



WHAT THE SEX EXPERTS WISH YOU KNEW

From fantasies to porn, and positions to bedroom 'rules', we pick the brains of five leading sex experts to find out the key things they really want couples to know. By Rachel Smith

OUR EXPERTS



Jacqueline Hellyer
Sex therapist, relationship coach and tantra teacher.



Elaine George
Sexologist and director of Sexology Australia



Dr Gabrielle Morrissey
Sexuality and relationship expert



Dr Ginni Mansberg
GP and author of *How to Get Your Mojo Back* (New Holland, \$29.95)



Dr Margaret Redelman
Sex therapist, educator and researcher

Many of us may be too reluctant to broach the subject of a problem in the bedroom – or worry that if we do seek help, we'll uncover an incompatibility that may end the relationship. But sex experts say we make sex a bigger deal than it is – and that many sexual issues can be resolved with the right help. Here are the main things the experts wish you knew.

COMPLACENCY IS THE BIGGEST PASSION KILLER

"Sex and love and intimacy take effort – like all the best things in life. You have to focus on them and give them time and energy. Of course, what you need to focus on are the fulfilling experiences like spending time together, doing what you enjoy together. The biggest thing that gets in the way of a great, ongoing sex life is complacency."

♡ JACQUELINE HELLYER

YOU NEED TO SEEK HELP EARLY FOR BEDROOM ISSUES

"If we can address an issue before it reaches a boiling point or crisis level, it is usually slightly easier to deal with. However, it is exceedingly common for people to wait until their distress level is unbearable before seeking professional help. Don't wait."

♡ DR GABRIELLE MORRISSEY

FANTASIES ARE JUST GAMES FOR THE MIND

"Fantasies are just your mind playing, and they encourage erotic variety, which is good. A lot of people have quite idiosyncratic fantasies and get ashamed if they feel their fantasies are outside the 'square' but it's perfectly normal to fantasise about things you wouldn't want to do in reality. Women may regularly fantasise about threesomes or being coerced into sex, or having sex with

people you wouldn't usually be involved with. But when you talk to these women they don't want to do any of it in real life. Should you share your fantasies with your partner? That's up to you. I certainly don't agree that you should share everything. It's about knowing your partner. Not everyone is sexually sophisticated and [you need to gauge that if] you don't want to be burdened with their judgments."

♡ DR MARGARET REDELMAN

IT'S UP TO WOMEN TO EDUCATE MEN

"We're taught about puberty and reproduction at school, but not about how to have a positive ongoing sex life – and so many women I see don't understand their bodies, their sexuality, their arousal; they expect that men should intuit it. But men are not mind readers and their sexuality is so much simpler than a woman's. Once he wants it, boom, he's aroused because he's got that oomph from testosterone. But women – and it's individual for every woman – must get in touch with their needs and communicate that to their man.

Men want to please you. They are not these animalistic creatures, even though that view is pervasive in our society. When I ask men what they love most about sex, they always say, 'the woman's pleasure'. The more pleasure she has, the more pleasure he has."

♡ JACQUELINE HELLYER

YOU'RE NORMAL IF YOU ROTATE THROUGH TWO TO THREE SEXUAL POSITIONS

"Totally normal! It comes down to pragmatics and time. If you're going to experiment with a new position and you don't know if it'll help you climax, then of course it's easier to stick with a position where an orgasm is a guarantee. It's like going to a restaurant and always ordering the same dessert that you know is good."

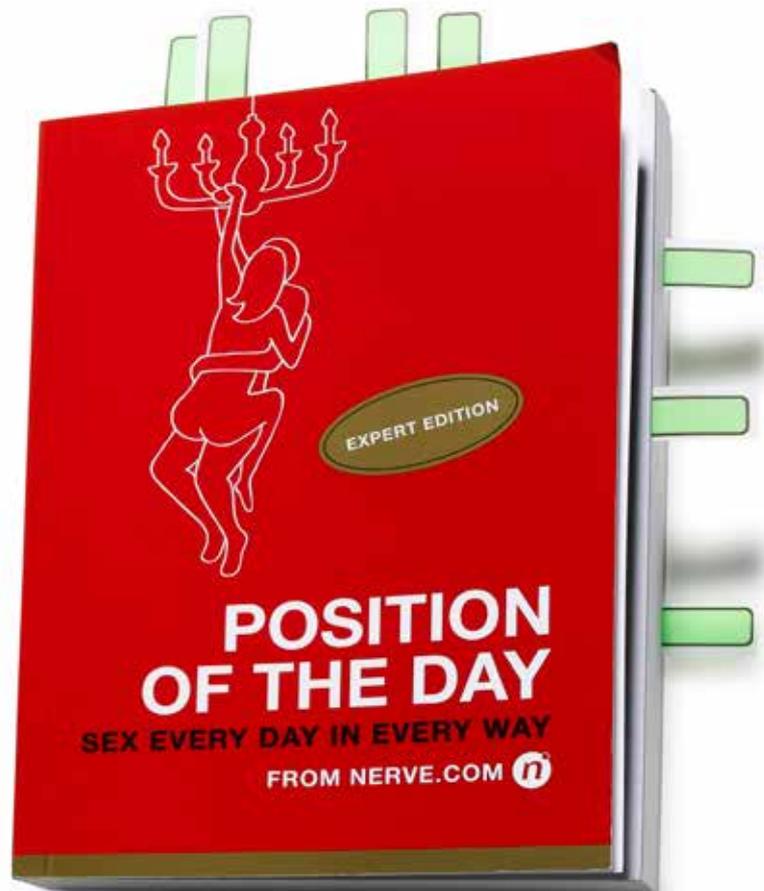
♡ ELAINE GEORGE

COMPARING YOUR SEX LIFE TO YOUR FRIENDS' IS A WASTE OF TIME

"People invariably want validation that they are 'normal' – even when they aren't sure what normal is or what defines normal. They want to know they are not alone, essentially. So it can be comforting for clients to know some statistics, but sex therapists always deal with the client sitting in front of them.

If handled well, it can also be comforting to know that every person and couple is unique and there is a solution to every issue. Reassurance that an improvement to their current situation is within their control if they do the work is more powerful than any statistic."

♡ DR GABRIELLE MORRISSEY



SEX SHOULDN'T BE WRAPPED UP IN EXPECTATIONS

"Not every sexual encounter has to end in orgasm for both partners. Not every encounter has to be 'fireworks sex'. The bread-and-butter sex is also just as important because it builds and maintains the emotional intimacy between you.

We have too many 'shoulds' about how sex should be and what equates to 'normal' sex when we just need to ditch the expectations. Every lovemaking encounter is a blank canvas. And we need to recognise that touching, expressing affection and cuddling are all as important as intercourse and climax."

♡ ELAINE GEORGE

YOU MAY HUNT FOREVER FOR THE G-SPOT

"There has been some research to suggest that there is a section of the vagina – about two thirds of the way up the front wall – that if touched can result in intense sexual pleasure, but it's inconsistent. It's actually a bit of a fantasy."

♡ DR GINNI MANSBERG

HAVING KIDS DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN THE END OF YOUR SEX LIFE

"We hear all these messages about how your sex life ends when the kids come along and frankly, it's nonsense.

Don't listen to it. The main thing to know is that you've got to expect your sex life to change, you have to anticipate it and you have to adapt. And if you adapt well, you can have the most beautiful, tender, exquisite sex throughout your kids' younger years and come out more in love and more bonded than when you went in."

♡ JACQUELINE HELLYER

NON-SEXUAL ISSUES CAN REALLY KILL YOUR SEX LIFE

"[Relationship expert] Dr John Gottman talks about the 'four horsemen': criticism, contempt, stonewalling and defensiveness.

If you have those four elements occurring they will erode the emotional intimacy between you, and the female's desire for sex – because women typically want the emotional intimacy before they want physical intimacy.

So it's hugely important – not just for your relationship but for your sex life too – to learn how to engage and communicate effectively if you want to avoid those Mexican stand-offs in the bedroom."

♡ ELAINE GEORGE

PORNOGRAPHY IS OKAY WHEN USED RESPONSIBLY AND SELECTIVELY

"Porn is just another way of creating variety for individuals.

But I wouldn't suggest it be used all the time. It becomes a problem for young people who can't differentiate between what's normal and what's not, and for people who use it on a daily basis, they get attached to that pattern and it becomes their 'sexual script'. When that happens, it does become more difficult to accept the reality that comes with their own relationship.

Men get attached to sexual scripts more than women do; women are more plastic in their sexuality. You can change your sexual script – what turns you on – but you have to be motivated to do it and work on changing that groove in your brain with small incremental changes."

♡ DR MARGARET REDELMAN

THERE AREN'T RULES EXCEPT THE ONES YOU MAKE TOGETHER

"Solo sex, outercourse, watching porn, flirting with boundaries, even monogamy – these are all areas to be navigated by each couple according to their own values. There isn't a set of rules handed down that we must follow. Sexual expression is varied, and our libidos, needs and desires are unique so each couple has the freedom and right to make their own relationship work for just them, together.

Sex therapists can teach the communication skills

needed to get there, and help with the conversation, but it's up to the couple, and their own values, to decide what to do with the buffet of sexual delights available to them!"

♡ DR GABRIELLE MORRISSEY

THERE IS A WAY TO TALK ABOUT SPICING THINGS UP

"It's mainly about good communication and being

positive. If your partner hears, 'I want to spice things up', they can read you wrong and turn off. If it's said in a positive way, such as, 'I love you – let's try something new together', it can be very exciting, but otherwise it can sound negative or accusatory.

When suggesting you try something new, make sure the message your partner hears is, 'I love you. I want you'."

♡ DR GINNI MANSBERG

