

What Do Women Crave? A Review of For Yourself

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What does a woman seek more than anything else in life? The answer, according to author Dr. Lonnie Barbach, is Good Sex. In her book, For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality, she outlines how a woman can not only appreciate and respect her partner's wishes in the bedroom, but she can also learn to achieve and respect her own goals as well. This book achieves the "reaching orgasm" process rather systematically; Barbach takes the reader through the process by first explaining what happens to the body, both cognitively and physiologically, during sex and orgasm, provides exercises for each reader to perform in order to reach climax, and finally answers many common questions women have about their sex appeal after or during such life altering events as pregnancy or menopause.

The first third of the book tackles the physiological and psychological aspects of both sex and orgasm. Barbach begins by making the reader feel comfortable, telling her "she is not alone." How does she know this? She introduced a group therapy program in her community in order to answer women's questions about sex and ease their feelings of inadequacy. As a sex researcher, Barbach is able to guide women on their quest to finding what it means to reach climax and how they are able to do so. Barbach tells the reader that her genitals are not "dirty" or "gross" as her old fashioned mother may have taught her, but rather something that can be a source of enjoyment--what an ungodly concept!

From a physiological perspective, Barbach lets the reader know what exactly lies in that deep dark dungeon known as a woman's vagina. Anatomically, the vagina is not that complex; a woman can achieve orgasm through either the vagina or the clitoris. The

complexity of orgasm lies in exactly where the woman feels it and how she can achieve orgasm. Every woman is different. Every woman feels orgasm in a different way. It is simple to explain that an orgasm can be stimulated through either the vagina or the clitoris, but how does the woman know she is having an orgasm? Why is it that sometimes she can achieve it and sometimes she cannot? In some cases, why can't she reach orgasm at all? Lonnie answers these questions by telling her readers that a person must completely stop thinking about anything other than feelings they are having during sex. She tells her readers to concentrate on the sensation they are feeling rather than how they are going to make their car payment or what work they have to do the next day. She tries to clarify to her audience that sex is not simply about your anatomy, but rather about what you are feeling. She states, "What we are setting out to do is to free the mind to concentrate on sexual feelings. Putting your body in the right place is the first step. Putting your mind there, too, completes the picture (97)."

Masturbation and fantasy are the most common forms of auto erotic behavior. Barbach promotes these two activities in the book as a way of achieving orgasm first by yourself, then with a partner. If a woman does not know her sexual responses herself, how can she expect her partner to know what she wants? As esteemed as men want you to think they are, they are not, however, mind readers. Barbach gives her readers a few practice exercises in order to become comfortable with even the thought of masturbation. She tells her reader to look at herself naked in the mirror and become comfortable with their genitals: Next she tells the reader to stimulate herself in a place other than her genitals. In other words, she should touch herself softly all over her body just to become comfortable. The final exercise, which usually takes more than one time to achieve, is

stimulating oneself in order to reach orgasm. After the woman achieves this, and is completely comfortable and aware of her sexual responses, she is able to move to the next stage--partner exercises.

Partner exercises prove to be a bit more difficult if a woman does not feel comfortable with her naked body in front of her partner. The first step in overcoming certain fears about sex, Barbach says, is to communicate and be open with your partner. If he doesn't realize that something is wrong in the sex "department," then how is he going to be able to help? Many of the women that Barbach spoke of, the women that were involved in the group, were afraid that their husband or partners would be angry with them and not want to help them find pleasure in sex. As to be expected, many of the women were wrong; their partners were ready and willing to help them. Once the woman establishes that she has trouble achieving orgasm, and has a partner that wants to help, it is time to move on. In the chapter entitled *Partner Exercises*, Barbach guides the reader through 10 exercises that should demonstrate how a woman can achieve sexual satisfaction with her partner.

The first few exercises prohibit sexual intercourse in order for both partners to experience different kinds of stimulation. In other words, rather than the woman jumping into bed hurriedly, simply to satisfy the man, she is able to experience other feelings aside from being the passive person, who gets no stimulation out of the action. The next exercises involve the woman allowing her husband to touch her, while touching herself as well. This demonstrates to the partner *where* and *how* he or she should touch, in order to provide satisfaction for the person on the receiving end. The final exercises involve intercourse but use different techniques, such as applying clitoral stimulation during

intercourse or different positions to try in order to “hit the right spot.” As Barbach indicates “learning these procedures takes time (178).” Both partners must be patient with one another in order to make these exercises work. By using a step by step procedure in order to familiarize both partners with one another’s bodies, Barbach proves to ease the uncertainty and comfort level (or lack there of) for both partners.

STDs, pregnancy and menopause are all things women worry about as they mature and begin exploring another person’s body sexually. In the final chapters of the book , Barbach not only warns her audience of the consequences of sexual activity, but she also provides information that many women do not know about such occurrences in the body, such as pregnancy and menopause. For example, many women, if not prohibited by their OBGYN, are able to have sex well into their pregnancy. She indicates that a number of women feel unattractive and uncomfortable during this period, but realize they can, indeed, be sexually active throughout the pregnancy. Something else women are unaware of is that, “the best preventative for sexual discomfort as we age is an active sex life, both masturbation and/or intercourse (194).” Many women feel that they are unattractive to their husbands as wrinkles start appearing and hair begins growing in strange places, but that is just not the case! Women should be just as, if not more, sexually active as they were when they were younger.

What do women want? Good Sex. What does this mean? This means being able to know your sexual responses and communicating those sexual responses to your partner. Every woman wants to reach the point of exclaiming “YES!! I HAVE HAD AN ORGASM!!” This book provided me with a great deal of information about what sex means to women, what sex means to men, and how a person’s partner can help them

achieve orgasm if you simply provide the means; communication, sex toys, sexual expansion, etc. This book provides its readers with the knowledge that sex isn't something to be ashamed of; it is something that every person needs in order maintain a normal existence. Sex provides pleasure, passion and, most of all, provides a bond between to people. A woman cannot just lay there and let her partner get all of the pleasure and not experience even one ounce of pleasure. Barbach proved to satisfy the needs of the reader by providing this guide to exploring sexuality. A woman needs to know her place both in the world and in the bedroom, and this book helps every woman gain that knowledge.