

## Do we all have "Fireworks" at climax?

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Would you describe your sexual response as 'fireworks'... 'a budding flame'... or 'not much at all'? Despite our societal conditioning of the 'typical' female orgasmic response, not all women experience "fireworks" at climax (like in the movies,)... possibly leaving those women with a 'less than typical' response, left wondering... *'Is there something wrong with me?'*

If you experience 'fireworks', that's great! But not all women experience 'fireworks' with climax (orgasm.) In fact, less than a third of women even *consistently* experience orgasm with sex. Like other sensory responses in our body, the frequency and quality of our individual sexual response vary amongst women (and often vary amongst experiences). Just like the 'savor' of chocolate cake, the 'scent' of spicy perfume, the picturesque 'vision' of a floral garden bring different sensations to different women, so does our experience of sex. Women vary in type, intensity and duration of orgasm, as well as in our level of satisfaction with the experience.

There is no 'right' answer for your response to sexual stimulation. A 'less than typical' response, is only a problem if *you* see it as one, and desire more from your experience.

For women, our sexual response is a complex phenomenon, based on many different psychological, social, and relationship factors ... some of these include:

Societal/cultural beliefs

Family/religious upbringing

Prior experiences

Relationship factors

Motivational factors

Fatigue/stress

Problems or dissatisfaction with our sexual experience may be due to one or more of these factors, and should be evaluated from the perspective of the individual, the relationship, and the related psychological and social factors. In the office, when patients express to me difficulties with libido or sexual response, I often start by asking, "How is your relationship?" or "Tell me about your stressors." Women with concerns or doubts about their relationship often report more problems with orgasm. We tend to have more sexually satisfying experiences in trusting relationships, where we feel emotionally safe.

I often find myself reminding young mothers of the negative effects of fatigue and stress on our overall interest in/response to sex. (Remember those times when you've been so exhausted, you'd much rather go to sleep, than to have sex!) To make the point, I may even add, "If you had an expense-paid vacation with your husband, and your kids were in safe hands, would you be looking forward to sex with your husband during that trip?" Posing this question to them, in many cases, allows them to see the negative effects of life's everyday stressors on their sexual relationships...lessening their concern for a 'hormonal' or 'medical cause' for their sexual disinterest or dissatisfaction.

Though medical conditions are typically a less likely cause for female sexual dysfunction than psycho-social factors, some of the medical causes are:

Substance induced conditions

Medications/SSRIs antidepressants

Mood disorders

Pelvic surgery/birth

Central nervous system depressants, like alcohol intoxication, may inhibit orgasmic response. As well, the use of the SSRI antidepressants are commonly associated with delayed orgasmic response in both men and women. Major mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety, may be associated with a loss of interest in sex, leading to orgasmic dysfunction. A short-term decline in orgasmic satisfaction may occur after pelvic surgery or childbirth...though long-term functioning should not be affected after routine pelvic surgery or childbirth.

'Fireworks' for some--or a 'budding flame' for others—Despite our societal conditioning, *you* should be the judge of your own sexual responsiveness and sexual satisfaction. Consider some

of the psychological factors or social upbringing that may be affecting your sexual response. Examine your relationship, as well as your stressors. And also, Be kind with yourself, and give yourself permission to explore and to grow.

If you have concerns about your sexual responsiveness, make time to visit/discuss your concerns with your health care provider.

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