



A COUPLE'S GUIDE:

# NAVIGATING THE PATH TO RECONNECTION

This guide aims to help put the joy back in sex, love, and intimacy. Written by Dating & Relationship Expert Sarah Louise Ryan as part of the Time To Raise It movement.

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## FOREWORD

### *With Dating & Relationship Expert Sarah Louise Ryan*

*Hello, I'm Sarah Louise Ryan, Relationship Expert and founder of Love Lessons Global, a hub that focuses on wellness in dating and relationships. I help people find, build and deepen romantic relationships - of the meaningful monogamous kind and I explore intimacy on all levels with those who are looking to connect deeply with themselves and their partners.*

*I'm wildly passionate about interpersonal relationships, especially those of the romantic kind as I believe to deeply love and allow ourselves to fully be loved by a significant other is one of those things we truly want in life.*

*It requires openness, vulnerability, authenticity, and, most of all, a willingness to learn how we communicate what we need and want intimately on an emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and sexual level.*

*I am a founding partner for the Time To Raise It movement which aims to eradicate shame and open up meaningful conversations around erection problems (EPs) for men and their partners. Having conversations around intimacy in relationships is an important part of emotional relational health, especially if you and your partner are experiencing EPs.*

*This guide explores what that conversation might look like and gives couples the tools to have a fulfilling relationship. This guide aims to support you in exploring more about what intimacy might look like for you and your partner.*

*For more help contact at [www.lovelessonsglobal.com](http://www.lovelessonsglobal.com)*

*This guide is kindly sponsored by Viatrix. Let's begin...*

*Sarah Louise Ryan x*

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

In this guide to reconnection, we will take a dive into how intimacy can take shape in a relationship, how those with EPs and their partners can create space to have deep conversations, and aims to positively impact physical relationships for couples in the long run. In a nutshell, this is a guide to help you navigate the path to physical reconnection in your relationship.

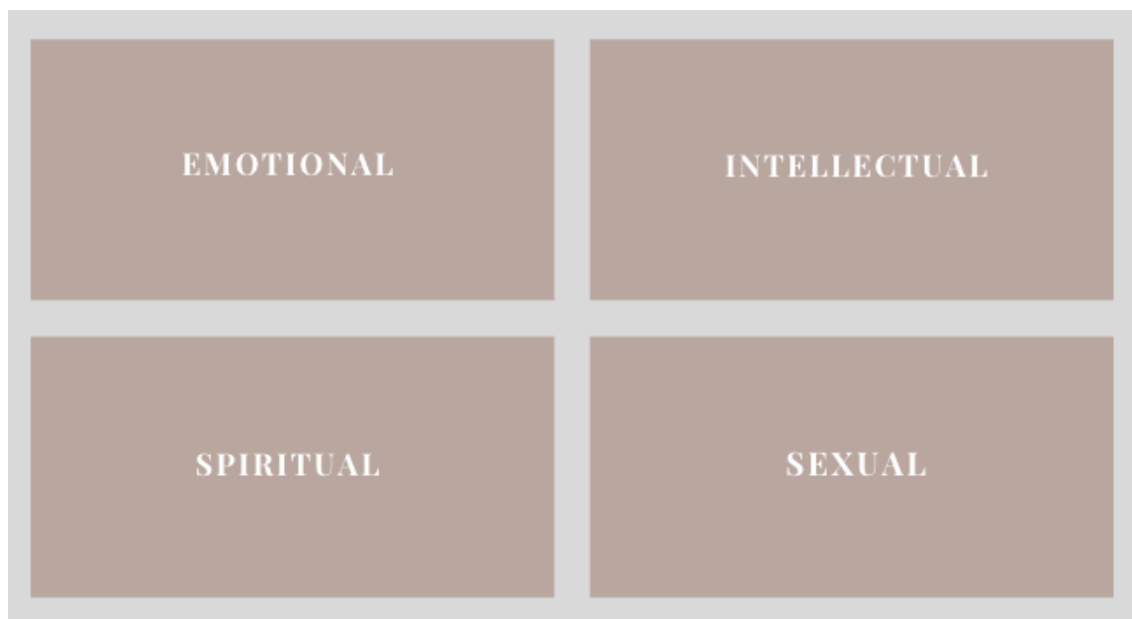
This guide will cover the following: types of intimacy, communication, how to create a safe space for sensitive conversations around intimacy, how to connect on a deep level with your partner physically, and more. We'll also take a look at how eroticism doesn't just have to be penetrative with your partner and there will be solutions to consider

## *EPs & Intimacy*

We know that erection problems (EPs) are a very personal problem. However, anything that impacts relational intimacy it becomes something that will affect both partners and should then conversationally be addressed to maintain deep connection on an emotional level.

Sex is not the only thing that is important in a relationship. There are other kinds of intimacy which create the foundations for connection.

## *The 4 Types of Intimacy*



Work towards understanding how you and your partner experience different types of intimacy.

You don't need to share all your feelings all at once, especially if you're the partner of the person who is experiencing EPs - keep talking, keep creating the loving and intimate space for them to share, and keep helping move towards full eradication of shame; your relationship will reap the rewards in the way of rejuvenation and integration of joy back into your sex life.



## *Types of Communication*

Understanding the ways in which we communicate with one another can help deepen relationships and strengthen connections with others, especially with romantic partners. There are three ways we communicate in interpersonal relationships. They are:

### **Linguistic Communication**

Listening to the words that the other person is saying, being conscious and mindful of the words you are also saying including phrases, metaphors and the language used to convey meaning to one another is key to good communication.

### **Para-Linguistic Communication**

Listening out for the timing of words, the accent, the volume of the pitch of someone's voice; not just taking a look at the words that are being said. This can often be really telling of how others are communicating with you verbally, as well as how you are communicating with them. Being mindful of how your words are coming across para-linguistically will help you to deepen the connection with your partner.

### **Non-verbal Communication**

Communication isn't just verbal, it can be non-verbal too. Non-verbal communication is seeing, 'listening', and observing someone's body language, facial expressions, and posture. Non-verbal communication shows and says a lot about how people are feeling in a certain situation and/or conversation. It can sometimes convey something that words haven't quite been able to yet. It's important and helpful to look out for non-verbal communication so you can understand yourself and your partner better.



A COUPLE'S GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIP RECONNECTION

# *A Guide To Key Communication*

## *The 6 C's*

## 3 TOP TIPS BEFORE YOU GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

- 1 - Know that timing and tone are everything
- 2 - Consider being inclusive with the language you use to help you both connect.
- 3 - Don't ever place blame, it could provoke feelings of shame.

## HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

When it comes to opening up the conversation around sex and all types of intimacy, it can be difficult to know where to start. If you are exploring the idea of having the conversation and you're feeling nervous, anxious, worried or anything else just know that you are not alone.

If you can imagine the end goal, which is you and your partner having a deeper understanding, better connection, and communication with each other, this will help you to know that you need to start talking.

Having conversations that feel difficult at first is often because we are not used to engaging in them. However, having conversations that feel like this is just like working a muscle. The more you work it, the stronger it will get.

1.

**TAKE A  
CALM  
APPROACH**

4.

**CONNECT BY ASKING  
QUESTIONS MORE AND  
ASSUMING LESS.**

2.

**BE CONSIDERATE**

5.

**MAKE SURE YOU  
COMMUNICATE  
CONSISTENTLY**

3.

**MAKE SURE YOU  
CAN SEE BOTH  
SIDES OF THE  
COIN**

6.

**REMEMBER THAT BEING  
CONGRUENT WITH YOUR  
PARTNER AND WITHIN YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP MEANS YOU  
END UP ON THE SAME PAGE,  
ALWAYS.**

## THE 6 C'S OF COMMUNICATION EXPLORED MORE

### *Taking a calm approach...*

Try to gauge each other's comfort level when it comes to talking about physical intimacy. There's no doubt about it - the subject is sensitive and needs to be considered as such. You can start to gauge your partner's comfort level by dropping hints and saying things such as "it would be great if we could look at how we can take things to the next level intimately" or "I'd love for us to connect more physically, can we carve out some time to talk about how we can do that?" or "I love being close with you, it would be great to see how we can connect more physically, can we find some time to talk about it - would you be open to that?"

### *Being Considerate...*

If you're the partner of someone who is currently experiencing erection problems it's really important to understand there can be a number of reasons they are experiencing this. It could be external pressures that are affecting them internally or it could be something medical that they haven't yet identified. It's important to be considerate and share your thoughts and feelings without provoking shame.

### *Seeing both sides of the coin...*

If you are experiencing EP just know that because you and your partner are in an intimate relationship it really is a two-person conversation - we all need to feel connected. Listen in order to fully understand each other rather than just speaking to be heard.



### *Connecting more...*

...by assuming less. We feel more connected to our partners when we feel they get us, respect us and accept us. Try your best, especially if you're the partner of a man experiencing EPs not to make assumptions about how they might be feeling about it. Additionally, if you are experiencing EPs yourself, try not to make assumptions about how your partner might feel. Always ask, never assume.

### *Consistency Is Key...*

Keeping the conversation ongoing offers a level of support for both partners. It keeps the space wide open for you both to ensure you can share what you need whenever you need it, paving the way for you and your partner to feel a deep sense of connection and belonging within your relationship.

### *Keep Things Congruent...*

Romantically we are drawn to people who are congruent with ourselves. When we feel a strong sense of alignment, especially in communication, it enables us connected to our partners and so it's important to ensure that when you are navigating conversations that feel difficult that you and your partner end up feeling and being on the same page. That can happen if as a couple the solutions are discovered and mapped out together.

A COUPLE'S GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIP RECONNECTION

*How To  
Navigate The  
Conversation  
About  
EPs*

Only through talking can we remove the shame around something that is so common. With 28% of people reporting to feel pressure about having the perfect relationship, it's time we start talking about real problems such as erection problems (EPs).

Considering a quarter (25%) of those who have experienced EPs are under the age of 35 and in their so-called 'sexual prime'. It's important that we create the space so men experiencing these problems can both share and feel supported emotionally.



Actively listen to everything your partner has to say. Listen carefully in order to understand one another rather than just waiting for your turn to talk.

Gently mirror the words back to your partner so you can check you have understood them correctly. In turn, the trust level between you will deepen as you both feel secure and safe with each other's vulnerabilities.

It's important that we create the space so men experiencing EPs can both share and feel supported emotionally.

It's helpful to address the conversation around intimacy as soon as you feel a shift or that there is something that is beginning to affect your relationship. The longer you leave conversations that really matter the more room you allow for shame or embarrassment to creep in. It's important you work towards being authentic about how you feel so you can eradicate those feelings that don't serve you and your partner much sooner.





Slow but steady wins the race when it comes to creating conversation to eradicate shame on this subject. You don't have to go into discussing the intricacies all at once.

Check-in on your partner. You can do this gently by asking "how do you feel talking about this" or "I know it's something we don't usually talk about, but it would be great if we could try" - this is all part of being inclusive with your partner and in your relationship.



Intimacy is one of those things we should be talking about before, during, and after (whether the physical intimacy is penetrative or not).

Start to discuss how you and your partner communicate with one another non-verbally. Understanding non-verbal cues can help a couple reconnect on a deeper level.

These conversations enable you and your partner to truly get, respect and accept each other.



It's never too late. If you have never had these conversations with your partner before, just imagine what kind of rejuvenation and spark it can bring. Imagine the most connected romantic relationship and then when you discuss things holding you back from connection it can bring you closer to creating it.



## NAVIGATING THE CONVERSATION CHECKLIST

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- ✓ Consider your tone, ensure it's engaging, warm, and inviting.
- ✓ Make sure your partner feels like they are seen, heard, valued, and respected throughout.
- ✓ Start the conversation in a relaxed atmosphere.
- ✓ If you are instigating the conversation, consider your choice of words ahead of the conversation so you can feel calm, confident, and connected to your partner. Be kind, loving, and inclusive with one another.
- ✓ Focus on the outcome of a more deeply connected relationship, rather than focusing too much on how you feel in the moment. Hard conversations help couples overcome hurdles holding them back from intimacy.
- ✓ Remember - creating space and timing is everything to fully and authentically share their thoughts or how they are feeling around intimacy.



# *Exploring Non-Penetrative Pleasure*

## *Physically & Conversationally*

When it comes to pleasure we should be talking about it before, during, and after, it's good self-care for you and your partner. Opening the channels of communication will really create a deep sense of connection and intimacy.

You can explore really great sexual experiences without intercourse or penis penetration itself using verbal and non-verbal connectivity tools. Make sure you're always exploring more with each other and scheduling time to 'connect and create closeness' - just as other things in your life take priority this really should too and if you're reading this guide it's because it really matters to both you and your partner.

Let's explore non-penetrative pleasure physically and conversationally.

## NON-PENETRATIVE PLEASURE

Once you begin the conversation you can then begin to see how you can explore pleasure in a different way to ensure you feel closer to your partner and also connected intimately to yourself. Being intimate with each other both conversationally and non-penetratively can result in a strong sense of togetherness and relationship satisfaction, which ultimately, is intimacy. With togetherness in mind, you and your partner can actualise such a deep connection in your relationship.

We know that there are so many factors that lend themselves to EPs and some to consider are lifestyle, stress, physical and mental issues. To work towards deeper levels of intimacy couples can pro-actively explore non-penetrative sex both physically and conversationally.

### TOP TIPS TO NAVIGATING NON-PENETRATIVE PLEASURE *CONVERSATIONALLY*

- **Eroticism starts with the mind. Starting to have conversations around what your fantasies are and what turns you on can make you feel connected to your partner sexually. You can start conversations with language such as “It really turns me on when” or “I’ve always wanted to try XYZ” or “Wouldn’t it be great if”**
- **Remove the pressure to perform - just know and share conversationally (especially a note for partners of those who experience EPs) that no matter what happens it’s okay when in the act, make them feel loved and desired, and use your language to lower the pressure to perform.**
- **Physical intimacy doesn’t just have to take place in the bedroom - try other places and spaces and talk about them to create an air of excitement.**
- **Get clear with each on the fact that pleasure doesn’t and isn’t just about penile penetration - there can be and is so much more to discover under the covers. And, pleasure doesn’t have to always result in an orgasm or ejaculation.**
- **Work on your playful side - if stress and other external factors feel like a contributing factor to EPs then consider focusing on other things that bring you pleasure. Perhaps your hobbies, connecting to your bucket list of things, stretching your comfort zone, and/or trying new things that seem out of the ordinary as an experience, and try to experience this with your partner. Making memories and engaging in new experiences with your partner might make you feel even more connected and bring your relationship to the next level.**
- **Speak up about sex - tell your partner the things you would like to do to them. Share with your partner what they’ve done to you and with you in the past that you would like to do - be provocative.**

## PHYSICALLY NAVIGATING NON-PENETRATIVE PLEASURE

### *Explore things outside of the bedroom...*

Pleasure can come in so many other forms that aren't just penetrative. Perhaps see this chapter as an opportunity for you both to explore more about what you may or may not like in the bedroom. On that note, being intimate with your partner can take place in many other places other than the bedroom. If you find that the bedroom just reminds you of times you've felt stressed at the end of a long day, the place you do all your thinking or instances where you haven't sexually connected to your partner, spice things up a little and try a different room in the house.

### *Fall In Love With Foreplay,,,*

Fall in love with foreplay - you can make you and your partner feel so much pleasure by exploring foreplay. You can take the pressure off each other by verbally addressing that there will be no end goal in mind - just to make each other feel loved, desired and pleasure through touch and physical intimacy. This can take place in the way of foreplay, mutual masturbation and more. Keep expressing your desire for each other by experiencing closeness, do this often. You could also introduce toys into the bedroom...

### *Take a Look At Tantra...*

Explore tantric connection which focuses on the feelings, sensations and reactivity to the sensitivity of each other's body through touch, understanding of sensations and exploration of pleasure that doesn't just have to be penetrative.

### *Create a Staycation...*

Consider exploring creating a staycation where you and your partner digital detox from the world and create a spa like or relaxing environment at home that lends itself well to connection. Or better yet, try a vacation. A new environment might activate all sorts of feelings of pleasure in itself for both of you. Be spontaneous, consider seducing your partner, perhaps with the aim of foreplay at a different time of day, in a different room of your home or in a different place all together.

## PHYSICALLY NAVIGATING NON-PENETRATIVE PLEASURE CONTINUED

### *Don't Ignore The Power of Touch...*

Your skin and how it makes you feel is so powerful when it comes to pleasure. Make sure you touch your partner, massage one another use oils and supportive elements which make you feel good as you explore each other's skin. The skin as an organ does more for pleasure than we often ever realise.

### *Touch Shouldn't Just Be To Have Sexual...*

Simmer away in your relationship. But what does that mean? It basically means consistently and casually flirting with your partner without it needing to result in sexual intercourse. It's basically a long game of flirting. Simmering takes place in the form of a kiss on the neck, a hand on the knee under the dinner table, a holding of hands-on a walk or when outside of the house, brushing their hair to one side, flirtatious eyes, really looking at them and feeling the connection that sets you and your partner aside from any other relationship that you have. Do this daily, throughout the week and often.

### *Self-pleasure Is Self-Love & Care...*

Practice self-care with self-pleasure. If you do feel like you are in a state of arousal consider self-pleasure and also consider that this is an act of self-love and self-care. Discuss this with your partner and have an element of openness that is inclusive so they feel a part of it or share with them afterward.

### *Really See One Another...*

Using mirrors in the bedroom during any kind of connection can heighten the senses and the sense of eroticism. To be able to see yourself giving and receiving of pleasure in your relationship really can heighten a sense of connection in a partnership on more levels than is just physical.

A COUPLE'S GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIP RECONNECTION

*Further Steps  
For  
Continued  
Support With  
EPs*



## FURTHER SUPPORT

Creating and seeking support around any of the issues explored in this guide might also help towards feeling confident both inside and outside of the bedroom.

If you are a man experiencing EPs then it might be really helpful for you to explain and delve deeper into your thoughts on EPs with those around you. Do you feel it's something that could be emotional, mental, or perhaps physical? Or, if you are unsure altogether perhaps privately consult with your GP or pharmacist about what it could be so you can approach the conversation feeling a little more informed about what is happening.

There are, of course, treatment options available with the guidance of your GP or pharmacist. Opening up the conversation with your medical go-to might help you understand what your options are.

Data reveals that only around 4% of men experiencing EPs have ever sought help from a pharmacist, with 76% of men with EPs feeling too embarrassed to discuss the issue at a pharmacy. Given the sensitivities of the subject matter, it is no doubt that men may be reluctant to speak about EPs to a stranger or their local pharmacists.

However, pharmacists are perfectly placed to be trusted experts for men experiencing EPs. They are specially trained to support their patients and customers. They are enabled to initiate what people might find to be potentially awkward conversations about EPs (but as we know, there is nothing to be ashamed of) and help understand the lifestyle factors that may be contributing to their EPs and the treatment options available.



## FURTHER SUPPORT FOR RELATIONSHIP REJUVENATION

There are so many ways couples' can work towards reconnection and it all starts with opening up the conversation.

If you have any questions or you feel that you could benefit from further support around any of the topics raised in the video, throughout the guide, or via the resources with our partners, do not hesitate, be in touch.

Working with you would be my absolute pleasure because I know it's time to rejuvenate the connection in your relationship and it really is  
**Time To Raise It.**

A massive thanks to the founding partners (more on them below) of the TTRI movement: Brook and Men's Health Forum

*Sarah Louise Ryan x*

EPs FROM THE  
**MOVEMENT PARTNERS  
PERSPECTIVES**

**MARTIN TOD  
MEN'S HEALTH FORUM**

"As well as being a sign of underlying health conditions, it's clear that EPs are having a profound impact on many men's mental health, which if left unspoken can be really damaging. With men less likely than women to disclose mental health problems to loved ones, it is now more important than ever for us to take EPs seriously and start talking about the issue, so people do not have to unnecessarily experience it in silence"



**BROOK  
HEALTH CARE**

"We're surrounded by messages that tell us sex is essential for a successful relationship. But this can create the perception that if you're not having sex all of the time, or something is preventing you from having the type of sex you see in the media you're somehow failing. It's so important for us to breakdown these perceptions of sex and relationships"

**SARAH LOUISE RYAN  
LOVE LESSONS GLOBAL**

"The myth that men are always 'raring to go' is extremely problematic, particularly when viewed through the lens of EPs. This viewpoint creates the perception that to not be able to get an erection means you are less of a man, which ultimately is causing men to remain silent on the issue. It's time to raise it for men and their partners"



## CREDITS

**TTRI Facebook Page:** [www.facebook.com/timetoraiseitEPs](http://www.facebook.com/timetoraiseitEPs)

**NHS:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/erection-problems-erectile-dysfunction/>

**Men's Health Forum:** <https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/>

**Brook:** <https://www.brook.org.uk>

**Sarah Louise Ryan:** <https://www.sarahlouiseryan.com>



**TIME TO  
RAISE IT**