

## Book Excerpt: "Secrets of the Sexually Satisfied Woman" Ten Keys to Unlocking Ultimate Pleasure

Written by Laura Berman, PhD, & Jennifer Berman, MD  
Last Updated Monday, 26 March 2007

One of the greatest mysteries of life is what constitutes a woman's sexual satisfaction. This book is about solving that mystery. It's about making sexual Nirvana an achievable goal, and unlocking the secrets to extraordinary lovemaking.

It's safe to say that many of us strive to reach the pinnacle of sexual bliss. It's why we read the magazine articles, buy the books, and watch television with such a fervent interest when there is something in the news about ecstasy in the bedroom. Sex is a central part of who we are—it's a part of the fabric of our relationships and our society. Most women agree that sex is much more than our genitals, and at the same time, it is not just a state of mind. There is a complex relationship between life circumstances, health factors, and our sexuality, often barely understood even by experts in the field. We are sisters and doctors—Laura a therapist, Jennifer a physician. Our careers are focused on helping women find sexual pleasure.

For years, women have been talking to us about their sensual aspirations, regardless of their age, marital status, race, and religion. We have built two of the premier centers for research and treatment of female sexuality: Laura is clinical assistant professor of OB/GYN and psychiatry at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago and directs the Berman Center there, and Jennifer is assistant professor of urology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA in Los Angeles and directs the Female Sexual Medical Center there. The combination of our backgrounds led us to take a multifaceted, mind-body approach to working with the total woman.

We find there has been a lack of understanding between therapists and the medical establishment that has led to a piecemeal treatment approach to women's sexuality. There is a common frustration among our female patients, as so much focus in the medical community is on male sexuality, male sexual function, and getting an erection long enough to have intercourse. This treatment gap derives from a lack of medical attention paid to women. Much of the focus has been on the clinical treatment of erectile dysfunction. This is in part a result of men pushing for an end point, namely an erection sufficient enough to perform.

While males often associate ultimate sexual pleasure with orgasm, for women it's much broader. It's an overall feeling a woman has about her love life. The FDA guidelines for new drugs are focused on orgasm as the main outcome variable to prove effectiveness, but it's not necessarily the most important factor.

Two years ago we began a journey to understand the complexity of women's sexual satisfaction. Rather than focus on negative aspects, we decided to take another approach. The better question, we thought, is to ask what are the secrets of people who celebrate their sex life and what can we learn from them? What components of their romantic lives lead to ecstasy under the sheets? Drawing from our personal experience with the thousands of women we've treated, as well as our peers and published literature, we created a study that measured sexual satisfaction.

{mosbanner:id=1:right:0}We asked a wide range of questions relating to lifestyle, mental and physical health, and sexual attitudes and behavior. The questions were designed as a validated measure of sexual satisfaction. By comparing the results we were able to determine how the various life factors correlated. In essence, we wanted to find the top ten keys to help every woman unlock the sexually satisfied woman inside.

### The Women's Sexual Satisfaction Survey (WSSS)

Our goal was to carry out this study in the most scientific way possible. We selected a nationwide sample of women by random-digit telephone calling. A total of 2,604 women, eighteen and over, participated in the survey, and of them, 41 percent felt that having a satisfying sex life is very important, a pleasantly surprising number. There was no notable difference in sexual satisfaction as far as income, employment, education, or race. In the overall sample, 49 percent had a high school diploma or less, and 51 percent had some vocational school, college, or more.

The respondents ranged in age from eighteen to seventy-one. The breakdown by age group is:

- 18–24 years, 14 percent
- 25–34 years, 21 percent
- 35–44 years, 24 percent
- 45–54 years, 20 percent
- 55–64 years, 13 percent
- 65–71 years, 8 percent

The women were of varied ethnic backgrounds, although predominately white: 66 percent Caucasian, 12 percent African American, 11 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian/Pacific, 3 percent mixed race, 3 percent Native American, and 3 percent other. (This adds up to 101 percent due to rounding off the numbers.) All of the women resided in the contiguous United States.

In analyzing the survey results for this book, we assessed what these women have in common, such as their state of mind, their outlook on life, their sexual function, and the nature of their relationships.

### Our Goal

In writing this book we hope to help all women reach their ultimate passionate connection. We want them to look forward to and cherish their sex lives, which contributes greatly to general health and wellness. In fact, studies have shown that sexual satisfaction is an important factor in marital happiness, and sexual dissatisfaction is associated with divorce.

We hope to inform and empower women, encourage them to take control of their sexuality, and overcome hurdles. We want women to feel comfortable advocating for their sexual needs and know they have the tools necessary to accomplish it. We also want to dispel some of the myths.

In our first book, *For Women Only: A Revolutionary Guide to Reclaiming Your Sex Life*, we armed women with information about their bodies and sexual response, and offered treatment options when they are faced with sexual dysfunction. We focused on physical difficulties and sexual stumbling blocks. The premise was that all women should feel entitled to their sexuality, and we want to build on that idea. This is the first national study that compares multiple life factors to measures of sexual satisfaction. From the findings, we are able to offer advice on maximizing sexual function.

Based on our clinical experience, along with the survey results, the following are ten key components to sexual satisfaction:

- Sexual communication in and out of the bedroom
- Relationship health—emotional and physical connectedness
- Strong emotional health and social support
- Self-stimulation
- Addressing your past
- Orgasm
- Arousal
- Lubrication
- Accepting and overcoming physical obstacles
- Sexual empowerment

In this book we will explore these components. We have devised quizzes, tips, rules, and guidelines. In the process of trying to attain sexual satisfaction, there will be inevitable struggles and soul-searching. You may revisit your past and reevaluate your relationships and expectations. You may have to change the way you think about sex, yourself, and your partner.

It may mean changing your attitudes, confronting your weaknesses, and assessing your emotional well-being with an open mind. You may find our advice easy to follow, or you may find it just the first step on your journey to sexual health. It is important to note that deep-rooted problems can be hard to fix, and when solutions are too challenging, therapy may be indicated. (See the Appendix on how to choose a therapist and type of treatment.)

This book is for every woman. Those who are sexually satisfied will want to continue to enhance their romantic lives, and those who are not will want to find ways for improvement.

Additional resources on female sexuality are available from MayoClinic.com:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/kegel-exercises/WO00119>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sexual-health/HA00035>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/womens-health/WO00110>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sexual-health/HQ01363>

