

Why is coronavirus killing my sex drive?

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Some of us have reported feeling thirstier since COVID-19 forced us to hunker down at home. In fact, the [sex toy industry has apparently seen a recent uptick in sales](#), per the *Washington Post*. Sadly, reader, I can't relate. My live-in S.O. and I have been experiencing a dry spell for the past few weeks, starting around the time the country began taking this virus seriously. Honestly, a reassuring cuddle while bingeing *Ozark* is way more appealing to me than sex these days. Why is the coronavirus pandemic such a boner killer?

When I asked Debby Herbenick, sex researcher and professor of sexual and reproductive health at Indiana University Bloomington, why corona is tanking my libido, she responded with another question: "Why wouldn't it?" The constant existential anxiety spurred by this pandemic, potentially combined with being around a partner or kids around the clock, doesn't exactly scream sexy.

"Most people, when they feel anxious or depressed, might feel less sexual desire," Herbenick explains. This pandemic has given us plenty of reasons to feel these emotions. Many of us fear for our health and that of our loved ones, not to mention a loss of our livelihoods. Our home dynamic might've drastically changed, with partners and kids now constantly cooped up together. Some of us need to work in hospitals, grocery stores, or other places that raise our risk of infection.

For the booted-up among us, seeing a partner *all* the time might also dampen our desire for them, Herbenick says. Indeed, this happens even among other members of the animal kingdom; she cites Esther Perel's book, *Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence*, which talks about the challenge of getting zoo animals that have been housed together to reproduce. After all, even cohabiting couples don't sign up to be around only each other, 24/7, for two months straight (or however long this ends up lasting). We often need some distance to feel that spark.

A lack of desire during something as dire as a pandemic could also have an adaptive purpose, evolutionarily speaking. While social media is abuzz with [speculation about a possible coronavirus baby boom](#), owing to couples

spending way more time together, Herbenick has her doubts. She suspects that many couples feel hesitant about conceiving right now, especially given the uncertain end date of this pandemic, reports about [doulas being prohibited from delivery rooms](#), and any financial instability they might be experiencing. Media outlets skeptical of baby boom predictions also cite research [showing that birth rates tend to decrease in the wake of a disaster](#).

A drop in desire is also common post-childbirth and during other stressful periods, Herbenick points out. Basically, it's our mind and body's way of saying, "The most important thing I can do right now is just take care of myself, stay healthy, stay alive, take care of friends and family," she says. "This sex stuff can wait."

That said, we're all different. While most people experience a dip in desire when they're anxious or depressed, a small percentage feel enhanced desire and might seek to relieve their anxiety or depression through sex, Herbenick says. (She cautions that those who fall under this group have a higher risk of engaging in unsafe sex, which, nowadays, can mean not practicing social distancing.) Others might not be that stressed because they live in an area with a low incidence of COVID-19. Whatever the reason, if you're feeling hornier now, that's ok, too.

But if you're like me and bemoaning your lost mojo, Herbenick suggests practicing self-kindness and reminding yourself that you've never undergone anything like this before. And if you live with a partner, keep in mind that just because they get annoyed with you, "that doesn't necessarily mean this isn't your person."

By the same token, don't take it personally if they want more space. Creating some distance, whether through solo walks or even Facetiming bae from another room, can help. So can old-school communication. That can even look like straight-up telling them that while you'd jump their bones under normal circumstances, sex is really hard for you right now.

"Oftentimes the way people find their way back to each other is to be emotionally vulnerable" — by revealing that they're feeling sad or scared, for instance, Herbenick says. "Whether or not they end up having intercourse or other kinds of sex together, if they're opening up, they're bound to feel closer and not be rejected by their partner's lack of desire." We'll make it out of this dry spell eventually, but until then, we can still cultivate other aspects of ourselves and our relationships.