

DESIRE DISCREPANCY:

WHEN ONE WANTS IT MORE THAN THE OTHER

Although you and your partner are separate people with distinct sexual appetites, the fact is that you have the same amount of sex with your partner as your partner has with you. Same place, same time, same positions. When you think of it in such terms, it's hardly surprising that libido imbalance, or desire discrepancy, is such a common problem in long-term relationships. Many sex therapists say it's the problem they encounter most frequently in their work.

The novelty and excitement of a new relationship often masks imbalances in sex drive, because you both want it. **It's when the relationship settles down that libido imbalance sets in.** Don't be surprised if it happens to your relationship, but don't sweep it under the rug, either: a libido gap that's left unattended is likely to widen over time - a phenomenon called polarization.

If you're experiencing desire discrepancy in your relationship,
it can cause tension and resentment on both sides.

USE THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIES TO PREVENT A LIBIDO IMBALANCE FROM ERODING YOUR RELATIONSHIP:

- **Stop blaming each other for your biology:** Realize that the partner who wants more sex or less sex is not abnormal or "wrong".
- **Invite masturbation into your sex life:** Masturbation can serve as a "valve" that equalizes the sexual pressure between partners with different sex drives. The partner with a higher libido can relieve some of his or her sexual needs through masturbation.
- **Adjust your level of mental desire:** If you have a higher libido than your partner does, cut back on activities that stoke your desire (such as fantasizing or reading/viewing erotic material). If yours is the lower libido, try fantasizing or touching yourself before getting into bed with your partner.
- **Teach your partner how to prepare you for sex:** If you're the slow-to-warm-up type, a body massage, foot rub, or a few minutes of no-pressure cuddling may help ease you into a more receptive frame of mind.
- **Be willing to start lovemaking from a sexually neutral state:** At least some of the time, cultivate a willingness to say yes to sex for reasons other than a strong physical need. In a healthy relationship, occasionally having sex simply to pleasure a partner can be an act of love.
- **Split the difference:** In other words, compromise. Alternate between doing what the higher-libido partner wants, doing what the lower-libido partner wants, and doing something in between - such as bringing one partner to orgasm without involving the other partner in full-blown sex.