

BOOK REVIEW

***A Tired Woman's Guide to Passionate Sex: Reclaim Your Desire and Reignite Your Relationship* by Laurie B. Mintz. Avon, Massachusetts: Adams Media, 2009, 237 pp. ISBN: 1605501077. \$14.95**

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Statistics bear it out: The most common sexual complaint that women have is low desire, and the most common reason that women cite is being too tired for sex. *A Tired Woman's Guide to Passionate Sex: Reclaim Your Desire and Reignite Your Relationship* is a thorough, research-based, cognitive-behavioral self-help program to help women not only revive their interest in sex but also be more assertive and take more time for self-care, which is sorely absent in the contemporary lives of women. Because the author has taken care to eliminate the crass language that is sometimes found in popular books about sexuality, it is a book that a psychotherapist or health care provider could easily recommend without fear of offending a female client of any age.

The book is organized into nine chapters and is written in a professional and friendly manner that will appeal to the lay reader. The first chapter is an introduction to the program to recover one's lost interest in sex. Chapter 2 touches on various factors that drain libido, including stress, body image, one's phase of life, medical issues, insomnia, poor self-care, and relationship issues. Chapter 3 reviews the positive role of sexual health in a woman's life and the role of cognitions in developing a more optimistic outlook toward sex. Chapter 4 demonstrates to women how they can change their thoughts from "I'm too tired for sex" to "Sex revitalizes me!" and "Sex is my reward!"

Talking to one's partner about sex is a difficult topic for most women, so the author outlines good communication skills and provides sample scripts in Chapter 5. The author also urges women to have a "kitchen table sex talk" with their husband (the author's choice of word for *partner*), setting aside quiet time to have an earnest conversation about the subject. Chapter 6 discusses ways to take care of one's self so that there is energy left for sex. The author suggests ways to exchange affectionate, playful, and sensual touch in Chapter 7. In this chapter, the author also recommends masturbation as a way for women to better understand their sexual needs.

Chapters 8 and 9 provide suggestions for ways to make sex more interesting and rewarding, as well as how to find time for "trysts." Mintz demonstrates how, exactly, different couples make time for sex as well as what, exactly, a tryst looks like. A variety of examples demonstrate to the reader that there's no one right way to create a satisfying sex life. Finally, there is one appendix on how to find a therapist and a second of resources on various related topics, including marriage in general, recovering from affairs, and time management.

A quick search on a bookseller's website reveals hundreds of titles related to women's low sex drive, some based on science (Reichman, 1999), some on popular culture (McCloud & McCloud, 2007), and some that are purely titillating (Wilson, 2008). As a fellow sex therapist reviewing this book, the author's work stands out for me because it is based on research, yet written in a way to make it accessible to the lay reader. For example, Mintz discusses Kaplan's (1995) model of desire as Physical Desire → Sexual Activity → Sexual Excitement/Orgasm, then compares it with a more recent—and complex—model by Basson (Basson, Brotto, Laan, Edmund, & Ultian, 2005) as Psychological Desire for Sex → Sexual Activity → Physical Desire → Continued Sexual Activity → Sexual Excitement/Orgasm. The author then further simplifies the concept, explaining that Kaplan's model can be boiled down to "Feel Horny/Have Sex" and Basson's model to "Have Sex/Feel Horny," letting women know that if they give themselves over to sexual activity, they may become aroused in the process.

Mintz talks about mindfulness as being akin to riding a roller coaster in terms that a lay person unfamiliar with the concept can easily grasp:

If you have ever been on a roller coaster—and whether you liked the experience or not—I bet you were thinking of nothing else but what was occurring that very moment. You were too immersed in flying downhill to think about the pile of work left at home or in the office. (p. 82)

Although the purpose of the book is to educate and motivate a lay audience, the book would be improved by having specific references to research included so that a psychotherapist unacquainted with the research in the field of female sexual health would be able to do further reading or research on the topic. Even a brief list of references to major studies would be preferable to none at all.

Second, the book lays the blame for being "too tired" squarely on the woman's shoulders. Much is made of the woman's task of helping her partner understand how she feels and what she wants. Although this is a good ideal, it assumes that the male partner is receptive to feedback or will make the requested changes. Men, socialized to think of themselves as repositories of sexual knowledge even if reality does not bear it out, are not always open to a woman's requests. Not only do women have husbands with sexual dysfunction such as rapid (premature) ejaculation or erectile dysfunction, they also have husbands who may be wandering, angry, passive, using substances, ignoring childcare duties, married to their mothers, or any number of problems that can affect a woman's interest in sex. Also, women are more often expected to be caregivers of elderly parents or ill children, adding another burden that is real but unaddressed by society. Finally, the book steers around the topic of attachment styles and bonding, a highly complex but nonetheless important reason that a woman may feel "too tired" for sex.

A third potential issue is the recommendation that women watch pornography. Although pornography seems to be in the mainstream, many people—both men and women—object to it on moral or

philosophical principle. Also, many women feel demeaned by their partner's use of pornography, so suggesting that they use it is problematic. Although the author recommends pornography made for women by a woman, it may still be a potential turnoff for some readers. Clinicians need to be prepared for a potential exploration of the topic should they recommend the book.

Still, *A Tired Woman's Guide to Passionate Sex* is better than many books on the topic. Perhaps because Mintz is brave enough to admit to her readers that she, herself, was a woman too tired for sex at one time and needed to go on her own journey to recover her lost libido, the book works as an empathic companion to the woman who is puzzled by her own lack of drive.

References

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Psychotherapy invites manuscripts for a special issue on *Empirical Studies on Psychotherapy Training and Development*. There is great interest in understanding how different training experiences impact professional development, psychotherapy process and outcomes. Although to date this research is limited and often demonstrates mixed results. We welcome papers empirically examining these issues across a range of different training experiences, from a macro (i.e. graduate degree program, post-doctoral certificates, etc), through intermediate (i.e. year of training or supervision, specific course, instruction in manualized treatments, etc) to a micro level (i.e. brief focused initiatives, workshop, etc). Studies using quantitative or qualitative methods, as well as those demonstrating null or negative results, are welcomed. In addition, meta-analyses on different training experiences that both synthesize the existing empirical literature as well as offer direction for future training, research and practice are encouraged.

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