No! Means Know!
Talking About Sex with Your Significant Other

Sex is a wonderful, enjoyable part of human relationships and the human experience. However, making the choice to have sex with a partner is a serious decision.

First, there are the physical questions. In most cases, you’ll need to use birth control (and be prepared for the possibility that it could fail). You also need to protect each other from sexually transmitted infections. Then, there are the emotional questions.

What Sex Can Mean

For most of us, entering into a sexual relationship with another person will change the way we feel about that relationship. For one, having sex tends to make us feel closer and more committed to that person. This may sound like a good thing--but if the relationship is new, if you don’t know the person well, or if you see a few red flags, having sex could get you more deeply involved than you’d really prefer. It then may be harder to end things if they don’t work out.

What’s Your Focus?

A relationship that becomes sexual quickly may also be focused more on sex and sexual chemistry than other important parts of a relationship, like trust, companionship, and emotional intimacy. Sex is great, but it can only get us so far. For a relationship to last, it needs to have more to it than chemistry between the sheets.

Delaying May Have Benefits

In fact, some studies suggest that delaying sex may lead to better outcomes for couples, such as more committed relationships, more emotional and physical satisfaction, a lower risk of cheating, and (if you end up tying the
knot) better marriages. If you’re looking for more than a “hook-up” (and most of us are), this is definitely something to consider.

When Someone Wants to Wait

So, let’s say you don’t yet feel ready to have sex, but your partner is interested. Or, flip the situation on its head: you’re interested, but your partner wants to hold off. How can couples know how to handle these different feelings?

If you want to wait:

- **Have the conversation ahead of time.** It’s probably not a great plan to spring this on your partner at the last minute! You may also find it hard to stick to this decision in the heat of the moment.
- **Find other ways to be emotionally intimate.** Maybe you and your partner are just looking for ways to feel close. There are a lot of ways to do that without having sex. Take a look at [101 Fun Dating Ideas](http://smartcouples.ifas.ufl.edu/dating/having-fun-and-staying-close/101-fun-dating-ideas/#d.en.314082) or Ten New Ideas for Fun and Cheap Dates for ideas.
- **Consider online dating.** If waiting is important to you, it may help to put this preference into an online profile so that you can more easily find partners who feel the same.

If your partner wants to hold off:

- **Communicate.** Talk to your partner about why he or she feels this way, being sure to listen compassionately to what he or she has to say.
- **Consider your priorities.** What is more important to you: finding someone with whom to have sex, or this particular relationship?
- **Focus on other positive aspects of the relationship.** Enjoy developing your intimacy in other ways, such as through learning more about the other person or enjoying spending time together trying new activities.
Remember, sex is great, but it definitely isn’t everything. While it’s important to have a physical connection and an attraction to a partner, you’re not likely to regret spending time with your date getting to know each other and developing your nonphysical relationship. Communicate with your partner when it comes to decisions about sex, and make sure your choice is intentional. Your relationship will benefit if you do.

References:


