



MAMA SUTRA

It's easy to relegate your sex life to the sidelines after kids come along. But there are surefire ways to get your groove back on—read, learn, and get down with your bad selves!

BY MAURA RHODES

list," she says. "Eye contact is key, too. Lock eyes with your spouse, smile at him, maintain a few seconds of contact, take a few deep breaths at least once a day." And when your body is off-limits no matter what, gently and lovingly say so—then offer him a little thrill. A hand job here or a blow job there will go a long way toward keeping him physically satisfied and the pilot light (for both of you) smoldering.

Engage in choreplay

Ask your man to sweep the kitchen floor, and you may well find yourself swept off your feet. That's because pitching in together can spark passion. Splitting the household to-do list helps fend off the special kind of libido-killing exhaustion that stems from an unequal division of labor. Not only does this nonstop activity tire you out, when it's your sole responsibility it can also tick you off, till you're in no mood for any adult entertainment.

By the way, this sort of tiredness is different from the usual type of sleep deprivation (though you'll have that, too, long after your newborn starts sleeping through the night, due to your kids' bad dreams, late-night potty trips, vomitous viruses, and your own worries about why your 6-year-old isn't reading or your 12-year-old Googled "jugs" on the family computer). A garden-variety snooze deficit is fairly straightforward to deal with: Squeeze in a nap or sleep late on Saturday morning and you'll be right as rain. This other form of slacker-part-

Los Angeles: "It was late one night and my kids, then seven and four, had been asleep for hours. We locked the door, turned on some music, and it was all heat and fireworks—until my daughter tried to open the door. She kept asking, 'Mom, are you okay?' and trying to barge in, but she couldn't, thanks to the lock. In seconds I went from ravaged woman to Mommy, got dressed, and put her back to bed."

As Marilyn's story so vividly illustrates, while many things get easier after your kids are out of diapers, it can be even harder to find the opportunity to make love with anything resembling abandon. Says Pamela Goldsteen, whose

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"Our sex life is way better POST-kids. Maybe 'cuz we value it more. Ha-ha!"

—"mommyof3boys"

Crowded house? Channel your lusty, sneaky

ner-fueled fatigue produces a chronic case of the low-energy blahs and sends desire down the drain. Sylvia, a mom of two in Westchester County, NY, uses a direct approach to make sure both she and her husband get what they want. "I'll say to him, 'Take out the garbage and clean up the kitchen and then I'll be in the mood,'" she explains. Don't be shy about politely delegating to Dad—he may have no idea that you're shouldering more of the load.

Lock in some lovin'

For many privacy-deprived couples, a simple bedroom-door lock is a sanity—and sex-life—saver. And no, it is not, repeat, *not* cruel to make it physically impossible for your kids to come into your room anytime they please; in fact, it can help you all avoid some truly awkward moments. Take it from Marilyn*, a mom of two in



children are 4, 7, and 10, “Now that the kids are older, the sex window is actually narrower. Logistically, the only time we can do it is when all three of them are out of the house, which is practically never.” One solution is to channel your inner lusty teenager and be sneaky. “We sometimes resort to ‘going to the basement to check on the furnace,’” says Lisa. “Once we even had a quickie while putting out the garbage—romantic! These occasions tend to be more fulfilling for my husband, but they create a shared playful, sexy memory that keeps things going.”

Use your words

It doesn't matter what's going on with the offspring, most men manage to get it up anytime, anyplace. Not so women. “My husband is one involved father, but it doesn't hit him in the same way when things are happening with the kids,” says Goldsteen. “In fact, for him, sex is a solution; it's stress relief. For me, it's the opposite.” Adds Resnick, “When women have young kids, they're very distractible. It may be nature's way of making sure Mom is attentive to baby. But when a woman is so focused on what needs to be taken care of, she doesn't value her own pleasure.”

What's more, studies have shown that women's bodies can be physically turned on in response to suggestive stimuli without their even being aware of it. In other words, you have to get your head in the game before you can enjoy that you're aroused—and the way to do that is with wordplay,

body. Know that to your man, you're positively beautiful. He doesn't care if you're a bit softer here and there; in fact, he might like it. Even if you're still carrying around some baby weight (five, ten years later), you'll still feel nice to him.

inner teenager and get busy in the basement.

not foreplay. “I'm running around all day, juggling schedules, problem solving, and my husband will jump into bed and want to have sex after we've been dealing with our own stuff and not talking to each other,” says Margarit, a mom of two school-age boys. “He doesn't understand that I need him to touch base first.” The pillow talk doesn't have to be sexy or provocative, either. “It can just be who drove us nuts at work today, or dang, what he thought of the pork roast,” says Margarit. “As long as he touches base before he touches boobs.”

Believe in your beauty

Start treating yourself like the desirable woman you are. Who cares if kids changed your body a little? Sure, pregnancy did its number on you, your diet consists of leftover chicken nuggets, and your gym pass is lost in the depths of your tote bag. But time and gravity take their toll on every-

Make the most of it by buying some pretty underthings: During the day, lacy panties or a thong underneath your jeans (you can find comfy, not-too-skimpy ones at Hankypanky.com) will be a reminder that you're still a sexy thing. Get some exercise, too, even if all you can manage is stepping up your pace when you walk the dog, or a ten-minute date with the kids' Wii. A recent study found that simply working out was enough to boost body image, without any significant physical changes. If you think of yourself as hot, you will come across as hot.

Once again, words can save the day. Let your partner know what you need to hear, whether it's “You're beautiful” or “You're smokin',” and then wallow in the praise. Next thing you know, you might find yourself grabbing his ass while he's doing the dishes; in fact, it might not be a bad idea to put a lock on the kitchen door, too. ✨

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