

Sexual Fulfillment

My husband and I are both over 60 and have been married for 2 years. Since the beginning we have had conflict over using lubrication when we make love. I need it. He doesn't want to use it. He has hurt me badly with tearing the vaginal and labia tissue and I had to go to the doctor once because the pain was so bad.

Needless to say I am afraid and cannot relax if he is trying to have sex without it. If he doesn't I know he will hurt me again and his foreplay feels like sandpaper. I used to really like sex and would still like to have an active sex life as long as I can but now I am starting to dread it.

He does not tell me when he wants to have sex so I have no way of preparing. Foreplay is short and heavy handed so that doesn't help with what little lubrication I could produce naturally.

He cites your chapter 4 on Sexual Fulfillment as justification for his anti-lubrication position. Out of the entire chapter, he focused on page 55, paragraph 3, "She can decide to engage in a process that leads to sexual arousal." He says am not "deciding" to become wet with natural lubrication. I told him I did fine with that before menopause but since, even with low dose extra hormones, I don't have enough. He ignores the entire rest of the chapter 4 and says he has lots of experience with sex with other women before me and never used lubrication.

Your other descriptions of the sex act in the chapter don't mention using additional lubricant so he blames me as if I was a slacker.

I am caught between saying no, being hurt, or nagging him to use lubrication and finally getting him to use it and both of us feeling upset. He resents the whole idea of using lubricant and nothing seems to change his mind. Having to beg and continually remind him right when I want to be turned on is humiliating and I become afraid he will hurt me so the mood is lost. My doctor suggested a sex therapist. Any help you can give me would be so greatly appreciated.

D.H.

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Dear D.H.

Of all the problems of marriage, sexual incompatibility is one of the easiest to overcome. But as is the case with all marital problems, the Policy of Joint Agreement is the best guide to a solution. When the POJA is not followed, even something as simple to resolve as sexual adjustment can seem impossible.

I strongly recommend that you never have sex with each other unless you are both enthusiastic about the way you are having it. For a while, it may mean that your sexual relationship comes to a screeching halt. But it would be tragic if you were to continue to make the mistakes that will ultimately lead to vaginismus, a sexual aversion, or both for you.

Sex should never be painful. At the first sign of pain, intercourse or whatever else could be causing it, should stop immediately. If you lack natural lubrication, and your husband insists on avoiding another lubricant, don't have sex until that issue is resolved. Sometimes a hormone cream can compensate for the natural loss of lubricant that most women experience after menopause. But if you can't find the right combination of hormones, don't have sex until it is painless for you.

During the first month of marriage, a wife should teach her husband how to have sex with her. That's because almost all women are somewhat different from each other in their sexual reactions, and even with prior experiences, a man will make serious mistakes without that training. Women usually teach their husbands to do what it takes to cause them to have a good experience, and that includes avoiding anything that's painful.

If your husband refuses to be trained, and wants to have sex without considering your feelings or reactions, you should call a time-out sexually. Quite frankly, if he applies this strategy that he is using for sex - making demands, showing disrespect and being angry - to your other marital conflicts, none of them will be resolved.

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