

## Stress Reduction Is A Pathway to Pleasure

What kills pleasure and intimacy in relationships?

Current research and our global community report the same thing: the number one enemy of libido is STRESS.

Stress and relaxation are two modes that the human body operates in - and the two systems are like a light switch - on or off, one or the other. Like the brake and the accelerator of your car, you need both systems to stay in balance. But all too often, we stay locked in the stress mode, bringing home stress and anxiety from our work and busy days. It becomes more and more difficult to relax, enjoy life and experience pleasure.

This inability to relax does more damage to relationships and intimacy than any other factor. So if you want a better sex life, you must learn how to manage stress.

### Has Stress Taken Over Your Relationship?

Not only does stress kill your libido, it can slowly take over your relationship.

Early in relationships when you are dating a new lover, going on a date is an event - often involving relaxing activities like going out to eat, seeing a movie or a show, or walking and talking. Part of falling in love is giving yourself the time to enjoy being with another person, relaxing and focusing your attention on one another.

Over time it is all too easy to allow the daily stress of life to leak into your relationship. Many people slowly stop creating dedicated time to be with one another, and rather experience life's stress and run a household together. As this transition occurs, sexual pleasure and excitement can disappear.

Stress also throws sexual hormones out of balance, resulting in low libido for both men and women, and possible loss of blood flow, arousal and sensation in the genitals.

But let's face it: you can't always quit a stressful job or get away from a stressful family situation. So the essential strategy is learning how to cope with stress and minimize it's effect on your life and health. To have a more pleasurable relationship and a hotter sex life, you must find strategies to spend quality time together, slay stress and learn how to relax. There are many paths to relaxation: a good dinner and glass of wine, yoga or dance, a long walk. You need to figure out what works for each of you and then make time and space for you both to practice these forms of self-care. Consider it an investment in your relationship and sex life!

But there is one strategy that not only melts away stress, it prepares the body for arousal and strengthens your relationship. The most effective tool we have found for managing stress and improving sex is **massage**.

### Manage Stress & Overcome Distractions With Massage

One of the many benefits of massage is stress reduction. Studies show that receiving massage relaxes chronic tension, reduces stress, releases pleasure hormones, supports the immune system and increases circulation. All of these benefits add up to a very positive experience for your body and an opportunity to release chronic and daily stress. Massage also gives you the chance to connect with your lover, share an intimate experience and get into the pleasure zone together.

Stress can also be one of the biggest mental distractions that might block pleasure or orgasm. If you find yourself stressing out about everyday issues or worrying during sex with your partner, this might be preventing you from feeling a great deal of pleasure. Learning how to focus on the sensations in your body rather than the "monkey mind" of everyday life can be an essential skill that will allow you to connect more deeply with your own pleasure and your partner.

Massage is a great way to begin learning the skill of focusing on your body and physical sensations. While receiving massage, you have the opportunity to relax and focus on receiving, with no pressure to reciprocate. Take this time to let your mind focus on the sensations of your partner's touch. When you find your mind wandering, acknowledge the distraction and then return to focusing on your body and your breath. We dive deeper into this skill in the coming chapters, but for now just recognize that the ability to focus on your body rather than mental chatter might be an essential erotic skill to develop.

If you find yourself distracted during sex, be sure to check out our free podcast episode: [Overcoming Distraction For Better Sex](#)

### Massage: Amazing Foreplay, But Not Always Foreplay

Massage can be amazing foreplay. Massage relaxes the body, preparing it for more intense arousal. It builds up intimacy, allowing you to go deeper with one another during lovemaking. Massage also brings your attention to the entire body, allowing whatever erotic sensation you build to flow more freely, creating the conditions for full body arousal and orgasms. You'll also be developing your touch skills, communication, timing and many other skills that will simply make you a better lover.

But it is important to know that all massage will not lead into sex - it can be enjoyed for its own pleasures, without any expectation of it culminating in sex. Communicate about what your mood, hopes and expectations are before you start massage, to avoid any misunderstandings - if one of you is thinking foreplay, and the other is ready to receive a massage then drift off to sleep, there might be some hurt feelings after an otherwise pleasurable experience. Be clear if you want the massage to lead to sex, you definitely don't want to have sex, or you are open but not sure yet and want to check in later during the massage and see how you feel then.

Enjoy massage on its own as often as you can. When you are both in the mood, use massage as extended foreplay and notice the benefits to your sex life. But don't conflate the two - or you might find one partner avoiding massage because they don't feel like having sex - missing an opportunity to exchange pleasurable touch and share an intimate moment. And, you can always check in after the massage and see how you feel - receiving massage may stir up erotic excitement that wasn't there when you started!

Do you love massage? Want to share professional quality massage at home whenever you wish? Check out our [Couples Massage Mastery Course](#) to bring the luxury of massage home to your relationship! This link will give you 33% off the course so you can integrate this essential foreplay practice into your love life!

### Next, Build Arousal

Remember, it is hard to get aroused if you are stressed out. So once you have strategies to cut through the stress of your daily life, you can start focusing on how to build more arousal. In the next sections, we'll explore arousal and reveal the upper limits of sexual arousal that you can attain.