



Ask Barbara

The 100 Most-Asked Questions about Love,
Sex, and Relationships

Barbara De Angelis, Ph.D.



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Sex, and Relationships

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**THE QUESTIONS EVERYONE WHO'S
EVER BEEN IN LOVE HAS ASKED...
THE ANSWERS EVERYONE
IS TALKING ABOUT!**

**How can you tell if someone is really
committed to the relationship?**

**How can I ask my partner for what I need
without sounding too demanding?**

**Is it okay to have fantasies about someone
else while I'm making love to my partner?**

**How do you deal with a partner
who is a flirt?**

**How do you know when a relationship just
isn't going to work and it's time to leave?**

**How can I get my partner to give me more
physical affection when we're not
having sex?**

**How can I get my husband to pay as much
attention to me as he does to our children?**

**Should I give a cheating partner
another chance?**

**AND 92 MORE
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
ABOUT LOVE, SEX, AND
RELATIONSHIPS**

What qualities should a partner have?

How important is sexual chemistry in a relationship?

Is it possible for a couple to rediscover sexual desire for each other after it has disappeared?

How long should it take to recover from a breakup?

Why do my partner and I fight all the time? How can we stop?

If your partner has an affair, should you just forgive and forget? How do you learn to trust again?

Is there a way to detect symptoms of trouble In your relationship so you can solve the problems before they get too serious?



First comes love, then comes... questions? In *Ask Barbara*, bestselling author and renowned relationship expert Barbara De Angelis, Ph.D., spotlights the 100 intimate issues that most often challenge couples in love—and singles searching for the right partner.

With warmth, wisdom, and compassion, she draws from her own experiences as well as those of the thousands of men and women who attend her standing-room-only seminars to deliver all the advice you need—to create a love that will last forever!

“Barbara has the advice guaranteed to make your love life soar.”

—*Complete Woman*

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by
Barbara
De Angelis**

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ASK BARBARA

**The 100
Most-Asked
Questions
About Love,
Sex, and
Relationships**



I humbly dedicate this book

To my beloved Teacher,
Whose Light has kindled my own,
Whose Love has made me whole,
And Who, in a sublime and miraculous instant,
Answered all my questions
By revealing the Truth to me.

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And most of all, my husband, Jeffrey, for being my best friend, my healer, my light, my inspiration, and for traveling with me along the invisible and sublime road that is leading us Home.

The 100 Most-Asked Question About Love, Sex, and Relationships

Author's Note

Love and Intimacy

How do you convince a workaholic partner to put more time and energy into a marriage?

Is it natural for the passion to disappear after years of marriage?

If a relationship takes a lot of work, does that mean something is wrong with it?

How do you deal with a partner who is a flirt?

How can I stop mothering my husband?

How can I help my partner break through the emotional barriers she put up because of her painful childhood?

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Dear Reader,

Everywhere I go, and I mean *everywhere*, people ask me questions about their love life. I can be eating dinner in a restaurant, standing in line for a movie, sitting on an airplane, or walking down the street—it doesn't matter—and someone will approach me with a question they're desperate to get answered. I've talked to men and women about the most intimate details of their relationships in the strangest of places, from the dressing room of a department store, to the galley of a jumbo jetliner crossing the Atlantic in the middle of the night, to a hiking trail in the California mountains, to the restroom of a museum in Paris.

What do people ask me? ANYTHING!!! I've had a salesperson ask me if I thought she should stay with her boyfriend even though he was sleeping with his ex-wife... while I was buying underwear! I've had a Marine officer roll down his car window and ask me to explain why his girlfriend was mad that he went to a friend's bachelor party... while his vehicle drove alongside mine at fifty miles an hour! I've had a security guard at an airport ask my advice on how he could give his wife an orgasm... while he X-rayed my carry-on bags! Then there was the time a cab driver was intent on discovering the secrets of getting women to be attracted to him and (as I discovered later) drove me miles out of my way in order to prolong the ride!

However unusual the circumstances or delicate the questions, most of the time I'm happy to offer my answers to the people who approach me (that is, unless I'm in the middle of chewing a mouthful of food, or trying to have an intimate night out with my husband!!). The reason is simple: I have great respect for anyone who has the honesty and courage to search for the truth about love, sex, and relationships. I believe that most of us need to ask ourselves and the people we love more questions, questions that will help us live with more integrity, love with more success, and move through our days and nights with more peace.

After almost twenty years of teaching about personal and spiritual development, it dawned on me that there were certain questions I kept hearing over and over again, at my seminars, through letters, on call-in radio and television programs. They are the kind of questions that anyone who has ever been in an intimate relationship needs the answers to. They are the questions you've asked yourself when you're lying in bed late at night, the questions your friends call and ask you when they're having a hard time, the questions whose answers you wish you'd had before your first date.

I wrote this book to be like a "*love encyclopedia*," offering you information in various categories to help you with whatever you're going through at a particular time in your life. You can read the book from beginning to end, or just turn to a section that specifically applies to your issues right now. And whenever you're having an argument with your mate, or when you're wondering how to handle a particular situation in your love life, or when a friend in a romantic crisis calls you up asking for advice, look through the list of questions, turn to that page, and you'll find the answer.

If you've read any of my other books, you know that I believe creating successful relationships takes a lot of commitment and hard work. So obviously, *Ask Barbara* isn't meant to be a cure-all for every personal issue you are faced with in your love life. My hope, though, is that what I've offered you in these pages will help connect you to your own inner wisdom, and guide you to discover the answers that are already waiting for you in your own heart.

In love,



Barbara De Angelis

July 25, 1996

Los Angeles, California

Love and Intimacy

1 How do you convince a workaholic partner to put more time and energy into a marriage?

I feel like I'm always competing with my husband's job. He's an attorney and works sixty to seventy hours a week, not to mention most weekends, which doesn't leave much time for me and our two boys. When I complain, he argues that he's doing this for us, and points to our lifestyle, which I have to admit, is very luxurious—we have a beautiful home, a boat, a vacation cabin (which we hardly use), and all the money we need. The only thing missing is him! He blows up when I call him workaholic, and tells me I'm being ungrateful. Is he right? How can I convince him to pay attention to us?

→♥♥♥→ You're not ungrateful... you're just lonely, and with good cause. You can't snuggle up to a checkbook, or hold hands with a share of stock, and neither can your kids. I have a saying: **Marriage is not a noun, it's a verb. It's not something you have, like a house or a car. It is not a piece of paper that proves you are husband and wife. Marriage is a behavior. It is a choice you make over and over again, reflected in the way you treat your partner every day.**

Men tend to define themselves by what they are *doing*, rather than what they are *feeling*, so it's no surprise that your husband has gotten caught up in the “doing more must mean I'm successful” mentality. That's the way society, and perhaps his family background, has trained him. He may feel like he's on a treadmill, running as fast as he can, and he doesn't know *how* to stop. Along with this, he may have other unconscious emotional reasons for working so hard. Some workaholics actually use their business to avoid intimacy and to maintain a sense of control over their lives. After all, it's probably easier for your husband to feel in control when he's doing business than it is when he's interacting with you and your children, and dealing in emotions, needs, and all that amorphous stuff.

Here are a few of my favorite methods to wake up workaholic partners. Whether or not these approaches are effective will depend on how addicted your mate is to the illusion of power and control that work gives him.

1. **Give him some perspective.** Have him close his eyes and imagine that he's at the end of his life, on his deathbed. As he looks back on his life, ask him to share what moments will have made his life truly meaningful. What, in the end, will really matter to him? You can bet he won't say “I can die happily because I closed ten big deals in 1997,” or “I feel content with my life because I owned a five-thousand-square-foot house,” or even “I feel at peace because I left my children a lot of money.” No, the moments that really matter, the moments that will have filled his life with meaning will be moments of love, connection, and sharing. I call these “real moments,” and he probably isn't having enough of them because he's too busy doing the things he has decided are more important. Tell him you want to share more meaningful time with him.
2. **Use fear to scare him into slowing down.** Sometimes this is the only thing that works to snap a guy out of his workaholic stupor. Ask him how he would spend his time if he knew he had only one month left to live. (Trust me, he won't say “I'd work like a dog for

twelve hours a day.”) Then remind him of some men he knows of who have died at his age, either accidentally or of natural causes. *The truth is, we never know if a day, or a month, or a year will be our last.* We live as if we have all the time in the world, and we don't. Share this anonymous quote with him:

First I was dying to finish high school and start college.

And then I was dying to finish college and start working.

And then I was dying to marry and have children.

And then I was dying for my kids to grow up.

And then I was dying to retire.

And now, I am dying, and suddenly I realize,
I forgot to live....

3. ***Use guilt as a last resort.*** Ask him to imagine what his children will say about him when they are grown. Does he really think they will look back on their childhood as happy because of their big house and expensive toys, and not care that they hardly saw the father? Does he really think that they don't care that he is hardly ever around? A child's real wish is to feel they matter, that they are important to us. The toys and treats may buy the children's silence now, but when they grow up, they won't even remember what he bought them—they'll only say "I hardly knew my dad." And they will wish he hadn't sacrificed "for their sakes," because whatever he leaves them will never be as valuable as the cherished memory of a good-night story, a game of catch, or the sight of Mommy and Daddy snuggled close together on the couch.

2 Is it natural for the passion to disappear after years of marriage?

My husband and I have been married for eighteen years and are more like best friends than lovers. We have sex very infrequently and have settled into what I would call a “comfortable” relationship. There’s a part of me that longs for that passionate emotional connection we used to have, but many of my friends tell me I’m being unrealistic, and that all couples feel this way after years of marriage. Am I expecting too much?

→♥♥♥→ Don’t buy into the popular but misinformed attitude that losing romantic attraction to your partner is an inevitable part of marriage. That’s like saying becoming unhealthy or having a heart attack is an inevitable part of growing older. Are heart attacks common? Yes—but now we know they are preventable IF you take good care of your body. In the same way, just because it’s *common* for many couples to lose the passion in their relationship over time doesn’t mean it is *natural*. It all depends on how you take care of your relationship.

Relationships don’t just lose their chemistry overnight. It takes years of neglect, not making the marriage a number-one priority, not talking about your needs, not resolving and healing hidden resentments, and not actively learning how to make love work. All these unhealthy emotional habits are what takes a couple from feeling “in love” to feeling like roommates.

I strongly believe that you *do* deserve to have a marriage that grows in love, passion, and connection year after year. Is this realistic, even in an eighteen-year relationship? Yes... if both partners decide to do what it takes to rekindle the passion and learn some of the skills you were never taught about successful loving. *Start by sitting down with your partner, taking his hands, and telling him how much you miss the physical and emotional closeness you used to share. (Believe me, he misses it too!) Without blaming him, tell him you want to work toward transforming your “comfortable” relationship into one that is intimate and exciting. Tell him he deserves more than he’s getting, as you do. When you both recommit to learning how to love, and use some of the skills I teach in my books and programs, you’ll find renewed levels of communication, closeness, and excitement.*

→♥♥♥→ SEE ALSO QUESTIONS 37 AND 47

3 *If a relationship takes a lot of work, does that mean something is wrong with It?*

At times, I find myself wondering whether my wife is my perfect partner, because our relationship doesn't ever seem to be completely effortless and without issues. We love each other very much and have grown tremendously over the past eight years, but it seems we're always "dealing" with something—balancing her needs with mine; learning to ask for what we want; giving each other enough attention, or space. Should it be this complicated?

➡❤❤❤➡ **Yes!** Show me a relationship without conflict and issues and I'll show you a couple that is either dead or in denial! A conscious relationship requires a lot of work, because it asks you to push past the fear that would keep you protected and invulnerable to your partner and, instead, to reveal *all* of you—the giving *and* the selfish part; the forgiving *and* the angry part; the compassionate *and* the blaming part. **In other words, a truly honest, deep, and committed relationship will continually confront you with all the parts of yourself that are not totally loving, and thus will make you uncomfortable as it stretches you beyond the boundaries of your ego.**

Where I think people get stuck is in the erroneous belief that a relationship is always supposed to make you feel good, so if it *feels* bad, it must *be* bad. Actually, it is often during the times when the relationship doesn't feel good that something good is happening: You are being forced to see a part of your-selves or a dynamic between you that is not healthy so you can change it and make your relationship even stronger. *It may feel like things are falling apart but actually, they are trying to come more together.* It's at these times when you need to be careful not to misinterpret your difficulties as signs of doom, but rather, opportunities for growth. (This only applies if you are actually with the right person in the first place—see the section on compatibility.)

Of course, *both* partners need to be willing to work on themselves and the relationship. And it's essential to share a vision and understanding of the purpose of your relationship, so that when stuff comes up, and it will, you remember what you're doing there in the first place. Here are three understandings I suggest couples adopt:

- 1. We have been brought together for the purpose of helping each other grow, and will be each other's teacher.***
- 2. Our relationship is a precious gift—it will take us through whatever we need to learn to become more conscious, loving human beings.***
- 3. The challenges and difficulties we experience will always illuminate our most needed lessons.***

➡❤❤❤➡ **SEE ALSO QUESTION 37**

4 How do you deal with a partner who is a flirt?

My boyfriend of two years is a flirt! He's always staring at other women when we are together especially certain body parts, and sometimes he even comes on to women right in front of me. When I complain about his behavior, he insists he's just being "friendly," and "joking around," and accuses me of being "insecure" and "jealous." What do you think?

➡️➡️➡️ What I think doesn't count—it's what *you* think and feel that matters, and you already know what that is. You think he's acting like an insensitive jerk, and he is! You don't need me to validate your opinion, but since you asked, I'll add a little something! What your boyfriend is doing is totally disrespectful. I call it "leaking sexual energy." He may not be doing anything physical, but on the astral plane, he's lusting after, undressing, and probably doing much more to other women, and right in front of you no less. His saying it's just "friendly" behavior is like someone whose dog is humping your leg telling you the animal is just being friendly. You know it's much more—you can feel it in your gut.

As for his accusations that you are "insecure" and "jealous," those are buzz words men (and women) often use to control their partner, invalidate their feelings, and make them feel something wrong with them. Don't fall for it, and don't let him minimize what he's doing to you. This is a problem that needs facing.

See, there's a difference between "noticing" that another human being is attractive as she walks by, and enjoying the contribution her beauty adds to the world, and, on the other hand, having a wild, ten-second sexual orgy with her in your imagination. The first is *acknowledging* attractiveness; the second is *indulging* in it and, temporarily, forgetting that your sexual commitment is to your partner. And you know when your lover is doing the second, because it feels like he disappeared for ten seconds—and he did.

Now, let me take his side for a moment, because the fact is that unfortunately our society trains and even supports men to behave in this disrespectful manner toward women. It's the old eye-winking, back-slapping boys' club that gives men points for "scoring," and looks the other way on cheating, flirting, etc. So it's possible that your sweetheart is a really nice, but misguided, member of the male race who just doesn't realize how his behavior is hurting you. Then again, it's possible that he's *not* a nice guy and couldn't care less about your feelings. That's a distinction only you can make.

Try sharing this information with your boyfriend without blaming him, coming from a more neutral place. See if it helps him understand how hurtful his behavior is to you, and let him know you respect yourself too much to stay in the relationship if the flirting continues.

➡️➡️➡️ *SEE ALSO QUESTION 54*

5 How can I stop mothering my husband?

My husband and I have been married for ten years, and have three small children, but I feel like I have four kids—including him. I find myself treating him like a child because he acts like one. He's always misplacing things, forgetting appointments, and leaving his stuff all over the house. I hate feeling this way, and I know it turns him off, because our sex life is practically nonexistent. How can I stop acting like his mother?

→♥♥→ Boy, am I glad you asked. Mothering our men is one of the biggest mistakes women make in relationships. The more we treat them like little boys, the more they act like it. They end up resenting us and, eventually, rebelling against us just like they did against Mom at some point. And what's worse, *mothering your mate is the quickest and deadliest way to kill the passion in your love life.* After all—no man wants to sleep with his mother, so if you're acting like her, it's going to be just about impossible to turn him on, unless he has a strange fetish for nagging and scolding.

Now, as a woman, I know how natural it is to mother someone you love. We're trained to do it from the time we are children ourselves. After all, your first and most predominant experience of love was probably associated with your mother, who carried you inside her for nine months, fed you, bathed you, burped you, and powdered your behind. Once you realized you, too, were a female, it was just a mental hop, skip, and jump to treating people you love with a “mothering, nurturing” attitude. There's only one problem—it drives men crazy and reminds them of you know who, and makes them want to leave home all over again.

There are six “Mommy-No-No's” that we do as women:

1. **We act overly helpful by doing things for men that they should be doing for themselves** (choosing his clothes, picking up after him, finding his keys).
2. **We play verbal guessing games with men to try and pull information out of them** (“You're hungry... how about some cereal? No? What about pretzels? Not pretzels? Okay, what if I make you some nice soup?”)
3. **We assume men will be absentminded or forgetful and remind them of information they should remember by themselves.** (“Don't forget it's trash night...” “Don't forget to pick up milk...”)
4. **We scold men as if they were children.** (“How many times do I have to tell you to turn off the kitchen lights?”)
5. **We take charge of activities that we assume they can't do right.** (Planning trips, taking the kids out to buy clothing.)
6. **We correct and direct them when they don't ask for our help.** (Correcting their memory, offering the “right way” to cook something.)

I know what you're thinking...“But he always forgets where he put his keys” ...“But if I don't do it, it won't get done...” Believe me, I've been there. All I can say is that you have much more to lose by behaving motherly than you do by waiting for him to find the keys.

once in a while. So here are my rules for you to follow if you want to transform yourself from a mother back into a lover:

Rule #1: Stop doing things for your mate that he can do for himself.

Rule #2: Treat him like a competent, reliable person.

Rule #3: Don't speak to him in "Mommy-talk."

Rule #4: Agree on what responsibilities are his in the relationship, and don't take over even if he makes a mistake.

Rule #5: Make a list: "The ways I play Mommy..." Read it every day, and give him a copy so he can bust you when you fall off the wagon.

Hang in there, and remember—when you break the mothering habit, you will feel and act more like a woman, and he will feel and act more like a man.

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