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Head: It's a pleasure to meet you...again

Sell: The art of rediscovering your sexuality at a later age.

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You've had your children, now is time to reclaim your vagina back for yourself - she's been through a lot and deserves some meritorious TLC. Or even if you haven't had children, maybe it's been a while since you've gone down south - and I'm not talking about a visit to Brighton beach... It is a common misconception that when women reach a *ahem* *certain* age, that their sexuality bites the dust. But much like the infamous Freddie Mercury once said "another one bites the dust" who is to say you can't reignite your sexuality at *another* time in your life and there is no time quite like the present. The need for intimacy is ageless. However, this begs the question: do women lose interest in sex because they feel old and tired? Or is it because society tells us we're too old to need it, want it or even enjoy it?

For many of us, exploring, discovering and pursuing our own sexual pleasure was not something we were ever taught or encouraged to do. Female pleasure has always been regarded as a taboo, if we look back to the Victorian era when a woman's sexual desires were clinically diagnosed as a disease or to the lack of teaching about the clitoris in sex education in schools today (with over 8,000 nerve endings - yes, EIGHT THOUSAND), it is clear this has been consistent an issue throughout the ages.

Instead of a passionate and pleasurable activity, sex can become a service to men's pleasure for women, and a suppression of our own needs that we might never have even encountered. Yet, sexual pleasure is an innate component of human sexuality so why is male pleasure always favoured over female? Luckily, the time for change is upon us ladies and the good news is that it's never too late to learn how to *lurve* yourself.

With the endless stress of everyday life, women tend to prioritise thinking and doing over feeling and being, leaving many often feeling disconnected from their bodies. In her book, '*The Wild Woman's Way*', sex and intimacy expert Michaela Boehm manifests the importance of finding pleasure in your body - the mind-body connection that is "the secret to finding deeper, greater pleasure." Boehm writes, "when we connect back into our body, we tap into a source of great power and a portal to unlocking who we truly are." The emphasis is on feeling good rather than looking good, the latter often a consequence of the former. It can be as simple as mentally connecting to that part of your body and realising it's not just a portal for children - but for you, your whole life.

Yet, as women age, they feel increasingly unseen - marginalised by the younger, newer, fresher fruit in the bowl. It's like you get to a certain point in your life and Harry Potter hands you his invisibility cloak. Long gone are the days of being served first at the bar, a handsome stranger paying for your drink, or being catcalled by creepy men on your way to work (thank God!). Why does ageing make us feel so invisible? The media is saturated with images of spritely youthfulness, without a wrinkle, grey hair or stretch mark in sight but who is to say that isn't what makes *us* beautiful? Crow's feet symbolise years of laughter, each fine line has a story to tell, and every scar is a tattoo of triumph.

Albeit, we must remember, you have to let the fruit ripen until it is sweet enough to taste. Much like fine wine or cheese, some things get better with age, growing older can be sexy if you embrace the process. Granted, not everything is going to be the same, some things may take a little longer or feel a tad different. But once you adapt, overcome and accept these changes, you're onto a winner. Confidence is crucial - fake it until you make it (and I am NOT talking about orgasms). If a woman is confident in herself and her sexuality, that confidence will radiate into her everyday life, becoming a vision of vitality and the ripest, juiciest, most succulent fruit in the bowl.

But it can't be all rainbows and unicorns, of course, the dreaded 'M-word', has a role to play in this too. According to a study by *The Obstetrician & Gynaecologist*, about 80% of women reported some decline in sexual desire during menopause. The alteration in hormone levels means our libido declines, and changes in our bodies can make it difficult to get aroused, painful, and impossible to orgasm. This means now, more than ever, we must focus on finding pleasure in ourselves. "Enjoying a fulfilling sex life is important for women's mental and emotional wellbeing," Dr Sue Mann, *Public Health Consultant in Reproductive Health for Public Health England*, told the BBC. Not only does it feel extraordinary, but it also possesses a multitude of benefits to a happier and healthier life.

On the contrary, according to *Researchers from the University of California*, a study of sexually active older women has found that sexual satisfaction in women increases with age and those not engaging in sex are satisfied with their sex lives. We have lived and we have learnt, from the awkward first time, the fake orgasms (we've all been there — don't lie) and erotic sexual fantasies; all of our experiences have shaped us into the women we are today and paved our sexuality.

Every woman's body is different and the beauty of it is that YOU are in control. So, take some time to get to know yourself again, rediscover what you enjoy, learning comes through experimentation so why not try something new? According to a study by *The Kinsey Institute*, lesbians' orgasm 86% of the time during sex, as opposed to 65% for heterosexual women. I am not implying you should jump ship (if that's not what you are into) but to realise that there is a gateway to a plethora of possibilities for exploration.

The truth is women don't lose interest in sex; it just becomes lost in hustle and bustle of the female brain. It is time to start celebrating the magnificence of mid-life. After all, I am sure it has been a long time coming...