

Relationships & Marriage - Loss of Sex Drive

Folks who come to see me about a decreased interest in sex (and who have passed a recent physical to be sure the problem isn't a medical one) seem to have two common problems: **1.** They feel chronically overwhelmed; **2.** They harbor long-term resentments in their relationship. Whether we like it or not, many of us just can't forget about the stuff on our minds and enjoy ourselves with the reckless abandon with which we would like. After we reach a certain stress or anger threshold, our arousal switch turns off. This is why we must constantly monitor our work load occupationally and at home. We must refuse to do more than what we are paid for at our jobs and see that no work (mental or paper) is regularly brought home. We must frequently communicate our needs to our spouse in the home and be sure we feel the chores and parenting are shared. We ought not answer our cell phones, check our e-mail, or fill up the calendar on evenings and weekends. We must go to bed at a reasonable hour if we are to make ourselves available for physical enjoyment (I have never met a couple with a great sex life who stayed up for hours past the rest of the family every night). Finally, we must take responsibility for our anger. Many of us have grown up in families wherein it was not acceptable to express anger at our caregivers. So, we keep things to ourselves and become bitter and uninterested in our partners (contributing to the dissolution of our marriages). Sometimes we are protecting ourselves from what might happen if we speak our minds. But more often, we are protecting our spouses, whom we are afraid will not be able to handle our anger (like our families). My experience with couples is that when time is taken to sensitively discuss past or current hurts/failures in the marriage that have decreased physical attraction, lasting change can occur.