

## Ep #6: Understanding Libido/Desire



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Dr. Sonia Wright**

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You are listening to The Midlife Sex Coach for Women Podcast, episode 6.

Welcome to The Midlife Sex Coach for Women Podcast, the only show that combines a fun personality, medical knowledge, sexual counseling and life coaching together. To create unique sex coaching that helps busy women awaken their libidos, address intimacy issues and learn how to express their sexuality for the rest of their days. Here is your host, certified life coach and sexual counselor, Dr. Sonia Wright.

Hello Diamonds. It's Dr. Sonia. It's so great to have you here today. Today I'm going to be talking about one of my favorite subjects which is libido. And I'm thinking about libido because it's actually the last module, the last day of my course called Own Your Sexuality Now. And I think of so many women that join this course because their issue is low libido, and trying to figure out how to 'fix' themselves or fix the libido, something has gone wrong with them.

And it made me think about it because this is the last day of my course and I'm actually starting a new course at the end of this month. This being the last day of my course I had asked people to fill out a testimonial.

And I got some great testimonials. And one of them that I thought was really interesting was I asked her, "What did you think was the most valuable aspect of Own Your Sexuality Now?" And she said, "Realizing I'm not the only one with low desire. And that there are definite things that I can do to address it. There are so many more options for me to take advantage that I didn't know existed. I loved learning about a woman's sexuality and what I can do to enhance it."

And she also said, "What advice would you tell someone that was thinking about joining Own Your Sexuality Now?" And she said, "Definitely join, you will learn that you're not broken. You will learn to embrace your sexuality and spice up your partnership and your relationship while having fun." So I love that. I love the fact that she's focused now on spicing up her relationship, on having fun now she realizes that she's not broken. And

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she's definitely focused on pleasure for her, and not as much as focused on to do list sex.

So this is what my mission is, to help women embrace their sexuality and to create that sex life of their dreams. That's what I want for every woman that I work with, and every woman that listens to this podcast. So I'm pretty excited that at the end of our course, this is what the women in our course are learning and enjoying in Own Your Sexuality Now. But then that makes me think of so many other women that are out there, they have not necessarily been able to deal with this issue of the 'low libido'.

So I wanted to talk to you about that today because I want to address this issue. It's something that's really important to me and I definitely want people to understand that nothing has gone wrong really, nothing has gone wrong. So many times women come to me and they want to work with me. And the things that I'm hearing them say are, "I want to want to have sex again." "I'm feeling broken." "I'm feeling like something's wrong with me." "I'm not interested in sex anymore." "I'm feeling like a part of me is dead."

Or they'll come and they'll ask me, "Is this all there is?" "Does it get better?" "What's happened to me?" "What's wrong with me?" "The last thing on my mind is sex." "I don't get turned on anymore." "I'm not interested." "I'm not interested in sex anymore, I'm broken." I hear this so many different ways, this concept of I'm broken. And I just want to talk to you about this today. I just want to talk to you about sex, and desire, and libido. So we have a kind of better understanding of what exactly that is.

So let's talk a little bit about libido. It's actually one of my favorite things to talk about. And so we're going to talk about women's libido or her desire and the sexual response cycle.

Okay, so the first thing I want to talk to you about is that there's different types of libido or desire. And so often we think of libido or desire being more like a spontaneous desire, which may be the case that this when you were either at the beginning of a relationship or you're in maybe your 20s

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or early 30s, you had more of the spontaneous desire. Which was you started off in a place of being interested in sex right from the beginning. And your mind was excited about sex. Your body was ready to go.

You saw somebody that you liked, you were attracted to them and you're like, "Hey, how is it going?" And you're interested in sex and you want to get to that, and you're anticipating it. And you're focused on it and you're thinking this is going to be wonderful. You're thinking of all the wonderful things that are going to happen. And that is coming from a place of spontaneous desire where you're turned on, where you're ready to go, your mind, your body is, everything's in tune.

But I always like to think about in that time when we were having more of the spontaneous desire. It was usually a time in our life where we had a lot less responsibilities. Maybe we did not have kids yet, we didn't have a stressful job.

I love to think about me in my 20s when I had an hour, an hour and a half to do my make-up and get my hair just right and put my clothes on, and go out of the house. And that was a big thing in the day, was to go out and see, and be seen. But I had an hour and a half to get ready. So I'm also going to be taking care of myself and be in that state where I'm more interested in sex.

And now if we shift over, we talked about one type of libido being more of the spontaneous type of desire. And another type of libido is more receptive or responsive type of desire. And this is where you start from a place of neutrality. So either if you've been in a relationship for an extended period of time or just we have a lot going on in our lives, and we're getting older, and things are shifting around for us.

As I mentioned before, we might be raising kids. We might be the sandwich generation where we're taking care of kids and then concerned about our parents, and maybe starting to take care of our parents as well. We have a

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stressful job, we have a lot of things going on, maybe our self-care is not at a 100%. Well, we need to take care of that if our self-care is not at a 100%.

But I just want you to know that you're juggling a lot of things. Usually at this point in time your libido or your desire is more a responsive type of desire, which means it's not necessarily gone, you're not broken. But it's just different from our concept of spontaneous desire. When people think about desire and libido, they think of the spontaneous desire. But I love to shift people's minds so that they're thinking not as much about spontaneous, but also about this receptive desire, and not that one is better than the other because they're both great.

And you can experience both at different times in your life, at different times of the week sometimes, and that is okay. I just want you to know that's okay.

So talking a little bit more about responsive desire. As I mentioned before, you start from a place of neutrality. And sometimes people interpret this neutrality as a problem, as something has gone wrong because you're not necessarily starting from a place where you're really into sex. If you're starting from a place of neutrality, which means you could get more interested in sex, or maybe not. You could go either way. You could snuggle up and maybe that could lead to sex. Or maybe you could snuggle up and just watch that Netflix series and you would be happy either way.

But I just want to impress upon you that nothing specifically has gone wrong in this case. Just so that you understand that there's at least two different types of desire, one is more spontaneous, which is what we often think about. And one is more receptive or responsive. Now, something to take note about is that women tend to be more in the receptive responsive type of libido and desire. And men tend to be more along the spontaneous type of desire.

That being the case, in our society we have a tendency to shift our models of desire and sexual intimacy to the 'male' model. And the female model is

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kind of like a mini version of the male model. But you know what? The female model or version does not have to be a mini version of the male model. It is our own version. It's the way our bodies work and our bodies work just fine.

So we don't necessarily have to shift something around and we don't have to say, "Wait, our libido doesn't exactly look like the male model of libido, so therefore there's something wrong with us. So I want to be very clear with that.

So talking about desire, the spontaneous desire and there's responsive receptive desire. And both types of desire are just fine. And women have a tendency to be more in the receptive responsive type of desire, libido, more so than the spontaneous type, and that is okay. So when people are starting to think that they're broken or there's something wrong with them, I just want you to understand that there's nothing wrong with you. It's just a matter that you're coming from a more responsive or neutral place when it comes to libido, that being the case we kind of have to look at it a different way.

So the way that I like to look at things is I like to look at what are the models of sexual response that have been out there. And how has that changed over time, and that can give us a better idea and a better understanding of a woman's sexual response cycle and also a woman's libido.

So let's look a little bit at sexual response. So when we originally came up with this concept of the sexual response cycle it was revolutionary. It was back in the 1960s, it was Masters and Johnson which came up with this four part focus of sexual response cycle.

So let's talk a little bit more about the sexual response cycle. So the first one to really talk about a sexual response cycle was Masters and Johnson, and it was back in the 1960s. And it's pretty revolutionary this concept. And they were in a lab and they put an ad in the paper.

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And they actually put this ad in the paper advertising for people to come into their lab and they would measure physiologic symptoms associated with arousal, and desire, and sexual intimacy, and sex, and engaging in sex. And so they would check on the heart rate, they would check on temperature, they would check on respiratory rate, which is how people are breathing. They would also check on engorgement of the genitalia, they would measure these things. So it was mainly focused on the physiologic change that occurs when somebody is engaged in sexual intimacy acts.

And it applied in the lab but it didn't necessarily apply a 100% in the context of life in general. And in this model, it's a linear model, and honestly it tends to be based more upon the male or people with penises, sexual response cycle. So there's four phases to the sexual response cycle. There's the excitement phase where you get the engorgement. There's the plateau phase where you're continuing to get the arousal and the engorgement. There is the orgasm phase and then there's this resolution phase.

Now, even though this was revolutionary and something that we hadn't seen before, it also wasn't perfectly aligned. It was a linear model. And in order for the sexual response cycle to be complete there had to be the excitement phase, the plateaus phase, there had to be an orgasm. So there's focuses on this orgasm and then there was a resolution.

Well, this phase is kind of interesting but it is based on more the male model or people with penises, because the resolution or refractory phase, women can have multiple orgasms and that wasn't specifically included in here. And so that's something to take into consideration.

And then this focus on orgasm for completeness, the sexual response cycle was not complete unless an orgasm was there. That puts a lot of pressure on performance to be part of this. And it did not take into consideration, relationship factors, cultural attitudes and external contributions that could be affecting things.



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And then also it was clear that something was missing, and so then we had a psychotherapist called Helen Singer Kaplan and this was in the 1970s. And she took the original model, the Masters and Johnson original model and then she actually modified it slightly. But she modified it in also another radical way because she put in desire or libido into the sexual response cycle where it had not been before. And so in this new model you had desire, then you went to the stage of excitement, then you had orgasm, so the plateau was kind of put in with the excitement.

So you have desire, excitement, orgasm, and then you had this resolution phase. So it was great because it added in this concept of desire, libido, this wanting to engage in sexual intimacy. But it was still linear and it still had it such that you had to have the desire before you had the excitement or the arousal component. So it still had to be in a certain way. And then it also still required that there is an orgasm for completeness. So we kind of got a little better in that we added in desire. But at the same time it still had to be in a linear fashion. We could only think of it in one way.

So then we had to wait till the 2000s, 2000 to be exact, before we get a new model of the sexual response model. And this model is by Rosemary Basson. And her model was really amazing because it is a circular model. It's not a linear model like we had seen before.

And this circular model, it was really great. It has different components in it and I'm going to include a graphic of this model so you have a better understanding, but there's different components to it. And it includes emotional intimacy, sexual stimulation, sexual arousal, arousal in sexual desire. So it puts it in there and then also spontaneous arousal and desire is also placed in this model as well.

So the interesting thing about it is that it's non-linear, and it accounts for the fact that women can start from this place of neutrality, and that women have a need for intimacy. And that might actually be something that triggers this. So it could be the case that a woman is interested in getting closer to her partner. Maybe initially she's coming from a place of neutrality and she



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could go either way in terms of libido and interest in sex. But she does want some intimacy there.

And so maybe she starts thinking about her partner and how she likes them and how good they are to her. And then that actually makes her want to be more connected to them. And maybe that connection will lead to having more of an interest in sex. And so maybe then it kind of kicks in, the libido, the desire could kick in from there. Or maybe it comes from a physical stimulation starts first and that could lead to engorgement. And then that arousal will then remind the woman that I forgot that I kind of like sex. And then her libido will kick in.

So it doesn't have to be linear where the libido has to be there first and then the other stages come in. It can start from any part of the stage, and that's a wonderful thing about it being non-linear in focus.

So when you think about this, it's kind of good to look at it and to recognize that it's okay to start from this place of neutrality. It's okay to start from this place of you're not sure if you want to engage in sex or you don't want to engage in sex, that is okay. But basically what it's saying is that nothing has gone wrong. Starting from a place of neutrality is completely okay. And in fact we tend to get into this if we've been in a relationship for an extended period of time, or as we get older, but it's not only one way or the other.

So we can have more of a spontaneous libido or we can have more of a receptive libido and one is not better than another. And I really want to say this, one is not better than another. Hey, if you have libido you have libido.

And you can tap into your libido. Sometimes I kind of think of it as your libido is there but it's kind of stuck under a big pile of laundry that needs to be done. It's like you clear out all the other stuff that needs to be done and then you get back to your libido. And then you're like there you are, I've been missing you and I didn't know it happened to you. But that makes sense that you're under this big pile of dirty laundry.

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So I just want you to know that nothing's wrong with you. You're not specifically broken. And as a side note, if you feel like there's something that's gone on for an extended period of time you could go and talk to your doctor.

There are some medications that are out there and you can go talk to your gynecologist specifically about these medications. And right now they're approved for premenopausal women, that side of things I leave to the gynecologist. So if you feel like there's something else that you need, if you need some medication onboard then yes, there is that side of things and you can go talk to your gynecologist about it. But what I find that most women need is actually to be reminded about their libido.

And then also to focus on something that is in one of my favorite books actually. And the book is called *Come as You Are* by Emily Nagoski. And this is a fun book. And I'll put this in the show notes as well. But this book is really great because it talks about the accelerators and the brakes. And so it brings up this concept that there's different things that accelerate us or make us more interested in sex. And there's different things that are brakes which make us less interested in sex.

And part of our job is to figure out what makes us more interested in sex. What are our accelerators? Does listening to erotica make us more interested in sex? Does thinking about all the wonderful things about our partner make us more interested in sex? Does having a vibrator onboard and having self-pleasure throughout the course of the week help you stay in that place where you're engaged and interested in sex? Each one of you has your own set of accelerators, or something that makes you more interested in sex.

And then you also have your own brakes, things that shut that system down so fast, you're like it is done. So also knowing what your brakes are and trying to eliminate some of those brakes is something that's really important as well. Are your brakes such that you come home and the house is messy and you can't focus on enjoying yourself, and connecting,

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and having pleasure if the house is crazy? Is it that your kids are running around then it's late at night and they're not sleeping, you need them to be in bed?

Is it that you need to – an accelerator might be taking a bath and relaxing ahead of time. So get a sense of what your accelerators are and what your brakes are. And so what makes you more interested in sex and what makes your libido increase, and what makes your libido decrease. And so this is something to work on and to recognize it. And even just start to write it down and to think about it.

When I talk to my Diamonds, I really focus on the fact that you are sexual beings, the majority of people are sexual beings. And you want to express that, it's something good to express in your life. There's nothing wrong with expressing your libido. There's nothing wrong with expressing your sexual desires. There's nothing wrong with expressing you yourself as a sexual being, it's a normal part. And if we suppress that part then we don't tap into our creativity, we don't tap into our joy. So I'm all about figuring out how to express ourselves, how to tap into that desire or libido.

So things to think about when you want to tap into this libido is sexual response for a woman is usually not a linear thing. There are a number of factors that come into play that will influence your libido and either increase your libido or decrease your libido. And it's okay for you to start from a place of neutrality, so don't worry about that. Desire does not necessarily need to be present initially, this is okay. You can start from a place of neutrality, there's nothing wrong with that.

Putting a focus on pleasure, and connection, and satisfaction are important factors. I tend to focus on those three things of pleasure, connection, satisfaction. You're going to hear me talk about this quite a bit. I should coin a term like PSC or something like that, pleasure, satisfaction, connection, because I think that those are the important things.

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Orgasm I think is incredible, I love orgasms and they are great as well. But sometimes we don't necessarily want to always put our focus on orgasms. It's like if you get an orgasm, that's great. But I don't want you guys focusing in on the orgasm being the be all and end all of everything, because then that puts a level of anxiety there, and performance anxiety.

And I'm going to talk about performance anxiety because I think we need a whole other podcast on that. But focusing in on pleasure, connection and satisfaction, I think those are important factors that we should focus on. As I said, orgasm is not a requirement or an end goal. And your libido can be either spontaneous or receptive responsive, and that's okay.

And finally, figure out what your accelerators and what your brakes are. I think that's very important. If you understand that then you're more likely to engage in sexual intimacy and have a better sense of yourself. You'll know what helps you be much more interested in sex and what detracts or what are your brakes that makes you less interested in sex.

Okay Diamonds, we had a little talk about libido today. And it was so great talking to you, thank you so much for joining me.

To celebrate the launch of the Midlife Sex Coach for Women Podcast I'm going to be giving away a \$50 Amazon gift card to five lucky listeners who subscribe, rate and review the show on Apple Podcast. It doesn't have to be a five star review, although I would really love it if it were a five star review. But more importantly, I want your honest feedback so I can create an amazing show that provides tons of value.

Visit [www.soniawrightmd.com/podcastlaunch](http://www.soniawrightmd.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how you can enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode. Okay, that's all for now, see you next time Diamonds.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of The Midlife Sex Coach for Women Podcast. If you enjoy Dr. Sonia's fun and caring approach to sexual intimacy, head to [soniawrightmd.com](http://soniawrightmd.com) to learn more.

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