

2 Building a Fulfilling and Connected Sex Life: A Comprehensive Plan for Josh & Kristy

Understanding Libido Differences: Spontaneous vs. Responsive Desire

One key insight from sexology is that individuals experience sexual desire differently. Josh's high libido reflects more **spontaneous desire** – an *urge or fantasy that appears out of the blue*, prompting him toward sexual release. Kristy, by contrast, fits the model of **responsive desire**, where sexual interest emerges *in response* to intimacy or stimulation rather than preceding it. This is normal, especially in long-term relationships and postpartum contexts. Research by Dr. Rosemary Basson emphasizes that for many women (and some men) in established relationships, *desire often follows arousal* instead of leading it. In Basson's non-linear model of female sexual response, emotional intimacy, context, and relationship satisfaction play huge roles in lighting the flame. Orgasm is considered a “nice bonus,” but **emotional satisfaction and connection** can be just as important for feeling sexually fulfilled.

For Kristy, this means she might rarely feel “*in the mood*” out of nowhere – especially amidst toddler chaos and fatigue – but given the right context (feeling relaxed, safe, loved), her body can respond and *desire will grow as things get going*. This responsive pattern is not a dysfunction; as educator Emily Nagoski notes, “*there is nothing wrong if you have responsive sexual desire*”. Understanding this relieves pressure: sex doesn't have to start with *both* partners revved up. Instead, you intentionally **create a context** (loving touch, massage, a warm bath, or just cuddling and talking) that allows Kristy's arousal to unfold gradually. In practice, Kristy can give herself *permission to begin sexual closeness from a place of neutrality*, knowing that as intimacy builds (with kissing, sensual touch, emotional closeness), her body's *responsive desire* can kick in. Many women report *enjoying sex once it's happening*, even if they weren't eager at the outset.

Postpartum hormonal and body changes further amplify the desire gap. After childbirth, it's common for libido to plummet for months or even years. One study found **83% of women** had little to no interest in sex at 2–3 months postpartum (and 38% at 6 months). Physical factors like birth trauma (stitches, pain) and breastfeeding hormones play a role. Lower estrogen in breastfeeding can cause vaginal dryness and reduce desire, while high **prolactin and oxytocin** increase bonding with baby at the expense of spousal romance. Kristy's experience of feeling “**touched out**” by the end of the day is very real – having clinging children can sap her desire for any more physical contact. Emotional factors are huge too: exhaustion, body-image issues, and even **resentment** can suppress libido. (For example, if she feels Josh's life has “not changed” while hers is upended by childcare, resentment can kill sexual interest.) On Josh's side, research shows new fathers also experience sexual ups and downs; their high desire is fueled by love and intimacy, while low desire is usually from stress, fatigue, and lack of time – *not* loss of attraction. In other words,

neither of you is broken or failing – you’re going through a completely normal adjustment where biology and life stress are dragging libido in opposite directions.

What to do? Embrace a team mindset against the real enemies of desire: fatigue, stress, and disconnection. Acknowledge that *mismatched libido* is common and manageable with understanding and effort. Josh can take comfort that Kristy’s lower drive *doesn’t mean she doesn’t love or desire him* – it means her arousal process needs a different starting point. Kristy can appreciate that Josh’s frequent sexual thoughts are not “dirty” or selfish, but partly wired by biology (and yes, years of youthful porn use may have conditioned him to crave constant stimulation – more on undoing that later). By reframing this difference as “*spontaneous gas pedal*” meets “*responsive brake*”, you can avoid personalizing it or feeling guilt/shame. Instead, you’ll work on **strategies to meet in the middle**, where Josh learns to slow down and stoke the warm coals of Kristy’s desire, and Kristy learns that opening herself to sensual experiences (even when not initially enthused) is okay and can lead to genuine enjoyment.

The Impact of Stress, Fatigue, and Young Kids on Libido

It’s hard to feel sexy when you’re sleep-deprived and stressed. **Chronic stress** elevates cortisol and drains the hormonal and emotional energy that fuels libido. With two kids under four, interrupted sleep and constant caregiving are likely taking a toll on both of you. Research confirms that *fatigue and stress are major libido killers* for new parents – often more so than hormones. In one study, **low sexual desire** in the months after childbirth was strongly linked to fatigue and lack of time, rather than breastfeeding status or physical issues. This means practical life factors (sleep, help with kids, self-care) are as important to address as any sexual technique.

Make rest and stress-reduction a priority for your sex life. This might mean carving out shifts so Kristy can get an uninterrupted nap or the two of you can have some downtime together once in a while. It could mean saying “no” to some commitments to preserve couple energy. Also, recognize the mental load new moms carry – planning meals, keeping track of kids’ needs – which can leave little bandwidth for eroticism. Sharing household and parenting duties more evenly can lighten that load. (Indeed, *inequity in the division of labor* is cited as a common factor in postpartum sexual dissatisfaction. Feeling supported and partnered in daily chores can translate into more openness to intimacy for Kristy.)

Another issue Kristy mentioned is **anxiety about the kids overhearing** or interrupting sex. This is a common concern for many parents. Her anxiety likely stems from the trauma of hearing others (her cousin/parents) having sex, which made intimacy feel unsafe or embarrassing. Addressing this will help her relax. **Practical steps:** Always **lock the bedroom door** – this is non-negotiable for peace of mind. If the kids are very young and prone to wandering in, explicitly teach them that when Mom and Dad’s door is closed, they should knock or wait (as they grow, they’ll understand this more). You can also use **background noise** (a fan, white noise machine or soft music) during intimate moments to mask sounds. Many parents find that playing quiet music not only covers any moans or bed squeaks but also helps set a relaxing mood. Realistically, as one family therapist quipped,

children will “*be more grossed out than curious*” if they do suspect you’re making love, and they’ll likely steer clear. Remind Kristy that consensual love between parents is healthy and nothing to be ashamed of – it’s **good for kids** to grow up with parents who show affection (albeit discretely). If the fear is intense, you might agree on a “**low volume**” style of lovemaking sometimes (e.g. more *slow, whispered, gentle sex* rather than headboard-banging vocal sex). This way Kristy isn’t constantly on edge listening for little footsteps.

Finally, given the exhaustion of parenting, **scheduling sex** is actually a wise strategy (and you’re already attempting this with Thursday nights). It may feel unromantic, but think of it as scheduling *time for each other*. As renowned therapist Esther Perel points out, *eroticism in long-term relationships often requires deliberate effort and planning* – a kind of “willful intent” to set aside the serious business of parenting and reconnect as lovers. Rather than waiting for a perfect spontaneous moment (which rarely comes with toddlers), agree on a realistic frequency (say, one night every week or two) and treat it as a date. The key is to **protect that time** from other obligations and to build anticipation. If Thursday night is the night, start flirting via text earlier that week or day. Send a sweet or sexy message (“Can’t wait to hold you tonight”). Both of you can then mentally prepare – Kristy can **transition out of “mom mode”** knowing intimacy is on the menu (perhaps she can take a relaxing shower or do something that helps her switch roles), and Josh can manage his high drive by looking forward to that special night, rather than feeling perpetual pressure. And if a scheduled night gets derailed (kids get sick, etc.), reschedule it soon rather than letting it slide indefinitely. Consistency builds trust – Kristy knows you won’t push every single day if you have a reliable rendezvous coming up, and Josh knows there’s a light at the end of the tunnel for release.

Bridging the Libido Gap: Aligning a High-Desire and Low-Desire Partner

The dynamic of one partner with a **higher sex drive and one lower** is incredibly common. Therapists often see couples where one is the “pursuer” for sex and the other the “distancer.” The goal is to avoid a pursuer-distancer standoff (chasing and withdrawing) by improving communication and **meeting underlying needs** for both of you.

First, identify what needs sex is fulfilling for each of you, beyond the physical release. Josh, high-libido individuals like you often (sometimes unconsciously) use sex to meet *non-sexual* needs such as comfort, stress relief, feeling connected, desired, or even just to alleviate boredom or anxiety. In fact, **men frequently use sex to fulfill needs for intimacy, closeness, affection, reassurance, and comfort**. Sexual intimacy might be the primary way Josh knows to seek emotional closeness or to unwind. Meanwhile, Kristy’s *reluctance* may stem from feeling that sex is yet another demand on her (when she’s already exhausted) or from not having those same drives at the forefront.

Here’s the empowering insight: “**There are nonsexual ways to meet all these needs.**” By getting creative, you can often satisfy the core need *outside* the bedroom, which takes pressure off sex. For example, if Josh is craving *comfort* or stress relief at the end of a long day, a loving **cuddle and back rub** might fill that tank. If he’s seeking *affirmation of*

desirability, Kristy can provide that through words (saying “I love how safe I feel with you, you’re so attractive to me”) or little gestures like a flirty compliment. If it’s *skin hunger* (needing skin-to-skin contact), taking 10 minutes to simply lie in bed holding each other, or giving non-sexual massage, can work wonders. By **negotiating alternatives** when one of you isn’t up for sex, you ensure no one’s core needs go completely unmet. For instance, “*Okay, we won’t have intercourse tonight, but can we just snuggle naked for a bit, or maybe I could take a warm shower while you sit with me and chat?*”. Even sharing a deep conversation or prayer together can meet needs for intimacy and communication that sex might otherwise be used to fulfill.

On the flip side, it’s important that the *higher-desire partner* (Josh) doesn’t feel *totally* deprived or rejected all the time, which can breed resentment. That’s why the scheduled sex nights are a great idea – they guarantee a minimum frequency. But also consider **expanding your definition of intimacy** so that not every “encounter” has to be full intercourse. Perhaps on a given week, Kristy is truly exhausted or not in the headspace for penetrative sex – instead of all-or-nothing, practice “*outercourse*.” You could give each other massages and see where it leads; or Josh might appreciate Kristy offering to help him climax with her hands or a lubricant while cuddling, even if she doesn’t desire stimulation herself that night. Or vice versa: use the Womanizer toy on Kristy one evening to give *her* pleasure without the expectation that Josh must also orgasm or have intercourse. These alternatives mean you’re still connecting and acknowledging sexual needs, but in a more flexible way that respects the lower-desire partner’s limits at that time. Many couples find that when the pressure for **full sex** is removed, the lower desire partner can relax and sometimes even get aroused once things progress naturally.

Communication is crucial in navigating this mismatch. Schedule calm, non-accusatory talks outside the bedroom about how each of you feels. Use “I” statements: “*I feel very loved and connected when we’re intimate, so when we go long stretches without sex I start to feel anxious or distant. How do you feel?*” Likewise Kristy can say, “*I worry that I’m letting you down, but sometimes I truly just feel ‘touched out’ or I’m afraid of being interrupted. I need to feel safe and not pressured.*” Approach it as a team problem: “*How can we make sure we both feel loved and get what we need?*”

Research from the Gottman Institute shows that **emotional intimacy and open communication are among the strongest predictors of sexual satisfaction** in long-term relationships. Couples who talk openly about their sexual needs and feelings, without shame or blame, have significantly higher levels of sexual fulfillment. Even though it might be awkward at first, talking *about* sex is a skill – and it can actually be sexy too. In fact, sex therapist Ian Kerner famously says “*foreplay is what happens all day long*” – meaning the intimate way you communicate and care for each other outside the bedroom sets the stage for what happens in bed.

Key communication tips:

- **Practice active listening.** When your partner talks about their feelings or needs, listen without interjecting or getting defensive. Acknowledge (“I hear you saying you’re afraid I’ll resent you if we don’t have sex often – I get that.” or “I understand you feel anxious and it makes it hard to relax.”). Feeling *heard* will diffuse a lot of

tension.

- **Use positive reinforcement.** Notice and appreciate when your partner makes an effort. If Kristy initiates a kiss or agrees to be intimate, Josh can later say, “Thank you, that meant a lot to me.” Likewise, Josh respecting a “not tonight” and cuddling instead is something Kristy can appreciate verbally. This builds goodwill.
- **Avoid criticism or contempt.** Never attack the person (“You’re so frigid” or “All you think about is sex – what’s wrong with you?”). Such negativity is toxic. Instead, focus on *behavior/feelings*: “I miss being close to you” or “I feel unwanted, even though I know that’s not your intent.”
- **Find win-wins.** Make it clear you’re *both* striving for a solution that works for both, not one “getting their way.” This could mean agreeing that Josh can initiate physical affection freely *without* it always leading to sex – so Kristy doesn’t pull away from every kiss fearing he expects intercourse. Conversely, Kristy might agree to initiate sex occasionally so Josh doesn’t always shoulder that role and wonder if he’s “coercing” her. Even scheduling that – e.g., Kristy will initiate once a month – can flip the dynamic in a positive way.

Emotional Connection as Foreplay: Insights from Relationship Science

Sex isn’t just a physical act; for a *truly* satisfying sex life, **emotional intimacy and trust** are the foundation. Dr. John Gottman found that *good sex is deeply interwoven with intimate trust, friendship, and open communication*. In other words, when a couple feels emotionally safe and connected, their sexual connection thrives. Gottman’s research indicates that couples with strong **friendship and “love maps”** (knowing each other’s inner worlds) tend to have better sex and more passion long-term. One reason is that emotional closeness fosters vulnerability – you feel safe to express your desires, to be playful or goofy, without fear of judgment.

For Josh and Kristy, this means investing in **non-sexual intimacy** will pay dividends in the bedroom. Simple practices make a big difference. For example, Gottman encourages couples to maintain **daily rituals of affection** – small gestures like a heartfelt goodnight kiss, holding hands on the couch, a 20-second hug when greeting after work. These may sound trivial, but such touches release oxytocin (the “bonding hormone”) which increases feelings of trust and relaxation. Even **non-sexual physical touch** (like cuddling while watching TV) can create a sense of safety and closeness that *primes* the body for sexual intimacy later by reducing stress and boosting connection.

Emotional connection also grows when you **stay curious about each other**. Take time to talk not just about logistics (kids, bills), but about feelings, dreams, and daily experiences. Research suggests dedicating **15 minutes a day** to meaningful conversation – truly listening to each other – can strengthen your bond and keep the spark alive. Try asking open-ended questions (Gottman calls this building **“Love Maps”**): *“What’s something you’re excited*

about lately?” “How have you been feeling about our relationship this week?” “Is there any way I can support you better?” When you know each other deeply and feel emotionally seen, the desire to be physically close often increases. In fact, one study found that couples with well-developed Love Maps were **60% more likely to be satisfied with their sexual relationship**. The lesson: talk, listen, laugh, and *be friends* – because **great sex is an extension of great friendship**.

Trust is another pillar. Kristy needs to know that she can be vulnerable (for example, trying a new sexy activity or sharing a fantasy) without being ridiculed or her boundaries violated. Josh needs to trust that he can express even his struggles (like lustful thoughts or guilt) and receive support, not shame. Gottman identifies **trust and emotional safety** as key predictors of both relationship satisfaction *and* sexual satisfaction. How to build trust? Through consistent small actions: keeping promises, being emotionally available, apologizing when you mess up, and showing empathy for each other's feelings. Over time, this creates a secure container where both partners feel **psychologically safe**. In that safety, erotic playfulness can flourish – you're not walking on eggshells, so you can let go and *be fully present* with each other.

Passion, Novelty, and Erotic Play: Keeping the Spark Alive

Desire in long-term monogamy is a balancing act between **security and adventure**. Esther Perel famously observes that we humans have two fundamental needs in love – **security (safety, knowing we can count on our partner)** and **surprise (novelty, mystery, “otherness” in our partner)**. At the start of your relationship, novelty was abundant (everything was new and exciting), but as years go by and you become a comfortable team, the passionate “heat” can cool if not tended. This is *completely normal* – love deepens, but erotic spark requires **intentional rekindling**.

Perel notes that in long-term relationships, *desire often needs space to thrive*. Paradoxically, too much closeness or routine can smother it. When you spend all day as a tag-team managing kids and work, there's little mystery left. One Perel insight: we often feel attracted to our partner when we **see them in their element, separate from us** – for example, watching Josh absorbed in a passion (playing guitar, engaged at work) or Kristy leading a playgroup, confident and independent. In those moments, you glimpse them through *new* eyes, almost like how a stranger might, and it can be sexy. So, intentionally cultivate a bit of **separateness** and individual growth. Encourage each other's hobbies and personal interests; occasionally spend time apart with friends or on a solo outing. It might sound counterintuitive, but *absence can make the heart grow fonder* – a night apart or even just doing separate activities gives you something to miss and to talk about, restoring a touch of novelty.

Another way to stoke the fire is through **surprise and novelty as a couple**. Our brains release dopamine (the pleasure chemical) when we experience something new or exciting. Studies show adding even small **novel experiences** boosts sexual desire and attraction. You don't have to swing from chandeliers (unless you want to!) – start with manageable adventures. For example: try a *new date spot* or cuisine, make love in a *different room* (or if

the kids are out, maybe the living room by candlelight), buy a *new lingerie outfit* or *role-play* a fantasy. Even **vacations or a night in a hotel** without the kids can work wonders – many couples find that a change of environment rekindles eroticism. If travel isn't feasible, consider a “staycation” date: decorate your bedroom like a romantic hotel (fresh sheets, candles, music) and pretend you're away. Or take a nighttime drive to a scenic lookout point and make out in the car like teenagers. **Play and novelty** are the antidotes to sexual boredom. Be each other's playmates in the bedroom. For example, perhaps once a month, plan a “surprise me” night where one of you secretly arranges something out of the ordinary – it could be as simple as a new massage oil or as elaborate as a sexy scavenger hunt with love notes.

Crucially, **keep a sense of humor and play**. Laughing together during intimate moments (e.g., when a position doesn't work or a knock comes on the door at the worst time) can actually increase bonding. Perel emphasizes that *eroticism is playful* and that maintaining a bit of flirtatious **mystery** (such as closing the bathroom door sometimes, or not always wearing the ratty pajamas to bed) can sustain attraction. This doesn't mean you can't be comfortable – it means occasionally stepping out of the purely domestic roles (colleagues in running the household) and seeing each other as lovers again. You might institute something like “*Five-Minute Desire*” check-ins: spend a few minutes now and then asking each other, “*Is there anything you've been fantasizing about that we could try sometime?*” or “*What's a sexual memory that really stands out for you with us?*” This keeps erotic conversation alive and signals that it's safe to share fantasies without judgment.

One more tip: **date each other** consistently. A weekly or biweekly date night (even if it's just at home with takeout and a movie after the kids sleep) helps you remember you're a romantic couple, not just co-parents. Research has found that couples who prioritize **quality time** together have significantly higher sexual satisfaction. Protect this time and take turns planning something fun or intimate. Some nights might be sex-focused, others might simply rebuild emotional connection – both forms of intimacy feed each other.

Tantric and Sensate Practices: Deepening Physical & Spiritual Connection

In addition to traditional sex, exploring **tantric and sensate focus practices** can greatly help you both connect on a new level. These techniques emphasize *slow, mindful intimacy* and can be especially beneficial given your dynamic (Josh's tendency to focus on release, and Kristy's need for relaxed, pressure-free arousal).

Sensate Focus is a classic exercise from sex therapy (Masters & Johnson) designed to reduce anxiety and build physical intimacy step by step. The idea is to take **intercourse and orgasm off the table initially** and instead touch each other in a mindful way to explore sensation. This can help Josh and Kristy get out of their heads (worries or goal-oriented thinking) and just be present. How it works in brief: you set aside time when you won't be disturbed (maybe after kids' bedtime). Start with **Stage 1: Non-genital touching**. Perhaps Josh touches Kristy's back, arms, face, legs – everywhere except breasts and genitals – for, say, 15 minutes, while she closes her eyes and focuses on what she feels. Then you switch, and Kristy touches Josh similarly. The rule is *no trying to arouse or tickle into sex*, and if

arousal happens, you don't act on it immediately. The focus is on the texture of skin, warmth, pressure – noticing the sensual pleasure in a simple caress. This may sound simplistic, but it's profoundly effective. It retrains your brain to enjoy the journey of touch without rushing to the finish. Many couples report that removing the *expectation* of sex for a while actually rekindles desire – because suddenly touch isn't fraught with performance worries. Over a few sessions, if that goes well, you move to **Stage 2: Genital touch** is allowed, but still with a slow, exploratory mindset (not immediately going for orgasm). Maybe incorporate some **“hand-riding”** (the receiver guiding the giver's hand to show what pressure/tempo feels good). Again, you take turns. Eventually, later stages reintroduce mutual touching, oral sex, and intercourse, but always emphasizing mindfulness and communication. Sensate focus can help Kristy relax and tune into her body's pleasure signals without the weight of expectations, and it can help Josh learn to slow down and savor intimacy beyond penetration. It's essentially a **relearning of physical intimacy** – perfect for transitioning out of a rut or addressing anxieties.

Tantric sex is another approach that dovetails nicely, especially with your interest in integrating spirituality. Tantra, rooted in ancient practices, is about seeing sex as a **meditative, sacred experience** rather than a goal-oriented act. It involves things like deep breathing, eye contact, and moving sexual energy through the body. Practically, you might start by simply sitting together, unclothed or partially clothed, in a quiet, dimly lit space, maybe with soft music or candles. Face each other and do some **breathing exercises** in unison. For example, the **“co-breathing”** technique: one partner inhales while the other exhales, so you're exchanging breath rhythm (this can create a powerful feeling of connection). Or try **synchronized deep breathing**, where you both inhale slowly for a count of 4, hold for 2, exhale for 6, and imagine tension leaving your bodies. As you breathe, maintain gentle eye contact – yes, it may feel awkward/giggly at first, but after a couple of minutes it often leads to a feeling of unprecedented closeness, almost seeing into each other's souls.

Tantric practice also encourages **slow, intentional touch and movement**. You might, for instance, gently run your fingertips along each other's arms and chest, focusing on *every tingling sensation*, without rushing to genitals. Embrace and feel your bare chests rise and fall together. The aim is to **heighten your awareness and prolong the arousal** without racing to climax. Techniques like **edging** (bringing each other close to orgasm, then pausing to cool down slightly, then building up again) can greatly intensify the eventual release and teach control. Josh, given your high drive, learning tantric breathing and control can help channel your sexual energy in a way that doesn't overwhelm Kristy and also increases your own stamina and enjoyment. Meanwhile, Kristy might find that tantric exercises help her get out of her own head (worries about kids or body image) and into a state of *full presence* with you. The deep breathing and eye contact are essentially mindfulness – they reduce anxiety and increase emotional bonding. As one sex therapist put it, *“tantric sex isn't about wild contortions; it's about being truly present with each other, savoring every touch, kiss, and breath as a pathway to deeper physical and emotional connection.”*. Many couples report that exploring these practices not only improves their sexual satisfaction but makes them feel **spiritually connected** – a sort of “unitive” experience that resonates with seeing sex as a God-given gift.

Practical tantric ideas: You can incorporate simple elements like *eye-gazing*. Lie nude together and gaze into each other's eyes for 2 minutes without talking, occasionally smiling – it's intense but creates intimacy. Try the "*lotus position*" – sit upright with Kristy on Josh's lap facing him, legs around his waist. Just hug, breathe together, maybe gently rock. This skin-to-skin closeness (which is also great for emotional safety) can lead to lovemaking if you choose, or not – it's connecting either way. You can also read about specific tantric techniques or even watch a tasteful instructional video together to get ideas. The point is to shift focus from *orgasm outcome* to *pleasure process*. Ironically, when you do that, the orgasms (when they happen) are often *more* intense and accompanied by a feeling of profound unity. Tantric philosophy frames sex as **sacred** – a way to experience transcendence or even divine love through each other. For a Christian couple, this can resonate: seeing your sexual union as something God-honoring, a way to experience the "one flesh" intimacy the Bible speaks of, rather than a dirty or merely physical act. In fact, integrating prayer or spiritual ritual into sex (if you're comfortable) can be very bonding. Some couples, for example, pray together before intimacy ("Lord, thank you for this gift, help us to love each other through this"), or practice gratitude after orgasm, or even view the afterglow as a time to meditate together. Blending the **sacred and sensual** may help resolve the mental split Josh sometimes feels (between lust vs. faith) and sanctify the bedroom as an extension of your spiritual life.

Faith and Theology: A Guilt-Free, God-Honoring Sexuality

Both of you have a strong Christian faith, which can be an immense asset to your sex life – but only if it's channeled with truth and grace rather than shame. Let's confront the elephant in the room: Josh's history with porn and lust has caused guilt, and Kristy likely has purity culture messages or trauma triggers that cause anxiety. It's vital to reframe your understanding of biblical sexuality in a **positive**, not merely prohibitive, way.

Biblical vision of sex: Far from seeing sex as "dirty," the Bible celebrates erotic love within marriage. *Song of Songs* is the prime example – an entire book of Scripture devoted to the sensual, passionate lovemaking of a husband and wife. It's brimming with seductive imagery, playful chasing, admiration of each other's bodies, and unashamed pleasure. Notably, *Song of Songs* shows two lovers **fantasizing about each other** and longing for intimacy before they even wed. "*I delight to sit in his shade and his fruit is sweet to my taste... his left arm under my head and his right arm embraces me,*" says the woman (Sg 2:3,6). This is clearly erotic dreaming. And it's in the Bible without condemnation! We can take a lesson from this: **sexual imagination and anticipation with your beloved is not sinful – it's celebrated.** God created our minds with the capacity to eroticize and revel in desire, as long as it's directed in a loving, respectful way. So Josh, one way to **honor God in your sexuality** is to consciously redirect your thoughts and fantasies *toward your wife* (and away from anonymous or multiple women). When lustful thoughts creep in, don't just suppress all fantasy; rather, "*take them captive*" and replace them with creative scenarios involving Kristy. For instance, instead of indulging a porn flashback or imagining a composite of women, intentionally **imagine Kristy** – recall a great encounter you had, or fantasize about an upcoming date night with her. This aligns with what one Christian sex resource suggested: *replace pornography with imagination*, training your mind to think of "*romantic contexts and*

interesting ideas to pleasure one another". By doing so, you start *"training your brain in the right direction"* – toward **your marriage bed** as the locus of sexual excitement.

It's also important to embrace **grace over shame**. Yes, the Bible warns against lust – but lust is not the same as sexual desire for your spouse. Lust is usually defined as a self-centered, covetous sexual urge for someone you shouldn't have. Sexual desire per se is a God-given part of being human. For married folks, *desiring each other* is good! So there's no shame in Josh having a strong sex drive – the challenge is channeling it rightly, with self-control and love. Likewise, there's no shame in Kristy's slower arousal – the aim is to lovingly nurture it, not judge it. Remember **Romans 8:1**: *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* God is not looking down on you in the bedroom with a scowl; He's the author of sex and calls it *"very good"* in the right context. Consider praying together specifically about your sex life – ask God to help you see it as He does: a source of joy, unity, and pleasure, not a source of shame.

Dealing with guilt around masturbation and porn: Josh, you mentioned struggling with masturbation and fantasizing about others, and wanting a more Christ-centered approach. This is an area where nuance and honesty with oneself is key. The resource *"The M Word"* (which you provided) asks some very pointed questions about motives for masturbation – essentially guiding one to discern whether it's leading you toward or away from God and your spouse. For instance, if masturbation is tied up with *lustful thoughts for others, escapism from your marriage, or reinforcing a porn habit*, then it's harmful spiritually (and often relationally). On the other hand, if it's done for reasons like *relieving tension in order to remain faithful, learning about your own body, or even as a stopgap during times when sex isn't available* – these can be more "permissible" reasons. It's about the heart posture and whether it becomes a **secret substitute** for intimacy.

Importantly, **pornography** must remain off the table for you both, as you've rightly committed. Not only is it a spiritual stumbling block, but science shows porn can literally **rewire the brain** in damaging ways. Regular porn use trains your brain to require intense, novel stimulation – people end up needing more extreme content or multiple videos to get the same arousal. This makes *normal sex with one partner* feel less exciting by comparison, which is so unfair to your real love. In essence, porn can create an addiction pathway: your brain craves the dopamine hit of new scenes, and over time you may struggle to respond to *"just" your wife in a quiet bedroom*. There are documented cases of men who consumed so much porn and masturbated in one specific way that they had difficulty orgasming with a partner at all. You're wisely trying to avoid that fate. The good news is, **neuroplasticity** means the brain can change back. By abstaining from porn and focusing on **partner-focused fantasy and real intimacy**, you can recover a healthy arousal pattern. It might take some time (you may experience strong cravings or "flashbacks" in your mind – treat those like a temptation to gently dismiss and replace with a better thought). Consider also using some brain-training strategies: for example, each time an intrusive porn memory or a fantasy of another woman pops up, immediately switch in your mind to an image of Kristy or a prayer ("Lord, bless that person I'm imagining – she's Your child – and help me refocus on my wife"). This aligns with the biblical idea of *"taking every thought captive"* to make it obedient to Christ.

Masturbation by itself, without porn, is a gray area in Christian ethics. The Bible doesn't directly address it. Many theologians suggest it can be either constructive or destructive depending on context and motive. What do **you** discern? Some couples incorporate masturbation in a healthy way: for instance, if one spouse is not available (postpartum healing, illness, deployment), they may *mutually agree* that the other can masturbate as an outlet, perhaps with the understanding that it's done while thinking of each other or at least not indulging lust for others. In fact, *The M Word* document explicitly states that *in cases like childbirth, sickness or long separations, masturbation can be "a great outlet" so long as the spouse is **fully aware and has agreed to it as part of the intimacy plan***. This transparency is key – it keeps masturbation from becoming a secretive, distancing habit. If you, Josh, occasionally **relieve yourself in the shower to reduce the daily pressure**, make this part of an open conversation. It might sound awkward, but you could tell Kristy: *"Honey, you know my drive is high. I want to respect your pace. One way I manage is that sometimes I masturbate quickly – but I only allow myself to think of you or us together. I want you to know, because I don't want secrets. Are you okay with this as part of how we balance things?"* Her comfort and consent are important. If she's uneasy, discuss why. Perhaps she fears you'll fantasize about others – assure her you're committed to keeping your mind on her. Perhaps she feels it's "unbiblical" – you could share some of the perspectives we've discussed, emphasizing that **intention matters** and that you view it as a physical maintenance/relief, not a replacement for her. If done right, this can actually *help* the marriage: you're less likely to pressure her or fall into porn, and she doesn't feel solely responsible for your every sexual need. However, balance is everything – if it's too frequent, it could start to **lower your drive for partnered sex or make sex too quick** (due to being pre-relieved). So, moderation and monitoring its effects are wise. Also, consider occasionally practicing **self-control** even when you're feeling desperate – it's like training a muscle. Maybe challenge yourself to sometimes channel that urge into a passionate non-sexual caress for Kristy or into exercise or prayer, just so you know you're not *enslaved* to your urges.

From a theological angle, remember the principle of *mutual love and submission* in marriage (Ephesians 5:21). Sex should never be a weapon or something one "withholds" punitively, nor something one **demand**s selfishly. It's a dance of generosity. *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband"* (1 Cor 7:3-5) is often cited – but note, that passage also says *"do not deprive each other except by mutual consent for a time."* The spirit of it is mutual care: Kristy being mindful of Josh's needs so he isn't consumed by temptation, and Josh being mindful not to coerce but to serve Kristy in love. It sounds like both of you *want* to serve each other – that's a beautiful thing. Lean into that. See sex as **ministry to each other**: Kristy's willingness to work on more sexual engagement is a loving service to Josh, and Josh's patience and emotional support is a loving service to Kristy. When you make love, view it as an act of *worship* almost – thanking God by enjoying each other thoroughly. This mindset can help purge residual shame. In **Song of Songs**, there's a verse (5:1) where God's voice essentially says *"Eat, friends, drink and be drunk with love!"* – a divine encouragement to married lovers to delight in each other without reserve. With that in mind, you can pray for your sex life just like any other aspect of your marriage, inviting God to "join you" in the sense of blessing your union.

Masturbation, Sex Toys, and "Masturbating Well"

You mentioned the recent purchase of a **Womanizer toy** and wanting to use tools in a healthy way. Let's talk about sex toys and masturbation in a fact-based, stigma-free way.

Vibrators and toys can be a fantastic addition, especially given Kristy's lower spontaneous arousal. Physically, the Womanizer (a clitoral suction vibrator) is known for helping many women achieve orgasm more easily – it provides consistent, targeted stimulation often more intense than manual touch. This is not “cheating” or something to feel weird about; it's simply technology enhancing pleasure, much like using a nice coffee machine vs. instant coffee. There is plenty of research showing vibrators are *commonly used and associated with positive sexual function*. For instance, a large 2009 nationally representative study in the U.S. found **53% of women** had used a vibrator, and vibrator users reported **higher sexual desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm quality, and overall function** than non-users. Importantly, **71.5% of women** reported *never* having any negative side effects from vibrator use, and any that did occur (slight soreness or temporary sensitivity) were usually mild and fleeting. In other words, the fear that a vibrator will “desensitize” Kristy permanently or ruin “real sex” is largely a myth. On the contrary, moderate use can **enhance her responsiveness**. If Kristy can reliably orgasm with the Womanizer, that's actually great for retraining her body to remember what arousal and climax feel like, which can increase her libido via positive reinforcement.

One study even specifically found that women who use vibrators *both alone and with a partner* have higher sexual satisfaction than those who use them only solo. Using it together can foster communication (“Is this pressure good? Want more here?”) and a team mindset toward pleasure. Couples who openly incorporate a vibrator often report **better sexual communication and less embarrassment** in discussing their needs. In your case, using the Womanizer on Kristy during foreplay might help bring her to a high level of arousal faster, which then makes penetration (if you choose) more comfortable and exciting for her. Or Josh can even use it *on her* as an act of service: some men enjoy watching their wives experience intense pleasure from a toy – it can be a turn-on and also a relief, knowing she's feeling good. If Josh feels a twinge of ego about “needing a gadget,” reframe it: the toy is *an extension of your loving effort*, not a competitor. As one therapist quipped, “*Vibrators do not replace partners – they're like adding a vibrator to a guitar; it enhances the music you make together.*”

Just communicate and have fun with it. Maybe establish a safe signal for too intense/too little, since toys can be strong. One potential drawback to be mindful of: if Kristy gets used to *only* one type of stimulation (like the Womanizer at a high setting) to climax every time, she might find it harder to orgasm from other types of touch (temporarily). The solution is simple: variety and **moderation**. Mix things up – sometimes use the toy, other times use manual or oral stimulation, or use the toy only to get close and then finish in another way. This keeps her body adaptable (which it naturally is). Given her responsive desire, the toy might actually serve as a tool to kickstart arousal on those days she's starting at zero – kind of like priming the engine. And there's no rule that both must orgasm every session; you can focus on *her* orgasm some nights (via toy or other means) without intercourse, and other times focus on *his* release (perhaps a quickie that she consents to but without pressure to orgasm herself). Over time, as any sexual anxieties diminish, you'll likely find more mutual encounters where both are fully satisfied.

On **masturbation** (“**masturbating well**”): We touched on the spiritual/mental side above. To add practical tips: since Josh has a daily drive, making masturbation *intentional* rather than mindless is key. If you’re going to do it, do it *well*. That means: **avoid porn or illicit fantasy** (we covered using spouse-focused imagination instead). Perhaps limit how often – e.g., if you’re having sex roughly once a week, you might masturbate on 2–3 of the other days at most, and refrain on the days just before you hope to have sex so you come to Kristy with ample desire (and perhaps last a bit shorter, which might actually align better with her arousal curve so she’s not worn out). When masturbating, consider it a chance for self-exploration – how can you learn about your arousal that might help during partner sex? Some men practice **edging** solo to improve control (bringing yourself near orgasm then stopping, a few times, before finishing). This could be useful if you find you get *too* excited with Kristy and risk finishing before she’s there; solo practice can increase your awareness of your arousal levels. Just avoid masturbating in a way that’s impossible to replicate with a partner – for instance, death-grip or very fast/frantic strokes that a vagina cannot match, or always in a specific position. As one sexologist noted, men sometimes condition themselves to only respond to a certain tight grip or motion that doesn’t occur in intercourse. Mix up your techniques to keep yourself versatile. And **keep Kristy in the loop** – not necessarily every instance, but as part of your general intimacy plan. If it’s “out in the open” as an agreed thing, it loses the shame factor and also holds you accountable to doing it in healthy ways. Some couples even incorporate *mutual masturbation* (masturbating side by side or watching each other) as a form of intimacy. This can be erotic and also educational (“Oh, that’s how you like to be touched!”). If you’re both comfortable, you might experiment with that – it can be less physically taxing for Kristy on a low-energy night, but still a turn-on and bonding experience.

Practical Intimacy Plan: Daily, Weekly, Monthly Practices

Finally, let’s synthesize all this into actionable routines. The goal is to make intimacy (emotional, physical, and spiritual) a **natural, ongoing part of your life**, despite the busyness with little kids. Think of this plan as a flexible guide – not a strict regimen – to keep both partners feeling loved and sexually satisfied.

Daily Practices – *Small Moments of Connection*

- **Morning or Evening Check-In:** Take 5-15 minutes each day to talk *one-on-one*, no kid interruptions. This could be in the morning over coffee or cuddling in bed at night. Share something about your day, or what’s on your mind/heart. Listen attentively. This maintains emotional intimacy, which, as noted, strongly predicts sexual satisfaction. Knowing each other’s emotional world will make physical closeness easier.
- **Affectionate Touch & Compliments:** Make it a point to exchange at least one meaningful touch and one appreciative comment daily. For example, a long hug and **passionate kiss** after work (even if kids are pulling at your legs – they can see Mom and Dad love each other). Psychologically, a 20-second hug can lower stress

hormones and deepen bonding. Verbally, say something kind: “You look gorgeous today,” or “I really appreciate how hard you worked on dinner,” etc. Feeling *seen and valued* outside the bedroom creates warmth that can translate to desire later.

- **Non-Sexual Physical Connection:** End the day with some physical contact, even if it's not sex. This could be spooning for a few minutes before sleeping, or giving each other a brief shoulder rub. Such **rituals of affection** release oxytocin, fostering security and connection. It's okay if it's routine – those little oxytocin boosts are like deposits in the love bank. Also, if you often sleep at different times due to kids, try to overlap at least a bit; even going to bed together once a week to chat/cuddle can help.
- **Mindful Transitions:** If Josh often finds himself highly aroused (“peaking”) and Kristy is not available or not in the mood, use a strategy for those moments. Rather than immediately stuffing it down or bursting with frustration, try a brief mindful exercise. For instance, take a quick cold shower or do 20 push-ups to burn off edge, then do a *mind reset*: pray or breathe deeply and refocus your arousal as an energy of love *for* Kristy. If truly needed, a quick masturbation (with Kristy's awareness/permission as discussed) can release the pressure without involving her every time. The **key is transparency** and intention (doing it to reduce pressure *on* the marriage, not to escape the marriage). And if you do it, consider afterwards still curling up with Kristy – intimacy isn't only about you being aroused. You can enjoy closeness even post-release; this assures her you didn't just get relief and check out.
- **Spiritual Connection:** If faith is central, a daily or near-daily spiritual practice together can bond you. Maybe pray together each night (even a quick prayer for each other), or read a short devotional or Bible verse. You could occasionally read a few steamy verses from Song of Songs *together* and see it as “foreplay” sanctioned by God. This reinforces that God is in favor of your sexual joy. It also helps guard against the porn temptation – you're filling your mind with holy erotic literature instead of junk.

Weekly Practices – *Dedicated Couple Time*

- **Date Night (or Date “Time”):** Aim for at least one date opportunity a week. This might be an evening out (if babysitting allows) or an at-home date. Rotate ideas: one week could be a romantic movie and wine after kids sleep, another week a board game or just sitting on the porch together star-gazing and talking. The important part is **focused time without distractions** – no phones, no chores. Research shows couples who prioritize such quality time report **35% higher sexual satisfaction**. Why? Because you're keeping your friendship and fun alive, which naturally can lead to more affectionate and sexual feelings. Protect this time – put it on the calendar. If exhaustion is an issue, consider daytime dates (a weekend afternoon while kids nap or are at grandma's). Daylight can be surprisingly sexy too, and you might have more energy then.

- **Scheduled Intimacy Night:** You already have every second Thursday planned for sex. If possible, increase frequency to *weekly*. Perhaps commit to *every Thursday* (or another night) being “us time.” Knowing it’s coming, you can both prepare. Use that day to build anticipation: flirty texts or a phone call, light physical teasing (a butt grab in the kitchen with a “can’t wait for later”). If one of you isn’t feeling up to full sex that day, consider still keeping the slot but doing something intimate (like a massage, extended foreplay, or a shared bath) so the habit stays and nobody feels rejected. But as much as you can, **honor the commitment** to be sexual in some way each week. Treat it like an important appointment. If fatigue is a big barrier at night, occasionally do an intimacy “morning” on a weekend, or a mid-day when kids nap. You might find you have more energy and less anxiety then.
- **Sensate Focus or Tantric Session:** Consider dedicating one of your weekly intimate times specifically to a *practice* (especially in these early growth stages). For example, one week, say, “Tonight let’s try that sensate focus exercise.” Light candles, make the room warm, and spend 30 minutes on the non-genital touch steps. Another week, do a tantric breathing and eye contact session for 20 minutes, without the goal of intercourse (though if it happens naturally, fine). Think of these as **workouts for your intimacy** – they build skills and closeness. You can even set a playful tone: *“Coach said we have to practice touching without pouncing – let’s see how we do!”* These exercises can be fun and often lead to great sex *the next time* because you’ve heightened the connection.
- **Team Check-In and Planning:** Once a week, maybe Sunday night, have a brief meeting (make it cozy, over tea or cuddled on the couch) to discuss the coming week’s schedule and any intimacy needs. For example: *“This week looks stressful on Wed/Thu; maybe we aim for intimacy on Saturday when things are calmer?”* or *“I’ve been feeling a bit disconnected; can we find a time to maybe do a long massage?”* Also use this time to honestly share how you each felt about your recent sexual encounter(s) – what was good, what you’d like more of or less of. Keep it positive: express gratitude (“I really loved that you initiated on Tuesday, it made me feel wanted”) and gentle requests (“Could we try using more lubrication next time, I think it would help me relax”). This prevents small issues from festering and keeps you on the same page.

Monthly (or Bi-Monthly) Practices – *Spice & Growth*

- **Try Something New:** At least once a month, deliberately infuse novelty or learning. This could be trying a new sexual position or technique, reading a chapter of a book or an article about sex together, or watching a respected Christian sex webinar or secular tutorial on something you’re curious about. You could decide, for example, to experiment with a blindfold and feather one month (sensory play), or introduce a mild fantasy scenario the next. Perhaps one month you focus on *her* pleasure (e.g., multiple orgasms for Kristy with the Womanizer and oral sex), another month on *his* (e.g., Kristy gives Josh a full-body massage ending in a handjob, focusing on teasing). By continually exploring, you’ll discover new turn-ons and avoid the trap of monotony. Plus, it gives you both something to look forward to (“Ooh, what will we

explore in July?”). If something doesn’t work for you, no problem – you tried and can laugh it off or tweak it. As long as it’s consensual and respectful, **freedom in the marriage bed** is yours. “*The marriage bed is undefiled*” (Heb 13:4) – you have a wide playground, so enjoy it without guilt.

- **Extended Date/Overnight:** Every month or two, if possible, arrange an overnight for the kids with a relative or sitter so you can have an **overnight date** or at least a full evening alone at home. Use this time to *really* focus on each other without listening for cries or rushing. Maybe recreate your honeymoon vibes – have dinner, dance in the living room, then spend ample time being intimate. You could incorporate all the senses: nice scent in the room, romantic music, flavored body paints or oils, etc. If overnights out aren’t feasible, even a 3-4 hour uninterrupted span while kids are out can feel luxurious. Consider occasionally using a day off from work (send kids to daycare or school as usual, then have a “**sex day**” at home). Many parents do this to get private time. Broad daylight, energy up, house empty – it can be fantastic.
- **Review and Celebrate:** Take stock every so often (monthly or quarterly) of how far you’ve come. Discuss what improvements you notice. Celebrate the wins: “*Hey, we’ve had a month with no porn and our communication about sex has been the best it’s ever been!*” or “*Kristy, you initiated once this month – that was awesome.*” Positive reinforcement will encourage you both to keep investing. You might even literally celebrate by treating yourselves – a nice dinner or a new lingerie or that couple’s retreat you wanted. This reinforces that your sexual wellbeing is an achievement worth rewarding.

As-Needed Strategies – Handling Challenges and Maintaining Progress

- **Therapy and Counseling:** You mentioned exploring therapy. A **sex-positive therapist** (ideally one who respects your faith perspective) could be a great ally. They can help unpack any deeper issues (like Kristy’s past triggers or Josh’s residual guilt) and facilitate communication exercises. Even a short course of couple’s therapy could turbocharge your progress, given you’re both open to growth. There are also Christian intimacy coaches and resources if that’s more appealing. Don’t hesitate to seek help – it’s not a sign of failure, but of commitment to a thriving marriage.
- **Accountability for Purity:** Since Josh is avoiding porn, consider using tools like accountability software (Covenant Eyes, etc.) on devices if temptation is strong. Also, identify triggers (stress? boredom?) and have an action plan (call an accountability partner, do a devotional, engage in a healthy distraction like exercise). Kristy can be a supportive ally here, not a policeman – if you struggle, be honest with her; pray together about it. Unified against the temptation, you’ll feel stronger. Remember, as *The M Word* notes, the goal isn’t to remove sexual desire (impossible and not good) but to **uncouple it from sinful patterns** and redirect it healthily. Every time you resist porn and choose your wife (in thought or action), you’re renewing your mind.
- **Body Image and Confidence:** Post-kids, Kristy might not feel as sexy in her skin. Josh, you can help enormously by **showering her with genuine praise** about her

body and beauty. Be specific: “I love your curves, you’re so beautiful to me,” or “Watching you breastfeed our child made me realize how amazing your body is – and it turns me on seeing you as a mother.” Show that you desire *her*, not some airbrushed ideal. Also, create an environment where she feels comfortable naked: maybe low light if she’s shy, or wearing lingerie that highlights what she likes and conceals what she’s insecure about. Over time, as she experiences you delighting in her body, her confidence will grow. Josh, you might also share your own vulnerabilities (if any) – e.g., if you feel self-conscious about anything. Mutual empathy goes a long way. And remember, **confidence is sexy**; encourage each other to feel proud and grateful for the bodies you have that can experience pleasure.

- **Continued Education:** Keep learning together. Read Christian intimacy books (e.g., *“Sheet Music”* by Kevin Leman, or *“Intended for Pleasure”* by Ed Wheat), or secular ones (*“Come As You Are”* by Emily Nagoski for understanding female desire, *“Mating in Captivity”* by Esther Perel for reigniting passion). You have that PDF from Rosie King; consider reading it fully together. Knowledge reduces anxiety – when you realize your challenges are common and solvable, it gives hope.
- **Non-Sexual Fun and Friendship:** Lastly, remember to **have fun outside of the “serious” work**. Be goofy parents together, nurture your friendship. A strong friendship = a strong foundation for erotic connection. Sometimes a hearty laugh or a new shared hobby can indirectly boost your sex life, because it’s all connected.

In summary, Josh and Kristy, you have a wonderful opportunity to turn this season of challenge into a season of growth. By understanding each other’s differences (spontaneous vs responsive desire), addressing stress and fatigue cooperatively, communicating openly and kindly, investing in both emotional and physical intimacy, and integrating your faith values with proven sexual techniques, you can **cultivate a sex life that is satisfying for both of you – body, soul, and spirit**. It won’t be perfect overnight, but every small step counts. You’ll likely slip up (maybe an unmet scheduled night or a stray fantasy); don’t panic. Extend grace to yourselves, learn and adjust. Keep the long game in mind: a marriage where **sexual intimacy is a source of joy, not tension**, where both partners feel deeply connected and desired. With love, patience, and the strategies outlined – from sensate focus exercises to nonsexual affection to using that Womanizer wisely – you can get there.

Remember, **you’re on the same team**. There will be seasons when one carries the other more. As scripture says, *“Love bears all things”*. Some nights will be more for Josh’s release, others more for Kristy’s comfort – and that’s okay when balanced over time. Continue to invite God into this journey; He cares about this aspect of your marriage too. Celebrate progress and don’t lose sight of the fact that **God designed sex as a gift for your enjoyment and connection** – it’s literally a taste of Eden, a mysterious “one flesh” reunion. With science as a guide and faith as your foundation, you’re equipped to build the thriving, *“God-honoring sexual life”* you desire – one that is *guilt-free, full of grace, sizzling with pleasure, and rooted in unshakeable love*.

Sources:

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- Sensate focus technique – mindful touch to improve intimacy, from Masters & Johnson.
- Tantric sex overview – slow, present, breathing-focused intimacy for deeper connection.
- "The M Word" (Christian perspective on masturbation) – advice on motives, replacing porn with spouse-focused fantasy; warnings on porn's brain effects; allowance for masturbation in marriage by mutual agreement.
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- Women's Health & ScienceDaily – vibrator use research (higher sexual function, rare side effects, better satisfaction when used with partner).