

What is libido?

Libido is your **sex drive**. Essentially, it is the driving force between whether you want to engage in sexual activities or not.

When it comes to libido, we fall into 3 categories:

Too little, too much, and somewhere in between.

There is no “right” libido, just what is right for YOU. The *issue* is when you have a libido that *isn't* what you **want** it to be and you are unhappy because of it.

I believe that there are a lot of women that are unhappy with their libido, and/or their sex lives, and don't know what to do about it.

They can fall anywhere in between the extremes of libido... from a feeling of *not having enough* to a feeling of *having too much*.

Regardless of where you are on the libido spectrum, there will be at least one, if not many, **factors that influence your libido...** positively and negatively.

Let's review them.

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Birth control pills: Testosterone levels have a profound effect on libido. When you take birth control pills, you are reducing your androgen levels, specifically testosterone, by inhibiting ovarian and adrenal androgen synthesis and by increasing levels of sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG).

Therefore, some women find that their libido *decreases* while taking them. What you don't know, is that even the short-term use of them, can cause *permanently* lowered testosterone levels. It happened to me.

Diet and Nutrition: In a nutshell... if you are eating poorly, overeating, undereating, and/or are not getting the required nutrients and minerals from your diet, then you're going to be deficient. A deficient body isn't going to feel as good, or function as well, as a healthy one. It's difficult to have a healthy libido in an unhealthy body. Health is the foundation.

Stress levels: Who wants to have sex when they are stressed to the max? Not me. Sex may be a great form of stress relief, but you'll have to be *in the mood* to want to take advantage of it!

Unfortunately, stress leads to higher cortisol levels, and when the body is in a state of fight-or-flight, it's not focused on having sex. It also makes orgasm virtually impossible. Increased cortisol not only negatively impacts your health, but it negatively impacts your libido and your pleasure.

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Thyroid: If you have a low thyroid (hypoactive) you will most certainly have low energy and you will feel sluggish. If you have a high thyroid (hyperactive), you will have a lot more energy, but this is the other extreme, and you may feel jittery and agitated. Your thyroid is your data center. Your thyroid is responsible for keeping homeostasis in your body. When it's not working as it should, it affects everything.

Ferritin levels: The amount of iron you store in your body is measured by your ferritin levels. If this is less than optimal, then you will be dragging your ass and losing your hair at the same time! Neither of these will put you in the mood. Guaranteed.

Vitamin D: Vitamin D is responsible for many functions in the body. We are often told to avoid the sun or wear sunblock if we do get sun. Unfortunately, this only leads to a vitamin D deficiency. We rely on the sun to increase production of various enzymes, minerals, vitamins and other nutrients to vitalize our body systems. Less sun means a lowered immunity and women already have lowered immunity at various times in their menstrual cycles.

Sleep: This is a biggie. Whether you are dealing with small children or teenagers, are pre-menopausal or post-menopausal, or are simply working overtime, you are likely suffering from sleep deprivation. Not only does this spike up cortisol levels (your stress hormone), but it makes you anxious and irritable. Who wants to have sex when you feel like that? Exactly.

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Your feelings towards your partner: If you're in a relationship where you don't feel loved, desired, appreciated, supported or safe, you will not have much desire for sex. If you feel anger, resentment, or dissatisfaction towards your partner, you also won't want to have sex with them. If you still enjoy masturbating, then you still have sexual urges, but if you don't want to have sex with your partner, then it's a sign that you are unhappy with the relationship. Sex is a very good indicator of how good the relationship is. If all is not well, then sex is usually the first thing to go. When that goes, the whole relationship suffers.

Your ability to communicate with your partner: Even if you have a great relationship with your partner, many women have difficulty expressing their wants and desires when it comes to sex. In fact, most women are uncomfortable discussing sex in general, let alone their personal preferences.

Desire discrepancies: There will always be one partner that has the higher sex drive... and it's not always the man! Since the one with the lower sex drive ultimately controls whether or not there will be sex, they effectively have the power. Regardless of which category you belong to, it can have a negative effect on desire. If you have the higher sex drive, you may resent having to beg and plead with your partner and at some point, you might just give up entirely. If you are the partner with the lower sex drive, then you may become resentful and bitter at being hounded all the time.

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Not being in a relationship: You don't have to be in a relationship to have great sex. However, most women find that being in a committed and loving relationship makes sex more fulfilling, and perhaps, more *acceptable* to them. Having trust is also a big factor in sex... whether you're in a relationship or not.

Previous sexual trauma or abuse: Sexual assault, and abuse of any kind, will make you less trusting of men and less relaxed in a sexual setting. My heart goes out to any woman who has felt demeaned, guilty, dirty and/or ashamed because of it. This was not your fault. I cannot even begin to understand what it feels like to have your sexuality used against you, but there are ways to help you move forward and enjoy sex again. Whether that is through therapy, or a loving and understanding partner, you CAN heal, and learn to want and enjoy sex again.

Sex hormone levels: Women have higher estrogen and progesterone than men, and lower levels of testosterone, but all these hormones are important to our libido and overall wellbeing. Many things can impact the production and availability of our sex hormones and when these are out of balance, so are you. When they are out, it is largely due to thyroid and adrenal issues as well as your lifestyle, your diet and environmental factors.

But while our hormones are certainly very important, they're not responsible for many of the female reproductive and health issues that women are told they are. Our hormones are meant to fluctuate...and provided we listen to our bodies and give them what they need... hormonal fluctuations will not be an issue.

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Menstrual cycle: Many women, and men, don't want to have sex when a woman has her period. Fair enough. But, if only one of you has a problem with it, and the other doesn't, then it can affect libido in so far as *rejection* is a libido killer. As well, certain days in the cycle can influence whether you feel like having sex. Prior to ovulation, you'll mostly likely have a higher libido as nature is trying to ensure procreation by getting you to want sex just when you have the highest probability of conceiving. But if you're on birth control pills, or your hormone levels are not where they're supposed to be, you may not have sexual desire. However, it's also important to understand that our cycles provide us with information about ourselves and our bodies. If we don't listen to our bodies, follow our natural rhythms and give them what they need, it affects our health, happiness, relationships and our sex drive.

Your stage in life: If you are newly in love or just married, then your libido is probably high. If you have small children or are busy with your career, then sex may not be your highest priority and your libido might be low. If you're older, and the kids/career are no longer an issue, you have more time, but you may be having health issues that negatively impact your libido and your enjoyment of sex. At the same time, when you're older, you tend to have grown enough to know yourself and your body and finally have the time and energy... and privacy... to enjoy sex. The key is in knowing how to enjoy sex during all these stages.

Injuries and chronic pain: It is fair to say that if you have an injury, or suffer from any type of chronic pain, it will make having sex not feasible, or at the very least, less enjoyable.

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Your views on sex: If you were raised to believe that sex was natural and healthy, then you would be more inclined to wanting and enjoying sex. If you were raised to believe that sex was dirty or forbidden, or wrong, then you would not only want to avoid it, but if you did have it, you probably wouldn't enjoy it.

If nobody taught you about sex, and all your "knowledge" came from friends, the internet, and magazines, then your view of sex could be inaccurate, distorted, misleading, or all the above. You would need to get to the bottom of it to determine what serves you and what doesn't.

Your level of enjoyment of sex: If your only experiences with sex have been less than pleasurable, you're not exactly going to want to sign up for more of the same. This lack of pleasure could be the result of a fear of pregnancy, painful intercourse, an impatient or inexperienced lover, lack of knowledge about your body and what you like, and your inability to relax and be present during sex. The goal is always to have pleasurable sex.

How important sex is to you: If you don't think sex is that important, or you see it as another chore on the TO DO list, then you aren't going to make the time for it. If something is important to you, then you WILL make time for it. If you don't make it a priority, it will never happen. Sex is important. Trust me.

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Advertising and social media: We are bombarded with sexual messages all the time. Having said that, we probably know *less* about what *real sex* is than ever before. That's because we buy into the hype. The way we think sex is "supposed" to be. Social media has an agenda, and that agenda rarely includes giving you the facts. They use sex to sell products and services, not to educate you. There is also pornography. It can be great for spicing things up on occasion, but there is potential for it to create unrealistic expectations that can result in a disappointing experience in a real-life situation.

Social conditioning: This involves not just what your parents teach you, but what society teaches you. Women are still living in a patriarchal society. One where our sexuality is still being suppressed, or at the very least, made to seem inferior in comparison to male sexuality. This conditioning is so pervasive that we don't even realize it. Women are made to judge their bodies and to criticize their sexuality based on a man's view. As well, many health conditions are mistakenly blamed on our bodies. Under these conditions, it will be more difficult for a woman to love her body and feel comfortable with herself and her sexuality to want to have and to enjoy sex.

Self-confidence: This refers to how you feel about your *abilities*. About how competent you feel at doing something. This could refer to your job, your mothering capabilities and even how good you think you are in bed. Self-confidence is incredibly sexy, but if you don't have it, you might not be feeling very sexy.

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Self-esteem: This refers to how you feel about *yourself*. It's a reflection of your self-worth and personal value. If you feel good about yourself, and feel you are loved and appreciated, then you would feel deserving of happiness. If you do not think you are worthy of love and happiness, then you will have low self-esteem. Low self-esteem will hardly get you in the mood. Much of what drives women to do so much is in an attempt to feel worthy.

Body confidence: This refers to how good you feel in your own skin. It's your body image... what *you* see when you look in the mirror. If you are bombarded with images that make you feel *less than*, then you will not be very happy with your own body. If you believe that you are not beautiful or desirable, then you will not be too eager to share your body with your partner.

Great sex comes from feeling good in your body, so that you can "let go" and experience pleasure. How can that happen if you are worrying about what you look like naked?

Sexual experience: When you are inexperienced, it's harder to reap the full benefits of sex. Limited experience can create anxiety over not knowing what to do or what to expect. If you don't know what you are doing, or feel embarrassment of any kind, you are not going to find it as enjoyable. And if it's not enjoyable, why would you want to do it? Conversely, multiple sexual experiences with multiple lovers may not be any better, as this can have a negative consequence if you start comparing them.

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Lack of sex: When you have some experience under your belt (pun intended), and it had been enjoyable in the past, then *not having it* will feel like you're missing out. Unfortunately, over time, when you're not having it, you tend to forget how good it is. But sex begets more sex. The more you have it, the more you'll want it. So, "use it or lose it", as they say.

Medications: Certain medications can lower your sex drive and make it difficult to reach orgasm. Whenever you are given a prescription for a new medication, be sure to ask your doctor what the side effects are... and if any of them are sexual.

Medical diagnosis: Women's sexuality is often measured by, or compared to, that of men. Sexual dysfunction is defined as *persistent, recurrent problems with sexual response, desire, orgasm or pain*. If you are told that you have a "sexual dysfunction", then you may start to believe that something is wrong with you or that you are broken. The problem with this "diagnosis" is that the solution is almost always a drug or surgery, when in fact, it probably doesn't require either. This is where you must be your own advocate and decide what is right for you.

Illness & disease: If you're in poor physical health or are suffering from any illness or disease, then it will negatively impact your sex drive. That's because when you're sick, or in pain, or are worried about your health, sex will be the last thing on your mind. Unfortunately, women's health and chronic illness are not given the attention that they deserve. Therefore, it's up to you to take care of yourself... and that begins with understanding your body.

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Emotional states: If you're suffering from depression, or have suffered a loss, then you won't be thinking about, or even considering, sex. That is understandable. However, sex can offer a means of escape from your woes and provide an opportunity to achieve intimacy that feeds your soul. It's important to know how to handle it, because it doesn't just affect you... it also affects your partner.

Your partner: If your partner is not initiating, or turns down sex when you initiate, then you will not feel very desirable. At her core, a woman *needs* to feel desirable. If she doesn't, she may shut down sexually or look for sex elsewhere.

There can be many reasons why your partner is not actively seeking sex with you. They include, but are not limited to:

- stress
- lack of sleep
- emotional issues
- low testosterone
- erectile dysfunction
- health issues
- fear of premature ejaculation/ getting you pregnant
- performance anxiety
- low self-esteem
- possible dissatisfaction with your relationship

They may not have as many issues affecting their libido as women do, but the ones they do have can be huge... at least to them.

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As you can see, there are numerous factors that can impact your libido, both positively and negatively. And there are many more.

Sexual desire is extremely complex... at least for women. It is based on physical, psychological, emotional and social factors... and these can either *enhance* your libido or *hinder* it.

If you want to find out what you can do to address these factors, and be happy with your libido, please check out my online course:

How To Get Your Sexy Back

