

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 128: How To Fix Your Sexless Relationship: Tracey Cox

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My friends, they're in their thirties.

Sexless.

Sexless relationships.

They are increasingly frustrated about it, it seems.

It's funny, I've got this collection of my best friends,

we're very talkative and communicative around our sex lives and stuff.

And I just noticed that in various ways, they're in situations

where they don't feel like they're getting enough sex from their partner and they see it as a critical problem,

which might result in them, for example, being cheating or ending the relationship.

Even in my own sort of sexual experience,

what got me really engaged with this subject matter

was I was in a relationship where the pop my partner turned around to me one day after six months and said, like, I don't like having sex.

And as a young man, with me, as a young man, I think with, you know, with an ego, I thought, well, what does that mean?

That's super emasculating.

Does that mean that I'm not hitting it right?

Or like, do I, maybe it's her proper, you know, whatever.

And so I went on that journey.

What did she mean?

So it's interesting because we separated.

Yeah, my reaction was very like, and also I turned to her and said, like, why?

And she said, the next sentence was, I'm not comfortable talking about that with you.

Oh, yeah.

So for me, that was like the door closed.

Of course it did.

Because where do you go with that?

Yes, it was exactly.

So I broke up with her and year passes.

We both go to different places.

We both kind of, you know, figure ourselves out a little bit.

And on her journey, she really got to understand that at the heart of her relationship with sex was this fear that had derived from previous relationships where the partner was very forceful, you know, apparent cheating, all of those things that we kind of discussed earlier. So it wasn't that she necessarily didn't like having sex.

There was a lot of psychological work to be done on removing that fear of like abandonment.

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And really, if I made her feel safe, really, really safe, then the sexual appetite would return. That's what happened.

So a year later, we get back together.

We end up having the best sex of our lives on an ongoing basis.

And it was because she was able to understand.

I was like, if she was able to understand what was really going on, I was able to like be patient enough to like listen and, you know, go from weeks and weeks and months with not having sexual intimacy and just be there, which allowed her to feel safe.

And then beyond that, we were able to kind of like rebuild it.

Fantastic.

And we're still together today.

Oh, my God. So this is your girlfriend.

Yeah, I have to ask her for permission to say this.

I'll show her the clip and make sure she's comfortable with that.

But, but that's an extraordinary story.

So we went from a point of I don't like having sex.

I don't like having sex in a really, really bad situation to the best situation.

I think one can imagine in that department, obviously communication was at the heart of it.

And giving her space to, you know, and I give the credit to her because she figured that out.

But that's what got me really into the subject matter.

Because I've now got loads of friends that are in that situation.

What I would say to your friends is if your partner doesn't want to have sex with you,

I wonder whether how good the sex is.

Because a lot of women say no.

I'm presuming these straight couples.

A lot of women say no to sex because the sex it's on offer is not that interesting to them.

So for this, we need to talk about sex drives, spontaneous desire versus responsive desire.

Have you heard of that?

Yes. Yeah.

From reading your book.

So spontaneous desire is two thirds of men have spontaneous desire.

And it's the desire that everybody has at the beginning.

And by the way, if you want to know somebody's resting libido, you've got to wait about a year.

You have to wait about a year to find out what their real libido is.

Because it's always so artificially inflated at the start, right?

But so spontaneous desire, two thirds of men have this.

It's the, you know, want to see, you know, seek sex, want sex, seek sex.

They can go from people with spontaneous desire could be like scrolling through Instagram, somebody's sexy walks past and it's like, wow, I'm instantly aroused for sex.

They go from zero to 100 very quickly.

They seek out their mate wants sex and they're off, right?

Responsive desire means that you have no desire for sex or very little desire for sex until somebody is actually doing something to you sexually.

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So this is somebody who, you know, maybe is with their partner.

Their partner wants to have sex.

They're not even slightly interested, but goes, OK, look,

I'll give it a go.

Then once things start happening, if their partner is very good at stimulating them and they enjoy the stimulation, all of a sudden they're like, yeah, actually, yeah, I'm enjoying this.

That's the warming up.

That's the warming up, right?

Now, 30% of women have responsive desire.

The rest of them are a mix between spontaneous and responsive.

Most men, so you've got this situation where most men have spontaneous desire.

Most women are responsive.

Most men are very happy to go straight to genital sex.

They don't need warming up the way their anatomy works.

For women, for prey isn't a luxury.

It's a necessity because in order for sex to be comfortable, you need the vagina to tent.

So it literally puffs up so that it can, you know, take a penis comfortably.

So if you don't wait for that to happen and you go male-style sex, go straight for penetration, she's not even off the starting blocks and suddenly you're penetrating.

Sex isn't great and then it's all over.

So for men, you could have like not even thinking about sex to having finished within 10 minutes.

For women, they need time to warm up because their sex drive is responsive.

So they're almost like blinking it's over and they haven't even got to 5% desire.

And this is the problem with couples.

And I'm talking about a very basic couple who probably don't talk about sex and who aren't terribly sexually savvy.

So I think because I think people have an understanding vague understanding that women need more foreplay.

I mean, that's been drummed into men, hasn't it?

But I think that what women don't understand is that women think, you know, at the beginning it was great, it was all spontaneous.

I desire was there, you know, when you get into a long-term relationship, desire doesn't tap you on the shoulder anymore.

You have to create it.

And women, I think, think because that spontaneous desire is gone and they don't feel like sex, it just doesn't come out of the blue unless they start having sex.

They think, oh, that just must mean I don't want sex anymore.

Well, something's wrong with me.

I don't want sex anymore.

You do want sex.

It's just that you've got to be have sexy things happening to you before you feel the desire for sex. And if people understood that, if women understood it better and stop saying, oh, well, it's obviously means my sex drive's gone.

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No, it hasn't.

It's there.

You've just got to have great stimulation and great sex to get it back.

And the other thing about women is that women, we have this thing about that women want tame and they want romance and stuff.

That's not true.

So much research now shows that women like erotic, wild sex.

I mean, they've done these experiments with women where they'll show them erotic videos and they'll wire up the genitals to measure genital response.

So when you're aroused as a woman, blood flows to the genital same as men and you lubricate.

So they're watching all these videos, various sexy videos.

And they have to say, you know, fill in a thing is disarousing you.

No, because society says no, we're not supposed to be.

And the genitals are like, are you kidding?

What are you thinking?

This is fantastic.

I'm absolutely say yes to this.

Say yes to this.

So, you know, there's such a big difference between what we're taught and what we would like.

So if your girlfriend's saying no to sex and you're in a long term relationship,

it's because you're not giving her interesting enough sex.

Give her exciting erotic sex.

Give her something like, actually, this is what we're going to do.

I mean, look at 50 Shays of Grey that got middle aged women wanting sex with women who hadn't wanted sex for 20 years.

I remember being on a holiday with my husband and we started talking to this couple.

And it was around the time when 50 Shays came out and she knew what I did.

And she said, she said, God, I hadn't really had great sex with my partner.

Wasn't interested in sex, you know, for like 10 years.

She said, I read the book.

I'm sitting there two o'clock in the morning.

I'm looking down at my partner.

I'm thinking, I really just want to wake him up and have sex with him.

And she said, and I've never, and then she said, and I read the books.

And suddenly I was back into this erotic sex with my husband that I'd just forgotten.

I'd forgotten about, like, you think of sex as like, oh, God, here we go.

Kissing, bit fumbling, you know, and then the routine sex.

But give people something interesting, like all your friends.

Give her really interesting scenarios.

Take her somewhere sexy.

Push her out of her comfort zones.

Don't give her romance.

Don't give her, you know, give her a sexy sex.

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And then they'll be interested.

I'm trying thinking of my friends, like posing that and how uncomfortable they'd feel.

Really?

Like, babe, I want to drive to the countryside and da, da, da, da, da.

Because, you know, when you've been with someone and you've become that kind of sibling thing that you described earlier, they might almost look at you with a bit of horror.

Yeah, you wouldn't go straight from not talking about sex to like, and we're going to go to a lactose club tonight.

And no, you have to have the conversation.

You have to bite the bullet and have the conversation.

Because the thing about sexist relationships, if you haven't had sex for a year with your partner, it is very unlikely you're going to have sex again with your partner, unless you confront it head on.

If you just think, yeah, this will pass, this will pass.

It will never pass.

You're not going to suddenly go, oh my God, look at that.

We haven't had sex for five years.

Let's go to bed now.

No, it's got to the awkward, awkward, awkward stage.

So, I mean, 30% of couples who have been together for two years or more don't have sex.

Two years, not 10 years, two years, 30%.

It is very easy to get out of the habit of sex.

And once you're out of the habit of sex, the less often you do it.

And then couples get into this thing where it's like, God, we haven't had sex for ages.

But you know what?

Next weekend, we'll have this marathon sex session, and that'll make up for it all.

And then the marathon sex session is like, God, how am I going to find time for that?

Or, you know, that's a bit daunting.

And then, of course, you'd have to have sex for like six weeks to make up for the session.

So, it just becomes more and more insurmountable.

So, I always say to people, just have little bite-sized bits of sex.

You know, sex doesn't have to have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Like, have a big snogging session.

Have a thing where he gives you oral.

You don't do anything, you know, give nothing back.

Or you give him oral.

Or, you know, you just do something sensual together.

You have a bath together.

That counts as sex.

You know, people think sex has to have intercourse in there.

It doesn't.

It's the least favorite bit for them.

And take the intercourse out.

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