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# Want good sex? Get married

While my mid-20s peers are playing the field and avoiding commitment, I'm married and thrilled to find the frisson hasn't fizzled out. Anything but - and it's all thanks to the three Cs

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Let's play a word-association game. If I say the word marriage, what comes to mind? Hot, steamy sex and earth-shattering orgasms? No, I thought not. When I asked some of my besties, they said things like "kids", "old" and "trapped". That's because the prevailing cultural narrative for women my age - I'm 27 - is that our teens and 20s are for sexual adventures: the try-before-you-buy approach. Our early 30s are for being just as flirty, perhaps a wee bit pickier, and for forging ahead with our careers. Eventually, when we get bored with playing the field and crawling home at 4am with a hangover that lasts three days, we settle down, have babies and start listening to Radio 4.

I've been tuned in to this unsophisticated, fear-mongering frequency for so long that when my gorgeous boyfriend of 18 months asked me to marry him, instead of shouting "I do" from the rooftops, I was paralysed with Fomo (that's fear of missing out for anyone born before 1975).

My biggest worry was going to bed and waking up next to the same man for the rest of my life. I thought I would feel claustrophobic and get bored with his face - lovely though it is - day in and day out.

But fast forward two and a half years and I can say that getting married was one of the best decisions I've ever made. Not only am I the most content I've probably ever been - in life, in myself, in my career - but I'm also having the best sex I've ever had. The Big O is no longer like Father Christmas - making an appearance once a year (albeit accompanied by much excitement) and I can say categorically that the frisson does not fizzle out when you get hitched.

Cosmopolitan, I trusted you and you lied to me. Ecstasy is not to be found in the face-to-face fandango, the figure-of-eight or even the side wind-her (who comes up with this crap anyway?). It's actually found in what I like to call the three Cs: commitment, connection and communication.

## Commitment

Friends who are in long-term relationships often say to me: "What's the point of getting married? It's just a piece of paper", but let me tell you, being married has changed everything for me in the bedroom department. Knowing that my husband (let's call him J) is completely invested in our relationship, has signed on the dotted line in front of all our family and friends and promised to share everything with me - including his

Star Wars box set - is better than oysters and champagne when it comes to sex. It's a real turn-on thinking about the vows he made to me: he could have picked any woman in the world (within reason - remember the Star Wars box set) but he chose me.

When I was dating, there was often a niggling thought in the back of my mind: he could leave at any time. It was a one-foot-in, one-foot-out kind of mindset that would creep into my thoughts when we were getting into the mood, like cigarette smoke winding its way through a clean room. To my shame, I would use this get-out clause to my own advantage whenever I got bored or the relationship got too hard. In fact, I found it very difficult to stay faithful to anyone.

I'm not naive enough to think that J would never leave or that I wouldn't get tempted to stray again, but divorce is a lot harder to arrange than a text message telling someone you just don't think it's working.

## Connection

Arousal starts in the mind, long before you get into the bedroom. Many of my past relationships were built on the ever so rocky foundation of aesthetics. I was relying purely on physical attraction and not on emotional and intellectual connection. Without those key ingredients, orgasms were rarer than affordable property in London.

With some boyfriends it would take up to an hour of constant foreplay to relax me enough to let loose and, even then, I would be so conscious of what facial expression I was pulling - that my fits of rapture didn't quite match the images I'd seen in pornography - that I struggled to climax.

In the unquenchable search for pleasure, we'd contort ourselves to little effect: sex always felt like a performance. I had to be toned and tucked, waxed and plucked, and wrapped up in peelable, matching underwear. As women we're taught that sex is all about pleasing your man. One particular ex had so many lads' mags lying around (hello, early noughties) that even with my ample DDs, I felt inadequate.

In marriage there is a lot less pressure. J hopes to know me when I'm a little old lady so a bit of extra tummy fat or an untrimmed bush isn't going to scare him off. There's also no pressure to be "keeping it fresh". If missionary ain't broke, why fix it? The nuns don't seem to be complaining.

Nowadays, I find it much easier to have an orgasm and because I expect to, I get aroused quickly just thinking about it.

## Communication

Communication is key to good sex. We've heard this a million times before, but the truth is it took tying the knot before I was able to be completely honest about what turned me on and enabled me to climax. Marriage is an adult relationship: it separates the men from the boys and because of that I can trust J fully with the most embarrassing details. Plus I know he isn't going to run off and gossip about our sex life with his friends.

With other boyfriends, honesty felt like an admission of weakness and telling them about my genuine desires felt too intimate and private, especially as relationships were sometimes short-lived. Happy to share my orifices, but fantasies were a step too far - at

least when I was sober.

I also found it difficult to be honest about the things I didn't want to do and this became more frequent as porn culture started seeping into the mainstream male mentality.

I remember an ex asking for something hardcore as if he was asking for milk in his tea - so matter-of-fact and expectant, as if everyone was doing it and I'd be a square to refuse.

With J it's about my pleasure as much as his and because we have mutual respect and a partnership outside of the bedroom, it helps to foster a healthy one inside it. What's good for us sexually is also good for our marriage, so J works hard to please me as he sees it as a "win-win" (his words, not mine).

Millennials have been sold a lie and our self-esteem and pleasure receptors are paying the price. The message shouted at us constantly through popular culture is: variety is the spice of life and monogamy is for mugs. Have fun while you're young and settle down when you're old.

As I look over the precipice of my third decade, I am relieved that I met J at 25. He saved me from countless one-night stands and the heartache that comes from the dreaded Tinder side-swipe. Because I felt my fear and did it, I'm now lucky enough to live with my best friend, I have the stability I've craved for so long and I know deep contentment.

And the sex? Well, move aside oysters and champagne. There's no better aphrodisiac than good old-fashioned commitment. Who'd have thought it?

*Verity Hall is a pseudonym*

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