#DebunkingDesire
# Table of contents

4  What is low sexual desire?
6  What contributes to low sexual desire?
7  All about pleasure
8  The Sexual Response Cycle
9  A note on consent
11 What is mindfulness?
12 #DebunkingDesire video
13 How to help
14 Tweet with us!
15 Post with us!
16 Accounts and hashtags
17 Resources
Our goal for #DebunkingDesire is to share evidence-based information about low sexual desire in women to create and amplify lasting dialogues with women, their partners, their health care providers, and the media.
What is low sexual desire?

Up to 40% of women may experience low sexual desire at some point in their life. Any woman of any age can experience low desire. A woman who has low desire might experience symptoms like:

- Reduced interest in sex
- No sexual thoughts
- Avoiding sex
- Reduced pleasure during sex
- Things that used to trigger your desire are no longer working
- No arousal

What isn't low sexual desire?

You might have heard of the term 'asexuality'. Low sexual desire and asexuality are not the same. Asexuality is a distinct sexual orientation in which a person feels little or no attraction to anyone, or feels attraction only in isolated circumstances with very specific people. Women who experience low desire feel distressed by their lack of desire, whereas asexual persons are not distressed by their lack of attractions.

Low sexual desire is also not (necessarily) just having a different level of desire than your partner. Sexual desire is different for everyone, and it's normal to not always be in the mood when your partner is!
1 in 3 women experience low sexual desire

What contributes to low sexual desire?

Sexual desire can be impacted by a number of things. Relationship difficulties, fatigue, mood, and body image can all have an impact on how someone feels about intimacy, but one of the biggest impacts on sexual desire is **stress**.

Stress triggers a cascade of hormonal reactions to help our body and mind adapt to perceived threats. The more often this happens, the less effective the body is at responding to stressful situations.

*So, the more chronic the stress, the harder it is for the body and mind to adapt to it.*

As it turns out, this can impact different hormones and biological processes in the brain and body, resulting in a decrease in sexual desire.
All about pleasure

Sexual pleasure is the physical and/or psychological satisfaction and enjoyment from sexual experiences. This can be through partnered or solo sexual activities, and can include thoughts, fantasies, dreams, emotions, and feelings.

Having low sexual desire does not mean you are sexually broken, or are unable to have a satisfying sex life. We at #DebunkingDesire are passionate about creating pleasurable sexual experiences and promoting the use of pleasure-focused (rather than dysfunction-based) language for women with low sexual desire.
For many women, sexual desire is not spontaneous. A sexual encounter can be triggered by any physical or emotional reasons, like the need to be close to a partner or the wanting of desire, even if you don’t feel it in the moment. After beginning to engage in sex, and with the right stimulation, a woman might experience sexual arousal. In response to feeling this arousal, sexual desire becomes triggered. That’s right, arousal first, desire second! This is known as:

**Basson's Sexual Response Cycle.**

---

**Basson's Sexual Response Cycle**

[Diagram of Basson's Sexual Response Cycle]

- **Positive influence on motivation**
- **Neutral (not aware of sexual desire)**
- **Willingness to be receptive**
- **Spontaneous desire**
- **Increased arousal & Responsive desire**
- **Some sexual arousal**
- **Sexual stimuli with appropriate context**
- **Stimuli processing (influenced by biological and psychological factors)**

**How you feel when you’re not thinking about or desiring sex.**

**How receptive you are to engaging in any sexual activities.**

**Spontaneous desire can also be thought of as your "sex drive" or "sexual hunger."**

As the sexual activity progresses, you begin to feel some sexual arousal!

Certain things that you think and feel at the time can affect your level of arousal. They might be:
- How tired you are
- How attractive you feel
- Your level of stress

Feeling this sexual arousal actually sparks your sexual desire, and both begin to increase together.

You’re then able to enjoy the emotional and physical satisfaction that comes with sex, like orgasm and emotional intimacy with your partner.

This positive experience with this sexual activity might make you want to have more like it in the future!
A note on consent

No matter what a person's level of desire, all sexual acts require explicit and enthusiastic consent of all those involved. This means that people are free to change their mind about sex even after providing consent.

Some people may consent to sex even when they do not desire sex. For example, among the various reasons provide for having sex, sometimes those reasons have nothing to do with desire, such as reasons to pursue intimacy, to obtain relaxation, or to please a partner. Research shows that active engagement in sex and experience of arousal can, in turn, elicit responsive desire.

Throughout #DebunkingDesire, we strongly advocate for active conversations about consent prior to every sexual encounter. Though low (or absent) desire does not connote lack of consent, sometimes low (or absent) desire is related to no consent.

Consent is a part of every healthy sexual encounter, and is required by law.
“Low or absent sexual desire is without a doubt the most common sexual complaint of women of all ages.”

- Dr. Rosemary Basson
  Director of the BC Centre for Sexual Medicine
What is mindfulness?

Quite simply, mindfulness can be defined as present moment, non-judgmental awareness. It involves the practice of moving one’s attention to the here-and-now and focusing on sensations of the body and breath.

It is well known that women can be quite judgmental of themselves, especially when it comes to sex. Mindfulness is a skill that helps women to be less judgmental and to observe sensations as they arise, and accept them for what they are.

Our research over the past 15 years has found mindfulness practices to help women be less judgmental, to be much more present during sexual activity, and ultimately to have improved sexual desire and arousal.
#DebunkingDesire video

created by UBC Studios
How to help

- Share our [video](#) and [website](#)
- Use our hashtag #DebunkingDesire
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Like our [Facebook Page](#)
1 in 3 women experience low sexual desire. If you experience low sexual desire, know that you’re not alone and you can improve your desire. #DebunkingDesire

When you’re feeling low sexual desire, sex feels like a shameful secret. It doesn’t have to be that way. #DebunkingDesire

Did you know that experiencing chronic stress can impact sexual desire? A UBC study found that #mindfulness can help manage chronic stress and improve desire. #DebunkingDesire

"For a long time I had little or no interest in sex, even though I really wanted to feel more" is often heard by women dissatisfied with their sex lives. In fact, up to 30% of women experience sexual desire difficulties. #DebunkingDesire

Feeling low sexual desire? Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to improve your desire through #mindfulness and #meditation. #DebunkingDesire

Having low desire doesn’t mean you are sexually broken. A UBC study found that #mindfulness can help manage chronic stress contributing to low sexual desire. #DebunkingDesire

No one is born with a fixed level of desire. Desire can change over time, and with life stressors. If you are feeling unsatisfied with your level of desire, managing stress through #mindfulness may be key. #DebunkingDesire
Post with us!

Click the images below to download and post with us on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram and use the hashtag #DebunkingDesire.

MYTH
"There is a 'normal' level of desire that I should strive for."
#DebunkingDesire

1 in 3 women experience low sexual desire
#DebunkingDesire

Did you know that meditation and mindfulness can help improve sexual desire?

For a long time, I had little or no interest in sex, even though I really wanted to feel more.

#DebunkingDesire

#DebunkingDesire

#DebunkingDesire

#DebunkingDesire
Accounts and hashtags

@ubcshl
@DrLoriBrotto
@RaykaKumru
@womensresearch

#DebunkingDesire
#HazzınHakikati
#LowDesire
#Mindfulness
Resources

Controversies of Women's Sexual Arousal and Desire
Chivers, M. L. & Brotto, L. A.
DOI: 10.1027/1016-9040/a000274

"Better Sex Through Mindfulness: How Women Can Cultivate Desire" by Lori Brotto
Dr. Lori Brotto looks at treating women's sexual difficulties through practicing mindfulness.

"Come as You Are: The Surprising New Science that Will Transform Your Sex Life" by Emily Nagoski
Dr. Emily Nagoski explores the uniqueness of women's sexuality through science.

brottolab.com
The UBC Sexual Health Lab's website, where you can find our publications on our studies, read about our lab members, and view some of Dr. Brotto's media appearances.

sexandu.ca
SexandU.ca provides accurate, credible, and up-to-date information and education on topics related to sexual and reproductive health.

Reclaiming Female Sexual Desire - Pam Costa
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Sn_UhcXZm4

The secret to desire in a long-term relationship - Esther Perel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa0RUmGTCYY

ThePleasureProject.org
Putting the sexy back in safe sex education! Pleasure-focused sex ed resource.

#DebunkingDesire