



MELBOURNE INSIDE OUT



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ABOUT LAST NIGHT

Q: After sex a few weeks ago my wife, Alison, said I wasn't a very romantic lover. My father never talked to me about sex. How does one learn to be a more romantic lover?
A: Most people find it difficult to talk about sex, even with their long-term partner. Alison must feel strongly about this to mention it. It is a pity she framed her comment as a criticism. Try not to feel hurt or offended. The positive point is that she wants you both to enjoy a more pleasurable and fulfilling sex life.

Sex education in Australia is still pretty inadequate, but when your father was growing up it was non-existent. He probably had no wisdom to share on this front. Women do not come with an instruction manual, and they too are often unclear about what they would enjoy, having had no guidance themselves.

Do not blame yourself for encountering a common impasse. The two of you need to talk, but not in the bedroom. Choose a time when you are happy and relaxed, and ask her what she means by "romantic". Can she give you examples of what she would like you to do? Be patient. She might be flustered and find it hard to put into words. Listen, without interrupting, commenting, or becoming defensive. When she feels safe to speak you might be surprised by what you learn. Simply listening, with love, could feel romantic to Alison.

Romantic love is the stuff of love songs, rom-coms, and soap operas. This kind of love is as intense, all-consuming, and idealised as that magic time when we are first in love. While that level of heightened pleasure cannot be sustained forever, it is possible to give your lover the affection, attention, and respect they deserve. There is nothing romantic about being taken for granted.

Essentially, what your wife is craving is a type of physical intimacy that is about engaging the heart, as well as the genitals. There is some truth in the idea that men need sex to feel loved, and women need to feel loved to want sex.

Try to begin your wooing a long time before you initiate intercourse. Take the time to make her feel special, your own princess. Establishing a loving connection is

part of foreplay, giving the woman the time she needs to experience her own desire. Older women can need more time to become aroused. It can be a turn off if you feel that you are merely a convenient body with which to couple.

One way to understand this better is by learning a little about the way sexual energy operates in the body. Tantric philosophers describe seven places, or "chakras", running from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. Energy can be brought up from the primal, animal base chakra, through the groin and solar plexus chakras, and into the heart. When this happens, there is an expansion of joy, and a deepened feeling of love and pleasure.

The problem is that many of us are blocked at certain points, and the energy cannot reach the heart. Most commonly, this

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blockage is around the navel, where your fears and angers are held. Many of us, especially men, protect our hearts from pain but this limits our ability to fully experience joy, and prevents heart connections.

This probably sounds a bit new age and kooky, but the bottom line is that using these ideas will result in you enjoying much more pleasurable and satisfying sex.

There are two books you might find useful. Australian tantra writer Kerry Riley's *Sexual Secrets for Men: What Every Woman Will Want Her Man to Know* comes highly recommended by the men who have read it. Diana Richardson's *The Heart of Tantric Sex* offers a number of practical exercises to guide you through this process.

Email your questions to atlastnight@gmail.com



MAUREEN MATTHEWS

SAVVY SHOPPER



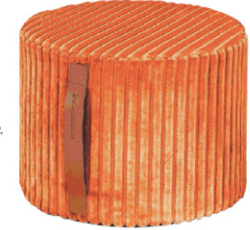
SHOW & TELL
 The new Google Home mini comes built-in with all the power of the Google Assistant that is just waiting for you to say "OK Google". The hands-free device is designed to project 360-degree sound and comes in chalk, charcoal and coral colours. Home mini speaker, \$79, Google, store.google.com



RELAXED ELEGANCE
 Now summer has ended, it's time to surround yourself with warm touches. Weave Home has designed a collection of soft furnishings inspired by coastal and urban living. This striking velvet cushion combines sunset tones and knerl forms. Palma cushion blush, \$69.95, Weave, weavehome.com.au



ITALIAN FLAIR
 This velvet stripe ottoman is by Mission Home, its compact design allows it to fit in just about any space. Coombs pouf, \$832, Mission Home, au.amara.com



NEW RETRO
 Tamara Watt, the designer behind Retro Print Revival, creates distinctive lamps using retro fabrics. The playful collections are full of colour and environmentally friendly, with materials sourced locally. Taking its cue from the '70s, the Rocket lamp features a rich ochre-coloured linen shade and oiled timber frame. Rocket table lamp tall, \$290, Retro Print Revival, retroprintrevival.com



SLIDING DOORS
 This streamlined sideboard, from Remodern, features a pop of orange in throwback to the 1950s. The timber-veneered structure incorporates a sliding door and an internal removable shelf so items can be out of sight but easily accessible. Slide Casegoods sideboard, \$2035, Sean De, remodern.com.au