

NOT TONIGHT, DARLING

Are mismatched libidos taking a toll on your relationship?

When it comes to sex, experts usually agree on one thing: it's nearly impossible to find a couple that has the exact same kind of sex drive. There's nearly always one party in the relationship who requires more or less sex and that's completely normal. However, if you're in a relationship where mismatched libidos are causing some serious struggle, there are some things you can do. We spoke to Teresa Bergin, a sex therapist and psychotherapist to find out more.

As a sex therapist, how often do you meet couples who are dealing with mismatched libidos?

I very often see couples struggling with libido difficulties - it's an extremely common issue and can lead

to a lot of tension within a relationship. It's a very confusing problem for a couple because at the start of the relationship, it will have seemed that they had a perfectly matching set of libidos. Many couples come into therapy feeling very confused and upset because their sexual relationship got off to a great start and is now, some years later, very different. Attraction and desire are both high at the beginning, especially when a couple doesn't have constant access to each other. The reality however is that people rarely match up perfectly in terms of sexual desire and as

a relationship progresses the differences become clearer.

What kind of an impact can mismatched libidos have on a relationship?

Mismatched libidos can have a really detrimental effect on a relationship and sadly, if a couple can't communicate about it or access help, it can lead to the breakdown of the entire relationships. There are very strong emotions around this issue. The partner who is more interested in being intimate feels rejected and takes it personally. Let's face it, it's deeply painful to perceive that you are no longer attractive to your partner. More often than not, this is not the case, but the perception can lead to frustration and anger on one

side and guilt and pressure on the other. What I often see is the couple locked in a very difficult 'pursuer-distancer' dance. Neither is easily able to understand or empathise with the other's position, let alone talk about it, so the dance is repeated over and over.

Why is it important to be aware of the level of sex you require in a relationship?

Self-awareness around sexuality is always key. If we don't take time to consider our own sexual desire and how we move around it, it's quite difficult to open up a conversation about desire within a relationship. It's really useful to reflect on what sex means to us - do we consider it as simply a way to reach orgasm or is it part of the bigger picture of intimacy? The former may leave a partner feeling that they are only there to assist you in the process of release rather than sharing a uniquely

