

What Am I Doing Wrong?

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by Dr. Doug Rosenau

Dear Dr. Doug, My wife is an inanimate sex partner who occasionally allows me to use her body out of duty. I feel like I am slowly being strangled. I long for intimacy and hate her label of "sex maniac." I did not get married to practice celibacy. I have prayed and fasted, been patient, tried to jump through many hoops, gotten angry, even threatened divorce, and nothing has changed.

A Hopelessly Frustrated Husband

Dear Hopeless:

I don't think wives are often aware that we don't want sex just for release.

Husbands hate "duty" and "pity" sex. Men's souls connect through sex in ways that our wives have difficulty even understanding.

But I have to be honest with you. You are your own worst enemy right now. You're hopeless, angry, stuck, fearful and probably haunted by lust. These are not very Christlike traits.

You must start to be proactive or your self-pity, wayward sexual thoughts and resentment will completely destroy your marriage. Please take these action steps and start making changes:

1. Be an empathetic detective and think outside the box. You say that you have tried every solution possible. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it is not how hard you try but how smart you try that can change your sexual situation.

Why do you think your wife is so afraid of sex that she would jeopardize your marriage rather than work on this issue? She isn't shutting you off because she doesn't want you happy. Something is broken and shut down for her.

You may be too simplistic in assuming that your wife hates sex and has no desire. Is she tired? Could there be physical pain or some hormonal imbalance? Read the book *Secrets of Eve* (Hart, Weber, & Taylor, 1998), and find out more about your wife.

Take time to discuss the following question: If there were miracles and the changes took place that you each wanted, what would your marriage and sex life look like then?

Become a detective and force yourself to risk conflict and discussions.

2. Become a servant-leader and change yourself. Right now your wife's deficiencies have you so absorbed, you aren't looking at yourself.

I know you have felt like every time you jumped through a hoop, she chose another one and raised it higher. But, what do you think are the accelerators and brakes in your sexual relationship that you control?

Women need to feel emotionally connected before feeling romantic. Are you doing the little things that help her feel in love with you? Making those phone calls, sharing your feelings, giving gifts, getting more involved with the children and sitting close to her on the couch?

Wives need to experience romance and to feel special. How could you do this better?

What chores could you do to help with her fatigue? What could you lighten up on sexually that would help her feel less pressured? Is there some activity that she thinks you

associate with sexual passion and you need to quit bugging her?

3. Practice tough love and assertively pursue God's ideal of passionate intimacy. Practicing tough love is never threatening divorce. Christians don't threaten but try to align themselves with God's truth.

Guys, there are some hills that are not worth dying on. But pursuing God's gift of sexual intimacy is one on which you must make a humble, loving stand. Do not threaten divorce but gently and persistently insist on God's realistic expectation of a fulfilling sex life in your marriage. Help her understand that this objective is not selfish but intended for mutual pleasure and loving closeness.

It is not easy to be a leader and a catalyst for change. Do not quit this time. Conflict and painful discussions are a part of any great marriage and sex life.

You will probably need professional help. Get medical assistance in checking out hormonal and physical problems. Find a marital therapist if sex is a symptom of deeper relational issues. Search out a sex therapist and get sexual counseling (see my Web site).

Courageously pursue God's gift of an intimate marriage.

Doug Rosenau is a certified sex therapist in Atlanta, and is the author of *A Celebration of Sex*. You can visit his Web site at .