

# Sex Therapist Tells All

By Deborah Burstyn

These days the love life of a couple can be challenging. Who needs the added pressure that a Valentine's Day brings? But ready or not, here it comes! Just in time to help is Walnut Creek sex therapist Sandra Lindholm-Norman Psy.D. In addition to her private practice, Dr. Lindholm works with Kaiser in Walnut Creek. In fact, you don't even have to be a Kaiser member to take one of Dr. Lindholm-Norman free sex classes.

Puppets, apparatus, and graphic cartoon slides were part of the presentation Dr. Lindholm gave to a crowded room full of attentive women of all ages at a recent "Reclaiming Your Sexual Passion" class. But make no mistake; this is not a comedy routine. What Dr. Lindholm serves up are straightforward sensible tips to rekindle the flame for those in a committed relationship for the long haul. Currently her classes are just for women but her advice seems relevant for all of us. Here's some of what Lindholm had to say:

1. **A healthy sex life makes us more relaxed, calm and well-rested.**
2. Sex helps communicate love and affection between partners and couples with a good sex life have less tension in other areas of their relationship.
3. **Married people have more sex than single people** but one in five marriages are non-sexual, defined as having sex less than 10 times in a year.
4. Surveys report that there are more than 40 million sexually dissatisfied women in the U.S.
5. **We need our family lives to be more marriage-centered and less child-centered.**
6. A good sex life between parents helps foster a closeness that models a healthy relationship for our children. Put a lock on the bedroom door. It is helpful for kids to know that you have boundaries.
7. **Forget togetherness.** As Shakespeare said, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Too much togetherness eradicates the separateness that sexual excitement requires. The paradox is that domestic life strives for stability, permanence and togetherness. Eroticism and passion often require novelty.
8. **Women do not lose sexual desire after menopause.** Au contraire. They are no longer worried about getting pregnant or exhausted from taking care of little kids so they're more raring to go.



9. **Americans are too goal-oriented about sex.** We need to relax and enjoy the journey, not rush to the destination.

10. **When you talk about sex with your partner, be sure to give praise and focus on the positive.** What's working? What's good?

11. **Relationship quality affects sex.** If you are angry and resent your partner, you will not feel sexual. For women there is a very thin veil between what happens in and out of the bedroom.

12. **Being in the mood emanates from being energized and healthy, not barely making it in the door.** Illness, anxiety, stress, depression and medications, such as those for blood pressure and cholesterol can detract from sexuality. Regular exercise boosts your physical well-being and can help you feel better about yourself and hence, sexier.

13. **Sex is not always going to be an academy-award winning performance.** It is important to have other physical ways of expressing physical intimacy and affection. Unrealistic expectations can lead to blame, guilt and sexual avoidance.

14. **Our culture's obsession with thinness and beauty can negatively affect women's sexuality by making them feel unattractive.** Women's dissatisfaction with their looks fuels the beauty industry but men are more interested in a woman's responsiveness. Challenge negative thoughts about yourself. For every negative thought you have about your body, come up with five to seven things you like about it.

15. **Women do a lot for others as caretakers but we also need to take care of ourselves and nurture our sexual selves.** Exercise, baths, perfume, lingerie and fantasies are all ways to do that.

16. **Avoid mental multi-tasking.** Focus. Mind your mind. The dishes won't walk into the bedroom and present themselves to be washed. Get a vibrator if it makes life simpler.

17. **Don't put off having sex until you can find the time;** time is not like a penny lying on the ground. You won't find it. You have to create it. Make sex a priority. It is healthy for you.

*For further reading, Lindholm recommends: Reclaiming Sexual Desire, Goldstein A., Brandon M. 2004, St. Martin's Press Mating in Captivity: Reconciling the Erotic and the Domestic; Perel, E. 2006, HarperCollins Hot Monogamy; Love, P.; Robinson, J.; 1995, Penguin Taking Sexy Back: the Cure for the Sexual Blahs; Campbell, J. A. 2009, Authorhouse. Contact Dr. Lindholm-Norman at (925) 457-7860 or visit her website [www.BayAreaSexTherapy.com](http://www.BayAreaSexTherapy.com).*