

**Beyond All or Nothing Sexuality**  
**By Karen K. Harrison, Ed.S.**  
**Printed in Evolving Magazine**

Do you find yourself either having intercourse or no sexuality or affection at all? If so, you are like many of the couples I work with in my marriage and family and sex therapy practice. Why? Here are the common reasons. One partner has more desire than the other, more often the male, but not always. The female then is reluctant to be affectionate because the other partner might interpret it as a sexual advance. She is already having more sex than she wants and doesn't want to invite additional sex. Another situation is the female has one of many kinds of vaginal pain problems, hormonal issues, or recurrent vaginal infections. These problems are usually treatable by a gynecologist sometimes in combination with a sex therapist or physical therapist who specializes in women's pelvic floor issues. Some women feel embarrassed and avoid seeking help. Men may want to avoid sexuality due to problems getting or maintaining an erection or struggling with premature ejaculation. A history of sexual abuse for women or men can cause flashbacks during sex that make sex unpleasant. The couple may have trouble with birth control methods so they fear getting pregnant. These are the more common reasons couples abstain from sexuality.

When couples adopt the approach of intercourse or nothing at all, they often find themselves having less affection, touch, and closeness. Over time, partners can drift apart. My opinion is that God gave couples affection and sexuality to get them through the rough parts of life like conflict, working, having children, finances, chores, sickness, loss, etc.

What can couples do to create closeness instead of having sex or nothing? Ah, I am so glad you asked! There are so many options. Consider the whole body as a pleasure center. Give your partner a head massage. It is easy to do this by having the giver sit on the sofa and the receiver sit on the floor. Or the giver sits on the sofa or bed and the receiver places their head in the other's lap. Try different touches and even grab chunks of hair and pull lightly. Ask the receiver to tell the giver if he or she would like the touch harder, softer, slower, or faster and if he or she would like a different spot rubbed. Give a neck and shoulder rub. Move on over to the ears and find lots of ways to delight your partner. Many find the ears to be an erotic zone. Giving a hand or foot massage can relax your partner. Most people love a back massage and it becomes more fun when you do this on the floor and straddle your partner's back. They don't get that in a traditional massage! Put blankets underneath for cushioning with a sheet or towel on top to catch any oil. I like to suggest that one partner give for 10 to 20 minutes and then switch. Make sure each partner gets a turn giving and receiving. Some couples get in a rut with one always being the giver and the other the receiver.

Awaken the senses of your partner in a wonderful way. One partner is the receiver and sits or lays down with eyes closed or even blind folded. The other uses items that have been previously selected for the experience such as feathers, silk, fur, scents, ice

cubes, rattle, etc. The giver touches the receiver with the items, wafts the scent under the receiver's nose, or makes the sounds nearby. Take about 15 to 20 minutes and then switch. Another way to enjoy the senses is to do the same experience with food such as cut-up fruits, strips of vegetables, cheese, chocolate, or nuts. Have the receiver sit up for this experience. Waft the food under the receiver's nose, slide it across his or her lips, and then suggest he or she eat the food slowly and succulently, savoring each bite. These are two of the exercises we have done in the Sacred Relationship/tantra classes that I teach. One woman remarked after the experience that it was better than sex!

Dancing is a great way to connect. Put on something slinky, sexy, or wear nothing at all and boogie to music that moves you both. Or have some fun and dance for your partner. Women can dance like a pole dancer, belly dancer, ballerina, or do regular dancing. Men and women enjoy moving to drum music that evokes our primitive natures.

Lay together in spoon position with one partner's back against the other's belly and synchronize your breathing for 5 minutes. Then switch positions. This is a great way to harmonize your couple energy because breathing together literally gets you on the same wave length so that it is easier to communicate.

Sit across from one another and gaze into your partner's left eye, considered to be the window to the soul. Intend to send love from your eyes to your partner and to see beyond your partner's personality into his or her soul while allowing yourself to be seen. Start out with just a couple of minutes and work up to 5 minutes or more.

Remember how hot it was to kiss for extended periods of time when you were a teenager? Try it again with a twist. Have one partner be the giver and the other the receiver. The giver shows the receiver how he or she likes to be kissed. Then switch.

Do you like to play games? Go to [www.mypleasure.com](http://www.mypleasure.com) or [www.bettersex.com](http://www.bettersex.com) and search on games. They have a variety of games that are sure to be more fun than Scrabble and everyone wins!

I hope you are inspired to reconnect with your partner in new ways that will enhance your relationship, your closeness, and make life together more fun and rewarding. Try one idea and then another! If you are struggling in any area of your sex life, consider seeking out a certified sex therapist at [www.AASECT.com](http://www.AASECT.com).

Karen K. Harrison, Ed.S  
AASECT Certified Sex Therapist  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist  
Licensed Professional Counselor  
[www.karenharrison.net](http://www.karenharrison.net) or 816-523-4440