilled intimate life.

-You are doing this for yourself. This is all about you- your pleasure, and your sexuality. You can worry about your partner later.

-It all starts with your commitment to being sexually empowered and optimized to whatever degree that you wish.

-The most important sex organ in the body is not the genitals. It's the brain. Desire, arousal, and orgasm all happen in the brain.

-Cast aside "good girl syndrome" that you were indoctrinated with for so many years, when you were told you that sex was bad and your "down there" parts were dirty.

-Also, ignore any societal messages about "slut-shaming" that many women feel, which makes them feel guilty for being sexually liberated.

-Realize that you are not alone. Many women have difficulty with libido and orgasm. A majority of American claim that they are not interested in sex at all.

-Up to 20% of women have never had an orgasm.

-About 2/3 of women do not have orgasm with intercourse only. Most women require direct clitoral stimulation in order to achieve orgasm.

-Do your best to set aside any self-judgments concerning religious mores, cultural values, upbringing, or body image, which may get in the way of the pleasure experience. See a counselor if needed to help you along this journey.

-Some other issues which may inhibit your sexual potential are hormone dysfunction, inadequate blood flow, stress, mood disorders (such as depression and anxiety), medications (such as antidepressants, and birth control pills), illness, fatigue, and pain.

-Talk to your medical provider about any meds that may be interfering with your sexual function. The most common are antidepressants, and birth control pills.

-Another frequent impediment is that women are just too busy. There is not enough time in the day for intimacy. Make intimacy a priority. Plan it into your day. Put it on the schedule and block out dedicated time for this. -Make intimacy a priority. We find time to take out the trash and to do the dishes. We need to find time for intimacy. It's that important.

-The number one cause of low sexual interest is low energy (fatigue). . Stress, and kids are also major factors. After a long day of work, kids, chores, etc. women are exhausted and just too tired for sex. Check out Dr. McMinn's podcast on low energy (#2) at McMinnMD.com.

-Check out Dr. McMinn's podcast on stress (#11) at McMinnMD.com. Also, see the Stress Plan and the Stress Management Toolbox, at McMinnMD.com on the documents page.

-The four main sexual health concerns of women are pain with intercourse, interest (desire), arousal, and orgasm.

-The most common causes of pain with intercourse are dryness and atrophy. In most cases this is treatable. If you have pain, then see your doctor for evaluation and treatment.

-Sleep affects just about every aspect of our health, including our libido. Make restorative sleep a priority. With better sleep, you'll have more energy, and will have more desire.

-The problem may be partner specific. You may not find your current partner to be sexually attractive, but another person may be a turn-on.

-Gender identification issues may also be a concern for some women.

-Weakness in the pelvic floor muscles may also affect orgasmic response. A pelvic floor therapist may help. See our podcast on women's pelvic floor health (#16) at McMinnMD.com.

-Do your Kegel exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor. This has been shown to improve orgasmic response. See handout on Kegels at McMinnMD.com under the document's section. Certain devices such as the Kegelmaster may be helpful for improving pelvic floor tone, which may help with orgasm. The Elvie Pelvic Floor Trainer actually comes with an App for your phone. Finally, you can easily purchase weighted Kegel balls of different sizes that may also be helpful.

-It is difficult to achieve orgasm if your hormones are suboptimal. Testosterone is the most important for sexual function. Estrogen, progesterone, and DHEA also play a role. Make sure your hormones are optimized with bio-identical hormones.

-Work with your doctor to minimize any medications that might block libido and sexual response, such as antidepressants, birth control pills, beta-blockers, and Valium type drugs.

-Likewise, there are drugs that may improve libido such as Wellbutrin. This would have to be prescribed by your medical provider.

-Women can have performance anxiety also. Women are expected to be orgasmic, and they often feel pressure to do so. This creates a negative feedback loop. Performance anxiety, thoughts about pleasing your partner, and pressure to have an orgasm make it more difficult to achieve your goal. Therefore solo sessions may be helpful, especially in the beginning while you are trying to figure out what works for you.

-If a woman is unable to achieve orgasm, then she often becomes less interested in sex. It becomes a vicious cycle. On the other hand, if she usually has an orgasm, then she often will have more desire.

-Get to know your body. Google “vagina diagram,” and then go to images. You will see many examples. Then use a mirror and a flashlight in a leaned-back seated position. Explore your own genitals with your eyes, your hands and a perhaps a vibrator. A vibrator may stimulate deeper nerves that your hands cannot reach. Identify your parts: Inner labia, outer labia, etc. If you don’t already know, then find out where your clitoris is. This is very important for orgasm, since the vast majority of women need direct clitoral stimulation in order to achieve orgasm. The clitoris is located at the top-front of the vaginal opening. View it on the labeled diagrams, and then compare it to yours. Every woman’s clitoris is unique to her. Some are larger than others, so if yours does not look like the one in the diagram, then that’s nothing to worry about.

-Find out what feels good. Use some good lube during this process of exploration as you use your fingers and the vibrator.

-Take some time to explore what turns you on. Get out a piece of paper and write at the top of the page “What turns me on.” Make a list.

-Likewise, make a list what turns you off.

-Then go about introducing more turn-ons into your life, and take away your turn-offs.

-You MUST get aroused to maximize your orgasmic potential. Therefore, develop an arousal toolbox (books, videos, etc.). Before you start your actual self-pleasure session, reach into your “arousal toolbox,” and read/watch some erotica, let your mind wonder, and engage in some fantasies. If you are a verbal person, then read some erotica, or a sexy romance novel or short story. If you are a visual person, then watch something sexy that turns you on. -To learn more about erotica go to McMinnMD.com, then scroll down to documents, and download Sex Resources.

-Follow your biorhythm. If you’re too tired at night to have sex, then start your day with some morning pleasure, or consider some “afternoon delight” when you might have better energy.

-Wipe away any negative thoughts about your sexuality, and start thinking of yourself as a “sexy” woman. Use positive affirmations to help convince yourself that you are indeed sexy.

-Resolve to act. Like most problems, sexual problems will not go away without the intention to change and action.

Self-Pleasure Session

-Block out some time when you will be uninterrupted. Plan on about 45 minutes. Ideally, in the early days try to do this 2-3 times per week. The more you do it, the better you’ll get at it.

-Have a safe place with a lock on the door. This is VERY important. You need to be absolutely confident that no one will hear you or walk in on you.

-Set up the room. Make it comfy. Get the lighting just right. Play some soft or sexy music. Light a candle if that's what you like, etc. Whatever helps you get in the mood.

-Kick the dog or cat out of the room. You need to be totally focused.

-Turn the phone on "do not disturb." No interruptions!

-Some women may find that a glass of wine before the session may be helpful in removing any inhibitions and getting in the mood. However, be careful, too much alcohol can blunt the sexual response.

-If you live in a state where marijuana is legal, then you may be interested in knowing that some well-done studies have shown marijuana to be helpful in heightening female arousal and orgasm for some women.

-It may also be helpful to take a relaxing bath before the session.

-Tune OFF the negative thoughts, the to-do list, kids, work, and stress. Don't allow negative messages such as "you're too fat," or "this is just too naughty." Don't feel pressure to have an orgasm. Just let it flow and enjoy the process.

-Now is the time to reach into the "arousal toolbox" that we talked about in the previous session. You may want to read or listen to an erotic story. If you tend to be a visual person, then consider watching an erotic video. Turn on the fantasy and let it flow. Follow the pleasure. Nothing is off limits. This is when you ramp up the arousal phase. You must go through this phase to enter the orgasm phase. Fantasy will help you get there.

-Reminder. This is all about you and your own pleasure. This is NOT a time to be thinking about your partner's pleasure.

-Apply some lube and begin to explore your body with your hands and a vibrator. A vibrator can help you stimulate nerves that a hand cannot. Focus all your energy on those parts of your body that feel good. For more information on vibrators go to McMinnMD.com. Go to the documents page and download the document about vibrators types.

-Some women find a clitoris pump to be helpful, such as the Eros CTD. It helps to draw blood into the clitoris.

There are OTC (over the counter) warming gels such as Promescent Female Arousal Gel that may help. These also act a lubricant.

-Your medical provider can also provide you with “scream cream” which may be obtained via a compounding pharmacy. This helps to bring about more blood flow to the genital area, including the clitoris. Apply this to the clitoris and surrounding area about 20 minutes before activity.

-Some women also find that a testosterone gel or cream applied to the clitoris about 30 minutes before activity can be helpful. This will also need to be prescribed by your doctor and is usually obtained at a compounding pharmacy.

-Although it is “off- label” for use in women, some studies have shown that drugs like Viagra and Cialis can also help women to achieve orgasm. These drugs tend to improve blood flow to the clitoris. These drugs will also need to be prescribed by your provider.

-Hormone optimization is absolutely key. Testosterone is the king when it comes to sexual effects! I cannot over emphasize this. It can have profound effects on some women in this area. Estrogen, also matters, and to a lesser degree, progesterone, DHEA, and thyroid are also in the mix.

-Certain herbs may help such as maca, and ashwagandha.

-You may find that some nipple stimulation releases oxytocin and this may be helpful to get you in the mood and ultimately can contribute to orgasmic success. Give it a try. You can actually get battery operated vibrating nipple clamps that you can put on your nipples, so that you can have your hands free to stimulate elsewhere. These may be obtained at most online sex toy distributors, such as Adam and Eve.

-Once you start your session, then stay with it. Don't fight it. Just let it flow. Keep the focus on your own sexual pleasure. Block out everything else. Be “in the moment.” Your pleasure is the only thing that matters in this moment.

-Some women find it helpful to also stimulate the “G-Spot” while stimulating the clitoris. This may be done with fingers, a dildo, a bullet vibrator, or a penetrating vibrator. If you are not sure where the G-spot is then just Google “Where is the G spot.” You'll find a description there, or if you click on images, then you'll find a good diagram.

-Try gently rocking your hips as you pleasure yourself. Relax and enjoy the feeling.

-Breathe in and out slowly and deeply. As the pleasure mounts, try a more rapid, panting breathing pattern and perhaps some moaning, as you focus all of your energy on your pelvis.

-Some women might find that closing your eyes during the process may help.

-Tighten your pelvic muscles intermittently.

-Try tensing the muscles of the legs and arms, clenching your fists, and pointing your toes.

-It may be helpful to experiment with different positions. Some women can only achieve orgasm when face down.

-Don't try too hard. Try to be process-focused rather than goal-focused. Just let it happen. Don't worry if it doesn't happen this session, then perhaps it will happen next time. If you don't orgasm this time, it's still not a failure, since you have at least learned about yourself and have experienced sexual pleasure.

-Just keep doing the sessions. Consistency is the key. Be positive and patient: "I can do this" is your mantra. It may not happen overnight, but stick with it.

-Once you learn to orgasm this way, you can take this confidence and "body knowledge" into the relationship with your partner.

-Online you can also find "experts" who claim to be an "orgasm coach," or pleasure coach, etc. It does make sense to me to have an expert who can coach you on this. However, I don't have any particular experience with any of these in order to make a specific recommendation for you. You can start by just Googling "orgasm coach and you will see many such offerings. Then check out reviews.

-For more information on orgasm, check out McMinnMD.com. Go to the documents page, and then download the document "Sex Resources" Look under the "Nonfiction books" for more information, such as books like "The Orgasm Loop."

The good news is that with a focused and personalized program, most women can become orgasmic. Good luck! May the force be with you.