



Experts reveal the best ways to rev up passion when the spirit is willing but the flesh is weary. By Jeannie Ralston

THE THOUGHT FLICKERS THROUGH your mind at some point between washing your face and slipping into your flannel nightgown. Sex. It's a momentary possibility. You fall into bed. Halfway through the nightly news he reaches over and caresses your arm and... It's not that you don't *want* it. You know you've put your sex life on the back burner. But carrying that moment's impulse beyond thoughts of plumbers, school plays and work deadlines—and that fierce fatigue—seems such an effort. You just can't break through to

that first step; the body once again concedes defeat.

It's one of the great ironies of married life that about the only time you find to have sex is the time

how to feel ●
sexier
 at 10 p.m.

when you're least equipped to do it right—at the end of a frenzied day of projects and kids and errands, when all engines are burned out and you feel about as sexy as the moose who trudges through town on *Northern Exposure*. “Fatigued people are not amorous people,” says Linda De Villers, a psychologist and sex therapist in Santa Monica, California. So you either do an obligatory spin in the missionary pose, fall into a you-push-this-button-and-I’ll-stroke-that-one rut or skip the whole darn thing, naively dreaming that one day will come a time when both of you will be as primed for sex as you were during those first heady (and childless) years of your relationship.

Of course, waiting for this might make for a celibacy streak that qualifies you for honorary membership in a nunnery. Rescuing your sex life requires a plan. We’re not talking about something big and complex like Hillary Clinton’s health-care proposal. We mean a few spirited hormone igniters that don’t take up a lot of space in a crowded cerebrum. “What you’re looking for is a sexual second wind, but the things that rev you up can’t be too complicated,” says De Villers. “‘Too complicated’ is not going to happen at 10 P.M.”

“Meet me by the closet door at 10:04, clothing optional”

If you want sex to be an integral part of your relationship, you have to plan for it. Many of us are reluctant to block off time for sex with our husband because it seems so premeditated. We want a little mystery, that swept-away feeling. But this attitude has not exactly led to the sex life of a Danielle Steel heroine. “If you don’t put it down on the calendar, the time will be filled with something else—kids, laundry, the news,” says Bill Young, director of the Masters & Johnson Institute in St. Louis. Just the act of writing it down gets you thinking about sex in advance, and as Young says, “Anticipation is every-

thing.” If it eases pressure, arrange the date with your husband as time to just fool around (a little cuddling, a little stroking) and see what happens from there.

Consider this “protected” time—time you’ll allow nothing short of an inferno in your family room to interrupt. Helen

Crohn, a New York City marriage and sex therapist, suggests you pick a ballpark time to be together. “If the kids go to bed at 9 P.M., don’t make it 9:15—that’s not realistic,” she says. If you’ve got teenagers who stay up later than you do, it’s probably safe to assume they have Pearl Jam blaring over their head-

phones, but lay down a closed-bedroom-door policy anyway: A shut door means no entering, no way.

Food for love—less is more

Whole books have been written about the power of aphrodisiacs. Oysters, for instance, are supposed to be the ready-for-sex food of choice. But little attention has been paid to what you *shouldn’t* eat for good sex. “Overloading on certain foods can make you tired afterward, and you won’t feel like having sex,” says H.L. Newbold, M.D., author of *Dr. Newbold’s Nutrition for Your Nerves*.

First, don’t eat too much of anything, especially for dinner, because if you weren’t sluggish already, this could make you feel that way—definitely the opposite of sexy. Avoid all day any foods or beverages you know make you tired. For some it’s alcohol; for others, dairy products. “A high percentage of people are made tired or depressed by milk and milk products, which can lead to a decreased desire for sex,” says Newbold. (A glass of warm milk at night is good advice for an insomniac and terrible advice for someone trying to boost her sex life.) Also, you might want to avoid dessert on an evening reserved for lovemaking, no matter how romantic and enticing the idea of sharing a piece of amaretto cheesecake is. “Sweets give you a lift, stimulate you for about an hour

To keep the fires burning, try what some therapists call simmering your sexual feelings.