

# SOS Détresse

## Love-life under pressure - the couple and sex

**For most people, sexuality and tenderness are most important components of a relationship.** Physical intimacy and a fulfilling sex-life are a source of satisfaction, and deepen and strengthen the bond. Of course problems can arise, as in all other areas of the couple's life together. These problems, and their causes, can be very varied. The most commonly encountered difficulties include lack of libido in women, and problems of impotence in men.

Our love-life **mirrors our overall relationship**; conflicts and shortcomings in other areas of the relationship have a clear repercussion on it. Women are often more aware of this than men are. However, it is also the case that partners sometimes **differ in their expectations, needs and requirements of a satisfactory sex-life**. For example, the difference between men's and women's sex drive is a perfectly natural state of affairs. Moreover, it is not unusual for a couple to be made up of **two people with quite different levels of sex education, socialisation and sexual experience**; it is not always easy to find a way of coping with these differences. Almost always, sexual problems will cause pain to both partners, and frequently **the whole relationship is put at risk**.

A relaxed and easy approach to sexual matters is not a given, not even in today's society. Many couples consider their sex-life to be a **sensitive issue**, especially if it does not come up to expectations. As often as not, we **fail to find the right language to use** to let our partner know our needs and desires, our likes and dislikes. **Criticism and rejection in the area of sexuality can be particularly wounding**, as a man or woman will quickly feel inadequate, unattractive or incompetent.

The hurt engendered by a couple's sexual difficulties is not just on account of a shortcoming in the relationship. It is above all rooted in fear - of being **unloved**, of being **abandoned**, of **loneliness**. It often involves a profound sense of insecurity and diminishment of sexual identity, because one's performance has not matched one's own expectations.

Moreover, problems are aggravated by the fact that many areas of modern life are sexualised and eroticised. Yet the sexual stereotypes portrayed by the media **hardly constitute a model for a "normal" love-life**. On the contrary, they are a destabilising factor, in that the images of sexuality portrayed on screen, in magazines or on Internet focus on extreme forms of erotic-sensual passion, pornography or even violent sex. The plethora of sources of advice in this area may also be unsettling and

---

confusing. **Societal expectations of performance** can put both men and women under serious **pressure**.

As a result, many people wonder what exactly “**normal sex**” is supposed to mean. Our answer would be that **any form of sexuality which is based on mutual consent and respect, and preserves each partner’s physical and psychological integrity** is to be considered normal. Once that is assured, it is then up to each couple to find out what suits them best, and gives them the most pleasure.

**If a sexual problem is worrying you and having a negative effect on your relationship, and you can’t manage to talk openly to your partner about it, maybe a clarifying conversation with SOS Détresse could be of help.** We can assist you in determining what kind of help and support you and your partner need. If the sexual issue is tied up with other relationship tensions, you should never hesitate to seek professional help. Couple counselling and therapy have really proven themselves in this field.

- - -

Image: [The stolen moment](#) | Eleazar license: cc-by