

## Burnt Out? The Impact of Exhaustion on Women's Sexual Desire and How to Fix It

A review of



**A Tired Woman's Guide to Passionate Sex: Reclaim Your Desire and Reignite Your Relationship**

by Laurie B. Mintz

Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2009. 237 pp. ISBN 978-1-60550-107-9. \$14.95, paperback



Reviewed by  
[Patti Britton](#)

At first, I was not impressed with *A Tired Woman's Guide to Passionate Sex: Reclaim Your Desire and Reignite Your Relationship*. As a practicing clinical sexologist who works with men, women, and couples with sexual concerns, I frequently encounter women with low or no sexual desire. It is my belief, shared by other sexuality experts, that dissecting out fatigue or exhaustion from the morass of causes for inhibited sexual desire (ISD) in women provides a false premise.

For example, one important cause of ISD is sexual shame that hovers like a dark cloud over a woman's head, depleting her sexual energy. A problem like this is not going to be healed by trying a new sex toy, talking about relationship conflicts, making out in the car, or embracing mindful ways of being. Life is exhausting today—frenetic, unfocused, harried,

interrupted, and fast-paced—and cell phones, text messages, and endless “to do” lists all distract from the joys of sex.

However, after carefully reviewing this book, I came to the conclusion that Laurie Mintz’s user-friendly book offers a fresh and substantive approach for addressing today’s epidemic of low sexual interest in women. The author correctly addresses the plethora of concerns a woman (or couple) faces when attempting to renew and recharge her sexual interest and energies.

Sexual desire is delicate and complex, and it is affected by myriad factors. Mintz addresses the mental, emotional, physical, and lifestyle factors that have to be addressed for change to occur, and this book is a useful self-help guide for any couple that has lost their sexual zest and joy.

In my own books, I have addressed resurrecting desire in women and assisting with couples’ efforts to find time for sex in their all-too-crowded lives (Britton, 2005; Britton & Hodgson, 2003). For many women with ISD, the suggestions so beautifully prescribed in this book, including moving from busy-ness to the slower pace necessary to fully experience sensuality, can be just what the doctor ordered. Clinicians can help women and their partners open their minds, set new priorities, find the courage to frankly discuss sexual concerns, make time for connecting body to body and skin to skin, and focus on the excitement of sexual encounters (or “trysts,” as Mintz calls them).

The book, written in a personal, upbeat, and friendly tone, is targeted primarily at the highly motivated woman who is at her wit’s end in her efforts to rekindle her sex drive. It nicely cites the potential causes for inhibited sexual desire experienced by one in three women. The author freely self-discloses, understanding that experts who aren’t willing to self-disclose may be viewed as condescending or hypocritical.

Mintz makes clear and sensible observations about hormonal replacement, overcoming a history of rape or other sexual trauma, coping with stress, codependency, body image issues, sleep disorders, medical conditions and the effects of medication on desire, and power struggles. Although Mintz provides a comprehensive overview, I would have appreciated a more detailed exploration of body image issues.

Mintz’s model is built around five *Ts*: *thoughts*, *talk*, *time*, *touch*, and *trysts*. This workable mnemonic helps the reader remember where she is headed as she works to (re)grow trust, communication, attraction, confidence, pleasure, and intimacy in what was once a sexually fulfilling life.

Mintz promotes a new view of women and underscores their unique response-ability. A woman may be aroused by sensual touch, a romantic act, a loving phrase, or an erotic story or DVD. Activating her ability to respond becomes a pathway to desire, and the author makes it clear that one does not have to wait for desire before initiating a sexual encounter.

Mintz encourages women to ask questions, and she encourages women to engage in open and thorough dialog, frequently using “I” statements. Her concept of “kitchen table sex talk” is a wonderful metaphor that encourages couples to identify a safe space to chat about

sex, a topic that is better discussed outside the bedroom. Mintz also strongly emphasizes the role and therapeutic value of masturbation. Her use of real-life stories adds the spice that is essential in any readable how-to book. Her chapter on touch describes well-known activities for couples to follow, and Mintz emphasizes the importance and value of nonpressured, nondemanding touch and other forms of communication.

## Omissions and Concerns

This book could have been more balanced and less judgmental. For example, all relationships are not heterosexual, and I had hoped Mintz would include recommendations for same-sex couples. Jack Annon's (1976) PLISSIT model (permission–limited information–specific suggestions–intensive treatment), a time-tested foundation for almost all sex therapy, is never mentioned, although Mintz relies on its precepts throughout her book. I also have qualms about the author's negative views on pornography. What is pornography to one viewer may be erotica to another, and not all pornography is degrading to women.

I was also surprised that so few sex experts are cited in *A Tired Woman's Guide*. Notable omissions include Gina Ogden, who devotes an entire book to the topic of recaptured sexual desire (Ogden, 2008); Esther Perel, a notable contributor to the literature on lost desire in relationships (Perel, 2006); and Linda Savage, who integrates ancient goddess teachings with contemporary sex therapy (Savage, 2004). I was also surprised that there were so few references to *Contemporary Sexuality*, published by the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (e.g., Melby, 2009).

These concerns aside, this is a well-written, thoughtful, and useful guide for any woman seeking practical suggestions about how to enhance her libido. It can also be an excellent resource for therapists, counselors, or coaches seeking a good self-help book to offer clients who are learning to awaken sexual desire.

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