

Navigating low libido in relationship

Guest: Evelyn Resch

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Alex Howard - [00:00:09]

So welcome everyone to this interview where I'm really happy to be talking with Evelyn Resch.

Firstly, Evelyn, welcome and thank you for joining me.

Evelyn Resch

Oh, thank you so much for asking me to be a part of this. This is a wonderful opportunity and I'm excited about it.

Alex Howard

Evelyn and I had a brief conversation about three or four weeks ago prepping for this interview, and I got to the point where I just had to stop us because we were getting carried away together. So I'm looking forward to getting into this.

We're going to be talking about, I think some really important issues around managing issues around low libido or different libido in relationships around how to manage all the different demands, both as men, but also particularly women of all the demands in daily life, and how that then meets being able to show up in intimacy and relationships.

And just to give people a bit of Evelyn's background. Evelyn Resch is a certified nurse midwife with over 30 years of clinical and teaching experience in women's health and sexual health for individuals of all genders.

Evelyn has a particular interest in the provision of highly personalized care. She strives to help patients adopt evidence-based regimes for allopathic and lifestyle medicine in the efforts to improve their health, quality of life and sexual satisfaction.

She is also a professional writer. Since 2013, she has had two books published, including this one that I've been enjoying dipping into *Women, Power and Pleasure*. And she has essays and commentaries that have appeared in a variety of publications and outlets including *Teen Vogue*, *Oprah.com*, *Rodale Press Online*, *The Huffington Post* and *NEPR*.

Evelyn holds graduate degrees in public health and nursing education. She also believes in the essential value of midwifery and nursing training as having provided a solid foundation for her comprehensive approach to providing care to all patients.

And I think, Evelyn, I'd love to start a little bit there, of your journey to becoming a sexuality counselor. I was fascinated when we spoke previously around how your work as a midwife has brought you on this journey and informed your perspectives.

Evelyn Resch - [00:02:25]

Well, it is a curious thing, you know, when you just think of it first off, one single dimension, how does one go from the labor room into the bedroom? But actually, what I discovered early on in my career as a midwife was that of course, we all know that reproductive health and sexual health go hand in hand, but what I didn't realize was how much suffering there was that women were experiencing, women in particular.

And then I came to learn, as my studies advanced, men as well, around enjoyment of sexual health and satisfaction and being able to achieve the kind of sexual relationship that people really wanted and made them feel whole and made them feel competent and confident and joyful. And that actually what I started to see in my practice so much of the time was, just this terrible burden that people were carrying, around sexuality and sexual health issues and also how much they didn't know about how their bodies worked on a sexual level. And that's how I became really interested in the topic and then advanced my studies in that field.

Alex Howard

And I think it's, one of things that I think is really important about the kind of name is, this can feel like a difficult conversation for people to have. There's a lot of shame that people can have around feeling they have low libido or feeling that they're not having as much pleasure from sex as they might have. Do you see that becoming a block to people being able to even ask for help, to being able to even open up dialog about this?

Evelyn Resch

It's a huge block. It's a huge block. And it is a major shaper of behavior around sexuality for people. And this is something that parents do inadvertently but also intentionally. Our sex education for children is very shame based. It's very deleterious, consequence based. And so people grow up feeling terribly aberrant.

However, oftentimes that feeling is based in gross misinformation about what is normal human sexuality? We don't have that many resources or at least we don't feel we do in the culture.

You know, we have people who are openly practicing as dentists and people who are openly practicing as psychotherapists and openly practicing as neurologists. But it's not that easy to find someone who specializes in human sexuality.

And often what people are coming into my practice believing is that what they're thinking, feeling, experiencing, seeking, actually actively doing is somehow aberrant. It doesn't fall within the normal scope of human sexual expression. And the majority of the time that is not the case.

Alex Howard

It fascinates me. I'm just reflecting that, particularly those that have children, how much their sex life can become something that they feel uncomfortable talking about or children being aware of. And yet their children are a product of their sex life. It's a very strange thing.

Evelyn Resch

It's a very peculiar thing. And what's even more peculiar is when I talk with parents about how to represent healthy sexuality within the household, you know, most parents don't want their children to have any inkling whatsoever that the two of them have sex with each other. And my response to that is, look, you know, you're not felons, you're not counterfeiting twenties in the basement. You're not selling meth. You're having sex. You're loving partnership and this is what you would want for your own child.

Yes. And they say, well, yes, of course. And I say, all right, so who is going to represent that? Who's going to be the example of how healthy sexuality looks in a relationship, if there's absolutely no indicator that that's part of what goes on between you and your partner?

And that's when people are able to start thinking, oh, you know, maybe it really is OK to say something to our children, like, please don't knock on the door, you know, on Sunday morning, unless the house is on fire, you've cut your finger or something and you're bleeding everywhere. Why? Because it's our time alone. Well, what are you doing? We might be having sex and you're not invited.

People get very panicky about that. And my feeling is there's not really anything to panic about here. This is normal. Hopefully, you know, this is happening between couples, however, and I'm sure we'll talk about this, unfortunately, it's not happening as often as it should in couples who have children. And that's a whole other kettle of fish. And I'm sure we'll get into it. But for starters, people have to understand that relating to their partner sexually and expressing some indication of that is normal in family life and should not be avoided.

Alex Howard - [00:07:31]

And I think you make a really good point that the more there's a sense of shame or a sense of something to be that's dirty or something to be hidden here, that's something that, children don't do what we say. They do what we do.

Evelyn Resch

Precisely.

Alex Howard

And if that's what we're modeling, it's a great reflection that that isn't what I think people want to be modeling.

Evelyn Resch

That's a really good point, Alex. It's a really good point that they do what they see us doing, not necessarily what we tell them to do.

And the other thing I think is important for people to think of is that when children who primarily respond to the vibrational elements in an environment, not the words, because they don't have the same neocortical function that we do and prefrontal cortex function that we do, they respond vibrationally. And when they feel this kind of energy between their parents, it's very anxiety provoking.

When they see their parents doing this, coming together, being harmonious, moving in space in a really lovely harmonized way, they relax.

So when people say, oh, the kids always say, don't do that, don't do that, I say, yeah, that's what they say. But that's not what they're feeling from you. When there's actually that energy, when you're coming together, it reduces anxiety in households. It doesn't aggravate it. This sort of, you know, your partner approaches you and you get very prickly. This is very anxiety producing for kids, because what it says to them is that the masters of their universe are not united. And they're not harmonious.

Alex Howard

Yes, and of course, there's so many ways that that can then lead to children using divide and rule strategies and playing parents off against each other and feeling that they're only safe if they're close to one parent distant from the other. There's all kinds of dynamics.

Evelyn Resch - [00:09:24]

That's right. It feeds triangulation in family groups. It feeds a subterfuge that's really dangerous. It's not dealing with the topic honestly. And it's also, it also often has significant elements of cruelty in it.

Alex Howard

Yes.

Evelyn Resch

That people don't identify in couples. You know, the etiquette between couples can be very cruel and people can feel very self-righteous about that. But spurning someone's affection and demonstrative energy, it can be very mean. And I see that a lot.

Alex Howard

Yes.

I'd love to open up a little bit more this topic around libido. And we mentioned a little bit how that could be the case within the families with children. But of course, it's a much bigger topic than that as well. What are some of the primary causes that you observe of low libido or indeed just a kind of lack of sexual pleasure and satisfaction, which often then leads to low libido?

Evelyn Resch

Well, for women, what I see mostly is a combination of things. It's always multifactorial. It's never one thing. A lot of body hating and negative self-image. I'm too fat to have sex, my breasts are too droopy to have sex, you're not attracted to me, whatever, fatigue, not prioritizing it and seeing it as sort of an extra in a relationship as opposed to a very strong adhesive force.

And also this idea that women are being forced to service men when what has to happen is a clear discussion about what people's natural appetites are for sexuality and how to foster that. That's what I see.

Alex Howard

Yes, because I think one of the dangers can be people having sex because they feel they have to, but then the other half feeling that they're doing it because they have to, which in of itself becomes a drain for both sides. And so, of course, the real challenge is not how to force something to happen, but how to naturally raise libido so there's actual desire that's there.

Evelyn Resch

Well, I think that that's true. And, you know, in some ways, this is a moment when I can use the analogy of exercise because I see, especially in long term couples, that maintaining sexual activity is a disciplined practice. It gets harder the longer you're together, you have to be more dedicated to it. And that's true with exercise as well. There are plenty of times, and I'm a person who exercises quite a bit, there are plenty of times when I go out and exercise and I feel like, well, you know, that hour or hour and a half wasn't really my best effort or I didn't feel on top of my game, but I'm really glad I did it anyway and it was enjoyable. I'll give it a B minus.

There are other times I go out, I exercise, I feel like a superhero. This is true with sex also. And these are charitable contributions sometimes that we make for the betterment of the relationship, for the betterment of our health, for the betterment of our psyche. And there's nothing wrong with that.

The problem ensues when people have this misinformation or crazy idea that every time you have sex you're going to see fireworks blasting off above your head. I mean, that doesn't happen. Orgasms fall on a continuum. Sexual episodes fall on a continuum. Sometimes it's like the best sex you ever had and sometimes it's like, I would have rather done laundry. I mean, this is our human experience and it's not a crisis if people have a bad sexual encounter.

I even said to my own spouse one time, so that really, I think, was the worst sex that we have ever had. And there was this alarm bell that went off. And I said, why are you so concerned about it? If it's the worst we've ever had, it's over with. We don't have to do that again. And we'll know to look out for it. If it's going really badly, stop it right now and do something else.

But the dread and the weight and the worry and the terror and the negativity around even approaching the topic is so huge. And so much of what I do is say to people, relax, I'm here to facilitate the conversation. This is really OK. I can say those words. Even if you can't, I can speak them, even if it's hard for you to speak them. And I haven't had anybody come into my practice, frankly, who has said this is the easiest conversation or I'm so glad we met with you because I love to talk about this.

I mean, it's kind of a universal dreaded topic. Because, again, we don't learn those skills growing up.

Alex Howard - [00:14:19]

It strikes me, as you're talking, that one of the things that also can happen is that when people are under a lot of pressures in their lives, we go increasingly into our heads and so what that can look like, I think, for women is not being connected to their heart connection and to their body and therefore just not really having libido. And for men, I think what can happen is that there might be libido, but it's in a very disconnected way and it's in a way of just wanting to kind of get orgasm out the way without really being connected to their partner.

Did you see that as an issue of the more disconnected we get, the more that then impacts upon libido or satisfaction?

Evelyn Resch

Oh, yeah, I think it's absolutely true. I mean, if you just live in your head all the time and you really kind of evacuate the soma, you're not going to have a very high pleasure quotient in life. You won't have an onramp for moving into being sexual. And you're going to overthink it to an extent that you'll talk yourself out of it every single time because you'll always find something else to do.

So the other thing that people really don't understand and I think is important, is that testosterone in comparison to estrogen is a very powerful metabolic endocrine force.

The hormone testosterone is like, it's a speeding train. Endocrine I'm sorry, estrogen works differently in the brain than testosterone does. And there's often this overlay, culturally, around the world of men's sexuality on top of women's sexuality, as opposed to saying, well, no, I can't totally understand what it must feel like to be you in your man's brain, but I can respect it. I need you to do the same for me and understand how estrogen affects my brain and therefore my sexual response.

Which in short, you know, you have men, they have the dominance of testosterone. It drives their erectile function. It drives their sexual energy. Women are not as fast moving and they don't have as strong as powerful of a force. Their testosterone levels are lower. Their dominant endocrine substances is estrogen, not testosterone. So you need to wait a little longer before arousal is going to set in.

Now, this isn't necessarily true if you're in the first 18 months of a relationship where your partner can do anything and you just look at them and think, oh, my God, I mean, I've never seen somebody spit so nicely in my life. I mean, we all know these phases of new relationships.

But 28 years into being with my spouse, I mean, there are plenty of things that I'm saying. Yeah, that's not so appealing. So how do I get to the appealing place? Well, you have to understand how to work with your body and your mind. And the first thing is to inhabit it. Because if you're just living up in your thoughts and your brain power and you're not living in your soma at all, you're never going to have sex.

Alex Howard - [00:17:24]

And of course, one of the challenges that can lead to that is there are so many pressures on men and women these days, but just looking at the female side for a minute, the pressure, and I think you speak to it very helpfully in your book, the pressure on women to have it all, to have career, to be the attentive wife, to be the great mother. It's a lot of pressure. Maybe you can say a bit about how that then impacts on capacity for sex and intimacy.

Evelyn Resch

Yeah, you know, it's very interesting right now to speak to this in particular, because at 62, I'm doing this very interesting comparison, historical comparison, between second wave feminists, which is the era that I came out of, Shulamith Firestone, Betty Friedan, you know, Andrea Dworkin, Kate Millett who started to really talk about the pressures that were on women to be mothers and move into into directorships and move into the professional world.

And now third wave feminists who seem to have forgotten about second wave feminists, I have to say, increasingly I'm seeing this, and to see myself as a product of the second wave feminist and now watching my 30 year old daughter and seeing how she's integrating feminist concepts.

And what I see more than anything is this notion which is completely void of common sense, which is I can do everything. Now, that actually has nothing to do with being a feminist, it just has to do with being a sensible person. Nobody can do absolutely everything.

Alex Howard

Well, they can't do everything well, right?

Evelyn Resch

Right, or simultaneously.

So somehow people feel, they feel badly if they decide not to have children, they feel badly when they have children because they never feel like they're good enough mothers. They feel badly because they don't feel like they're good enough partners to their male partner or their female partner. I mean, there's always some reason to second guess what you're doing. And what I got out of second wave feminism is I have a choice to do something and not do something else. Not that I'm supposed to do it all.

And that's the part that I think is missing. And there's also this weird thing, I don't know if this is true worldwide, but it's certainly true in the United States where children have become the central focus of families. And I say to people, oh, don't do that, because if you let that happen, you never will have sex. Because kids want 2, if you give them 2 hours, they want 4. If you give them 4, they want 8. And the people that should be the central focus of families are the couple.

Alex Howard

You said this when we spoke previously and I found myself thinking about it afterwards, I thought, I love the fact that you just name it so directly because it's something that is definitely, it's certainly a UK issue that I see. And it's funny, my wife was away at the weekend with a couple of our kids on a on a camping thing. And we were talking, she was talking about afterwards how a lot of the kids there

had very poor boundaries and they were just free to be wild and sort of go to bed when they want to go to bed. And there were no sense of containment.

And what it meant was it was really hard for some of the adults to enjoy the adult time because the kids were ruling the show. And it sort of feels like, I like the way you frame it with different ways of feminism. And I think another way of looking at it is there's a lot of, I think my generation that grew up feeling that the boundaries were too tight when they were younger and so, well, I don't want to parent my kids like that. So it swings the other way and say, well, I want my kids to be free and be whoever they want to be and it seems that pendulum swings in a way that just causes a whole new set of problems.

Evelyn Resch - [00:21:30]

I, you know, you said it beautifully. I mean, that is a perfect summary. The pendulum has swung way, way, way too far over to the other side where, you know. Yes. I mean, when I grew up, there were very clear boundaries between adults and children and what children were permitted to participate in. And then I started having my family and I went way over to the other side. Had to do a lot of correction around age 12, I have to say.

And now I'm seeing that the pendulum is going even farther and people are doing the most insane things and letting children make decisions that they simply don't have the capacity to make. And it's ruining family life. It's like, you know, children have become positively feral.

Alex Howard

That's exactly the word we both found ourselves using. But there's something as well around the, for the family system to work well there has to be obviously boundaries, but also everything has to be given its time. Right. And what I'm hearing you say is that sex, and it doesn't always have to be the act of sex, the act of intimacy and the act of a couple being connected and being together needs to be its own, it's the wrong word, I was going to say line items on a To-Do list, but it needs to be something which is given value and priority. Just like the kids being taken to parties they want to go to, just like the laundry needs to be done, just like family meal time together.

Evelyn Resch

Yes, I totally agree and I don't think that it's wrong for parents to stake that claim and to say, no, I am not taking you to that soccer game because I have not seen your father or your mother all week long. And if we don't spend time together it's going to be a whole lot worse than you not going to a soccer game because we're going to be utterly miserable and that's going to make you miserable and you just have to buck up because you're not the only person in this family that has a need or a desire. And let me reintroduce myself to you. I am the CEO and the mortgage holder of your home.

I did that with my own daughter. One time I said, hey, come here, allow me to reintroduce myself to you. CEO, Bank of Mom. You know, there was some, like, extortion going on for money, for some stupid thing. And I said, no, you know, and it was a major flip out. And I just thought, sorry, I mean, this is part of being parents we have to learn how to withstand major flip outs. You know, this is not the end of the world. Nobody's bleeding to death.

Alex Howard

Sometimes when boundaries have not been in place for a long time and one's sex life and intimacy has been therefore shut away, to reestablish those boundaries can be quite challenging.

And someone once said to me years ago, I find it incredibly helpful that when you put appropriate boundaries in place with children, what you're really saying is, I love you enough to give me this boundary, even if they don't like the boundary in the moment. It's an act of love to hold a boundary, not an act of unkindness.

Evelyn Resch - [00:24:53]

Well, and also when you're talking about placing those boundaries on children to facilitate being able to be with your partner, who is the other master of their universe and in control, what you're saying is, I love you enough to exclude you. Because I need to be with your father or your mother. Because we're the two that are really the stable forces here and people don't see it that way.

You know, I have this formula that I recommend to people often. It's called the 6 by 36. Every 6 weeks, you have to go away for a minimum of 36 hours, OK. And people will say, well what are you talking about? You mean we have to go to a hotel to have sex. And I say perhaps because your house is a sex evaporating machine, there is nothing sexy at home. The phone's ringing, kids are complaining, dogs are barking. You've got snail mail, email. I mean, it's not that easy.

And people will say, well, I mean, what can you accomplish in 36 hours? All right, here's what you can accomplish. Four meals without children.

Alex Howard

And four meals you don't cook as well.

Evelyn Resch

Precisely. You leave on a Friday at 2:00. That gives you dinner on Friday and then breakfast, lunch, dinner on Saturday. You get home Saturday night at 10:00. You miss two bed times. You know, and you, I mean, and it's an extraordinary thing, it's very rejuvenating and people say, well, I mean, I can't possibly leave them with somebody overnight. Well, if you're not leaving them with a serial killer, surely you can find somebody who can take care of them, their grandparent, your best friend. You can pawn them off to somebody they go to school with and you switch. You do the same. You let that family in on your secret of the 6 by 36. It's very rejuvenating. But people are very resistant.

Alex Howard

I think one of the reasons why people can be resistant, you spoke to this a little bit earlier, and I think it's a really important issue, is, I see it in my own peer group, as it were, that before we had kids, a lot of us were into taking care of our bodies. It was a priority. We were going to the gym, we were working out, we were fit, we were eating really well. We were in good shape.

And so, even if we had some self-esteem issues when it came to intimacy, we basically knew we were in good shape. And as we've all had kids, we've all got a bit older, all to different degrees, I think there is definitely a reduction in self-confidence that people have around their bodies and around intimacy. And I think particularly, I'm sure for women that have had kids and how that's affected their body, that self-esteem and body confidence can go down as people get older and that also that impacts upon one's sense of being able to be seen naked and be vulnerable. And therefore, it's almost like everything else becomes, is in danger of becoming an excuse because of this lack of self-esteem that I think can be there.

Evelyn Resch

Well, there's no question that aging for all of us, you know, people say, oh, don't get old. But that's an incomplete sentence, because really, if you complete the sentence it's, don't get old, just drop dead now.

I mean, if you're lucky enough to age, right. Think of it that way. You will deal with infirmity. You will deal with morbidity, OK? You will have episodes where things are not working well and your body is going to change. There's no question about it.

However, as someone who is in the experience of the living laboratory of this at 62, what I say is that you also, what often ends up happening is that people start seeking comfort more than arousal.

However, comfort can have an erotic edge. Because if you are in a mutually monogamous relationship or even if you are in polyamorous relationships, I mean, it's not like you're having sex with every person in the world if you're polyamorous, you have a select group.

OK, within that mutually monogamous relationship or that select group of partners. The exclusivity component, that that's the only person that you would lie next to in bed and say, please stroke my back, please stroke my breast, please, let's kiss a little bit. Comfort can be erotic, it may not be explosive, genital to genital orgasmic, you know, like I'm going to die from this sex and that's OK. But it can be comfort seeking practices that have an erotic edge that are exclusive to you and that intimate partner or you and that group of intimate partners.

And that still counts, in my opinion, as a sexuality counselor, as a person, as a woman who's 62, who has been in a long term relationship, that counts. And so many people discount that. And that's a big part of my work is saying to people, reframe this, reframe this. Just because your sex isn't what it was doesn't mean that the difference belittles it or lessens it in terms of its value or its adhesive quality.

Alex Howard - [00:30:32]

And I think also what's true is it may have less of that sort of excitement, but it can also have more depth and more connection, right? Which is often not there in those more dramatic moments. Let's say, in our younger years.

Evelyn Resch

That's right. I mean, in those dramatic moments, I mean, some of us are so, our arousal is so heightened that we could get through the course of our experience and then discover that we were with a werewolf. I mean, we're so wound up, we would have no idea, you know what I mean?

But when you know exactly who you're with and what it is you need and that that's the only person that you would want to share that sleeping space with or that sofa with at that moment, these are deeply meaningful times.

And I think that it's a fine edge when people are dealing with illness, I mean, sure, there's a certain element of nursing care and taking care of that isn't sexually charged. But if you cultivate this, you can move that erotic edge into it or you can move into the erotic edge aspect of it. I really believe that.

Alex Howard

And just speaking to that a bit more, when there's a significant difference in libido, sexual appetite in a relationship, how does one navigate that? If you've got one partner that wants it every day or three or four times a week and another partner that's happy to go weeks without?

Evelyn Resch

Yeah, well, the number one intervention that I use, and it's the year 2021 and still the blanching that I see in people's faces when I say this to them, it's extraordinary to me. People need to be willing to masturbate, they need to be willing to masturbate in the company of their partner. And they need to understand that this is normal human sexual expression and it is the absolute best way to deal with desire discrepancy.

And here's why. Because, first of all, our sexuality starts with us as individuals unto ourselves, number one. So we take responsibility for our satisfaction.

Number two. Our loving partner, if they're not interested in participating they may still very well be interested in being present. While we are enjoying ourselves and doing so has an erotic charge to it, so sometimes it can spark a flame when we least expect it. It's also generous and loving.

Alex Howard - [00:33:11]

Yes. And also it's the opposite of the shame, right? Of this is something that I need to hide away.

Evelyn Resch

Absolutely. And so when I say to people, how does that feel when I say that to you? I'm sorry to say, but more often than not, it is upsetting to people and they can't quite imagine it or they can't quite get themselves to do it. And I just think, oh, really, I'm not sure where to go at this point, you know? I mean, if there's that big of a barrier, I don't know, keep the lights off, put music on. I don't know what to say to people.

I mean, it's interesting. You know, you'd think by this time in my career I would have all these brilliant tricks. But people have natural built in sexual temperaments. And sometimes if somebody says to me on a scale of 1 to 10, my sexual temperament is about a 9, and it has a lot to do with who I am as a person. And they happen to be coupled with somebody whose natural temperament is scored as a 4. Well, the only way that we're going to be able to work with that is by using self pleasuring practices and by saying to the less inclined partner, part of what your responsibility here is a loving partner is to be present. Even if you're not willing to participate, you need to be present because everyone who is in a loving partnership where sex is confirmed as a component has the right to have an active sexual life. They also need to take responsibility for self pleasuring and doing that completely on their own.

Alex Howard

It strikes me, as you're talking, that often in the earlier parts of a relationship, people find themselves outside of their comfort zone because they're with someone new and it's perhaps a bit edgy and because someone's longing to be in a relationship, they're willing to take those steps that take some courage.

And then I think what can happen is people become comfortable in a relationship. They get caught in their patterns and they forget that that willingness to go outside of their comfort zone is the whole reason why they've got a relationship in the first place. But they need to bring perhaps some of that of that braveness to reconnecting in that way.

Evelyn Resch

I couldn't agree with you more. And, you know, the whole concept of courage and bravery. Boy, oh, boy. I mean, it takes a lot of courage and bravery every single day to live your best life. And that includes bringing yourself in earnest to your loving partner and to do things that maybe you're not so inclined to do, but you want to give it a try because you know that it's meaningful to them.

And sure, you can say, well, I don't want to just give charity sex. I don't want to just do this because I'm supposed to. Well, I mean, frankly, my marriage is a charity I'm very willing to donate to. I mean, I don't feel like having charity sex is such a bad donation system all the time. I mean, I don't want to do it all the time, but I mean, what better charity to donate to?

Alex Howard

That's one of my favorite lines of the conference so far.

Evelyn Resch - [00:36:27]

Yeah. I mean, so you make a charitable contribution. So what. I mean, it's not like the sex police are going to put a mark against you on your scoreboard. I mean, for God's sake, just, sometimes I mean, so this is where the third wave feminists sometimes get it all goofed up, in my opinion, anyway, where they're saying, well, I'm not going to do this just because he wants to. And I'm thinking, why the hell not? I mean, don't you do things sometimes just because you want to or don't you want him to do something sometimes with you just because you want to, like, watch a chick flick or go shopping? I mean, personally, I'd rather chew glass than go shopping. But I mean, there's always something that we want our partner to do. And I don't think saying to your partner, if you're a man and you're coupled with a woman saying, I really want you to have sex with me because I really want you and I miss you, I'm lonesome for you. I haven't had sex with you for two weeks. This is making me crazy.

Alex Howard

There's something about, I think the danger in some of these emerging ideas around this hyper individualism is like, I can't have me if I give something to you. And I think as you say it's a dangerous path to go down.

I think that there's a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, that there's many things that previous generations have got right in relationships.

Evelyn Resch

You're absolutely right. No you're absolutely right.

And, yes, these things take a certain degree of finessing. I mean, I will absolutely agree to that. And yes, you don't want somebody to end up being a bully or being demanding in a way that isn't reasonable. But that's where, as a sexuality counselor, I may say to somebody, it's time for you to masturbate. I mean, for her to want sex once a week or twice a week is plenty. If you need it more, go masturbate or masturbate with her or do something else but lay off, for God's sakes, quit chasing her around the house.

But this idea that asking to have sex at all isn't just an excessive demand in the face of family life? That's ridiculous. What usually has to happen in those cases is kids need to butt out and they need to be less present and parents or couples need to be more unified with one another.

Because the problem is it's very difficult for men to have in-depth conversations. Conversation does not come naturally to men. I mean, people who have daughters and who have sons, you know, can attest to this. The difference is vast.

But if you're erotic orientation as a woman is towards a man, well, you're going to have to find some way to accommodate his difference. You can't keep expecting him to act like a woman. He doesn't have the brain of a woman. He's not a woman. You can't have it all. You have your best friend to complain to about this, you know, but you're not having sex with her. You want to have sex with him. So where are you going with this you third wave feminist?

I mean, and I often feel really badly for men in today's world because women have expanded and done all these new and cool things and gotten involved in stuff. And men are just sort of standing there and they're like vibrating, they don't know exactly what to do, which is not my way of saying men are not culpable. Of course they're terribly culpable in the power dynamics between the genders but we have to acknowledge that there's a difference between a brain that's been shaped on testosterone and a brain that's been shaped on estrogen. And if you're erotic orientation is towards an opposite sex partner, well, you're going to have to master the tools of working with them.

Alex Howard - [00:40:20]

Yes. And I'm mindful of time Evelyn, but as a patch to bring some of this together for someone, maybe a woman, maybe a man, but for someone that's watching this, that recognizes their libido is lower than perhaps it has been in the past or lower than it might be. What are some of the starting places for them to start to work with that? There's a lot you've already spoken to around communication, and be brave enough to take steps, but where can they start?

Evelyn Resch

Well, here are some questions they need to ask themselves. Number one, are they still attracted to their partner? Because if they're not, they have to figure out why.

Number two, they have to ask themselves what's their end goal? What is it that they want from their sex life at this point in their lives? And do they want it with their existing partner?

The other thing is they have to say to themselves, what are the obstacles? If they're attracted to their partner, they want their sex life. What are the obstacles to me being a more sexually active person? And if the obstacle is, I don't like my body, I'm exhausted, my kids are too demanding. Well, there are three places that you can start to make changes and make adaptations and figure out, well, what is it that would make you feel better about your body, not be so tired and not have your kids pulling on you every single moment of your life?

You know, and the other number one question I say to people is, what's your pleasure quotient in life? Because if your pleasure quotient is really low, you're not going to be a sexually active person. Pleasure begets pleasure and that includes sexual pleasure. You move, I try to anyway, I try to move throughout the day with these pleasurable interludes because it's lubricating to then move into something that's sort of the height of pleasure for a lot of people, which is intimacy, sexual intimacy and eroticism.

But if all people do all the time is work and answer emails and stare at a screen and, you know, I mean, this is not pleasurable living.

Alex Howard

What I'm really hearing you say is you have to start where you are, and I like the fact that you're asking these exploratory, inquisitive questions, because if things aren't right, they'll be a reason and having the courage perhaps to even ask those questions.

Evelyn Resch

That's right. And you're not going to have sex with somebody, I mean, right out of the gate, you're not going to have sex with somebody if you're not attracted to them anymore.

You know, I mean, I can go around and around and give you all kinds of ideas, but if the chemistry isn't there, it's not going to happen.

Alex Howard

And I guess if it's not and it was, there's a big question of what's happened there?

Evelyn Resch

That's right. That's right.

A lot of things that people say to me sometimes is my partner has lost their respect for personal hygiene. My partner has lost their respect for self care in terms of diet and exercise. They eat

whatever they want. They never move. They've gained 45 pounds. They keep complaining about it, but they still have these habits that keep them in a place that they don't even want to be themselves. Or they hate their job. They've done nothing about changing it.

And one of the things that happens with self care is that self care builds confidence and there's nothing sexier than a confident partner.

Alex Howard - [00:43:52]

That's a great place to finish.

Evelyn, for people that want to find out more about you and your work. Obviously, I recommend your book, *Women, Power and Pleasure: Getting the Life and Sex you want*, But what else, where else can they, your website, what else can they find?

Evelyn Resch

Yeah. So, you know, I'm a funny person when it comes to social media. I don't use Facebook. I don't use Twitter. I do have a newsletter on substrakt.com it's called *Nightingale*.

And you can also find my work on my website, which is www.evelynresh.com.

Alex Howard

Fantastic.

Evelyn, I've really enjoyed this interview. Thank you so much for your time.

Evelyn Resch

As have I, Alex, thanks so much. Bye bye.