

Her Sex Drive's Stuck In Neutral



DR. SANDRA
SCANTLING
INTIMACY, SEX
& RELATIONSHIP

*Dear Dr. Scantling:
I'm about 33 years old
and have been with the
same guy for about
four years. Having sex
has always been good
for us, but for the last
nine months, I'd rather
just watch a movie or
sleep. I'm not sure why
I've lost my interest in
sex. It's really getting
me worried. We used to*

*use condoms but switched to the pill
about a year ago. He's a patient person,
but I'm afraid he may leave me. I feel I'm
to blame for the problem I'm having. He
keeps telling me to get "fixed," but I'm
not sure who to call? Any advice would
be welcomed. Thanks.*

— **Cindy in Coventry**

Dear Cindy,

There are some small research studies indicating that women who use OCPs (oral contraceptive products) report lower sexual interest and more pain during penetration. In some

women, certain birth-control pills can lower their free testosterone level because of an increase in a protein called SHBG (sex hormone binding globulin) that actually "gobbles up" testosterone, the key hormone of desire. Some women on OCPs have more than four times as much SHBG than women who use other methods of contraception. There's also some evidence that in some of these women who have been on OCPs, the SHBG remains elevated for some time after the woman stops the pill.

I suggest you start by calling your gynecologist to discuss your changes in libido. She or he may decide to check your SHBG level and other lab values. Based on those findings, you may be prescribed a more "androgenic" pill or a lower-dose pill, assuming your physician feels it's indicated.

On the relationship front, I'm concerned that your male friend "keeps telling you to get fixed" (as if you need to be neutered or spayed) and that you're afraid he may leave you because of it. Have you shared your worries with him? The road gets bumpy on this

intimacy highway, and we've got to buckle up for the rough times. Conditional relationships that put pressure on one partner to change are rarely successful. Keep your lines of communication open with him, and put away your self-blame. You may have the decreased desire, but both of you have the problem.

Best,

Dr. Scantling

*Dr. Sandra Scantling is a licensed clinical psychologist, advanced-practice registered nurse and certified sex therapist. She practices in Farmington. You may e-mail her at AskDrScantling@aol.com. Her website is www.dr.sandy.com. Her archived columns for *The Courant* are available at www.courant.com/ne.*

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