

Health & Wellness

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— Erika Prafder

THOSE MAGIC MOMENTS

Keeping an active sex life means doing due diligence

FOR mature couples, "getting lucky" too often means finding a choice parking spot rather than a romp in the bedroom. When you're together for a long time, on an emotional front, long-standing relationship issues, resentments and disappointments can lead to diminished desire, frequency and intensity of sex life," says Irina Firstein, (right), LCSW, a Midtown-based individual and couples therapist. But there are ways to combat the decline.



➤ GET PROACTIVE

Physically, "As we age, general health issues arise, and medications, such as those that treat high blood pressure, depression and cardiac issues can cause a reduced libido and typically lower levels of testosterone and estrogen," says Firstein, who recommends hormone supplementation and is a proponent of Viagra or Cialis. "Sex is important at any age. It stimulates circulation, makes you feel more alive. It's very life-affirming."

➤ CHANGE YOUR GOALS

If your sex life could use a jumpstart, "You have to know what you're prepared to do in order to have the relationship you want and to be the partner you want to be," says Esther Perel (pictured below), MA, LMFT, a Manhattan-based marriage and family therapist and the author of "Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence" (Harper Perennial).

"Sex with age only gets better. You accept yourself more," says Perel. "It's not about frequency, orgasm and measurable results. Good sex is about self-worth, entitlement and permission to experience pleasure."

➤ TAKE RISKS

"Go dancing, or walk around the city together without a plan, enjoying the mystery and surprise of where you'll end up," says Perel. "At a certain age we stop taking risks, but risk and growth go together. Getting out of a comfort zone invites playfulness and imagination."

➤ ESCAPE

"Do something nice for yourselves. Get away," says Perel. "Retreats are a way to nurture and invest in a relationship. Couples don't come just to have more frequent sex. If it happens, nice. It's about rethinking your relationship to your body, to pleasure, to your longings and yearnings."

Firstein agrees. "Whether it's a candlelit dinner, snuggling on the couch or watching a sexy movie, recall what used to evoke romantic feelings and engage in those things," she says.

➤ HAVE PATIENCE

"Sex is different in the older years. Arousal takes longer, so have reasonable expectations," says Firstein. "Place emphasis on caressing, kissing, and being open to what happens, rather than putting pressure on how often or great every experience is."

