



anxiety that's already there."

So what's the solution? Teresa says the first step when it comes to dealing with ED is to encourage your partner to pay a visit to their GP to rule out any physical issues. It's also a good idea for a couple to make positive lifestyle changes together such as taking up exercise or quitting smoking.

Aside from that, it's important to start the conversation but to avoid speaking about the issue during sex as, Teresa notes, "that's not the best time to have it because a man is feeling very vulnerable and his partner is also feeling very vulnerable. So it's best if it's outside the bedroom."

Another common cause of male sexual dysfunction is premature ejaculation (PE) and most of the advice for ED can be applicable to PE as well.

Teresa says that PE can be "a very distressing problem".

"Again [like ED] it results in a sense of anxiety, in feelings of embarrassment, feelings of awkwardness and shame... Premature ejaculation is slightly different from erectile dysfunction because it's more likely to be a problem of longer duration, beginning in early adulthood rather than later on."

Affecting an estimated 30 per cent of men (although it's hard to find a definitive number) PE can be caused by heightened sensitivity, by medication or by an on-going sense of anxiety that begins in early adulthood.

Teresa says that a lot of couples would be living with and managing PE on an on-going basis. So if your partner is struggling with PE, what's the best course of action? It's quite similar to what you would do if you're dealing with ED, says Teresa.

"It's the very same really, to take the pressure off the

conversation that's difficult for the partner because they are anxious, they are confused, they are worried. It's difficult sometimes to be patient and to be understanding but what I see in clinical practice is, if partners get very annoyed, very angry, very blaming, it really doesn't help and it leads to rows and it leads to the distance between them," says Teresa.

Again, when it comes to PE or ED, education is key.

"Even educating yourself helps, because a lot of men won't realise that many of their friends or their peers would have experienced both of these problems at some point in their life or currently, because men don't typically talk about this. In general we're not very good at talking about sexual difficulties," says Teresa.

"So men will often think that they're the only one experiencing this which adds to the shame and it's the same for their partners – they won't necessarily understand that both are such common problems.

"So you just begin to read and learn a bit more – it just helps them to understand that this occurs for so many people. All sexual difficulties are very common."

And, of course, says Teresa, it's important to note that experiencing erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation within a relationship doesn't necessarily mean that the relationship is doomed.

"No, no, no. Not at all. That doesn't need to ring the death bell of the relationship. No, there's an awful lot you can do and, as I say, it's best to try and do that together, to support each other." **WW**

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man open up about it and start to talk about it."

When a man is struggling with erectile dysfunction it can be hard for his partner not to take the issue personally.

"So often when I meet couples to talk about this and to work on this, the woman will be blaming herself and her first assumption will be, 'He's not attracted to me any more.' And in the vast

majority of cases, that's not part of the picture at all. It's rarely, rarely the case that erectile dysfunction has got anything to do with the partner," says Teresa.

"And blaming or frequent questioning or shaming a partner about it will actually only build anxiety and tension and make the problem worse because the blaming and the questioning will feed into the cycle of