

GÜDLIFE

**HOW TO PREVENT SEX FROM BECOMING AN
ENDANGERED EXPERIENCE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP**



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HOW TO PREVENT SEX FROM BECOMING an ENDANGERED EXPERIENCE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

The bald eagle, a symbol of American freedom was an endangered species. Once a thriving population, it's numbers dwindled from 500,000 to 412 pairs in the 1950s. Action taken to protect them from being hunted, combined with a ban on the use of DDT, saved the bald eagle from extinction.

This may sound strange but I observe a trend among many couples today. An absence or infrequency of sex.

I wonder. Is sex is becoming an endangered experience in marriage?

3 COMMON THREATS TO SEX IN MARRIAGE

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS TO SEX

Couples are busy meeting the demands of raising kids, managing a household, and work. When it comes to relationships, couples are more likely to focus (or over-focus) on kids. This means less time for marital needs. Tired couples are more likely to choose media devices to veg out. Sex gets a raincheck.

INTERPERSONAL THREATS TO SEX

Busy couples interact mostly about the tasks of managing a family. Unmet needs create a wedge between them. This increases the frequency of arguments and blame game.

When deep hurts or betrayal wounds inflict one or both partners, sex may be off limits. Unhappy couples develop patterns of avoidance where certain topics are no longer discussed. They co-exist, but not as intimate partners.

COMPENSATORY THREATS TO SEX

So if couples are not having sex what do they do about their sexual drive?

Some couples compensate by seeking sexual satisfaction apart from each other. Masturbation is often the solution. For example, pornography is a substitute more often engaged by men to seek sexual gratification. Women may prefer sexual toys in privacy.

Sex outside of marriage is a solution people seek today. Hook-ups, pay-for-service, or a full blown affair are ways unhappy partners compensate for a sexless marriage.

A SEX DEPRIVED MARRIAGE IS SYMPTOMATIC OF A BIGGER PROBLEM

Couples are becoming more disconnected from each other on an intimate level. Many are exchanging romantic partnership for roommates. Here are some familiar patterns I observe among couples today.

- **An increasing number of couples are not sleeping together.** Nearly 1 out of 4 married couples sleep in separate beds according to a recent survey in the National Sleep Foundation.
 - While some legitimate reasons contribute to this trend, a pattern of geographical distancing in the home puts couples at risk for diminished intimacy, including sex.
- **Couples allowing kids or electronic devices to occupy space once meant for each other.** In many cases, this is used to create a buffer against intimacy.
- **Couples are redefining marriage to exclude sex as a primary need.** Expectations about sexual intimacy are lowered accordingly.
- **Couples are settling for co-existence.** They get along by avoiding problems, focusing on kids and themselves, but not their marriage.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT SEX FROM BECOMING AN ENDANGERED EXPERIENCE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Sexual intimacy is a key factor in marital happiness and longevity. If it is not nurtured it is an endangered experience in your marriage. Here are 4 things you can do to prevent extinction.

IF IT CURRENTLY GETS "FRONT-BURNER" ATTENTION MAINTAIN THAT HABIT

Early in marriage couples tend to have more frequent, satisfying sex. They don't have the competing needs of kids to consider. If this is where you are currently, here is some advice. Make an agreement now to keep romance a priority in your marriage after kids arrive.

Develop good habits around connecting. Disconnect your devices and have some "organic" FaceTime!

COMMUNICATE REGULARLY AND RESPECTFULLY ABOUT YOUR SEXUAL NEEDS

Note the two key words: **regularly** and **respectfully**. Talking about sexual needs is very personal. If you want a healthy sex life, make your partner feel safe when she or he talks about their needs.

As you talk, discover your similarities and differences in what you like and don't like. Don't assume your partner knows your needs. Communicate them.

Talk regularly about the current state of your libido. Various things can increase or decrease sexual drive. Check in with each other. Explain to your spouse what "gets you in the mood". Have conversations about the barriers to intimacy for you.

Talk about ways you can spice it up! Don't settle for autopilot sex.

LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS HOW TO HAVE A GREAT SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Experts in the field of sexual intimacy are a great source of information. Here are a few options.

- Read books together
- Watch educational videos on sexual intimacy
- Meet with a sex therapist or doctor (especially if you're having problems)
 - Mental health conditions that impede libido
 - Sexual dysfunction problems in males/females

GIVE YOUR MARRIAGE GOOD QUALITY CARE

The most significant factor in developing a healthy sex life is the care you give to the marriage on a daily basis. Establishing a rhythm of mutual care will keep the portals of intimacy open. Here are some ways you can do this.

- Check in at least 3x a day
- Be friendly toward each other
- Step in to support (whatever this means to your partner)
- Work through problems, resolve disputes, settle your arguments
 - Make it a habit not to go to bed angry at each other
 - If you can't do this, seek professional help

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Is sex in your marriage thriving or in danger of extinction? Review the 4 steps and decide what action to take next. By all means do not avoid the problem.

Taking action saved the bald eagle.

Follow the exercises below to get started on improving your sexual relationship.

Are you experiencing one of the three common threats to sexual intimacy in your marriage? Check the box below that best describes your current situation.

- Environmental Threat** - we are way too busy and are not prioritizing our sexual relationship.
- Interpersonal Threat** - we have unresolved issues and/or conflict patterns in our marriage that create emotional and sexual distance.
- Compensatory Threat** - one or both of us are compensating our need for sexual gratification without the involvement of our mate.
- Other Threat** - describe here what you consider a threat to sexual intimacy in your marriage that is not listed but important to identify.

What are your current concerns about your sex life? Do buffers exist that enable you to avoid romantic encounters? (Sleeping in separate rooms, kids or devices in bed, etc...) Write your concerns here.

One of the ways you can keep sex from becoming an endangered experience in your relationship is by communicating about it **regularly** and **respectfully**. I'm not suggesting you nag or complain. This will have an opposite effect. Instead, take a curiosity position and respectfully inquire where your partner is on the subject.

Let's consider some scripts to get the conversation going. Based on the current state of your marriage, check the scripts that may work as conversation starters.

- I noticed we've been having less sex lately. It concerns me. How about you?
- How would you rate our sex life lately? What do you think we can do to make it mutually satisfying?
- What gets you in the mood for sex? What takes you completely out of the mood?
- I know we haven't had sex for a while. Rather than argue about it, would you be open to going to counseling with me to address the underlying issues? I'm open.
- How do you like to be romanced? What are you looking for from me that will make our sexual relationship more special or passionate?
- I'm interested in learning how to keep the passion alive in our marriage. Would you be interested in reading a book with me?

Giving your marriage good quality care is a major factor in keeping romance and sexual intimacy alive. What are some specific things you can do to improve the connection in your marriage on a daily basis?