Under the Sheets

The Secrets to Hot Sex in Your Marriage

Dr. Kevin Leman
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Introduction

Have a great sex life—by Saturday night! (Or Thursday night, if you’re really frisky.)

When Adam saw Eve for the first time, what do you think he said? “Holy moley, will you look at that!”

To Adam, beautiful Eve was a wonder—the one creature in Eden perfectly suited to be his mate. What did Adam do next? What comes naturally to us men: He stared. He appreciated. Then he couldn’t help but touch this gift from almighty God. And what happened next was very, very good.

Sex—God’s awesome invention—got a great start in that beautiful Garden of Eden. But whatever happened to the garden where a man and a woman—true partners, together for a lifetime—were naked and not ashamed?

You know what happened. Just one little bite of the forbidden fruit, and all of a sudden what almighty God created got labeled “dirty.” Adam and Eve quickly realized they were in the buff, so they slunk off into the bushes to hide themselves until they were clothed. Their perfect world of paradise was ruined. Their lov-
Introduction

ing heart connection with almighty God was severed. And their innocent, peaceful relationship, as well as their sexually satisfying exploration of each other, was interrupted. All at once they knew their differences—and found them downright shameful and embarrassing.

But when it gets right down to brass tacks, what do we all dream of? Getting back to those days in the garden, where God’s perfect invention of sex surrounded both the man and the woman in a mutually satisfying, forever relationship. What does every godly man want? A godly woman who loves sex. What does every godly woman want? A godly man who provides the intimacy that her soul longs for. You see, men need only a place, but women need a reason. As a husband and wife understand and learn to appreciate those crucial differences, they can turn up the heat in their relationship and have great sex—all the time.

Sex inside the bounds of holy matrimony was God’s idea, but today folks are just a little afraid to ask questions about it, for fear of embarrassing themselves. (It’s kind of like Adam and Eve hiding naked in the bushes.)

So I’ve made it easy for you.

Packed into this book are the hottest questions about sex and intimacy—questions I get asked every day as I travel, speak, and counsel married couples and soon-to-be-wed couples—and my straightforward answers. (To protect the privacy of those who have shared their stories with me, some details and names have been changed.)

Have you ever wondered how often you should do it—and if you have to do it? Why she likes the lights off, and you want them on? What to do when you’re too pooped to whoop and he’s giving you a look like Bullwinkle the Moose? If depression or aging can affect sex drive? If he’s a sex addict? If you are, because you’ve just
got to have it? What’s okay—and what’s not—in bed? If there’s sex after children? How you compare to his exes? Why he’s so boring in bed? If you’ll still be able to . . . you know . . . when you’re eligible for the seniors discount at McDonald’s?
    And that’s just for starters.

If you want to have a great sex life by Saturday night, just read on. Under the Sheets will take you and your spouse to new, scintillating heights of mutually enjoyable satisfaction. I bet you’ll even save money on your heating bills.

You can thank me later.
Some honeymoon symphonies are like the Boston Philharmonic. Others are like “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, where the heck are ya?”

You might be about to embark on the long-awaited event of your honeymoon. Or maybe you have already taken the long walk down that flower-strewn aisle, are now nestled together in your romantic getaway, and have brought this book along to read together. Either way, good for you. If you’re already thinking about what you can do to make your marriage the best it can be, you’re starting your marriage out right!

Most people think, Wow, the honeymoon. I can’t wait! After all, that’s when the bells, whistles, and sirens all come together at the same time. And that mighty crescendo is the sign, of course, that you’ll live happily ever after. All you need to do is save up to buy that little house with the white picket fence and your top-of-the-line Beemer, and eventually have a couple of those . . . what do you
call ’em . . . children. Oh, of course. (On second thought, maybe a schnauzer would be cheaper.)

But does life always turn out as you expect? Has it so far? Just as life has its surprises, your honeymoon is likely to have its surprises as well. If you’re like most couples I talk to, you’re going to find that the honeymoon isn’t quite what you thought it would be.

If you are sexually inexperienced (possibly 20 to 25 percent of the people reading this book are virgins), I can guarantee you that you’re not going to create a symphony. You’re going to have something a little more like “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, where the heck are ya?” But think about it. If there’s a job that requires good ol’ on-the-job training, and lots of it, what job would you rather have? What would be a more fun career than learning to master this one, I ask you?

Others of you have had sexual experiences previously with one or more partners. You might have been married before. You might have gone through the loss of your first spouse through divorce, death, or abandonment. You might have experienced things in your childhood you never should have experienced—abuse that was not your fault. Because the very nature of sexual experiences is so intimate, those memories will also be a part of your relationship with your spouse. (We’ll talk more about all these issues in this book.)

Some of you are past that first honeymoon night already and have had a great experience. You’re thinking, That was incredible. I never thought sex would be so great! And then there’s the other 95 percent of you who are thinking (and a little embarrassed to admit it to your spouse), So that was it? That was the best he had to offer? Or, You gotta be kidding me. Did she think that was going to turn me on? And, Oh my goodness, what have I gotten myself
Shootin’ for the ‘Moon

into! I have a lifetime of this? Some of you, out of desperation, may have even picked up the phone to call Mom, Dad, or a friend for some quick advice. Or maybe you went to the local bookstore to find one of those how-to-do-it-right books, because deep down inside, you feel just a bit panicked.

If you’re one of those who have pushed the panic button, rest assured that you’re not alone. You’d think that sex would be one of the easiest acts to master in life—after all, get a male and a female, and the rest should be natural, right?—but, quite frankly, it takes some doing. You need the timing of a major league baseball player, the precision of the finest jeweler, and the capacity to be like Arthur Fiedler incarnate in the bedroom. And here’s the kicker: even if you could be all those things rolled up into one, there’s no guarantee that those bells, whistles, and sirens will be wailing away in your bedroom.

So how can you prepare yourself emotionally, physically, and mentally to become one on your honeymoon—and beyond?

I’m so glad you asked. Because your questions have everything to do with how sexually experienced or inexperienced you are prior to your honeymoon, you may want to skip to the section that best applies to you. (And it’s okay if you want to peek at the other one too.)

A. You’re virgins or very inexperienced sexually.

B. You’re experienced sexually (you’ve had prior partners or been married before).
A. You’re Virgins or Very Inexperienced Sexually

Q: My husband and I are both virgins. We started dating when we were in college and dated for three and a half years until we were both through college and grad school. Both sets of parents agreed to fully fund our educations if we agreed to wait to get married until we graduated. But sometimes I wonder if we waited too long. We couldn’t do it for so long (there were some nights it was so, so, so hard to not get... uh, close... you know what I mean), and now that we’re on our honeymoon, all of a sudden we can. I just can’t seem to make the switch in my head. Neither one of us can relax. Help!

A: Kudos to you and your husband for waiting—and for asking for help in this area while you’re still on your honeymoon! That says a lot about the type of people you are—and the married couple you will become. If you controlled your desires for that long and waited for sex, it’s not likely either of you are going to be worried about your spouse finding sexual fulfillment somewhere other than in each other because you’ve built trust and a mutual respect. But I agree with you. My wife, Sande, and I were both virgins when we got married. It is hard to flip the switch, especially for a woman. Why is it harder for women than for men? Because for a man, Mr. Happy is ready to go at just about any time, any place. (So kudos to your guy for keeping himself purely for you—that says more than words ever could about his love and respect for you.) A woman? She needs the atmosphere, the environment, the cuddling, the words, the right timing. Everything has to be right for her to feel cherished and loved.

So here’s my suggestion to both of you. So many people make their honeymoon a time when they have to go see places. “Oh,
hey, let’s go to Puerto Rico.” “What about an Alaskan cruise? I’ve always wanted to go there.” “Paris? After all, it’s the city of love, and I’ve always wanted to see the Eiffel Tower.” Sure, you might be in an exotic location (many folks are when they’re on their honeymoon), but instead of focusing on the sites, why not instead make it a time to “see” each other in a beautiful and romantic spot?

Instead of rushing off to a local tourist attraction, a special dinner, or the beach, take things slow. Take your time. Wake up and cuddle. Spend a day completely, totally naked. Touch and revel in each other’s bodies. Don’t answer the phone. Order room service. Take time to explore and get to know each other’s bodies for the fun of it. Don’t make it your aim to always get the goal into the net. This isn’t your time to have to figure out everything about sex and perfect the act. It’s your time to laugh, stroke, have fun. It’s your time to relax and just enjoy being together.

Q: I started taking birth control pills about three months before our honeymoon because we want to “plan” our family—not have it be a surprise. It has been really hard for me to wait for sex over all the years I’ve been single; sex has been constantly on my mind. But now that we’re married, my sex drive seems way lower. In fact, it’s hard to even get interested in sex. I hate seeing the hurt look on my husband’s face. Is something wrong with me—or could it be that the birth control pills are making me less interested?

A: The first thing you need to do is explain to your husband what’s happening in your mind and your body so that it becomes “our” problem—not “your” problem. Go together to the ob-gyn, explain the situation, and discuss other options. There are many formulations of birth control pills; you could easily try other
And there are also other forms of birth control (including diaphragm, condom, IUD, and natural family planning). The most important thing is that the two of you are now a unit, and you have to work together toward the goal of a healthy, satisfied sex life. Magazines gossip about how taking birth control pills inhibits your sex drive. And there might be some truth to that for some women. But the real issue, to me, is what’s happening in your mind and in your heart and how the two of you are working together, as a couple, to turn up the heat on your passion.

**Q:** The first time my wife and I had sex, I’d wanted it to be so beautiful, so perfect for her. I thought I was being really gentle, going really slow (we’re both virgins) . . . then she started crying. So I stopped and ran a long, hot bath for her (she says that helps her relax) and even ran to the store to get some lavender, her favorite scent. She sat in the tub and cried some more. Then she called her mom and talked for two hours.

What am I doing wrong? I really love her, so how could I hurt her? Is my penis too big? Am I going about things wrong?

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**For Women Only**

**What Not to Expect from Your Lover**

1. That he’s George Clooney. Fred Flintstone might be closer. Most men are lousy lovers; they don’t innately understand what turns a woman on.

2. That he’s knowledgeable, just because he’s a guy (and especially if he’s had sex before). I’ve talked to a lot of men and asked them if they knew what a clitoris was, and they said, “A what?”

3. That he’ll know the roadmap to please you. He’ll have no clue what feels good to you unless you tell him . . . not only once . . . but time after time after time. “Oh, honey, I just love it when you do that!” And, “It felt good for you to start there yesterday, but today would you start . . . here?” And then just watch Lover-Boy enjoy pleasing you!
I don’t ever want to see my bride cry—ever again—especially if I’m the cause of it.

A: Wow, a guy who actually asks for help, is thinking of his wife instead of himself, runs her a bath, and goes to the store to get her favorite scent? Hang in there, buddy. You’re doing everything right! We could auction you off on eBay for big bucks.

The truth is, you’re a male, and she’s a female. And when you enter her, with Mr. Happy all puffed up and energetic, she is going to be sore. As a virgin, she hasn’t had any visitors there before.

Did your bride go to her ob-gyn before your honeymoon? Some women get their hymens stretched; some have them broken for a more pleasurable experience. Others use two or three fingers to begin stretching the opening before their first experience with sex so the muscles are more flexible.

As her husband, you’re now in a position to help her . . . gently. There’s nothing you can do about the size of your penis, but you can use a lubricant for easier entry. Also, as your wife adjusts to sex, realize that there will be some times when you won’t “go all the way.” Keep the emphasis on your love and care for her and what feels good to her. Focus on long sessions of cuddling and closeness without sex when she’s sore. Realize that for women, processing thoughts and feelings is extremely important. So don’t feel bad if she calls Mama for some advice now and then. Mama herself was most likely in a similar position, say, 20 to 30 years ago, and I bet she remembers that time and can give some long-term perspective.

If I handed you a viola and said, “Play it,” you’d probably look at me, surprised, and say, “I can’t play the viola. I don’t know the first thing about it.”
So I’d encourage you further, “Come on, just try it. I want you to play it. Take the bow and play it.”

So you do, and you make this rather awkward sound. I might look at you and say, “Good, that’s good!” My guess is that you’d look back at me and say, “Good? That’s terrible! I told you I can’t play the viola.”

“Yes,” I’d say, “but you made noise, and that’s the beginning.”

You too can make beautiful noise.

And one last thing: keep up the lavender baths. They’re a great path to your wife’s heart—and your growing love for a lifetime.

Q: I grew up in a really conservative, religious home. I was never told this in so many words, but the message came across loud and clear: *Sex is dirty. And you’re dirty if you even think about it.* Sometimes I wonder how on earth I ever came to be, because I never saw my parents in anything less than their bathrobes. I still remember getting in trouble as a 7-year-old for running out of the bathroom in my underwear without a robe on. Bible verses about staying pure were held over my head during my teen years.

My fiancé (husband in three days) says he can’t wait to see me nude. I know this sounds stupid, but that idea panics me. I really love him and trust him, but I’ve never revealed my body to anyone. The only sex education I’ve really had is from books—the ones I’ve purchased in the last year since Ryan and I got engaged. I really, really want to be married, but being naked just seems . . . *dirty.* Okay, so I said it. How can I get that out of my mind?

A: Thanks for your honesty. And you’re right. The way you were reared has everything to do with how you view your body. It
sounds like your home was extremely strict. For example, most 7-year-olds wouldn’t think a thing about streaking completely naked from the bathroom and down the hall—and yelling happily as they go, “Hey, look at me!” You were wearing underwear and you still got in trouble. That hands-off approach has made you understandably skittish. It’s time to adjust your thinking. You mentioned you’re aware of Bible verses. But I’ll bet anything that you weren’t allowed the opportunity to read the Song of Solomon (also called the Song of Songs), unless you sneaked and did anyway. Here’s just a little snippet:

How beautiful you are and how pleasing,  
O love, with your delights!  
Your stature is like that of the palm,  
and your breasts like clusters of fruit.  
I said, “I will climb the palm tree;  
I will take hold of its fruit.”  
May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine,  
the fragrance of your breath like apples,  
and your mouth like the best wine.

Song of Solomon 7:6–9

Whoa! That’s in the Bible? you’re saying. Yup, sure is. The whole book is a joyous celebration of married sex, showcasing all the delights that God has planned for one man and one woman in holy matrimony. May I make a suggestion? Take a Bible with you on your honeymoon and place a Post-it note on the Song of Solomon. On your honeymoon night, start reading slowly from the beginning of the book: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth” (Song of Sol. 1:2).

As you read together, caress each other gently and begin to undress slowly (in a low light, if that’s what you’re most
comfortable with), and you’ll begin to experience the delights of marital bliss with the one who loves you and has chosen you.

And, by the way, if you still need that bathrobe? (Old habits do die hard.) Ask your groom-to-be to handpick something out for you himself. I bet it’ll look far different from the ratty pink one you’ve been wearing for years.

B. You’re Experienced Sexually (You’ve Had Prior Partners or Been Married Before)

Q: I’m really embarrassed to write this letter, but here goes anyway. We just returned from what we thought would be the greatest time we’d ever have as a couple, in the exotic setting of the Bahamas. Sex was . . . a major disappointment. No, let me correct that. It majorly stunk. No fireworks. Nothing special. Just kinda . . . boring. We’re both in our thirties and have had multiple partners before. I hate to even admit this, but all the

What to Expect on Your Honeymoon . . .

For virgins
1. A scared, apprehensive, nervous, somewhat fearful (see where I’m going here?) bride (who just might cry or call Mama)
2. A nervous groom (who may need a lot of cold showers)
3. A sore bride with a urinary/bladder infection and an unhappy (for awhile) Mr. Happy
4. Empty tubes of KY Jelly

For those who are remarrying or have had prior sexual experiences
1. A fresh new start, brimming with realistic or unrealistic expectations
2. A determination to make it work this time
3. A different partner than the one you had before (that may seem obvious, but think through that one . . .)
4. Old memories surfacing when you least expect—or want—they to
hot and heavy nights with my high school boyfriend in the backseat of my dad’s car were much more sizzling.

After the first three nights, my new husband and I just found other things to do—like going to late-night luaus and lying on the beach to watch the stars. Surely there has to be more to this marital intimacy than what we’ve experienced.

A: No worries. Remember that your honeymoon was only the beginning movement of the symphony you’re going to create together as a couple. If it was that boring and you’re finding ways of filling time without having that closeness, I think there’s something missing in your relationship. Are you really a couple who can share thoughts and feelings with each other? Do you have what I call the “intimate connection,” where you could pick up a conversation two weeks later and not miss a beat? I think there’s something wrong with your relationship, and coupled with that, you had some pretty high expectations of what your honeymoon would be like.

Think of men as violas for a moment. Violas can be made in the same factory and be built to the exact same specs, and they still have a different tone! What you’re experiencing with your husband will be much different from what you experienced with your high school boyfriend. (And I would hope so! From what you’ve said, those nights were all about lust and certainly not about commitment, longevity, and communication.) Your husband is a different instrument than your old boyfriend. He’ll play with a completely different tone—but it doesn’t mean that he won’t play with passion and excitement.

I have news for you. Great sex takes time to perfect, but what a fun ride it can be! So make time for sex in your marriage. If you both feel bored or feel like it’s nothing special, talk about what would be exciting—and try it!
Go beyond the standard missionary position and experiment with what feels good to each of you. Romance each other during the day. Go ahead and lay on the beach to watch the stars. But make a few adjustments. Lay a blanket over the two of you and let your fingers do the walking all over your spouse’s body. Nibble on his ear. Get Mr. Happy’s attention with a little rub. Whisper sweet somethings to her about how desirable she is and how she’s the only one you desire.

Try some of these ideas for turning up the heat, and also invent your own. You might just find yourself walking a little more quickly back to your honeymoon suite.

Q: Guess my dad said it best. “Paint or get off the ladder, son,” he told me one day when I said I was debating whether to ask Cindy to marry me. He raised an eyebrow and added, “Well, you’ve been getting what you wanted—a little watoosie (my dad’s word for sex)—for seven years. Don’t you think it’s about time to get a ring on her finger?” I couldn’t argue with him; he was right. So we went ahead and did the whole wedding thing.

Now we’re spending two weeks in our dream vacation spot: Hawaii (we’ve saved up for years to go at some point). Funny, though, I don’t feel any different about her than I did before. Guess I was hoping we’d ramp up the sex now that we’re mar-

For Men Only

What Your Bride Needs Most from You

1. Don’t think of sex as “the jackpot”—think of it as part of your relationship (albeit a very important part, says Mr. Happy quickly).
2. Think of your bride’s needs first, before your own.
3. Realize she needs an environment of love, care, trust, and that she needs to feel safe, protected, and not rushed for her to have sex at the forefront of her mind.
ried. But it just seems like the same old, same old. Am I just expecting too much?

A: The very tone of your letter shows that you’re discouraged. Here are a few probable reasons:

1. You called your wedding (the event that should be the huge event in a couple’s life—their joining) “the wedding thing.”
2. You referred to your dream vacation spot instead of your honeymoon.
3. You mentioned that the sex was “the same old, same old.”

Well, how different did you think sex in Hawaii would be from your home in Illinois? The two of you haven’t changed, right? So sex in Hawaii is only going to be hotter and muggier!

The only thing that has changed is the piece of paper that declares you both have the same last name now. Let’s face it: the surprise of sex and intimacy between the two of you has long been removed by your previous experiences. So if you’re expecting a hot sexual interlude that’s surprising and new on your honeymoon, you’re a dog barking up the wrong tree.

Instead, think of your honeymoon as a new chapter in your life and in your love story. Because of your love for each other, you’re taking your relationship to a deeper level. You’re signing on the dotted line and pledging your troth to each other—whatever that is. I pledged mine years ago and still don’t know what it is!

Your sex life doesn’t have to be boring, though. Talk together about how to liven things up.
Q: I’m 40, and I just got married for the first time. All my friends say, “It’s about time,” and I guess it is. Brett’s a great guy. We had been going together for four years (and yes, sex was a part of our relationship) and decided six months ago it was time to tie the knot. We’d both like to have kids someday, and I’m not getting any younger. And because I grew up with parents with two last names (my dad divorced my mom after he had an affair), I didn’t want to do that to my own kids. So three weeks ago we got married and took a week off work for our honeymoon. I have to say, honeymoons are nothing like all the articles I’ve read. I just thought being married would be a little more exciting . . . especially the sex part.

A: Good for you for deciding to make the commitment to get married, especially with thinking about children on the horizon. You’re right—it isn’t fair to a child to be in a situation where there are no ties, where one of you can walk away scot-free at any time from the relationship. And that’s what happens over and over every day in America (as you well know—you lived through it as a child).

In essence, you’ve had all the amenities of a marriage—without the commitment—over the past four years. By now you know each other quite well. You’ve been functioning as husband and wife without the paperwork, so you tell me what’s going to be different on your honeymoon. You aren’t working through the sex-for-the-first-time jitters or surprises such as, “I didn’t know it would take you an hour to get ready to go to the pool!”

And you know what? You made a smart choice to get married. Research tells us that people who are married are happier, are healthier, and live longer than people who aren’t. What a good step in the right direction! And down the road, your kids will thank you too.

**Straight Talk**

When you and your spouse leave on your honeymoon, it’s so tempting for others to send you to the field of life with a pat on the back and the words, “Go win one for the Gipper.” But the reality is, developing your sex life in your marriage isn’t something you simply win or lose. It’s something you win for yourself and your mate.

Your sex life has the potential to be one of the most, if not the most, satisfying and pleasurable parts of your marriage. Sex as the Creator intended it to be is a great gift that draws one man and one woman together for a lifetime.

The best things that honeymooners can do for themselves are read books about sex and communication, and talk about things before they get married, all through the honeymoon, and through the next 50 or more years of their life together.

So why not approach your honeymoon with the attitude of, “Hey, I’m not sure what we’re getting ourselves into here, but I’m convinced it’s going to be a great ride. So let’s learn, laugh, and have fun doing it together!”

Now that’s a honeymoon attitude for a lifetime.