

CHAPTER 27

Increasing Pleasure

Sexual ecstasy is to sexual pleasure what joy is to happiness. Almost all of us have peak experiences involving joyful and ecstatic states at some time in our lives. And yet we often deny ourselves such states in sex. The key to awakening the ecstatic response within ourselves is the art of relaxing in high states of arousal. We can learn how to generate excitement, contain it and relax into it. We can discover how to awaken the orgasmic reflex independent of the sexual content. By containing genital orgasm, we can emphasise the brain's contribution, creating a variety of ecstatic states and a sense of expanding our energy beyond our bodies. We can experience sexual ecstasy. That at least is Margo Anand's promise in her book, *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy*. Based on Taoist and Tantric principles and expressed in mystic, non-scientific terms (and containing some errors of physiological fact), it nonetheless can work. If you and your partner have the necessary discipline, try it.

But let's start with some simpler measures. One of the simplest, most effective, is to plan a joy break (anything from breakfast in bed to dancing together in the nude to soft music) at least once a week. Anything to break the boredom. Try all-day foreplay. Do it somewhere other than in bed for a change. Try different positions. Watch a sexy movie together. Know what you want and ask for it.

In the meantime, get fit, using the exercises in the previous chapter, especially the Kegels. Females who have given birth may also need to restore their perineal, vaginal and pelvic muscles by doing leg raising and other leg exercises, kneeling exercises, and 'swimming' exercises.

Read a good book on better sex (besides this one, of course). I'd recommend *The New Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking for the Nineties* by Alex Comfort, M.D., Ph.D. (Crown, 1991) as the wittiest, warmest, most explicit sex manual ever written.

Explore each other's anatomy. Find the clitoris, explore it and learn how it likes to be handled.

Learn how to communicate with each other. Listen empathetically. Talk in terms of 'I', not 'you'. Be direct. Develop consistency between what you say and how you say it. Describe behaviour rather than labelling it.

When it comes to intercourse, she should decide when it's time for penetration, not him. She should guide her partner's penis in. The man should vary his thrusting pattern and his speed of thrusting. He doesn't have to go to climax once he has penetrated her; pulling out and making love in other ways before resuming not only prolongs the experience but makes the delayed climax feel stronger. Touch her clitoris during intercourse. Change positions during intercourse. Delay ejaculation by squeezing or tensing. She should be allowed to reach orgasm before he does.

An aroused younger woman usually produces enough natural lubrication to make intercourse silky. After menopause, however, reduced levels of oestrogen inhibit the vagina's ability to produce natural lubrication. This can make intercourse uncomfortable for the woman and, to a lesser extent, the man. The oldest and sexiest lubricant is saliva but this can be a means of inoculating some bacteria, harmless in the mouth but capable of causing infections in the genitals. K-Y Jelly is the most used preparation and is quite effective and safe with condoms. So are Lubrin inserts and Astroglide. My own favourite is Sylk, a New Zealand product derived from the kiwifruit tree and having a feel remarkably similar to the natural product. Oils, like baby oil and coconut oil, and petroleum jelly can be used but destroy condoms so cannot be used with these. They can also incubate a vaginal infection. If vaginal dryness is a regular problem, you may need to examine your lovemaking patterns. Is it simply because you don't get sufficiently aroused - because your desire is low (for any number of reasons) or because your partner is failing to arouse you? Get a checkup and ask your doctor whether any medications you are taking could be contributing. Finally, remember nature's 'if you don't use it, you lose it rule'. Regular

sexual activity, including masturbation, encourages the vagina to produce more lubrication.

Sex aids of the type sold in sex shops have a sleazy reputation but they can be fun, harmless and actually enhance and enliven sex play - if you maintain emotional closeness while using them. It's not a good sign, however, if you can't have sex, or can't reach climax, without them. If you want to try a vibrator, experiment with different sizes, shapes and attachments, use lubrication, start by massaging the body and then move to combined penile penetration and vibrator on the clitoris.

In China, penis rings (made of carved jade or ivory) appear in erotic literature from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Fitted around the base of the penis, these rings (today's versions are made of elastic materials and may include ticklers for clitoral and labial stimulation) are used to maintain erection and delay ejaculation. The sheath, which is wrapped or strapped around the shaft of the penis (sometimes acting as an extension for the penis), also is used to maintain erection.

Coloured, flavoured, ribbed, contoured and rippled condoms may also be fun - as long as you don't rely on them for contraception.

Tinkling Chinese balls also made their appearance in the Ming dynasty. These were inserted under the skin of the penis after it had been cut. Women were also known to insert them vaginally before sex.

Though the male version never made it in the West, the female version did - from the 18th century on. Today's versions are usually two or three plastic or metal balls joined by a string for easy removal. Inserted into the vagina, they provide intense stimulation capable of lasting, if you can stand it, all day. A variation of this theme is Thai beads, made up of a string of 15-20 smaller beads.

The Venus Butterfly is a strap-on butterfly-shaped device that sits against the clitoris and vulva, stimulating the wearer for as long as she wants to keep it on.

Sex shops also usually stock a range of attire - from leather gear to chastity belts - that some may find exciting.

They also frequently have all kinds of 'discipline' accessories - from hoods to whips. If this sort of thing turns you and your partner on, fair enough - so long as it's all in fun and no one gets hurt (even if they ask to be). For most couples, being tied down with ordinary household items like scarves is probably sufficient. This can be valuable instruction for both, particularly if the one being tied down is the male and the object is to prolong the experience as long as possible. Many people of both sexes enjoy a bit of spanking during sex play; again, there is no harm in this if it does not get out of bounds.

In all this, as in all of sex, each partner must be prepared to take no for an answer - whether this is to having sex or to any aspect of the sex experience. There is an old rhyme:

'Between a woman's yes and no
There is not room for a pin to go.'

True enough in many cases, but make sure she really has finally freely said yes. Another old wise saying is the Golden Rule ('do unto others as you would have them do to you'). This applies as much to sex as anywhere - but don't automatically assume that your partner will like what you like; ask her or him and ask for what you want yourself. Take responsibility for your pleasure as well as that of your partner. And remember that, just because you find your partner irresistible doesn't mean that she isn't turned off by your stubble, bad breath or general sloppiness.

On the other hand, many people of both sexes inhibit their sexuality by worries about their appearance when naked. Women worry about their weight, that their breasts are too big or too small, that their thighs are too big, that they are showing signs of aging, that scars from pregnancy and childbirth disfigure them. Men think their penises are too small, that they are too tall or too short, that they are showing signs of aging, including balding and a big stomach. Most of us need to learn to be kind to ourselves and to let go of unrealistic standards. Look in the mirror and realise that what you see there is all that is needed for good sex. There is no reason not

to do everything positive you can to improve your appearance and to encourage positive changes in your partner but, at the same time, focus on your and his or her best features and enjoy them. Help your partner to learn to love his or her body by praising your lover's lovemaking ability and let him or her see how his or her body meets your sexual needs.

Fear can also be a powerful inhibiting force on sexuality. This can be fear of intimacy, fear of being rejected, fear of losing control, fear of becoming overly sexual or fear of hidden desires. If this affects you, you should acknowledge the fear, share it with your lover, face it and, with the help of your lover, defeat it. If your partner is the one affected, you need to accept him or her as he or she is, acknowledge his or her fear (and sometimes your own), use positive reinforcement and recognise that change takes time.

According to the famed sex researcher, John Money, our patterns of arousal are formed in childhood when the brain develops a lovemap through interactions with parents, other adults and peers. Exploring this lovemap by attempting to relate your early sexual experiences (actual and vicarious) to your current practices and preferences can be instructive and useful, especially if you and your partner both do this and share your results with each other. If each of you then let the other know in very specific terms exactly how you would like your lovemaking to change, it may well be possible to redraw your lovemaps in a way to benefit both of you.

In good sex, we bare not only our bodies but our souls to our partners. Over two thirds of people say nothing is secret in their marriage. However, eleven percent would not reveal they had more money than the partner, ten percent would not admit an affair and six percent would keep their weight secret. If you feel you should reveal some deep, dark secret, think before you share - make sure that your motives are good, that you're not being unduly hard on yourself, and that the disclosure will not make your partner feel inadequate. If you find it awkward to share, keep trying and help your partner to share too. Revelations may be stored but not inappropriately divulged, repeated or used against the person making the revelation. If you enjoy your lover's efforts, say so and thank them in whatever way seems most appropriate.

Couples who are sexually bored need to talk about it but should not get mad at each other for being honest. Improving your personal appearance will help. So will adding variety to your lovemaking and experimenting sexually. But the problem is often tied up with boredom in your whole pattern of life together. If you make changes in this (including surprising each other in nonsexual ways) and ensure that you both grow as individuals, sexual boredom may well disappear along with the more general kind. If not, make sure you eliminate any performance goals (including how often you should have sex), think dirty, masturbate (but not to orgasm) and play like children. Become more self-indulgent. Schedule an hour a week for just the two of you, plus a real dinner together at least once a week, plus a ten minute massage each at least once a week. When massaging, find out what your partner wants and do it. Concentrate on the face, the neck and shoulders, the insides of the arms, the small of the back, around the ankles, the feet. Try strapping a vibrator to the back of your hand and transmitting the vibrations through your fingertips.

Don't let work, kids or parents stop you spending time together. Do something together - other than watching television - before going to bed and go to bed at the same time. Make a habit of giving thanks for the happiness your partner brings you and seeing his or her faults as less important. If you can't stop negative thoughts or ghosts intruding when you go to bed, forget about sex then. Set your alarm for ninety minutes later or an hour before you have to get up and see how you feel. If money is a constant problem, reevaluate your spending habits and financial goals.

Therapists sometimes help couples completing treatment to develop a calendar so they can maintain their romantic momentum throughout the year. This simple concept for keeping romance alive can be used by any couple. Planning the year together is part of the fun.

In the euphoric stage of love, the brain produces a potent love hormone, phenylethylamine, that causes a natural high. Excitement, adventure and risk also cause the

production of this hormone. Being adventuresome, in sexual and non-sexual ways, can put a zing into your lovelife. Showing physical affection, doing something romantic every day and flirting with each other can help maintain the glow - but to be really successful, you must learn to empathise with your partner, put yourself in his or her place.

Use all the five senses during lovemaking. Learn to read your lover's body like a map by sight and by touch. Identify all your partner's scents. Really listen to his or her sounds. Know the taste of his or her skin and other parts. Bring some outside sensory surprises into it - arousing sights, scents, music, materials with a different feel, food and drink. In daily life, use your senses to expand your awareness of your surroundings and this heightened awareness will carry over into your lovemaking.

Sensate focus, as developed by Masters and Johnson, can be very useful in training both you and your partner in using your senses more completely during sex. It can also be incorporated into your actual lovemaking. It forms part of the following 'peak experience' ritual, which also incorporates aspects of Tantra, Taoist sex and Arabian delights.

With each partner completely nude, lead into it by breathing deeply and slowly, letting the air fill your chest cavity and expanding it, before slowly exhaling, and use this slow breathing to slow the arousal process. Now, you and partner lie on your sides with him cuddling her back, both with eyes closed, and breathe together for five minutes, while he imagines he is breathing her into his body with his breath. He then touches and explores her anywhere but in the genital area or breasts, while she makes no move to reciprocate but instead concentrates on the sensations produced. After some five minutes of this, he includes her breasts and genital area in his touching and exploration, for about another five minutes.

Now they both roll over so that she is cuddling his back and goes through the same process with him. When the sequence is finished, he rolls onto his stomach and she uses her hair, mouth and breasts to stroke his body, rolling him over to continue on his front side.

Then she rolls onto her stomach. He takes some warmed baby oil on his hands and glides, kneads and spider walks over her back. He kneads her buttocks and then strokes teasingly down the crack between them and along the perineum. She turns over. He glides slowly over the front of her body and down to the genitals and back with one hand, while massaging the breasts with the palm of the other and gently squeezing the nipples. The gliding hand moves down to her inner thighs, caresses her genitals and then moves between thighs and genitals, while the other hand moves between her breasts and her abdomen.

When she is aroused, while she still lies on her back, he squats between her legs with his buttocks resting on his feet. She then raises her legs and rests her parted thighs across him. He puts his penis between the lips of her vulva and, using his thumb and forefinger, pulls them closed around it. He then makes shallow but quite rapid thrusts, while stimulating her clitoral area, until her vagina is moist and fully aroused.

They change to a position where she is sitting on his lap, with his penis inside her, and their legs wrapped around each other. Remaining as still as possible, they press foreheads together. Keeping their eyes open, they put their mouths together and exchange breaths, with him exhaling as she inhales and vice versa.

They keep this up for at least a few minutes before she straddles him and they continue mutual touching. When she feels ready, she takes his penis and slides back slowly on it until her vagina is snuggled around its head. Slow, gentle insertions and withdrawals of the penis to this level follow until, after a few minutes, she slides about half the penis inside herself. She then holds absolutely still for a few seconds and then contracts her vaginal muscles or squeezes her legs together before slowly withdrawing his penis from her vagina again and playing with it at the external genital area for 20-30 seconds.

Now she lies on her back with a cushion placed under her buttocks and her knees raised as far as possible towards her chest. As they look into each other's eyes all the time, he takes eight shallow strokes (allowing only the head of the penis to penetrate the vagina) followed by one

deep thrust, then draws out of his partner's vagina and slides his penis for a moment or two between her thighs before reinserting it once more. He then continues as before but this time doing seven shallow and two deep thrusts before withdrawing. He carries on in this manner until he is doing all deep thrusts.

Then he withdraws completely, removes the cushion from under her buttocks and places cushions or pillows on either side of her shoulders and rests his hands on them. She places his penis inside herself and raises her buttocks off the bed as high as she can, her partner following this motion with his body. Then she lowers herself to the bed again, but this time in a series of fast, almost jerky movements. The partners' movements must be carefully synchronised to prevent the penis slipping out of the vagina. This continues until climax or until one or other becomes fatigued and they switch to some other position to attain orgasm and climax.

If none of this works and especially if there is deep anger and depression, seek professional help.