

## When Sexual Desire Fades: Women Talk about Changes in Desire within Long Term Heterosexual Relationships

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**Abstract :** A decline in women's sexual desire over the course of long-term relationships, relative to men's, has been frequently noted. Yet, while there is ample evidence that this change in women is quite common, it is still generally pathologized. Moreover, little is known regarding its true meaning for women and the effect it has on their wellbeing. In light of that, our primary goal was to investigate women's subjective experiences of this reality. Do they connect it to dysfunction in self or marriage, or rather they don't equate love and sex, which for them simply become less connected with time, even as the relationship remains entirely fulfilling? A second goal was to explore how such gender-based differences in sexual desire impact women, and indirectly the couple and partner, in terms of wellbeing and satisfaction from the relationship. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 women in committed long-term relations, aged 25 and over. The findings indicate that for women, there is no contradiction between a loving relation and a decline in spontaneous sexual desire. At the same time, while not rooted in a problem, it does create some. Tension, frustration, conflict, and pressure are some of the negative sequelae that carry adverse effects for women's wellbeing, the solution to which requires, in their opinion, honest dialogue, mutual respect, and reasonable compromise.

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