

The “problem” this couple is discussing is that he has always wanted sex more frequently than she does. In this snippet of conversation, she is trying to get him to agree that it’s not a problem anymore. She wants his reassurance. He thinks the problem still exists, but he avoids telling her that directly.

So often when a husband and wife talk to each other about their sexual needs, their conversations are like this—indirect, imprecise, inconclusive. Frequently both partners are in a hurry to end the discussion, hopeful that they will miraculously understand each other’s desires without much talk. They rarely say things like “I love it when you stroke my breasts for a long time the way you did last night” or “I really need you every day” or “Morning is my favorite time for making love,” and so on. The problem is that the less clear you are about what you want, the less likely you are to get it. Sex can be such a fun way to share with each other and deepen your sense of intimacy. But when communication is fraught with tension, then frustration and hurt feelings too often result.

**The solution:** Learn to talk to each other about sex in a way that lets each partner feel safe. This will enhance the experience for both of you. For example, research consistently shows that women have more orgasms when couples are able to talk comfortably about this topic. To get started, take this quiz to get a sense of how you’re feeling about your current sex life.

## QUIZ: QUALITY OF SEX, ROMANCE, AND PASSION IN THE RELATIONSHIP

For each item, check the one box below that applies to your relationship right now:

### I WOULD SAY THAT:

- I.  A. Our relationship is romantic and passionate.  
 B. Our relationship is becoming passionless—that is, the fire is going out.

2.  A. My partner is verbally affectionate and compliments me.  
 B. My partner is not very verbally affectionate or complimentary toward me.
3.  A. My partner regularly or often tells me, "I love you."  
 B. My partner rarely tells me, "I love you."
4.  A. My partner expresses respect and admiration toward me.  
 B. My partner rarely expresses respect and admiration toward me.
5.  A. We do touch each other tenderly a fair amount.  
 B. We rarely touch each other these days.
6.  A. My partner courts me sexually.  
 B. My partner does not court me sexually.
7.  A. We do cuddle with each other.  
 B. We rarely cuddle with each other.
8.  A. We still have our tender and passionate moments.  
 B. We have few or no tender or passionate moments.
9.  A. We often kiss each other passionately.  
 B. We rarely or never kiss each other passionately.
10.  A. My partner surprises me with romantic gifts.  
 B. My partner rarely or never surprises me with romantic gifts.
11.  A. Our sex life is fine.  
 B. There are definite problems in this area.
12.  A. The frequency of sex is not a problem.  
 B. The frequency of sex is a problem.
13.  A. Being able to just talk about sex, or talk about sexual problems, is not a serious issue between us.

- B. Being able to just talk about sex, or talk about sexual problems, is a serious issue between us.
14.  A. Differences in desire are not a big issue in this relationship.  
 B. Differences in desire are a big issue in this relationship.
15.  A. The amount of emotional connection during sex is not a problem.  
 B. The amount of emotional connection during sex is a problem.
16.  A. My partner is satisfied with our sex life.  
 B. My partner is not satisfied with our sex life.
17.  A. I do feel romantic toward my partner.  
 B. I do not feel very romantic toward my partner.
18.  A. I feel passionate toward my partner.  
 B. I feel passionless—that is, my own fire is going out.
19.  A. My partner is romantic and passionate.  
 B. My partner is passionless—that is, the fire is going out in my partner.
20.  A. The satisfaction I get from sex is not a problem.  
 B. The satisfaction I get from sex is a problem.
21.  A. We have made sex and romance a priority in this relationship.  
 B. We have not made sex and romance a priority in this relationship.
22.  A. I definitely know how to turn my partner on sexually.  
 B. I do not really know how to turn my partner on sexually.
23.  A. My partner definitely knows how to turn me on sexually.  
 B. My partner does not really know how to turn me on sexually.

24.  A. I feel desired by and sexually desirable to my partner.  
 B. I do not feel desired by and sexually desirable to my partner.
25.  A. Overall we can and do talk easily and comfortably about our sexual needs.  
 B. Overall we do not talk, or we do not talk comfortably, about our sexual needs.
26.  A. Overall we know and respect each other's sexual fantasies.  
 B. Overall we do not know or do not respect each other's sexual fantasies.
27.  A. Overall we are good sexual partners.  
 B. Over all we are not very good sexual partners.

**Scoring:** Add up all of the times you answered "A."

**27:** Congratulations! The quality of sex, romance, and passion in your life together is as good as it gets.

**20–26:** The quality of sex, romance, and passion in your relationship is pretty good right now, but talking more directly about your sex life would likely improve it. Read on to see how to accomplish this in an effective, positive, and gentle manner.

**11–19:** The quality of sex, romance, and passion in your relationship could stand some real work. But the situation probably isn't critical yet. You are hardly alone—many couples have difficulty in this area. The ideas and tips below will help you learn to talk more effectively to each other about your sexual needs and desires.

**0–10:** Currently, the quality of sex, romance, and passion seems to be a very serious issue between you. The advice in this chapter will be helpful, but it may be more beneficial to first review chapter five (nurturing your fondness and admiration) and chapter six (turning toward each other) before concentrating on specific sexual issues.