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Sex begets
desire begets
more sex
begets.... You
get the idea.

LIZZIE HIMMEL GRAPHISTOCK

Sex trick BUSY COUPLES swear by

What's the first thing to go when you're busy, tired, and stressed? If you said sex, you're not alone. An estimated 24 million American women say they don't have time, are too exhausted, or just aren't in the mood for sex, and more than a third of *Redbook* readers say that being too tired is their number one excuse for not having sex. So we put it off for later—but later can easily become never. In case you haven't noticed, abstinence doesn't make the loins grow hotter, it just begets more abstinence.

No time for sex? Here's how to reignite that can't-get-enough-of-each-other passion—in just 10 minutes at a time. By Susan Crain Bakos

Sex, on the other hand, begets more sex. Studies show that lovemaking elevates the levels of brain chemicals associated with desire. So the best way to increase your yearning for sex is to *have* it—a tall order if you're one of those 24 million stressed-out women.

Get ready to recharge your batteries. Carole Pasahow, a Fair Lawn, NJ, sex and marital therapist, has designed a program especially for overworked, overstressed couples. These couples have no sexual dysfunction; their only problem is that they have *no time*.

Pasahow's Passion Fix program jump-starts a stalled sex life in less than four hours over a four-week period. The program is based, appropriately enough, on the quickie—but this is not by any means your grandmother's quickie, the wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am duty sex that pleased only the man. These quickies, which she calls provocative encounters, include both mental and physical stimulation but not necessarily intercourse.

Here's how it works: A couple pledges to make time for three provocative encounters a week. The first and longest is a 30-minute fantasy encounter (talking, not touching), followed by two physical encounters that last ten minutes each. "In less than an hour a week, a couple can rediscover the passion they thought they'd lost," Pasahow promises. "After four weeks they will be making love more often than they were before the program—and having better sex."

Too good to be true? Try it and see. Here's the step-by-step for week one—just repeat the process for weeks two, three, and four—plus comments and suggestions from women and men who've tried (and loved) it. *(continued on page 142)*

hotter sex life

(continued from page 125)

STEP 1: THE FANTASY ENCOUNTER

What it is: An intense exercise in mental foreplay.

Why it's important: Sharing fantasies with no obligation to act on them encourages creative erotic thinking, deepens understanding and intimacy, and helps you imagine each other in new sexual ways. The fantasy you develop together becomes your mutual mental foreplay for the week ahead. You'll get in the mood much faster simply because you'll have that hot fantasy ready to spark your libido.

How to do it: Set aside 30 minutes of uninterrupted time on Sunday (finding this time may be the hardest part of the program, but trust us, it's worth it) in a relaxed setting—perhaps in the bedroom after the children are asleep. Wearing loose-fitting but attractive clothing (no holey sweat pants!), sit down together and share your sexual fantasies. If you're uncomfortable talking about the ones you usually indulge in, make up some new ones. Let your imaginations roam free. The caveat: Don't touch, just talk. There should be absolutely no pressure to act. About 20 minutes into the encounter, agree on one fantasy as your mental foreplay of the week. Then build the story together, like two screenwriters developing a screenplay. The fantasy can be as simple as sex on the beach, as romantic as the memories of your courtship, or as kinky and complicated as a sci-fi scenario involving sexual slavery on an alien spaceship.

Pasahow's tips:

- Make the fantasies personal, incorporating each other's best physical features—your beautiful breasts, his bedroom eyes.
- Combine your fantasies and his in a scenario that excites you both. Eliminate story elements that one partner finds offensive or nonerotic.
- Use erotic novels and videos for storyline inspiration.
- Consider adding simple props, especially costumes, to the fantasy. You can use/wear them during the next two encounters to heighten arousal.

What the road testers say:

"I stopped waiting for sexual feelings to develop inside me and started creating them, using the fantasy encounters to rev my engine. Our first scenario was

inspired by a video on erotic massage that I rented by mistake, not realizing it was a self-help tape. Watching it, I was really turned on by the idea of getting an erotic massage. When I told my husband, he suggested that our fantasy center on him being a massage therapist whom I'd hired for a straight massage until one touch led to another. We kept working out the details until we were both aroused. Our plot may sound corny, but it worked for us." —Debra, 34

"The first week our fantasy was silly. He wanted me to be Ginger from the television show *Gilligan's Island*, because he'd had a huge crush on her when he was a little boy watching the reruns. I couldn't put myself there. Then he

Sharing sexual fantasies with no obligation to act on them encourages erotic thinking and deepens intimacy.

bought me a red wig and a cheap and very tight pink dress and a matching pair of pink stiletto heels. It worked! Just glimpsing that outfit in the closet makes me lust after him." —Amy, 29

"Karen was willing to try anything except the fantasy encounter. She said fantasizing was wrong and a betrayal of the relationship. So instead of inventing sex stories, we revisited our memories of the beginning of our relationship and told those memories to each other as stories. I can still remember how aroused I was standing next to her and sneaking glimpses of her nipples outlined beneath the tight fabric of her dress. Our first encounter was a reenactment of the night we met, at a mutual friend's surprise birthday party—except in the new version, we had sex." —Jeff, 34

STEP 2: THE FIRST PROVOCATIVE ENCOUNTER

What it is: A physical encounter that lasts at least ten minutes and includes manual and oral attention to one or both partners' genitals, plus the use of one sex toy. Orgasms preferred but not required.

Why it's important: This provocative encounter takes a couple out of the typical—and boring—sex-equals-intercourse routine. Sex becomes more unpredictable—and therefore more thrilling. For married couples in particular, sex without

intercourse seems almost illicit, like the beginning of an affair.

How to do it: Schedule this encounter for sometime in the first half of the week. Then get ready in your head: Draw on your fantasy encounter for advance mental stimulation in stolen moments leading up to the actual event—a form of "no hands" arousal.

Pasahow's tips:

- Vary your patterns of oral and manual stimulation from week to week, and use the sex toys more creatively each time. Don't do the same thing twice.
- Be more daring as the weeks pass. In week four, do something you've never done before. (For example, let him bring you to orgasm in the car before going into a dinner party.)

What the road testers say:

"In our first provocative encounter, I dared my husband to give me an orgasm without removing any of my clothing or touching my bare flesh below the neck. That was in sync with our fantasy of being rival politicians conducting a clandestine affair in television-station greenrooms between talk-show appearances. After several minutes of kissing me from eyelids and earlobes to mouth, he inserted his hand between my skirt and panties and used his thumb to massage me. It was delicious." —Rebecca, 39

"We'd both gotten lazy about performing oral sex on each other, reducing what should be a splendid act of love to a few cursory licks. I hadn't given him manual stimulation since we were dating; and he'd never done that for me. So we bought some guidebooks and brushed up on our technique. It was a learning experience for us." —Kate, 30

"We wanted more variety in our love-making but hadn't done anything to make things different and more interesting. We had our first provocative encounter in the kitchen before dinner, while our daughter was napping. I came up behind my wife, put my hands on her breasts, and said, 'I'm going to make you come for me right now.' Our fantasy scenario was built around perfect sex with a (continued)