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PARENTING MAGAZINE

# babby

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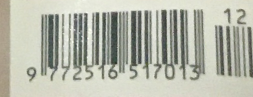
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# Bedroom Battles

Zoey Goto SPEAKS TO SOME OF THE LEADING EXPERTS IN WOMEN'S POSTNATAL HEALTH, TO GET THE SCOOP ON KEEPING INTIMACY IN YOUR POST-BABY RELATIONSHIP

**S**ustaining your sex life after having a baby is challenging for most couples. The physical, emotional and hormonal changes, coupled with the sheer exhaustion, can often result in a libido dip. However, with a healthy dose of patience and perseverance, as well as seeking out specialist help where needed, it is possible to rebuild your sex life into something stronger than ever in the long-term.

## EXPERIENCING AN IDENTITY CRISIS IS COMMON FOR MANY NEW MOTHERS. ONCE THE DUST HAS SETTLED POST-BIRTH, DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE ON RECLAIMING YOUR SEXUAL IDENTITY?

I actually think it's less about reclaiming one's sexual identity and instead more about creating a new one. Becoming a mother is such a profound experience, but this change can actually be an opportunity. Part of reclaiming, or creating, that identity needs to be about advocating for our desires – and no one can do that for our sex lives but us.

These desires don't necessarily have to be an erotic porn plot line, they can also be the desires of non-penetrative physical intimacy (yay, bonding!) or even just communicating directly about sex with your partner – something we shouldn't assume every woman did before having the baby.

Sex isn't just about our bodies, and in most cases, our 'erotic imaginations' are the strongest drivers of our sexuality, so start thinking about sex more, fantasise on your own terms, fantasise with your partner and remember, not all fantasies need to be acted on, which doesn't make them any less satisfying.

**Sarah Forbes**

*Curator, sexual culturalist and author of the upcoming book, *Mama Sex**

## YOU'VE SPOKEN OPENLY ABOUT HOW YOUR LOVE LIFE HAS TRANSFORMED FROM PAINFUL POSTPARTUM EXPERIENCES, TO NOW HAVING THE BEST SEX OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP. WHAT HELPED YOU GET YOUR POSTNATAL MOJO BACK?

It was a mixture of mental and physical. My life-saving moment was meeting Amanda Savage, a women's health physio who helped me to find the right strength in my pelvic floor, release muscles in the rest of my body, and deal with my vaginal scar tissue.

Mentally, it was really hard to reconcile motherhood and my sexual identity, as well as get over a traumatic birth and postnatal depression. And, practically, I didn't feel sexy when fatigued beyond belief, alert to baby cries and at risk of milk squirting out of my 'don't touch!' breasts. Not an ideal combination!

Talking it through, both with my therapist and having an open dialogue with my husband, was at the heart of clearing those mental blockages. The tiredness recedes and you learn to live with your new normal. But I wouldn't have got there if I hadn't asked for help. My message is that you can have a happy ending, pun-intended!

**Clio Wood**

*Founder of family wellbeing company, & *Breathe Postnatal**


## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU WISH YOU'D BEEN GIVEN BEFORE YOU HAD CHILDREN?

While pregnant, or preferably prior to getting pregnant, use a mirror to explore your private parts and find what is normal to you. It will help you to identify if something is out of tune after the birth.

If you had a tear or episiotomy, learn to massage the scar tissue to make it more flexible and desensitise it. See a women's health physiotherapist for this and to learn to use your pelvic muscles correctly – relaxing the muscle is as important as contracting it.

**Anya Smirnova**

*Founder of *Modern Postnatal Recovery**



*Touching and talking with your partner will help get your sex life back on track post-baby*

### **HOW MIGHT LUBRICANTS AND VAGINA MOISTURISERS HELP WITH POSTPARTUM SEX?**

Vaginal dryness after childbirth is very common, especially when breastfeeding, due to the absence of ovulation and drop in oestrogen levels. There should be no shame attached to using a water-based lubricant to alleviate dryness and remove the fear of pain, but it's essential to choose a natural pH balanced lubricant, free from glycerine, perfume and chemically based ingredients, which can cause irritation.

**Lavinia Winch**

*Ambassador for YES Organic Intimacy products*

### **WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE ON KEEPING CONNECTED WITH YOUR PARTNER?**

Find ways of gleaning connection-rich moments from small amounts of time. If your baby is happy in the pram or sling, go for a walk together so that you can talk without interruption. Look at one another when you talk to each other. If you're both too exhausted to chat in the evening, sit or lie next to one another so that you are in physical contact. Physical connection is just as powerful as verbal communication.

**Dr Alexandra Kasozi**

*Counselling psychologist*

### **IF SOMEONE HAS EXPERIENCED DISCOMFORT DURING SEX, WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE?**

For many women, sex after a having a baby can be uncomfortable, so listen and respect your body, as it may just need time to heal. Communicate this honestly with your partner and if the pain doesn't subside, then seek advice from a pelvic physio and your GP.

**Maria Elliott**

*Founder of The Mummy MOT*