

New book details the scientific evidence behind bringing mindfulness into the bedroom

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Quality and satisfying sexual encounters really rely on mindfulness, says Lori Brotto, a UBC psychologist and sex researcher. Credit: University of British Columbia

For women, the answer to the loss of sexual desire does not lie in prescription pills but in the practice of mindfulness, says Lori Brotto, a UBC psychologist and sex researcher.

In her first book, *Better Sex through Mindfulness*, Brotto, a professor in the University of British Columbia's faculty of medicine and the executive director of the Women's Health Research Institute at BC Women's Hospital, outlines how mindfulness improves desire, arousal and [sexual satisfaction](#).

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention on purpose, moment by moment, and doing so in a non-judgmental or compassionate way. It has a very long history within Eastern Buddhist meditation but in the past 40 years or so, mindfulness has made its way to Western health care.

We know from interviewing people about their most satisfying and optimal sexual experiences that they describe those great encounters in a mindful way. They'll say things like: "I was fully alive," "I was completely there," "I was totally in tune with my partner" or "I was aware of every breath and every sensation."

I would say that quality and satisfying sexual encounters really rely on mindfulness.

Why is compassion and non-judgment a big part of helping women with their sexual concerns?

Mindfulness is more than just concentration training. It's fundamentally about how we pay attention and how we concentrate. The compassion and non-self-judgment aspects mean that we're not berating ourselves

for doing it wrong, but rather we're expressing a lot of kindness and compassion towards ourselves for whatever we observe when we pay attention.

The clients we see with sexual concerns will often state that they are chronic multi-taskers and, in fact, take a lot of pride in defining themselves that way. But multi-tasking often extends to sexual activity. During these moments, our client's mind is elsewhere. Sometimes it goes to benign places like "What do I have to do to prepare for that meeting tomorrow?" but it also goes to those judgmental places like: "Will my partner notice those parts of my body that I'm not happy with? Will I not respond in a way that is going to be satisfactory? Will my partner leave me if this encounter doesn't go well?"

Those individuals who are more likely to not be in the present are also more likely to engage in those catastrophic thoughts, those negative judgmental thoughts.

Why is mindfulness a good solution for women?

Because it works, and that's why I wrote the book. I was featured in the *New York Times* in 2009 for my research and I was approached by a number of publishers with the request to write a book on this topic. At that time, I remember saying there was not enough data to conclude definitively that this would be a useful strategy.

Now, in 2018, we can conclude that the evidence is strong. There's been enough research coming from our lab and others to show that [mindfulness](#) is a skill that will help women tune in, experience greater desire, greater satisfaction and reduce their depressive symptoms and anxiety. It tackles the physiological effects of stress, and improves relationships and satisfaction.

More information: *Better Sex through Mindfulness:*
[greystonebooks.com/products/be ... -through-mindfulness](https://greystonebooks.com/products/better-sex-through-mindfulness)

Provided by University of British Columbia

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