

IDENTIFYING YOUR LIBIDO TYPE

Dr Sandra Pertot, Clinical Psychologist and Sex Therapist

From: When Your Sex Drives Don't Match: Discover Your Libido Type to Create a Mutually Satisfying Sex Life (Marlowe & Co, 2007)

It makes sense that mismatched libidos are more than just differences about how often you and your partner want sex. Some individuals in a relationship may actually desire sex at the same frequency, but differences in what they want and need from sex can lead to misunderstanding and frustration so one or both gradually withdraw from sex.

Below are 10 sentences that describe different aspects of sexual desire and satisfaction. Rank the following from 1 to 10, in order of what **most** describes you to what **least** describes you:

1. Emotional intimacy is more important to me during sex than sexual performance. ☐
2. I only feel emotional closeness with someone who is sexually passionate. ☐
3. I need sex to cope with my life. ☐
4. I should get the sex life I want when I am in a committed relationship. ☐
5. I find it difficult to resist sex with other partners despite being committed to one partner. ☐
6. My sexual satisfaction only comes from pleasing my partner. ☐
7. Although I feel sexual desire, I avoid sex because I worry I can't please my partner. ☐
8. I don't think it would bother me if I never had sex again. ☐
9. I'm not worried about sex, it's just easier to relieve sexual frustration with masturbation. ☐
10. I find it difficult to arouse and enjoy sex unless I involve a special object or situation. ☐

Now go back to the first three you have chosen, and identify whether this aspect of your sexuality influences your sexual thoughts, feelings and behavior; circle the right answer for you:

Choice 1:	all of the time	most of the time	occasionally
Choice 2:	all of the time	most of the time	occasionally
Choice 3:	all of the time	most of the time	occasionally

Key to Types

These are the labels I've used for each type, but they are used as a convenient summary, and you may find other words you feel describe more accurately how you feel:

- | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Sensual | 2. Erotic | 3. Dependent | 4. Entitled | 5. Addictive |
| 6. Reactive | 7. Stressed | 8. Disinterested | 9. Detached | 10. Compulsive |

The ten libido types describe common sets of characteristics which you can then draw upon to identify your own sexuality. This preliminary exercise will give you an indication of your libido type. If your first choice stands out to you, and none of the others seem relevant to you at all, you are likely to be a straightforward libido type.

However, at least half of you will find that you don't neatly fit into a single type: there may be other libido types that influence your sexual feelings, thoughts and behavior some of the time, most of the time, or all of the time. If there are two or perhaps three choices that all strongly influence you, you are a mixed libido type, which means that you have a blend of characteristics from more than one type. Sometimes the blend is more subtle, when there is one dominant type for you, but others have a moderate or mild influence. Given the complexity of human sexuality, there is much more variety than ten libido types, and it is not my intention to put any limits on this.

For example, a common blend is the Sensual/Erotic libido type, which means that while for this lover emotional connection is more important than sexual performance, at least sometimes he wants this to be expressed in a passionate and erotic way. Other common mixed types are Reactive/Sensual, Entitled/Erotic, Detached/Stressed, and Addictive/Entitled, but don't feel limited by these examples. The point of this exercise is not to end up with a label to pin on yourself (or your partner) but to find a way of describing your current sexuality as a tool to address the problems you and your partner are experiencing.

The libido type you have identified is not necessarily how you have been in the past or will be in the future, because your libido type can change as your life circumstances change. For example, any of the libido types associated with a regular desire for sex can become a Stressed, Detached, or Disinterested libido type under conditions of stress or distress. Conversely, with encouragement, support, and respect, some types who prefer to avoid sex can discover an unanticipated sexual interest that moves them into an active libido type.

Your partner

Now you might like to use this exercise to describe what you think your partner's libido type is - but I warn you at the outset, your partner may disagree with your assessment. The point of the exercise is to work out whether you are each judging the other's sexual wants and needs accurately, or whether you misread and misinterpret each other, leading to hurt and confusion.

When you have each done this exercise for both of you, you now need to talk about your discoveries with curiosity, respect and generosity so that you can understand and appreciate the differences between you. This is the first step to finding mutually satisfying solutions for your sex life.