



## Top Ten Tips for Restoring Intimacy

If you find it difficult to maintain intimacy with your partner, you're not alone. Surveys of couples living with chronic pain find as many as three out of four have little or no sexual contact. So take steps to help restore intimacy between you and your partner.

**1. Learn to Talk About It.** The most important step is to start (and maintain) a dialogue with your partner - one that is free of blame and focuses on ways to be more intimate. Be open about sharing your fears and concerns, and set manageable goals together.

**2. Spend Quality Time Together Without Distraction.** Carve out time go for a long walk, meet for coffee or plan a weekend getaway.

**3. Think about sex in a different way.** Even if you are unable to engage in sexual intercourse as frequently as you used to, it doesn't mean that your sexual relationship has to end. Broaden your idea of "sex." Learn what feels good to you and your partner.

**4. Experiment, experiment, experiment.** Think of creative ways to show your affection—try different positions, other types of stimulation, cuddling, caressing and massage.

**5. Agree on a non-verbal sign.** Think of a visual way to let your partner know you're available and willing to try. For example, you might light a candle, draw a bath or use a specific pillowcase.

**6. Monitor your pain and make a date.** Track your pain using a pain notebook. Schedule time to be physically intimate with your partner. Pick a time of day when you have the most energy and are least likely to have a pain flare.

**7. Take care of yourself and listen to your body.** Be persistent about getting your pain to a tolerable level. If you don't feel well enough to engage in sexual activity, don't force it. If you do, you risk associating pain with sex, which often leads to a vicious cycle of avoidance. Take small steps. It may be easier for the person with pain to initiate sexual activity so he or she has more control.

**8. Relax** It may be easier said than done, but it's important to relax and feel vulnerable with your partner. Begin by using simple breathing exercises. And sex can help too. Not only is it a natural and healthy part of life, sex can naturally reduce pain sensations by releasing endorphins and lowering stress.

**9. Practice Positive Self Talk.** The most important step is to start (and maintain) a dialogue with your partner - one that is free of blame and focuses on ways to be more intimate. Be open about sharing your fears and concerns, and set manageable goals together.



**10. Seek professional help.** Find a healthcare provider or qualified sex therapist willing to work with you and your partner. Many medications can reduce your interest in sex (libido) or ability to get or stay aroused. Talk with your healthcare provider about possible alternatives.

**Remember: all is not lost.** There are many therapies available (e.g., pelvic floor exercises, muscle relaxants and other medications, counseling) to help patients restore intimacy. Talk to your healthcare provider because the ways in which you try to restore sexual intimacy will depend on the nature of your injury or pain condition.

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**Information taken from American Pain Foundation at:**

<http://www.painfoundation.org/learn/living/top-ten-tips/restoring-intimacy.html>