

Right, But Should We Be Scheduling Sex? Esther Perel Answers All The Questions

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SUMMARY

Esther Perel discusses the complexities of intimacy and sexuality in relationships, particularly after having children. She emphasizes the importance of intentionality and creativity in scheduling time for intimacy, the need for self-care to transition from caregiver to lover, and the significance of communication in rekindling connection.

- Scheduling sex can be beneficial; it can transform from a routine to a ritual filled with anticipation and creativity.*
- Caretaking roles can hinder romantic feelings; women often need to focus on their own pleasure to reignite desire.*
- Transitioning from caregiver to erotic partner requires self-care practices that help women feel carefree and sensual.*
- Awkwardness in intimacy is normal; embracing it can lead to playful and creative interactions.*
- Parents should prioritize their relationship to avoid placing emotional burdens on their children.*
- Acknowledging and owning the distance in a relationship can foster vulnerability and connection.*
- Small gestures of affection can help rekindle intimacy and remind partners of their sensuality.*
- Desire is a personal experience; individuals must take responsibility for their own feelings of aliveness and connection.*

we all want more knowledge and sharing from estera perel and right now we're going to hear Astaire answer your questions I'd love to share some questions that come directly from the community here's one that came up so often is it completely awful to schedule sex the first few years after having children not at all not at all but you see the word schedule

in the American mind often involves you know a very task oriented calendar but you can also look at it in a much more beautiful poetic way that there's a ritual around it so the question is what happens once you meet is there a ritual you know is there a coming together is there an anticipation I mean part of what you want is that makes it erotic is the fact that you look forward to something forward to

spending time together for to connect forward to experience pleasure forward to be taken care of whatever it is but there the anticipation is the mortar of in our imagine an erotic imagination so schedule a way and then ask yourself what do I do with the fact that I can rely on this time I know it's set it's ours it's Saturday morning it's Sunday evening whatever and then make it special because that's what changes it from something that is

routine to something that is ritualized a ritual is a routine that is infused with intentionality and creativity and my visual as you're talking is like the schedule right because I hear the thought from parents too it's like oh when when my two kids are both napping and there's like a 45 minute overlap it has to be then or whatever it is I don't know why I picture that as like you're saying there's a container like that's what you think that's a wonderful

but then within the containers there could be a lot to clean up the porch yeah actually say we have 45 minutes let's go play yeah why not love it you know when you have little ones structure creates Freedom before you have the structure of the kids the freedom is the lack of structure one of the most important things to redefine is that with kids Freedom comes from structure not from the absence of it okay another question that came up a lot

being in caretaking mode feels like it's a threat to being romantic being in caretaking mode of your kids yes so I think that is a very very interesting piece I just did a little clip in Australia that went completely viral over exactly this thing so this is what I'm gonna say and I'm going to say it better than I did in the first time very often if I work with the heterosexual couple I will hear a caring

male partner say nothing turns me on more than to see her turn down I love seeing her into it because if she's into it he doesn't have to deal with the predatory fear he knows she's enjoying it I have yet to hear a straight woman say nothing turns me on more than to see him turned on if she's not into it if she's not into it whatever is

happening to him will not change her what turns her on is what happens to her and for that it means that she needs to be able to focus on herself away from the worry and the responsibility and the caretaking of others one of the most difficult things in the transition from mother to woman from caregiver to erotic being is the ability to switch the focus onto oneself in a

healthy narcissism I really would pleasure use that word away from the responsibility and the caregiving it's her turn on it's what's happening to her that will ignite her and so then you ask for some women it's about taking off the apron that is filled with spit and that's all I need in order to move to retrieve the woman that is behind the mother for another person it's about leaving the house for another person it's about leaving the city

how much do I need to be away from that locus of caregiving that allows me to feel Carefree to attend to myself to allow myself to experience pleasure without worrying that something is gonna happen to the people over whom I am responsible so while someone's in their house with their partner yeah and they struggle to make their shift yeah they're like yeah I need that trip out of the city or I need this well I say first of all I completely get

it and I explained to the partner you really need to understand it this is almost evolutionary this is not your wife or your partner this is you know Revolution did the job very well it made women completely feeling that sense of responsibility which is part of why in history that she's been divided the mother was here and the other woman was there it's the the integration of these two people inside the same household is a challenge and

doesn't solve this so the first thing is what helps you transition Miss is it a shower is it a walk is it a bath is it some good music over your ears is it just being allowed 15 minutes to be alone in the room and have no obligation no responsibility nobody asking you anything what helps you that should be part of the ritual of scheduling for example so then you give the partner a role it's not just that you have to

you have to talk her into it the next thing is it doesn't always start with desire you can have a responsive desire not an initiating desire so it starts with willingness I don't know I could do without I could just as well go to bed but you know I'll see where it takes me let's see and don't take this as she's not into it or she has less desire and there is a discrepancy it just means

that at this stage willingness is one way for her to shift from mother to lover hmm then if she says I need to be out of the city then make sure either you use your fantasy life and you create a trip you know I had a fantastic couple in the pandemic the story they were supposed to travel exactly to the other City they had the whole thing the plane everything got stopped there was nowhere to go and

they created a beach inside their living room just for a night you know why only with children do we play why is it only the children who take books and turn them into rocks and think they're on a river but why you you know there's a lot of self-consciousness right it feels awkward for a lot of adults with their Partners but with their Partners yes of course because there is this notion that once you have entered family life and

Domesticity you have to become all serious is it just a matter of saying okay I'm just gonna kind of we're gonna do this it's just like jumping off the diving board just trying and being and saying how can you believe this this is so awkward but the first time there is nothing more exciting than to be transgressive in your own home and to step out of the role and the box that this role puts you in rather than have

to create a whole massive production we have freedom in confinement comes from our imagination our imagination can take us anywhere and we do go to the movies to the theater to art for exactly that because it takes us outside of our reality it goes outside the boundaries of what is permitted the couples whom have it do this naturally it's not that they don't have dips it's not that they don't have dry spells it's just that they know how to

resurrect because they know how to bring that erotic energy as in playful creative mischievous curious inside their kitchen you know what you just said that I want to kind of just Center for a moment is I hear this a lot from parents who struggle to even take time for themselves away from their kids how do I go out to dinner with my friends and Miss bedtime without feeling guilty and I often say you're gonna do it while

you tolerate feeling guilty and we're not gonna do it without feeling guilty the guilt's gonna come you're going to tolerate it's part of the experience and one of the things you're saying about you know entering into fantasy

or play with your partner is it's gonna feel awkward it's not don't wait till the moment it doesn't feel awkward you can even oh this feels awkward this is so different than what we usually do you're saying just it's part of the experience

that's correct the awkwardness is one character in the play and you talk to the awkwardness yeah you bring it in and you say how awkward are you feeling today you know for me it's a nine but the thing about the guilt about going for dinner I mean that is systemic this is not your grandparents did not feel guilty when they went for dinner when they went away for two weeks for that matter and for some of us it's our

parents this is very generational this is part of the domination on the parents I really think that it's it needs to be called out as such and not to be told well if you don't want to give everything to your kids that don't have them right because that's the answer that we that you then get go out and here is why because if you don't and you deprive yourself you begin to ask your children to become your emotional

caregivers you want your children to validate your sacrifice you want your children to make sure that you're not too alone and too disconnected and when you recruit your children into that caretaking role you're creating a legacy of emotional burden that is not going to be too good for them well I know this is going to line well on our listeners because I feel like the you know people might hear about me or good inside about kind of certain parenting strategies but

really you know what we're about is redefining motherhood has not martyrdom that's not good for anyone no but nobody benefits from a selfless parent not the kid not the parent not nobody but you're not even selfless most interesting thing is that you surreptitiously pass the burden on to your kids yes you want your kids to validate what you gave up for them and then you resent them when they challenge you or when they don't want to spend

more time with you or when they're not thinking that you're the best thing that ever happened to them you put an emotional burden on your children for something that other people need to provide we live in community we can't ask our kids to be the validators of our Parenthood to sit with your friends and you discuss that and you get a sense of normality okay last question because I know we're gonna have to wrap up I know there's a

lot of people listening we're probably thinking they're they're steps I would need to take you know before you know before sex before more intimacy me and my partner feel so far apart yeah that erotic energy feels so far away are there things that people might not even think about are legitimate steps that are kind of concrete doable yes there are many things and many things um and I write about it I mean you know I created the whole card game where

should we begin a game of stories because it creates a different conversation between partners and I've seen people do one card a day and just say you know what we've gotten stale so the first thing you do is you kind of acknowledge you go to your partner you write a letter when you sit on a plane one day or where you're stuck in an airport and you just say I was thinking of us and I realized it's been two months two

years ten years whatever we have really grown apart and I just noticed it and I was shocked I was sad how did this happen and I know I'm sure I have done a lot of things to contribute to that you don't start blaming you just own your part own your part and the other person can own theirs I miss you I miss us I miss the person I thought I was going to be how did I get

there what happened and I'm suddenly not even sure that we can come back from there but I would like to try I'm not sure you want to come back from there but I hope you still do all I want to tell you and this is the vulnerable part I want to do better will you join me and then you get to chills because this is caring for your relationship and then you say when they come home

that doesn't mean you wait for them this is not you just really say can we sit and you know what was it like for you to read this letter or you don't process the letter and you just say and you just make a beautiful table and you say I just thought we needed more than just standing at the counter and I wanted us to sit again and to have nice music and to cook something for you

or to order something in I wanted to make you feel that you matter that you're special that it's important to me and that I will do whatever it takes for that and this is the challenging thing is that you're gonna do it without knowing for a fact that the other person is right there because they may have tried for a while and you were missing in action or because who knows but you do it because it matters to you it's enlightened

self-interest that's what will help you with the vulnerability on the matter the term for Terry reel that I love to use and then you just say you know when we sit at the couch you suddenly take their hand and you say wow it's been a while since we held the hands like this and then you take their shoulder and you massage it or you put your hand in their hair and you just say whoa you know it

feels nice you don't say why don't we ever do this you don't say it's been so long you know how long do I have to wait or when they finally kiss you back you say what took you so long you say that feels nice it feels a little awkward we've become so stiff a little bit and we try to just deal by getting pecs from the kids and from the dogs you know we've replaced ourselves and you own that in an adult

language and then slowly you get closer to them and then when you are in the shower you may say join me or maybe they just sit in the tub and you go and you rub their back or you you know you do gestures they're not lead-ons they're gestures that are meant to be just that it feels nice to touch you know we can live without sex but we don't live well without touch yeah yeah that's the slow steps of that you

know you look nice you know would you wear that shirt that I like so much and you make the person feel that they are sensual sexual living breeding human being next to you that's the process that is so so profound and so important and and you make it you make it so concrete and and thank you and I hope this is one of many times we speak this is just the beginning

um what would be the next question it would have taken oh what's the next question we would have taken should marriage change after kids it does it doesn't should it definitely does so does your experience with your body so does your sexuality so does the resources that are available to the government those are facts yeah but then there is what you do with the facts yep what of what I said struck you most

um I love when you were talking about having having to really show someone that they matter that recognizing someone matters has to be matched with like actually doing things about it like manifesting and we do that we do that with our kids like all the time so it is a perfect little example that I took from Judy gottman on that where she says it's one thing to say to someone thank you for making me the tea

it's another thing to say that was very thoughtful of you if you want to go back from a task oriented to a meaning oriented relationship that's an example of the shift yeah one is about the T and one is about the person yeah and the process and their intention you're seeing the relationship and you're connecting quality of your relationship determines the quality of your life ultimately for sure I think

that's on your website you know the other thing you've said in the past that I think about a lot and I've used it in a lot of my sessions with people is your question of how do you turn yourself off and on and on but I will explain that question right it for me it's a it's a very important one so it comes from that very thing where I said it's not what happens to the other person

it's what happens to her in this case it's a her right and I ask how do you turn no what turns me off is or I turn myself off by yes it's very different from what turns me off meaning you turn me off when yes what do I do that turns me off it's when I worry about the kids it's when I'm anxious about money it's when I didn't take time for myself it's when I feel

bloated and I've over eaten it's when we have a fight that I turn myself off when and I turned myself on I awaken myself when I'm in nature when I listen to music when I go out with friends that answer is what will help you the most with your question about how do I not feel guilty when I go out with my girlfriends you know I think that's a new thought for a lot of people of you know turning

myself on or off that's not something someone else controls no because desire is to own to wanting yes you can't make people desire you can make people do things but you can't make them want it so the wanting is entirely yours and the wanting is not sexual it's about feeling alive yeah if you don't feel alive you can have sex women have done sex for centuries and felt nothing that's not the point the point is to

experience a sense of Vitality in the relationship that's what people want and you want it with your kids and you want it with your partner so you have to take some of the energy away from the kids and into the relationship because it will actually give more to the kids when you do more for the couple that's the triangle I want people to stay with Hallelujah for real thank you my pleasure

so I have an idea you might be thinking oh so much of this episode resonates but it's such a hurdle to get over to talk about these things with my partner well one of the things I know from working with couples is talking about tricky topics is much easier when you have a third what do I mean a third instead of talking directly about a topic to a partner the two of you talk about an episode you both listen to or

an article you both saw or a book you both read so right now consider sharing this episode with your partner as a way to bridge the gap maybe add a note like hey there were a lot of really interesting points that made me think about things differently thought you might be interested in this too or take it a step further and write I miss you I'd love to reconnect maybe we can both listen to this and talk

about it together thanks for listening to share a story or ask me a question go to goodinsight.com podcast you could also write me at podcast@goodinside.com parenting is the hardest and most important job in the world and parents deserve resources and support so they feel empowered confident and connected I'm so excited to share good inside membership the first

platform that brings together content and experts you trust with a global community of like valued parents it's totally game changing good inside with Dr Becky is produced by Jesse Baker and Eric Newsom at magnificent noise our production staff includes Sabrina farhi julianat and Kristen Mueller I would also like to thank Erica belski Mary Panico Ashley Valenzuela and the rest of the good inside team

and One Last Thing Before I Let You Go let's end by placing our hands on our hearts and reminding ourselves even as I struggle and even as I have a hard time on the outside I remain good inside