

Creating a Ritual for Initiating and Refusing Sex – John & Julie Gottman

<http://www.gottmansexblog.com/2011/08/creating-ritual-for-initiating-and.html>

The reason communication about sex is often fuzzy or murky is because people want to save face and avoid outright rejection. It is a scary prospect for people to hear, “No” from their partner. They feel hurt.

Instead of asking their partner directly to make love, many people tend to make indirect bids for sex, and then hope that their partner will somehow pick up on their subtle initiation request...

However, research indicates that among couples in committed relationships, clear bids for affection and sex are highly more likely to be accepted, especially if they are personal (I desire *you*) rather than impersonal (*I'm horny*). Research also shows that in couples when one person clearly asks the other for sex, the answer tends to be, “YES” a whopping *85% of the time*.

This information is worth talking about, so we are going to help you come up with a ritual for initiating and refusing sex.

By a ‘*ritual*’ for initiating and refusing sex, we mean a way of acting that is very clear to both of you. A ritual for initiating sex is a clear way of saying, “*I want to make love to you.*” A ritual for refusing sex is a clear AND GENTLE way of saying, “*I love you, but right now I am not in the mood to want to make love.*” It’s a way of saying “no” without destroying our partner’s personality.

The following is a list of sample ideas for you to use, to help you and your partner arrive at an agreement for how to directly initiate sex:

1. Simply tell your partner that you want to make love.
2. Kiss your partner’s neck and say, “I really want you right now.”
3. Leave your partner a note, email or text saying that you want (or desire) them tonight.
4. Tell your partner that you find them devastatingly attractive right now and that you want to start kissing them and see where it leads...

Talk it over. Use our ideas as suggestions and come up with some ideas of your own. When you have had a chance to do that, it is time to create a ritual for gently refusing sex for when you’re not in the mood. Work with some of the following ideas:

1. Use a scale from 1 to 9 on how amorous you feel, with a 1 being “not at all amorous,” 5 being “I’m convince-able,” and 9 being “I’m very amorous.” For example, if you don’t want to make love, you might say, “Right now I’m a 1.”
2. You could say, “I usually would love having sex with you, but I need to take a rain check. Right now I’m really not in the mood, but I still find you very attractive.”
3. Or say, “I’m sorry honey, but it’s not the right time for love making or any kind of sex for me right now. But I still love you a lot, and you are very attractive.”
4. Or you could say, “Sorry, I’m just not in the mood. But can I do something to help you come?”

Ultimately we would like you to arrive at *your own rituals*. Look over our list of suggestions and select a few that you like and discuss them with your partner. See if you can come up with at a ritual that works for both of you. Give this exercise a try this weekend and comment on how it goes.