

The Emotional Floorplan:

Understanding the Seven Rooms of Desire

*Based on the book Come Together by Emily Nagoski,
and neuroscience research by Panksepp & Biven*

Sexual desire doesn't appear out of nowhere. It grows out of the emotional state you're already in. Emily Nagoski describes this using a simple, powerful metaphor: your inner world is like a house made up of different emotional rooms. In any given moment, you're standing in one of them.

Some rooms naturally bring you closer to feeling open, connected, and possibly in the mood for intimacy. Other rooms quietly pull you farther away—not because anything is wrong with you, but because your nervous system is focused on protection rather than pleasure.

These seven rooms are universal. Everyone has them. And learning your personal “emotional floorplan” can help you and your partner understand what you need in order to move toward desire with more ease and compassion.

Below, you'll find a guide to each room: what it is, how it tends to feel, and how it relates to sexual desire.

The Four Pleasure-Favorable Rooms

These emotional rooms naturally support or open the door to sexual connection.

1. The Lust Room

What it is

The brain's sexual system—your natural capacity for arousal, fantasy, and erotic energy.

How it feels

A sense of wanting or being drawn toward touch, warmth, closeness, or erotic play. Physical arousal or curiosity may show up here.

Connection to desire

This is the room where sexual desire is most active. Some people enter here easily. For others, this room only opens after they've passed through other rooms like Care, Play, or Seeking.

2. The Play Room

What it is

The social play system—the part of you that responds to humor, fun, spontaneity, and lighthearted connection.

How it feels

Goofy, relaxed, silly, playful. Think inside jokes, shared laughter, dancing in the kitchen, teasing, or flirtation.

Connection to desire

Play lowers defensiveness and helps your body shift toward openness. For many people, the Play room is a natural hallway into the Lust room.

3. The Care Room

What it is

The attachment and caregiving system—where tenderness, affection, and emotional safety live.

How it feels

Warm, connected, valued, cared for, or cherished. It's the sense of being loved and emotionally held.

Connection to desire

Many people experience desire only after they feel cared for. This room often becomes the foundation that makes sexual openness possible.

4. The Seeking Room

What it is

The curiosity and exploration system—the part of your brain that is motivated, interested, and oriented toward possibilities.

How it feels

Alert, engaged, curious. You might find yourself thinking about closeness, anticipation, or new experiences.

Connection to desire

Seeking is the “I’m intrigued” room. When curiosity lights up, desire often follows. It’s the room of “what if?” and “I want.”

The Three Pleasure-Unfavorable Rooms

These rooms are not wrong or bad—they're simply emotional states in which the body is focused on protection rather than pleasure. When you're here, sexual desire usually fades or goes quiet.

5. The Panic/Grief Room

What it is

The separation distress system—activated by loneliness, rejection, loss, or emotional hurt.

How it feels

Sadness, longing, heartache, emotional heaviness, or a need for reassurance.

Connection to desire

It's hard to feel sexual when your body is grieving or worried about disconnection. What this room needs is comfort, care, and emotional repair—not pressure for sexual closeness.

6. The Fear Room

What it is

The fear and anxiety system—the part of your brain that responds to threat, uncertainty, or stress.

How it feels

Tight, overwhelmed, worried, hyperalert. Your mind may race or your body may brace.

Connection to desire

Fear pulls your system into self-protection. Desire requires safety, so this room often sits far from the Lust room. Calming, grounding, and reassurance are what help you move out of here.

7. The Rage Room

What it is

The anger system—activated when you feel wronged, disrespected, dismissed, or blocked.

How it feels

Heat, irritation, frustration, resentment, or a desire to push away or defend yourself.

Connection to desire

Anger creates distance in the body. Until the hurt or injustice is acknowledged, sexual desire usually goes offline. Connection returns once repair or understanding has happened.

Two Extra Rooms

These rooms are not emotional spaces necessarily, but they can influence our ability to get into a desire mindset:

8. The Office

What it is

This is where we go to think, plan, worry, ruminate, and other things that involve the thinking mind.

How it feels

Being distracted or preoccupied

Connection to desire

It's easy to become trapped in this space or feel like we can't "get out of our head" about something. It's often hard to relax when we have something unresolved to think about.

9. The Utility Room

What it is

In addition to having thoughts and emotions, you also have a body and that body has bodily needs like eating, sleeping, or exercising.

How it feels

General feelings of maintaining one's health and addressing the needs of life

Connection to desire

This is an important room to check into every once in a while to make sure we have the energy and vitality for the other rooms.

How to Use Your Emotional Floorplan

Instead of asking "Why am I not in the mood?", try asking:

"Which room am I in right now?"

"What room do I need to visit next to feel more open to intimacy?"

Your emotional floorplan is not fixed. You can move from room to room with awareness, warmth, and support from your partner. When both of you learn your own maps—and each other's—you begin to understand desire not as something spontaneous or mysterious, but as something deeply human, deeply connected to emotion, and absolutely workable.

