Praise for

The Elusive Orgasm

"Filled with practical advice and sound suggestions, *The Elusive Orgasm* is sure to help women overcome the inhibitions or interferences that are preventing them from enjoying orgasmic pleasure. Written with the understanding and knowledge that only an experienced sex therapist can offer, Dr. Cass has produced a book that will prove incredibly helpful to scores of women. I recommend it highly!"

—SANDRA LEIBLUM, PHD, Director,

Center of Sexual and Relationship Health, UMDNJ—Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, author of Getting the Sex You Want

"An outstandingly readable book, with excellent illustrations. In a thoroughly modern way Dr. Cass provides her readers with invaluable information and advice. Such knowledge enhances the lives of women *and* their sexual partners. Mothers read this book and then pass it on to your daughters!"

—ROSEMARY COATES, PHD,
Professor, Sexology Program, Curtin University
Vice President, World Association of Sexual Health

"The Elusive Orgasm is an important book for all women, their partners and health professionals. It takes a woman by the hand and gently guides her to sexual satisfaction and pleasure. What fun to read!"

—BEVERLY WHIPPLE, PHD, RN,
Professor Emerita, Rudgers University
Secretary General, World Association of Sexual Health

"[A] sexual bible."
—OUT magazine

"Reminds us that orgasms are not essential to good or even great sex.... A very helpful and reassuring book that is more than a guide to having orgasms, it is a book about having good sex. Clinicians who treat women with arousal and orgasm difficulties will find *The Elusive Orgasm* an extremely helpful adjunct to therapy."

—*Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*







A Woman's Guide to Why She Can't and How She Can Orgasm (Updated Edition)

Vivienne Cass, PhD



A Rockpool book

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introduction: the elusive author

THINK IT'S only fair that you know something about me. After all, discussing orgasms is not the same as talking about what to cook for dinner. Wouldn't it be nice if it were that simple? Unfortunately, few of us live in societies where sex is accepted so positively.

So, let me begin with the serious stuff. I started out as a book-keeper, then public servant, then teacher, before becoming a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist. I became professionally involved in the sexuality area at a time when such a thing was considered a sure sign of secret nymphomania (an obsession with sex).

Somehow I survived and managed a private practice for thirty years (although I can't imagine where the time's gone). I've worked mostly with adults, covering all sorts of psychological difficulties, as well as sexual issues.

Since the 1970s I've taught courses on sexual therapy at universities and to health professionals and given talks and lectures on sexuality and psychology to community groups, professionals, and the general public. I also give my fair share of media interviews, since (as we all know) sexuality and human relations are favorite topics with journalists and conference organizers.

Also of interest to me is the area of sexual orientation. In 1979 I published the first of many papers and book chapters on the way people develop the identities of "homosexual," "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual." Happily, my ideas are still being used by therapists and researchers even today.

In the mid-1980s I was asked to set up counseling services in the area of HIV/AIDS and, as a result of my experiences, published a book, *There's More to Sex Than AIDS: The A to Z Guide to Safe Sex.*

So, that's it in a nutshell. No stunning overnight career as an Internet millionaire. No worldwide exposure as a \$10,000-a-day model. No one beating a path to my door to play TV host. Oh, wait . . . I did have a yearlong stint as one-half of a duo, singing and playing guitar at a local hotel (until it was sold and our services "no-longer-required-thank-you"). And I did have a few moments of fame co-hosting a weekly radio program, *You're Only Human*, for two years. It was about the way humans imitate animals. Just kidding!

For those of you who must know the star sign of an author before you read their books, I was born under the sign of Capricorn—and yes, I'm too serious, much too practical, and I have a tendency to focus on my work instead of those around me. Fortunately, I enjoy music and balance out the serious stuff with raucous renditions of "Climb Every Mountain" (which, as you'll find out in chapter 3, is required singing for any sexual therapist).

Well, that about sums it up. Oh, yes . . . I'm told I belong to the baby boomers, but there's nothing too babylike about me these days—and I certainly don't "boom" much any more.



P.S.: Writing A book is damn hard. Everyone knows this. So why haven't I learned my lesson and turned to gardening instead?

Well, if you must know, it started with my concern for the many women who live in remote country areas and don't have access to psychological help, especially in the area of sexual therapy.

And then I thought about the women who are too embarrassed or shy to make an appointment to see a sexual therapist, even if one *is* available.

And then I pondered over how I could make sure that thirty-odd years of professional experience wasn't lost when I retired.

So, you see, in no time I'd talked myself into writing *The Elusive Orgasm*. And the thought that I might be able to cheer up someone having difficulties with orgasm dangled like a carrot in front of me and kept me going—even when the thought of typing the word

"orgasm" yet again made me want to scream. (Okay, so now you also know I'm not the calmest person in the world!)



ANOTHER P.S.: THIS is probably a good time to let you know that, despite my peculiarities, the following organizations are still happy to have me as a member:

- International Academy of Sex Research
- The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (USA)
- The New York Academy of Science (USA)
- The International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health
- Editorial Board, Journal of Homosexuality (USA)
- Australian Society of Sex Educators, Researchers and Therapists (AUS)
- Western Australian Sexology Society (AUS)
- Australian Psychological Society (AUS)
- Clinical Psychologists Association (AUS)
- Australian Society of Authors (AUS)



to begin with...

THERE ARE SOME women who do not orgasm during sex and are quite content with this. Then again, there are some women who are extremely dissatisfied with this situation. Strange, don't you think, how something that's acceptable to one woman is seen as a problem by another? Yet, women differ in other areas, so why not in the way they express their sexuality?

This book has been written for any woman who finds it difficult to orgasm and is not content with this situation. So, if you do not orgasm and are quite happy, save yourself the cost of the book—you don't have a problem (even if someone else tries to tell you otherwise). Of course, you may be interested in learning a little more about women's orgasm and buy the book for this reason. Hopefully, your curiosity will be met.

Did you know that a little baby girl, just a few months old, can have an orgasm by touching her clitoris or pressing her legs together and rocking gently? It's true! Of course, the baby has no understanding of what she's doing or feeling, and we could not call her experience "sexual," as we would for an adult. But she can experience a physical

sensation that appears to be pleasurable and relaxing. And her vagina becomes wet, just as it does for an adult woman who is aroused. As the baby girl grows older she can continue to enjoy these feelings, sometimes using orgasm to relax or soothe herself.

I suppose you're now wondering,

But if this is so natural for babies, how come adult women—like me—are having problems with orgasm?

Exactly! What has happened to stop us using our natural ability to orgasm? This is the question I want to talk about in *The Elusive Orgasm*. The truth is, there are many adult women who have lost this ability.

One American survey found that in the twelve months prior to the study being carried out, *nearly one-third* of the women they investigated (31.6%) had never, rarely, or only sometimes felt an orgasm. And, *more than two-thirds* of women in the survey (71.4%) did not always orgasm during sex with a partner.¹

Australian women are similar to American women with *nearly one-third* (28.6%) being unable to orgasm for a month or more in the previous twelve months.² In Europe, however, less women seem to have orgasm difficulties (4 to 10%).³ Don't ask me why. It's still a bit of a mystery.

Do you think that having orgasms and being happy always go together? Think again. They don't! In the American survey, nearly half the women who rarely, never, or sometimes had an orgasm (48.1%) described themselves as very happy. And, of the women who had no orgasm difficulties, about one-third did not describe themselves as "very happy" (36%). Like I say, there's a lot more to being happy than having orgasms.

So what happened—from the moment you were born—that now stops you from climaxing or having an orgasm as easily as you'd like? I'm sure you've asked yourself this same question. But how easy has it been to find the answer? For many, not easy at all. You may not have access to a professional person with the right training. Books (not to mention bookshops) may not be available where you live. Perhaps you're too embarrassed to talk to anyone. You may have even tried different methods and found they didn't help.

So, I can understand if you're feeling a bit impatient or half-hearted.

Well, yes I am. But I've had my problem for quite a while now, so I just want to get straight to the point: how do I fix it?

Good question! We'll get to that soon enough. But first, you need to identify what kind of orgasm difficulty you have and why. This is important if you're going to choose the right program to overcome it.

You need to first *understand* your orgasm difficulty before any "fixing" can start to happen. It's surprising how many areas of information need to be covered to help you develop this understanding of yourself. By the time you've read the last word of this book, you'll have thought about:

- sexual arousal (because most orgasm difficulties are really difficulties in getting highly aroused)
- how to describe and understand an orgasm
- different types of orgasm difficulties (and which type *you* fit into)
- the causes of these different types of orgasm difficulties (and which fit *you*)
- how to change your situation so that you can feel orgasms

Are you wondering if you're ready to take such a close look at yourself? That's understandable. But why not stay with me for a chapter or two (or three) and see how you feel? You may be surprised at some of the tidbits of information that pop out of the coming pages. And, don't forget that having read a few chapters, you can always put the book down and come back to it later when you feel ready.

types of orgasm difficulties |

LET'S BEGIN BY finding out which type of orgasm difficulty you experience. Since the causes of each can be quite different, it's

important to know which one you fit into. Let me list these different types for you. Then you can figure out which category seems to fit.

TYPE ONE: ordinary "garden-variety" orgasm difficulty

Did you know that most women have difficulty reaching orgasm at some time? It really doesn't take much to stop any of us from getting sexually aroused. Stress, tiredness, worry about a child or a parent, or simply not feeling in the mood are examples of some things that can stop us from reaching a sexual climax. So if you occasionally have problems in this area, you're in good company, because there are thousands of women just like you (and me) to whom exactly the same thing happens.

TYPE TWO: women who never have an orgasm

Perhaps you've never had an orgasm; there are plenty of women who haven't. You may have tried and tried, with no luck. Or, you may have been unaware that women could have such a feeling. Or, you may have never wanted such an experience before now.

TYPE THREE: women who rarely have an orgasm

Perhaps you occasionally orgasm, but only after what seems like a great deal of hard work on your part—and a lot of luck! For some women it takes a glass of wine and a time of being unusually relaxed for this to happen.

TYPE FOUR: women who used to be able to orgasm

You may be one of those women who feels quite frustrated because she used to be able to feel orgasms, but can't at the moment. Or, you may be finding that your orgasms have become so weak or so quick that you hardly notice them. Perhaps the ease with which you used to have orgasms has gone and you now struggle to make them happen.

TYPE FIVE: women who can orgasm at some times, but not others

Then again, you may be able to climax quite easily *except* when you're:

engaged in a particular kind of sexual practice (such as intercourse), or

- having sex with a partner rather than on your own (don't you wonder how orgasm can be so hard to reach with someone else around, but so easy during masturbation?), or
- having sex with a particular type of person (e.g., a thin man; a gentle woman; someone who's been drinking), or
- having sex with a particular partner (your current partner; someone you've just met).

Did you realize so many types of orgasm difficulties existed? Or that thousands of women fit each of these descriptions? It's true. So, just in case you've been thinking you were an oddity or abnormal, think again. Many, many women have exactly the same difficulties you have.

And most of us, as I mentioned earlier, have experienced the Type One variety and found orgasm difficult to feel on occasions (but don't expect it to be a topic of conversation at your next social gettogether—we're a bit shy of talking about these things).

> Okay, so I'm not an oddball. But I am one VERY frustrated woman when I have sex. My feelings seem to go so far and stop. . . . It's like they hit a brick wall.

Yep, that's frustrating all right. However, just make sure being frustrated doesn't lead to thinking you're a second-rate woman. Let me explain what I mean.

feeling negative |

UNFORTUNATELY, SOME WOMEN with orgasm difficulties start to convert their feelings of frustration into negative thoughts about themselves.

- They feel there's something wrong with them, that they're different from other women.
- They believe they aren't good enough because they can't orgasm.

- They see themselves as not being complete women, that something is missing.
- They worry their partner will leave if they don't have an orgasm *soon*.

If you're thinking like this, my guess is you're also feeling (check whichever applies):

miserable
depressed
insecure
unworthy
useless
ashamed
fed up
angry with yourself
something similar to the above

The kinds of emotions I've listed here often pop up whenever we start blaming *ourselves* for our orgasm difficulty. This is a great pity. In later chapters, when I begin to identify the causes of orgasm problems, you'll see that there are some very real and logical reasons why women can't orgasm easily. And none of these reasons relate to being a second-rate person.

What you DO is quite separate from who you ARE.

Please remember this. Just because you want an orgasm and can't have one (what you *do*) doesn't mean to say you aren't a nice and interesting person (who you *are*). In other words, you can have difficulties with having orgasms and *still* be the kind of person I'd like to get to know.

But it's hard to think positive when I've tried and tried and tried to get highly aroused, with no success. Maybe it is. Still, think about the determination and strength you've shown to keep going as much as you have. I hope you've got a little of that stamina left to read this book and find out why your past efforts have not brought you the sexual feelings you want.

Stay with me. We're going to explore the causes of arousal difficulties and help you identify which ones seem to fit your situation. I've described *twenty-five* reasons why women have difficulties with orgasm. I'd be surprised if at least one of these didn't explain what happens to you when you begin to get aroused. Then, we'll take a look at what changes can be made so you *can* get aroused enough to orgasm when you want.

If you're having sex (either on your own or with a partner) and thoroughly enjoying it, congratulations! This really makes the point that orgasms are only *one* way of feeling sexual pleasure. And congratulations, too, if you've continued with sex despite being very frustrated and negative at the lack of orgasm. There are women who give up expressing their sexuality because an orgasm seems impossible to achieve. Quite understandable, but a great shame. Hopefully this book will give them the confidence to start feeling sexual again.

pressure to have orgasms |

Well, I'm not usually a quitter, but the harder I try to orgasm, the worse things seem to get. It just seems easier not to go through all that hassle.

Ah, you've discovered how an orgasm works—or I should say, doesn't work. If there is a rule about orgasms, it's this:

The harder you try to have one, the further away it seems to go.

In other words, if you keep pushing yourself to make one happen, you'll end up feeling less sexual than when you started (and a whole lot more bad tempered).

It's easy to become so focused on *wanting* an orgasm that it becomes the only reason for being sexual. Orgasm then becomes the *goal* of lovemaking or masturbation (expressing sexual pleasure on your own). But what happens when you can't meet your goal? You feel terrible, a failure, disappointed and so on. You may also feel that you should have an orgasm so as not to disappoint your partner.

Eventually, this pressure becomes too much to bear. Some women cope by pretending to have an orgasm, believing this will please their partner and take the pressure off themselves. Others feel that the only alternative is to switch off from sexual feelings altogether. I suspect neither of these alternatives leaves any woman feeling truly happy.

So let me suggest a truce. You take the pressure off yourself. I'll try to show you why you can't orgasm at present, and how you can become aroused enough to do so.

In the meantime, just relax and enjoy the feelings of sexual pleasure you do have.

Assuming you're now ready to take the pressure off yourself, let's check if there is anyone else pressuring you. It could be a:

husband
partner
girlfriend
lover
fiancé
casual partner
other

Take a moment to think about it. Sometimes the reactions of sexual partners can be obvious, such as when annoyance or impatience is expressed because you don't orgasm. Sometimes reactions are more subtle. The following is a true example of one woman's situation. Her partner thought he was being encouraging when he said:

Don't worry, honey, I know you'll get there. We'll just keep trying. I'm sure there's something that will help you.

Did this help? I'm afraid not. All it did was reinforce to "honey" that she needed to find the "right" method (whatever that was). She tried a few things, but began to feel like a circus performer jumping through hoops just so her partner would feel she was trying to "solve the problem." After doing this for a while, she started to avoid sex and to resent her partner.

Some women find the pressure from another person makes them desperate to try *anything* that will help them to "be a normal woman."

Hey, I'd be happy to try anything if I only knew which hoops to jump through. I'd love to find a simple instruction manual, but so far I've had no luck.

Well, you're not alone there. Many women with orgasm difficulties don't know what to do (or where to go) to improve things. Some believe that going to a sexual therapist or psychologist would be too embarrassing (or expensive). I've seen women who thought about getting help for years before taking the plunge into counseling. (And some of them cursed loudly when their difficulties disappeared sooner than expected.)

However, some women feel so resentful towards a partner who has been pressuring them that they don't want to make the effort, even if it means helping themselves to feel greater sexual pleasure. And resentment also plays a part for women who believe their partner *should* give them an orgasm and feel annoyed if this doesn't happen.

Have you noticed how resentment makes it awfully hard to be warm and intimate? How can you begin to relax and enjoy yourself during sex if all you feel inside is pent-up anger? With great difficulty!

Resentment is *absolutely* the biggest dampener of sexual arousal in women. And without *strong* sexual feelings, there is no way—*I repeat*, no way—you're ever going to have an orgasm.

So far I've talked about the pressure you get from yourself and

from your partner. But let's not forget what little gems society has to offer, too. If you have access to magazines on women's health and sexuality, you'll have probably read headlines something like this:



Even,

How to fake one.

What a lot of pressure there is to have an orgasm! You'd be forgiven for believing that every woman you meet is able to have one—except you.

Now, remember what I said: there are hundreds and hundreds of women having difficulties just like yours. Your friends may not chat openly about these things, but that doesn't mean they aren't experiencing the same difficulties. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we did talk about these things more honestly? Can you imagine the conversation over coffee?

Oh, girls, what a problem I had last night! I sweated my way through sex for two hours and then that damn orgasm just disappeared into thin air. What am I going to do?

orgasms aren't everything in sex |

THIS HEADING SHOULD probably be in VERY LARGE print to emphasize how important it is.

What, are you crazy?

You write a whole book on how women can have orgasms, and now you say they aren't important?

No, I'm not crazy (well, not in regard to this point, anyway). And I'm not saying that orgasms aren't important to us. But most societies have made such a big deal of having them that it's easy to forget about the enjoyable parts of sex or lovemaking that don't involve orgasm.

Such as:

- being physically close with a partner
- having fun
- being relaxed
- feeling the pleasure of sexual arousal inside our body
- allowing ourselves to be held and comforted
- feeling intimate
- being raunchy and letting go
- switching off from work
- feeling sensuous
- feeling cared for

And so on . . .

And if you don't have a partner and like to touch yourself or masturbate, it's equally enjoyable to arouse and caress yourself, to feel your body get turned on, be able to switch off the rest of the world, and to fantasize being touched.

So let's put things back into perspective. Yes, orgasms can be very enjoyable, and it's true women often feel happy being able to express themselves in this way. And, yes, it's great to have the *option* to orgasm, to feel we've been able to express our peak sexual feelings. However, sex can be great without an orgasm.

Having orgasms is *one* of the ways we human beings can feel pleasure and express ourselves sexually. But orgasm shouldn't be the main (or only) focus of our lovemaking. I believe our only goal should be

to enjoy the pleasure we can get from expressing ourselves sexually. This pleasure may come through touching, holding, feeling loved, a sexual position, kissing, having fun, and so on. Orgasms may or may not be part of this.

men can be different |

IF YOU HAVE a male partner, you may find he doesn't fully understand my last point. While men can enjoy the intimacy of sex too, they're often less focused on it than women. They're more likely to see an orgasm (and vaginal intercourse) as the goal of sex. Sexual expression is often more important than romance and sensuality (the nice feelings we get when our senses—touch, smell, sound, sight, and taste—are aroused). Many women tend to operate in reverse: they find lovemaking without sensuality and romance to be less emotionally satisfying and less sexually exciting.

If men get turned on or sexually aroused, they're often keen for sexual activity and orgasm to follow soon after. Women, on the other hand, don't always assume, as men often do, that sexual activity and orgasms should follow. They may want to spend a lot of time touching and being close. And, if aroused, they may choose to let their sexual feelings drift away rather than have them become stronger.

The truth is that men often don't understand the whole business of women's difficulties with orgasms. The vast majority of them have experienced orgasm by late teens. Even if they have problems expressing themselves sexually with a partner, most men can easily orgasm during masturbation. No wonder they have trouble empathizing with a woman's difficulties in this area.

sometimes women are too similar

IF YOUR PARTNER is a woman, you may have a different set of issues to deal with. She may seem really understanding of your difficulties and at no time pressure you about having an orgasm. But something else can happen here. She may be so keen to avoid stressing you that she'll go too far the other way and won't

encourage any sexual activity at all. This can easily happen. In relationships between women, female needs set the scene. The emphasis on sensuality, cuddling and kissing (common to most women, whoever their partner is) can override the desire for sex or for sexual arousal.

Although this situation may take the pressure off you to orgasm, it can also change the relationship to the extent that you feel like companions rather than lovers.

how to use this book

I WANT TO be blunt here and say that not all readers will be able to benefit from The Elusive Orgasm. The question of who will and who won't benefit is tackled in chapter 2. I urge you to read this short chapter carefully in order to find out which group vou fit into.

Since some women aren't exactly sure what an orgasm is, I've used chapter 3 to try to help them. Those of you who have never experienced orgasm or aren't sure whether you have, should find this useful. If you are familiar with orgasms, take a few moments to read through the chapter, anyway. Some of the ideas mentioned in it pop up at different times later in the book (for example, the bit about the Arousal Hill). And if you haven't read anything on women's genitals for a while, you may be surprised at what we now know about the clitoris. I imagine there are quite a few of my readers who'll be saying, "Well, I never knew THAT." by the end of this chapter.

In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I'll discuss the possible causes of each of the orgasm difficulties, twenty-five in total.

> Hey, did you say three chapters on what causes orgasm difficulties? And twenty-five causes? This is beginning to sound serious.

Maybe, but each type of orgasm difficulty needs to be given attention. Each of the three chapters will cover different groups of women.

Chapter 4: Covers women who have never, or only occa-

sionally, had an orgasm (Types 2 and 3)

Chapter 5: Covers women who used to be able to have an

orgasm, but now find it impossible or more difficult to do so, or find their orgasm is hardly

noticeable (Type 4)

Chapter 6: Covers women who have difficulties only in some

situations, or with some people and not others

(Type 5)

Even if you're busy (and who among us is *not*?), I *strongly* recommend that you read through the chapters on each of the different groups. Sometimes there can be an overlap between the different types. And you never know which piece of information will suddenly make you say, "Uh huh, that seems to fit me, too!"

By the way, you may find there are several causes of your orgasm difficulties—so don't stop reading just because the first one seems to fit.

From chapter 7 onward, I've outlined ways in which you can overcome the causes of your orgasm difficulties. Now . . .

HOLD IT!

I know it's tempting to dash ahead, but remember, if you want to choose the right treatment approach, you must first find out what it is that stops you from having orgasms. There's absolutely no point trying to change things if you don't know exactly what it is you have to change.

Oh, and one more thing: throughout the book I'll be asking questions, giving you a quiz or two and offering exercises you might like to try. I suggest you write down your answers as well as any thoughts you want to record. You may like to use a notebook or the pages at the end of this book. A notebook is also essential if you've borrowed this book from a library and need to leave it clean for the next reader.

but first, are you ready to orgasm?

HERE are two important questions which need to be answered before you tackle the rest of the book. This chapter will help you to work out your response to each one. Here are the questions:

Question 1: Do you actually have a problem with orgasm?

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{Question 2:} & Are you ready to look at why you have orgasm \\ \end{tabular}$

difficulties?

If you find that the answer to either question is no, it's unlikely that your orgasm difficulties will be helped by *The Elusive Orgasm*. So, let's check whether I'm going to be able to help you. Better to do this now than to be disappointed later.

CHECK#1: | which problem is it?

Listen, I KNOW when I can't orgasm. How could anyone be confused about what the problem is?

Well, of course, most woman know quite clearly when they can or can't orgasm. But for some women, the real problem is that they don't feel any sexual desire. Let me try and explain this further.

To have an orgasm we have to be feeling highly aroused sexually. I mean, really aroused or "turned on." These feelings of sexual pleasure seem to center on our genital area, but can also be felt in other parts of our body. Now here's the interesting bit: women with orgasm problems usually have no difficulty feeling sexual desire or getting aroused to some level....

They just don't get aroused ENOUGH to experience orgasm.

Women who feel very little or no sexual desire have a different problem. They simply don't have an interest in sex. If you feel no interest in expressing yourself sexually, you won't be in the mood to get aroused or be willing to try. If you don't get aroused, you won't orgasm.

If this describes you, it's likely that you never think about being sexual (on your own or with a partner), and can happily leave the whole sex business to others without feeling you're missing out on a thing. Or, you may find yourself in the mood on rare occasions, helped along by a glass of wine or an exciting new partner. And when this happens you may find you can orgasm quite easily.

Therefore, you don't really have a difficulty with orgasm. Rather, your real difficulty is with not feeling enough sexual interest or desire to encourage you into situations where you become aroused and experience an orgasm.

It's important to understand that lack of sexual desire is a related but different kind of sexual problem from difficulty with orgasm. While this book has not been written specifically for women who lack an interest in sex, I believe it may still be useful in helping you to understand a little more about yourself. The causes of lack of sexual interest are often different from those of orgasm difficulties, but there is some similarity. So, the information provided in the next few chapters may be useful and offer something for you to think about.

The same thing applies to the Change Programs outlined in later chapters for women with orgasm difficulties. Some sections may be helpful, while others will not be suitable for women who lack sexual desire.

I must point out, however, that both kinds of problems can be connected. For example, women who start out with good levels of sexual desire can become so frustrated with their difficulty in experiencing orgasm that they eventually lose all interest in sex. And, as I mentioned earlier, women who usually have no sexual desire may easily have orgasms on the occasions when they do engage in sexual activity.

CHECK #2: | can you be bothered?

DO YOU REALLY care about having an orgasm or not? I'm sure one or two of you are reading this book only because a lover/ex-partner/friend gave it to you as a gift (a rather unsubtle hint?). Perhaps you're reading through it quickly just so you can say,

Yes, nice little book. Quite useful, I suppose. I might try some of the suggestions when I have more time. . . .

Maybe you were hoping I'd offer some quick-fix solution in the first chapter, so that your partner is kept happy without you having to do too much yourself. That probably means you're not really interested in having orgasms for yourself.

Then again, perhaps you're motivated to read what I have to say *only* because you think it will improve your relationship. You may believe it will keep the peace, bring you closer or help to sort out other problems you have. Maybe you feel guilty about not being able to please your partner who, you know, would like you to be able to orgasm.

There are many women who simply can't see what all the fuss is about. And the truth is, there *is* far too much fuss made of the whole topic of having an orgasm.

But what about your needs? Do you care one way or the other about your own pleasure?

Of course, if you've never had an orgasm and can't begin to imagine what it's like to have one, then you're hardly likely to get excited, are you? Picture what would happen if you rushed up to a group of people who'd never heard of or tasted ice cream and told them they should try it. Are they going to jump up with glee and race off to the nearest store? Hardly!

Well, orgasms aren't much different. It's perfectly understandable if you're not sure what all the fuss is about. Even those of you who used to experience orgasms may have forgotten how nice it was to orgasm easily and without pressure.

So, the question is, how keen are you to understand why you can't orgasm? And, how enthusiastic are you about learning (or relearning) how to orgasm? Are you really interested or just half-hearted?

Well look, how long can a person keep on trying before they lose interest?

Good question! It is hard to stay keen. Yet, without the desire to try—and I mean try for you—I'm afraid you probably won't get very far along the Programs offered later in this book.

If you're feeling half-hearted about the whole situation, be honest with yourself about your lack of motivation and wait until you're willing to try again. And remember,

You don't have to orgasm—or even want to.

You don't even have to read another chapter in this book: so, don't feel pressured to do so. *But* . . . (I'm sure you knew there would be a "but . . ."):

All I ask is that, before tucking this book away in the bookcase, you consider *why* you don't want to orgasm. I'm not saying you *should* orgasm. I simply want you to think about and understand your reaction.

Is your decision based on something positive, such as wanting to put all your energy into a special project at the moment? That may be fine, unless this is something you always do. Do you always throw yourself into completing tasks at the expense of taking time for yourself? Is

there a lack of balance between work and play, or between "doing for me" and "doing for others"? Do you give time to your relationship only when all the tasks are finished?

Then ask yourself whether having an orgasm is important enough. If it's down the bottom of your list of "things to do," you'll probably never feel ready to follow the suggestions made in later chapters. There'll always be something else more important to do.

Perhaps your half-heartedness is related to something you want to avoid, such as fear of failure, anger with your partner, nervousness at being vulnerable. Again, be honest with yourself about this. After all, it's perfectly acceptable to want to avoid a situation which threatens to make you feel terrible.

Now consider whether you would like to try and feel orgasms if only you could get over your fear, embarrassment, resentment, nervousness, and so on. If your answer is yes, maybe a chat with a friendly psychologist will help you through these emotions and free you up to do what you secretly want to do.

Sometimes it can be poor health, rather than emotions, that stops women from feeling motivated to try and have orgasms. If you have been or are currently ill, you may not feel well enough to do anything about your orgasm difficulty. In that case, be kind to yourself and stop worrying about having orgasms. Wait until you have more energy and interest. Let me tell you, trying to work through the Change Programs will be no fun if you're feeling unwell. There are no medals for orgasmic martyrdom, I'm afraid!



SO THEN, CHECK out why you may be half-hearted about trying to have an orgasm. Don't let yourself become pressured into following the Programs outlined in my book unless you feel ready to do so.

But, keep in mind that it *is* nice to have the *option* to choose whether to have an orgasm or not. Knowing *how to* orgasm doesn't mean you *have to* orgasm.

And finally, let me remind you of something I said in chapter 1. There are many women who are quite content with not having orgasms. I've worked with plenty for whom sex was great fun—without their feeling a single orgasm.

what is orgasm?

RYING to describe an orgasm is like trying to describe the joy of sinking into bed after a busy day, or the exquisiteness of a particularly beautiful sunset, or the delight of swimming in the sea on a hot afternoon. It's impossible to put feelings like these into words.

Women who haven't experienced an orgasm often feel embarrassed by their inability to say what it is.

> Well, everyone seems to know about orgasms except me. I'm too ashamed to say anything, but I don't have a clue what an orgasm is. It's like I'm supposed to know!

It's true. We're all supposed to know what an orgasm is. But who gives us this information? Our parents? Heavens, no! Our school friends? Unlikely. Our teachers or sex educators? Rarely. They seem to skip over anything to do with sexual arousal. And, most of us aren't comfortable, as adults, asking a friend or partner.

Interestingly, when I checked the word orgasm in my computer's