

INTIMACY SHUTDOWN

What to Do When You Feel Yourself Shutting Down During Intimacy

How to recognize when you're starting to leave the moment, and when you need to stop.

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PSYCHOTHERAPIST · INTIMACY SHUTDOWN

Sometimes you know immediately that you don't want to keep going.

But sometimes it's harder to tell.

You're kissing your husband and suddenly you feel far away.

You notice yourself going quiet.

Your mind gets foggy.

You stop having much of an opinion about what happens next.

Or maybe you don't feel upset at all.

You don't feel much of anything.

And by the time you realize you don't want to keep going, you already feel like you're somewhere else.

Those are the moments I want you to learn to recognize.

Because there's a difference between noticing yourself starting to shut down and realizing you're already past the point where you can stay connected to yourself.

And what you do next depends on which moment you're in.

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE

Are you still here, or have you already gone somewhere else?

When I work with women experiencing Intimacy Shutdown, I'm interested in the moment when they start losing access to themselves.

Not because you should be monitoring yourself perfectly during intimacy.

And not because every uncomfortable feeling means something is wrong.

I want you to start noticing when your experience changes.

YOU'RE STARTING TO REACH YOUR EDGE

You're still connected enough to notice what's happening. Maybe:

- Your body starts to tense.
- Your stomach tightens.
- You notice yourself holding your breath.
- You suddenly want more space.
- Your mind starts racing.
- You feel irritated and aren't quite sure why.
- You start wondering how much longer this is going to go.
- Part of you wants to pull away.

You're still there. You can still notice:

Something just changed.

That's important.

YOU'RE PAST YOUR EDGE

This can look very different. Instead of feeling more, you may start feeling less. Maybe:

- You go blank.
- You feel numb.
- Your mind gets foggy.
- You stop knowing what you want.
- You go very quiet.
- You feel far away from what's happening.
- You feel like you're watching yourself instead of fully being there.
- Your body is participating, but you don't feel connected to it.

IF YOU DON'T FEEL ANYTHING

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A woman who says, “I don't feel anything” isn't necessarily fine.

That may be the moment she has already gone too far past her edge to stay connected to what she wants.

And if that's where you are, I don't want your next question to be:

How do I make myself relax so I can keep going?

I want it to be:

Do I need to stop?

THE NEXT TIME YOU NOTICE IT

You don't have to figure everything out in the moment.

If you've spent months or years shutting down around physical intimacy, you may not notice the response immediately.

That's okay. We're starting with something much smaller.

1 · NOTICE THE CHANGE

The next time you're physically close to your husband, pay attention to the moment your experience changes.

You don't have to know why. Just notice:

I was okay a second ago. Something changed.

Maybe you tensed. Maybe you wanted space. Maybe your mind got busy. Maybe you suddenly went blank.

The first step is simply recognizing that the moment happened.

2 · ASK YOURSELF ONE QUESTION

Am I still here enough to know what I want?

Don't ask what you *should* want. Don't ask what your husband wants. Don't ask whether you're disappointing him.

Just notice whether you can still feel yourself in the moment enough to know what you want next.

3 · IF YOU'RE ALREADY PAST YOUR EDGE, STOP

You can say:

“Stop. I need to stop here.”

You do not need to finish because you started.

You do not need to figure out why you're shutting down while it's happening.

And you do not need to find the right technique to make yourself continue.

If you're already blank, numb, far away or unable to tell what you want, this isn't the moment to push yourself further.

The job right now is to notice where you are and stop.

Stopping isn't the whole solution to Intimacy Shutdown.

But recognizing that you've gone past your edge is very different from continuing because you didn't realize you had.

WHAT IF YOU CATCH IT EARLIER?

There's another moment I want women to learn to recognize.

It's the moment when you can feel the response starting... but you're still there.

You can still feel yourself. You can still notice what you want. And you still have some choice about what happens next.

That's the moment I call The Moment Between.

I have a short practice for exactly that moment.

I teach it when I work with women on Intimacy Shutdown because learning to catch the response before it completely takes over is different from realizing afterward that you've already shut down.

GET THE MOMENT BETWEEN

If you love your husband, want your marriage, and don't want to keep bracing, pulling away, going numb or getting through physical intimacy, this is where I want you to start paying attention:

Not only to the moment you pull away.

To the moment right before you lose access to what you want.

Carrie Cohen

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