



Sexplain It: My Antidepressants Killed My Sex Drive. My Partner Is Getting Pissed.

Zachary Zane helps a man navigate his low libido in this week's column.

BY [ZACHARY ZANE](#) OCT 7, 2021



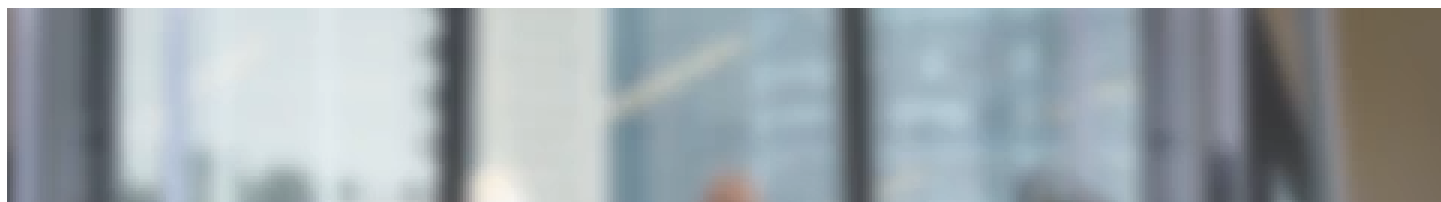
I'm Zachary Zane, a sex writer and ethical manwhore (a fancy way of saying I sleep with a lot of people, and I'm very, very open about it). Over the years, I've had my fair share of sexual experiences, dating and sleeping with hundreds of people of all genders and orientations. In doing so, I've learned a thing or two about navigating issues in the bedroom (and a bunch of other places, TBH). I'm here to answer your most pressing sex questions with thorough, actionable advice that isn't just "communicate with your partner," because you know that already. Ask me anything—literally, anything—and I will gladly Sexplain It.

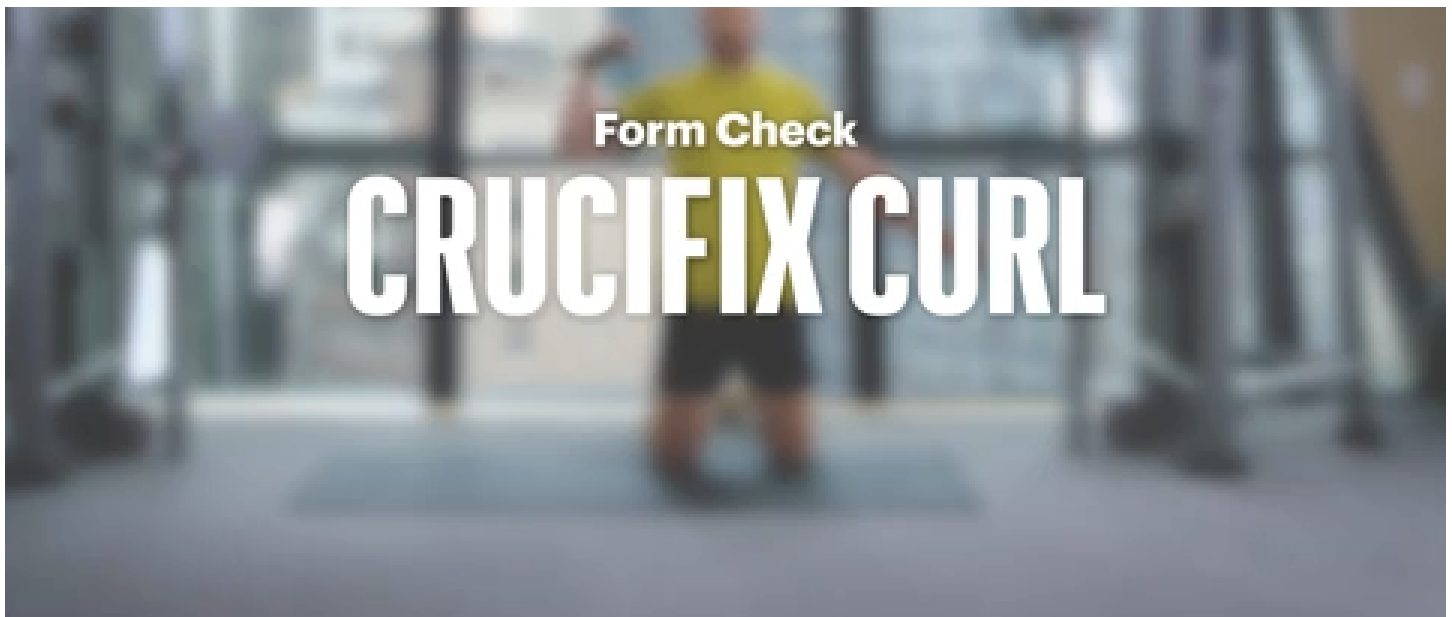
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Dear Sexplain It,

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I'm struggling with my current relationship. We've been together monogamously for almost nine months and I love him. We've been through the pandemic together, and it's been great having him in my life. The only thing is our sex drives are pretty off. I take antidepressants, and it can alter my sex drive, or just when I'm down I don't really feel like doing it. He thinks I'm judging him for being "too horny" all the time, but I feel like he thinks I'm "withholding," when really, I just don't have the energy or sex drive for doing it. I love him a lot and don't want this to be the thing that breaks us up. How do we overcome this and find a way that we're both happy?

— Broken in Berlin



SEXPLAIN IT

Dear Broken in Berlin,

My first thoughts are: Have you told him this? What you just told me, I would tell him verbatim. This goal here is to make it clear that this isn't a "you vs. him" issue. Nobody is "at fault" here. The issue here is antidepressants, and you want to tackle the issue together, as a unit. Telling him what you shared with me will help you two become a problem-solving team.

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Talking to him about this will also let you know where *he's* coming from. If he's feeling judged, that isn't coming out of the blue. He's likely had past experiences where he's been judged for his sexual behavior, so you hit a nerve. Talking about everything will clear things up. (Might I suggest couple's therapy? It's often a lot easier to have these difficult talks with a neutral, third party present to help direct your conversation.)

"Sex is absolutely central to nearly all relationships, but far too many couples are unwilling to have the conversation or afraid to approach it directly with their partners," said [Joe Kort, Ph.D.](#), certified sex therapist, and Director of the [Center for Relationship and Sexual Health](#), when I showed him your question. "As a result, you end up with issues in your sexual relationships when they could be avoidable."

So, once you've had the conversation and you're ready to face the problem as a united front, the next step is coming up with some solutions to address your low sex drive.

The first is talking to your doctor to see if there are other medications you could take that won't affect your sex drive. I know this can be a pain in the ass, and for some folks, unfeasible, as going off medication, even briefly, can cause serious psychological or physical harm—but maybe that's not the case for you. You can also "ask your doctor to see if you can take short breaks from your medication to get your sex drive back," Kort says.

"I'm also wondering if you could boost your sexual frequency by understanding your own patterns of desire."

Whether you change your meds or not, I'm also wondering if you could boost your sexual frequency by understanding your own patterns of desire. It might be that you're sitting around waiting to suddenly get in the mood (a.k.a. spontaneous desire), when in reality, you're the kind of person who gets turned on after you start

hooking up (a.k.a. responsive desire). People with responsive sexual desires need to feel physical arousal first; then, the mental desire second comes. So it might be worth it to start engaging in sex, even when you're not initially in the mood, to see if after a few minutes of kissing and heavy petting, you *do* get hot and bothered.

And if you don't think there's a world where you can increase the frequency of your own arousal, you may consider having what prolific sex columnist Dan Savage calls "maintenance sex." In short, it's having sex when you're not really in the mood, but you *do* want to fulfill your partner's sexual needs. As Savage explained in his column, "The person asking for maintenance sex—the horny partner who's being indulged/milked/sexed by the non-horny partner—shouldn't expect mind-blowing, toe-curling, sheet-shredding sex. Maintenance sex is mellow sex, it's low-impact and low-stress, it's sex that requires minimal effort, and it's likely to be non-penetrative sex—and gratitude is the only appropriate response."

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I want to clarify that doesn't mean you automatically agree to have sex every time your partner wants to even if you don't. It simply means you have sex when you're not feeling your horniest. It might not do much for you, but your partner really needs and appreciates it. You may also gain some satisfaction from seeing your partner satisfied! So go ahead and give him a handy while watching porn together. He gets off. You didn't put in that much work. Everyone's happy.

Of course, there is always the potential for an open relationship, but that shouldn't be where you start. Open relationships talk a lot of work. It's not a quick fix for issues you're having with a partner. If every person opened up their relationship for a mismatched sex drive, then nearly everyone in the world would be in open relationships (and they are definitely not for everybody).

So, your to-do list: Talk to your partner to remove any shame, anger, resentment, and confusion between you two. See if you can switch your meds. Start hooking up, even when not initially in the mood, and see how that feels. If that doesn't work, well then, this relationship might not be for you. Sometimes a mismatched sex drive overpowers love. It's a bummer, but you'll be better suited with someone who has the same libido as you.

ZACHARY ZANE

Zachary Zane is a Brooklyn-based writer, speaker, and activist whose work focuses on lifestyle, sexuality, culture, and entertainment.