

MWB S03 E02 for review

[00:00:00] **Brian Goins:** From the Podcast Network at FamilyLife, this is Brian Goins, host of Married With Benefits, where we're committed to helping you love the one you're with and discover the real benefits of saying "I do."

Well, welcome back to season three of Married With Benefits, where we're gonna help you rediscover the benefits of saying "I do."

And this season we are tackling some pretty intense questions. Questions every couple is asking about sexual intimacy. We're not just saying about sex because we think people tend to think of that as just how-to and technique, but really what we're saying is that great sex is a byproduct of great intimacy.

Really what we're after is how do we become more connected as a couple, especially as it relates to intimacy and to, uh, physical intimacy. And I'm back with our co-host, Harvard-trained researcher, author Shaunti Feldhahn, who recently co-wrote the book, "Secrets of Sex and Marriage." I want to know those secrets.

[00:00:53] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Yeah, we all do. Right? That's the reason. Yes.

[00:00:55] **Brian Goins:** Absolutely. And you have done so much research in your life. You have become a master question asker.

[00:01:01] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** It's because I talk to so many people. Right. So I am hearing all those questions out there. "Please help." Yes.

[00:01:07] **Brian Goins:** And, and I loved one of the questions that you asked for this book, which was you asked everybody, "What's the one question you would have for a sex therapist?"

And I'm super curious as to, as to what people would say, what's their, what's their number one question if they could talk to a sex therapist?

[00:01:20] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** At the very beginning of this process, uh, yes, when we asked that question, it was pretty overwhelming actually.

The top answer by far was basically this kind of heart cry of people saying, "Why isn't my spouse as interested in this as I am, why, why aren't they

interested?” Or the converse of that is, “Why am I not as interested as my spouse?” Kind of that sense of feeling a bit of pressure.

[00:01:45] **Brian Goins:** Right. Because the assumption is, I mean, when we got married that what my spouse is gonna think exactly like I think about sex.

[00:01:50] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Of course. Absolutely.

[00:01:51] **Brian Goins:** Yeah, why wouldn't they? We're in love. So they would obviously want to think about it as much as I do or like I like it or whatever.

[00:01:58] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Like we said in the last episode, it's all about those expectations. It's all about those assumptions.

[00:02:03] **Brian Goins:** Yep. That's exactly right.

Well, and as we said, in order to answer that question, because it is asked of a sex therapist, it would make sense for us to bring in a sex therapist.

[00:02:12] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Talk about this with a sex therapist.

[00:02:13] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. We might as well ask one, and we've got one in the studio with us right now, one that I'm happy to present, Dr. Sytsman, who is a sex therapist, or as I like to say, a sexpert.

He's one of our sexperts that we're gonna be asking. I feel like you're that way too, Shaunti. You have become that.

[00:02:26] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Uh, no.

[00:02:27] **Brian Goins:** No, you have. You've written a book on it. If you've written a book on the “Secrets of Sex and Marriage”, you're a sexpert in my book.

[00:02:32] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Oh, yeah. Let's just say how often as we were in meetings with Mike for three years researching this. I am not because Mike can embarrass me just by like, using anatomically correct terms. And so, yeah.

[00:02:47] **Brian Goins:** Well, let's just say he's forgotten more about the subject of sex than we probably will know. And when I look at this guy's resume, and we've had him on before...

[00:02:56] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Yes, and we heard from him last time and for a few minutes.

[00:02:57] **Brian Goins:** That's right. But I don't think I've ever really let people understand exactly what his resume is.

[00:03:01] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Let's do that. Because I would love to explain actually how we connected up with him. Dr. Mike. Been one of our main advisors on this topic for 18 years as we've been doing this research.

And you know, we've, we've talked about this topic before. We've heard about it in several of the other studies, and he would be the one that I would call and say, "I'm seeing this like, 127 times. What does this mean?"

[00:03:27] **Brian Goins:** So he was your phone a friend?

[00:03:28] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** He was the phone a friend, exactly.

[00:03:29] **Brian Goins:** When you needed an answer, like those old game shows, he was your phone a friend.

[00:03:32] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Exactly. And just, he's a, a pastor actually by inclination vocation as well. And so just has this incredible depth of experience on this. And so when Jeff and I felt like, you know, we really need to tackle this topic.

We had tackled the other big issue in marriage that causes arguments, which is money. And we're like, okay, this needs to happen. We felt like the Lord was leading us this way, but no, like we could do damage on this topic if we didn't make sure it was completely accurate. So that is where we connected up with Dr. Mike to do this research project and write this book together.

[00:04:12] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. And Dr. Mike, you have a lot more letters after your name than most of us will ever come close to. You know, when I think about, it's like you have a PhD from the University of Georgia. You have an LPC license.

[00:04:23] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Professional counsel.

[00:04:24] **Brian Goins:** There we go, I can't even say that. You know, you have a CST, a Certified Sex Therapist, a CPCS, Certified Professional Counseling Supervisor. You founded Sexual Wholeness, which helps train, mentor and equip other sex therapists. So you're like the coach of other sex therapists...

[00:04:39] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** At this point in my career? Yes.

[00:04:41] **Brian Goins:** Yes. And so you have got an incredible experience. Not only that, as Shaunti said, you're, you were ordained as a pastor in the Wesleyan Church...

[00:04:48] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Correct. Technically, I am appointed by the Wesleyan Church as pastor to building intimate marriages, which is the practice where I see people.

[00:04:56] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. And you do see people all the time.

[00:04:57] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** About 20-22 couples a week.

For couples therapy, for sex therapy, for whatever pain, desire, hope is bringing them in to see me. Yes.

[00:05:10] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. And you were telling me yesterday it's, it could be upwards of nine hours a day. I don't know what you do for nine hours a day. I don't know that I could listen to people's problems about sex for nine hours a day.

[00:05:16] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Oh my gosh. Well, and the thing is, I've actually known people who, in years past, have actually gone through this with Dr. Mike. And the reality is this topic is such a big deal and there's not that many people who really specialize right in this area, and it is life-giving.

[00:05:39] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Yeah. We keep training more and more, so there's an increasing group of really skilled and well-trained therapists across the country that can work in this.

But you're right, there's still significant pockets of area where there's not somebody that that you can trust to deal with it. But for me it's not just sitting, listening to couples' problems for nine hours a day. That would be just kind of horrendous.

[00:06:05] **Brian Goins:** I'm glad you feel that way.

[00:06:06] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Yeah. To me it's, it's the ability to be a part of their discipleship and their growth, of watching people reach a point that they realize, “h wait, this is about me and I need to either make a decision to grow up and be more Christ-like, or I can continue to sit here and blame my spouse, and stay angry and contemptuous and stuck.”

And I love those discipleship transformation moments. And so that's why I do it is, is I watch people make the choice to be more Christ-like to go another step in their spiritual, emotional, relational development.

And being a part of that, it's such a rich reward and exciting.

[00:06:49] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. And I, I like how you say the word journey. I think our friend Julie Slattery, she likes to say that we're all on this journey of sexuality. And, and it really is a sanctification process. And it, it's like none of us have arrived on our wedding day to be these, you know, these experienced sexual beings, um that, that, all of a sudden that just happens. That part of really growing up, as you said is “How do I become more Christ-like in the bedroom?”

[00:07:12] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Yeah. And we'll talk more about that in a later podcast., I know. But I really think that's what God's designed it for.

[00:07:20] **Brian Goins:** So we have a sex therapist right here and we have the number one question that people've been asking.

[00:07:24] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Yes, we do. And this question of “Why isn't my spouse is interested as I am”, or conversely, “why am I not as interested?” What we have seen as a simplistic thought is that people think “If my spouse doesn't seem as interested as I am or if I'm not as interested,” quote unquote, there's only one answer.

Like the assumption is, that means that somebody just has a higher sex drive and somebody has a lower sex drive, and that kind of pits the two people against each other because that's not necessarily always something you can really change. And instead, as we sort of dove into what's underneath the surface of some of these issues in our, in our life in this area, we found multiple reasons that go far beyond what somebody's kind of libido or sex drive is that we don't know are running underneath the surface. And in this episode today, we are

gonna be talking about one of the big ones. One of the big surprising ones. Because it actually turns out that there are multiple types of desire.

Now, in another episode, we're gonna be talking about the fact that there are different levels of desire, but that's not nearly as big of an issue as people think it is. So in this episode, we're gonna dive into these different types of desires, so Dr. Mike...

[00:08:47] **Brian Goins:** And have you heard this question a lot when you, when you have people in front of you?

[00:08:51] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Uh, it's a major reason people come in for therapy and, and as Shaunti said, it's a, a big question when I'm doing workshop seminars that, that couples are asking.

As we get into desire, I would like to make a bit of a caveat. Desire is one of those highly complex issues, and we really do not, by meaning we, sexologists in the field, hose of us who study it. And sexual desire discrepancy was a topic of my dissertation over 20 years ago, so I've been studying this particular question for, you know, the length of my sex therapy professional career.

And we still really do not understand it. Uh, we...

[00:09:34] **Brian Goins:** That's not encouraging, Dr. Mike. Like "it's been 20 years. We still don't know what we're talking about."

[00:09:39] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Yeah. We don't understand intensity of desire, why some people seem to have very high desire and why some people seem to have very low desire. We've got lots of theories and lots of ideas, but when it comes down to it, we really don't understand it well.

We've spent billions of dollars trying to find medications that can change somebody's desire, decrease it or increase it, and we...

[00:10:01] **Brian Goins:** Can we get any of those medications? Is there this, any of those out there? Not saying that I might need it, but I might want to give it to someone, is what I'm saying.

[00:10:08] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** You know, if they reliably work for everybody, that'd be great and you'd know about 'em.

Um, there are some that work for some people in some circumstances, and that reflects how complex it is. There's so many things that are playing into the intensity of desire that it's really tough to figure it out. We told the story in the book of a individual who sat down across from me, supposedly for a marketing call to meet me because he was gonna send clients to me.

And in the first five minutes he said, “Well, the reality of it is I'm here because I want to know there's gotta be some kind of a cream that we can use, um, that would help my wife want me more.”

And I think that's generally what we're looking for is that one quick solution that will change somebody's desire. “I want my spouse's desire lower because wow, I just can't manage it and there's something wrong. It's too high.” Um, or “I want my spouse's desire higher. It seems way too low.” Or “I want mine lower or higher,” and we, we don't know how to do that, nor do we know direction real well. And people are sexually directed to their, their, what we would call arousal template is very different from person to person. And we have not figured out how to shift what somebody is attracted to. So we don't understand intensity or direction of desire...

[00:11:30] **Brian Goins:** And if I could just translate, it's like we don't understand why someone has a certain like level, a libido, or what turns me on.

[00:11:37] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Correct.

[00:11:38] **Brian Goins:** I mean, that's really what you're saying is that we don't get those two things.

[00:11:40] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** We have lots of theories. And some of the theories make a lot of sense, but no, when it comes down to we don't understand it.

[00:11:46] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** And so we know some of these things we don't know. However, there is something that we do know, which is that there is a big assumption out there that many people have, I sure had, that is totally wrong. That we do know that this is inaccurate, and that's the idea that all of us have in our minds about “This one way is just the way desire works.

And it's kind of what you see in Hollywood. It's what you see on television, what you read about in books where you have the the boy and the girl and they look at each other and there's just a spark and they start kissing and pretty soon

the clothes are off and they're in bed. And they both have this equal, like, let's just go for it. And that is actually one type of desire, but it's not the only one.

And so I am hoping that Dr. Mike will unpack for us the fact that actually there's a whole nother way that this works that is just as legitimate. It's just different.

[00:12:50] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Correct. So the first one you're talking about is kind of the stereotypical standard sexual drive, sexual, um, desire.

And we call it an initiating desire. There are some that you slightly lead different labels for it in the, the sex therapy field, but I really like the, the label of an initiating desire because it reflects that, uh, well, we use the example in the book of the car is in drive. And when my car is in drive, if I don't have the foot on the accelerator, it's still gonna be creeping forward.

You know, it has this, this energy, this draw to be moving towards something. And that's kind of the initiating type of a sexual desire. It's prompted by several different things that are going on in our bodies and in the brain. And, uh, it prompts us to think about sex and prompts us to begin to pursue sex.

And, and, uh, one wife said, you know, "I was talking to my husband and, and realized that he has thought about me eight times, naked before lunchtime. Like, seriously? You know, I'm probably still half asleep in bed and, and he is still fantasizing about me." That's that initiating kind of a, of a desire that we do see often stereotyped, but that's not the only type of desire that we, we see in the field.

The second type of desire we, we call receptive desire. The initiating desire is a little more complex than this, but where we're thinking about sex or we have a desire for sex, and then we begin to move forward and pursue it, and that prompts us to have experiences that cause arousal.

Sometimes the arousals happen a little bit earlier than that, but that's kind of how it, it works. With the receptive desire, that has kind of flipped. With receptive desire, they might not have thought about sex. They might not have been thinking, "Yes, I want to do this," it's more like the car's in neutral and it takes an exterior force or it takes something else happening to get it to drop and to drive and to begin to move forward.

So the parking brake's not on, they're not resistant. They're, it's just, “Wow. Sex. Yeah, I haven't thought about that in three days, if I get all of these tasks done...”

[00:15:05] **Brian Goins:** Which to someone with initiating desire could be really frustrating.

[00:15:07] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** And this is where I wanna just mention, and I want you to keep going on explaining receptive desire, but here's the main issue for people listening is to recognize that in general, it is perplexing to the person with initiating desire.

And they think there's something wrong with their spouse and the person with receptive desire, who doesn't know that this even exists as a thing. They think that there's something wrong too.

[00:15:33] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Right. The prominent cultural message is that the initiating desire is how normal desire is supposed to work.

And so for somebody who has a receptive desire, they don't hear other people talking that their type of desire is typical. It's normal. It actually happens in a huge percentage of the population, but when nobody's talking about it, you feel like there's something broken. There's something wrong.

[00:15:58] **Brian Goins:** Right. Yeah. There's never a movie in Hollywood that it's like where somebody is going, “Yeah, I don't really think about sex very often,” or “I'm not really in the mood,” or like, it just doesn't, it doesn't happen. It's always presented as mutual excitement. Like both people are trying to step on the gas at the same time, who can go faster?

And for somebody that has initiating desire, which I feel like that, it can be frustrating cuz you think, “That's all I've ever thought... that's all I've ever thought about sex.”

[00:16:24] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** That's all you've ever known. And so it just seems weird that's that there's this whole different direction where one of the ways that I can put it is, desire kind of happens in the reverse order, right?

[00:16:37] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** So the, the receptive desire individual, it often takes something external to prompt them to, to think about it. So their spouse may come in and say, “Hey, you know, it's been a couple of days, I'd really like to be with you. Could we be together tonight?”

“Oh, okay. Let me try that thought on for size. You know, if I get these tasks done, I think I could have the internal bandwidth to do it,” and they're making an intentional decision to move forward with it.

That is a part of the receptive desire, and by now, often the initiating desire is trying to figure out what's going on. You know, “Am I being rejected? Why haven't you been thinking about it?” But if they allow that to go, the receptive desire person can choose to move forward with it. And they choose to engage in, in sexual play.

Uh, they may be kissing and, and hugging and holding, and there may be some light petting that's going on. And in that process, they're self-evaluating what this feels like. “Oh, I'm enjoying this. You know, I'm with my spouse, I'm with my husband, or I'm with my wife and this feels good, and oh, my body's feeling good. I like that I'm getting aroused here and doing this with my spouse.”

And now sometimes five to ten minutes into the sexual act, the receptive desire person is finally feeling desire...

[00:17:53] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** And feeling to some degree what the, their spouse may have been feeling from, well, way before they ever started.

[00:17:59] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** One, one husband said, “You know, it takes us five to ten minutes into sex before she looks and says, ‘why don't we do this more often? This is great.’”

And he's like, “I'm thinking, yes finally she's learned.” And he said, “The next morning I roll over and go, ‘it's more often.’ And she's like, ‘no, we just did it last night. I'm not...’ And I'm so confused.” It's because she's not aroused and she's not aware of the arousal, and so the desire's not on.

And the, the same thing happens often for older men. There are significant number of men that experience, uh, receptive desire, but more o as we get older, that's more the pattern as well. So this happens for both males and females, and it is that awareness, the arousal happens before the desire happens.

So we have to almost choose to move forward with it and then it can kick in.

[00:18:51] **Brian Goins:** Yeah, so you talked about two out of the three, you mentioned there were three, initiating desire, it's like that car is in drive you, it's always in the back of your mind, you know, and it's like, it's like, I remember in high school.

It's like, that was for me, you know, 16, 17 years old. There was nothing that even had to prompt me to think about sex. Um, that hasn't changed a ton, although we're gonna get to what makes changes for initiating desire if it ever changes. Receptive desire, you have to have the something before...

[00:19:18] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Something has to add energy to the process.

[00:19:20] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Yes. There needs to be a, a choice to move forward and a sense of arousal and an awareness, a positive evaluation of that arousal.

[00:19:28] **Brian Goins:** Okay, so the car's in neutral... what's the third?

[00:19:28] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** The third one is, um, a resistant, um, desire, sometimes called a reverse desire. Um, and for this one, if we stick with a car analogy, I think of it as somebody who's, um, in park, or they might be in neutral, but the parking break is on.

It's easy to think of the resistant desire as just wrong, as bad, and that is not true. Um, there are times that a resistant desire may be healthy or may just be and is. Uh, sometimes there may be a medicine involvement. There are other times that we move into relational issues and the relationship is just not safe enough.

Uh, you know, sex is designed to be something that is very intimate. And the relationship may just have a high level of contempt. Uh, there may be other things that have threatened these safety boundaries like pornography or infidelity or, or something that has made it unsafe to be that open and vulnerable.

Sometimes we don't know why the parking break is on, maybe past trauma, but yeah, that's a resistant type of desire, where the parking break is on. We need to figure out why it's there. It's there for a reason, just telling somebody to get rid of it is not a good plan. Uh, we want to figure out why the parking break is on. It may be important.

[00:20:45] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Now and just to give some context, because I know everybody is listening to this and going, "Okay, I'm trying to wrap my brain around the fact that it's not just the Hollywood way," and so let's give some numbers. If you don't mind.

[00:20:56] **Brian Goins:** Yeah that's what I was gonna say. Yeah, absolutely. Cause I'm wondering, okay, who's initiating, who's receptive, who's resistant?

[00:21:00] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Exactly. Well, and starting with resistance, since you were just doing that, that's a very small percentage of people. It's in, in our survey and one of the big surveys that we did, which was of matched pair couples, so we knew who was married to who in this big anonymous survey, it was 3% of women, and 4% of men.

Okay. So it was a pretty small right number. So, but the initiating and receptive, which are the two big buckets, actually it's pretty interesting. 24% of women were initiating... interesting, huh? And 59% of men. And if you look at the receptive, 73% of women are receptive, which of course is probably not a surprise to many of the people listening.

And 38% of men are receptive, trending towards the older men, but not entirely. There's plenty of men who they're, that's just their pattern.

[00:21:50] **Brian Goins:** Which you, I mean, that's not what people joke about at marriage conferences. It's, it's almost always, the jokes are always geared towards, well, men always wanna have sex and women don't, you know, it takes 'em longer for them to get in the mood.

[00:22:01] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Which is only partially accurate. It's not that they don't want to, it's that there's a different pathway for them to get there. Aand, and we're not reflecting that. And, um, and the same for the older men.

Now, one of the most common questions I get around these types is, "Is it always this way? Are you always initiating desire? Are you always receptive desire?" The answer is definitely not. It can definitely change over age. It can change over stage of life. You know that a young woman who's looking forward to get pregnant, often she really reflects a strong initiating type of desire and three kids in the receptive desire is fully entrenched.

You know, because her body's in a totally different place, her mind's in a different place. Uh, we'll see men in differing marriages reflect differing patterns. They may be initiating in one or receptive in another. So these aren't just, this is who you are. They do shift. And part of the challenge is couples being aware of, here's who I am right now, and talking about that with their spouse.

[00:23:03] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** One of the things that I found really interesting as, as part of this research, we found people actually were identifying with like this initiating, receptive thing. And yet there's actually two different ways of

looking at it. Um, which is, you may have the feeling of like, the Hollywood feeling of desire.

Like I see my spouse and I think, “Ooh,” right, and I have the feeling to go for it, but you may actually take on the receptive role. We heard this a lot from husbands who didn't wanna pressure their wives and who didn't wanna feel rejected, and it was, there's so much of their kind of emotions and their identity wrapped up in this, which we'll talk about in another episode, and kind of the emotions behind it, that they would sort of step back and wait for their, for their wife to be the one to initiate.

Or, and the same thing would happen with initiating wives who, they have that feeling of desire, but they're taking a step back. And so there's actually also a slight difference sometimes in the roles that people take on where, “I'm not gonna put my heart out there. I wanna make sure that, you know, you're feeling this.”

So it's kind of putting you in that role and sometimes that is helpful. But one of the things Dr. Mike told us early on is that there can be something a little unhealthy in there where somebody's waiting cause they don't wanna get their heart hurt and they're pulling back.

[00:24:25] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** And, and that's the invitation, is to challenge what's going on for us.

If somebody identifies themselves as a receptive spouse, if that's how their, their body and their pattern works, the initiating spouse is often looking going, “Why don't you initiate sex more?” You know, “I want you to initiate sex more.” But that's not how they think. That's not how they work.

[00:24:46] **Brian Goins:** It's kinda like, “Why don't you like Mexican food?”

Right? “You should like Mexican food. I love Mexican food. Like, why wouldn't you love it?”

[00:24:52] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** “You never ask me to go out for Mexican.” Well, because I never think about it cause I don't like it... and this isn't an, “I don't like,” it's, it's just not there. And “Why don't you in invite it more?”

And so the receptive spouse in, uh, different research, not for this, for my dissertation, I took just those that were receptive spouses and I asked them, we can't come up with a good biblical term for horny, so I just use horny...

[00:25:22] **Brian Goins:** It's not in the Message Translation? I'm, I'm sure it's there somewhere.

[00:25:25] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** You know that, that kind of initiating desire, if you experience it, but you are more of the receptive typically, would you initiate with your spouse? And a quarter of the receptive desired spouses said, "Even if I felt it, I would never initiate. That's not who I am."

And that, that shifts into that role that. that Shaunti's talking about. "If I experience that receptive desire, that's how my body works. It doesn't feel right for me to initiate." Others, about two thirds of them said, "Well, sometimes I might." And a small number of them said, "No, I always will."

Even though that's, and versus the initiating, you know, they're saying "No, I generally will, except," like Shaunti's saying, "in those relationships where doing so seems to cause harm, or I've been rejected enough times that now I'm kind of afraid I'm gonna get burned. So I'm pulling back and the role I'm taking on is more I'm waiting and I'm receptive."

And it's important to tease those out for the, the couple and, and what's going on.

[00:26:31] **Brian Goins:** So if I'm listening, I'm, I'm asking a couple questions. One, is there a test I can take to find out if I'm initiating receptive? Or do I just know, like, is there an Enneagram version of this that I can, I can take?

[00:26:40] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Not yet, but that's a great idea.

We're working on that kind of stuff.

[00:26:43] **Brian Goins:** We're working on that. So you guys will get that. But seriously, how would I, because I wanna know not only what my type is, but more importantly what is my spouse's type.

[00:26:50] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** The, the easiest way is just, you know, as you listen to the descriptors, what seems to feel more like you.

You know, "I tend to think about sex and then pursue it," is the initiating type of desire. So we tossed out the question, "I begin to desire sex after I've decided to engage sexually and begin to be aroused." So, "I've said, yes, I'm starting to get aroused, and now the desires showing up. Is that how it works for you?" And husbands said, rarely.

That's not how it works for them very often, but the most common answer from wives was, "Usually, that's usually how it happens for me." And as Shaunti said 73% of, of these wives are those receptive kind of individuals. So they're the ones that are saying, "I start to get aroused and then I want it." If you're resonating with it, saying, "Yeah, that sounds like me," then you're gonna be more the receptive type of an individual.

If you're saying "No, you know, I kind of avoid those situations and I dread my spouse asking, I dread that look in their eye that tells me that they're hungry for sex and I try to start little arguments, if I know they're gonna be interested, to keep it shut down," that would put you in the resistance side. Um, the parking break's on and we just need to figure out why.

[00:28:13] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** And to clarify, cuz I hear women when we talk about this, they misunderstand, or sometimes men too, but misunderstand it. What we're talking about with resistant is dread. Fear. Not just, "I'm just not interested. I'm tired."

Right? Like those are two very different things. Like not interested, tired, that can be receptive. But that dread, fear, "I try to totally do everything I can to run away from it." Those are two different things.

[00:28:44] **Brian Goins:** Right. So what are the chances, if I'm married, that I'm married to somebody that's my exact type?

[00:28:49] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Well, we know the answer to that question.

[00:28:52] **Brian Goins:** We asked Cause that's what everybody's wanting know is like "Certainly I would be, I mean, when I got married, what are the chances that I get married to somebody that's my exact type?"

[00:29:00] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Well, here's the thing that to me was by far the most fascinating piece of the puzzle with this, is that if you look at the, when the feeling of desire arrives, not the roles you take on, but the feeling, 90% of people are not in the Hollywood marriage.

90% of people do not have both the husband and the wife be initiating. Only 10% of the population. 90% are not that Hollywood idea that we think should be 100% like everybody thinks...

[00:29:33] **Brian Goins:** Right, because that's what's presented.

[00:29:34] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Because that's what's presented, that you, we're both initiating.

[00:29:37] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Where both spouses are initiating.

[00:29:37] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Right.

So only 10% of people are in that category. Now, two thirds of people are not married to somebody like them. That's sort of the way that the numbers break down. A little bit less than two thirds. But basically two thirds of people...

[00:29:53] **Brian Goins:** So chances are you're married to somebody different than you.

[00:29:55] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Very much so, and that's where the confusion sets in, because my way, of course, is probably right. And why aren't you like me? There's something clearly wrong with you.

[00:30:06] **Brian Goins:** And if you love me, if you love me,

[00:30:08] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** you would do what I want. Yes. And rather than if I love you, I'm gonna discover who you are and figure out how to, to care for and to serve and to draw you into this, is a different stance.

[00:30:20] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** It is a life giving thing. Once people recognize that it's not just that my spouse isn't interested, so let's go back to that question from the very beginning, right? Why isn't my spouse interested? Well, actually they are interested in most cases, it's just you have a different definition of interested.

Their interest arrives into the sexual play. Their interest arrives later at a different time than your interest. And so you can kind of take your ego out of it. Like you can take the, I'm feeling rejected because my spouse just isn't quote unquote "interested." Well, actually they have been designed with a different physiology than you.

[00:31:04] **Brian Goins:** So it might be a better question.

Why aren't they interested at the same time? And, and when you take that, that takes that out of it.

[00:31:09] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** That takes that out of it, that takes the emotion out of it.

[00:31:10] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Or what does it take for us to both be there at the same time? Or even better, “I’m the initiating desire, so I’ve been thinking about it.” What does it take to draw my spouse into that space?

Knowing that it may be 5-10 minutes. You know, an example that I use, especially in Christian audiences is ask, you know, “How many of you have devotions every day?” And I’ll get, you know, a pretty decent number of people say, “Well, yeah I do.” And that’s good. That’s a good discipline for us. And how many of you ever wake up and think, “Oh, I just don’t have the time or the energy for it today.”

And yet you choose to anyways out of discipline because you know it’s good for you. You know, it’s right. And really it’s who you want to be. What happens 5-10 minutes into your devotions? It’s like, “Wow, I’m so glad I did this. God met me. And yes, my day is starting well. Um, because I chose to, because it was right and it’s who I want to be.”

It’s not that dissimilar for many people with receptive desire. “I hardly have the energy for this, and it’s not that I’m being pressured into it. If you’re initiating spouses is pressuring you into it, that’s not good.

[00:32:18] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** Because that’s completely unhealthy. Yeah, that’s a different thing.

[00:32:22] **Brian Goins:** And we’ll talk about, you know, that whole 1 Corinthians 7 passage that’s been misused as, “This needs to be your duty. You just need to do this.” That’s not what you’re saying.

[00:32:28] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** That’s not what I’m saying. It’s, okay. It has been a few days. The vision that we have for a couple is, and this is who I want to be. I don’t feel like it, but I’m going to choose to because that’s who I want to be. And that’s good. And I allow my brain to focus in, to be present with the touch and with my spouse.

And I’m thinking about how much I do love them and I enjoy this time together and all of a sudden my body is responding and then the desire’s there and “Wow, I’m glad I did. This is so much fun.” That’s what we’re inviting. And as the initiating desire spouse, if I know that, their process, how do I be patient and

woo them into it and draw them into it? To where I look over and say, “Hey, so you look really cute, um, can we be together?”

And they go, “Eh, I'm not sure. I don't have a lot of energy and I got a lot to do yet this evening.” Rather than getting hurt and bent outta shape or punishing, or blaming or critical or anything that's gonna destroy the, the process. I lean back and I think internally, “Challenge accepted. I will help to draw you into this. I'll make the environment such that it's easy for you to step into it because I know, I know us. Five minutes into this, you're going to be so into this and glad you did.”

But that's a different kind of a mindset than many couples have when they don't understand the initiating receptive difference.

[00:33:57] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** There's another piece of the puzzle that is actually helpful for a percentage of the population, not necessarily everybody, and that is building what we call anticipation time into the process. Because somebody who's initiating desire, they don't need anticipation time because they're always anticipating, right.

The person with receptive desire often just isn't thinking about it. And so if you can do something, if you are the initiating spouse, and let's just say that you're the wife who's the initiating desire. And so you're the wife and you know that your husband is receptive and you have, you know, you got this on your mind and you wanna make sure that he has it on his mind.

You can like flirt with him in the morning and be like, you know, if we get all the chores done, if you get all those DIY projects done, you know, I'd love to be together later. And he's thinking about it in a way that he may not have been thinking about it before, and that gives the anticipation of looking forward to it so that there isn't that, as much of that gap.

That one thing of adding anticipation time into the mix, it helps in so many cases, not all, but so many cases.

[00:35:08] **Brian Goins:** Right, and it really goes back to how can the initiating type be more of a woo-er? And I, and I think that you did that naturally when you were dating. Something happens when you get married. And it's almost like, “I shouldn't have to do that anymore.”

[00:35:20] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** That's true. But also when we're dating, it is more common that both will show an initiating type of desire. And we see

typically for women, two to three years in the marriage, or after the first child, they switch from an initiating type of desire into receptive type of desire.

Um, we argue a bit about it in the sex therapy field. But most tend to believe that that is pretty normal for women. So that early dating, “Wait, you lied to me.” No, they didn't. They really, really didn't. That's where their body was at that point. And their body shifted, um, after marriage.

[00:35:58] **Brian Goins:** And we're like, like you said before, this is about a sexual journey.

I'm on a journey with someone and I'm gonna have to love them in different ways, throughout different seasons of marriage, throughout different experiences with kids, different medical things that might go on. And so it's “How do I die to myself, to love the type that God has put me with?”

[00:36:14] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** To die to self and be curious about, to understand.

So to seek to know rather than to man, to be, you know, when I demand that my spouse be something that's probably not gonna be helpful for marriage. When I step back and I go, “Okay, I know you love me and you wanted to do this, something's in the way, and I'm going to be a good student of you and help to draw you into that space.”

[00:36:42] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** From a completely practical standpoint, because, because one of the things that we've seen over the years, and that Dr. Mike sees all the time, is that you can have all the right intentions and yet not necessarily be taking some of the steps that will actually make a difference. And so we hear all the time from husbands, for example, stereotypically who are like, “But I've gone to the marriage conferences with my wife and I'm pursuing her and I'm, you know, showing up as somebody who, like when we were dating, and I'm telling her how much I love her and how beautiful she is to me, and she's still not interested in sex. What do I do?”

And I'm like, “Just because you're helping with the chores and being amazing, she's not thinking about sex. You have to get her thinking about it.” That again, that anticipation time, for example, earlier in the day, or just be okay with the fact that she's gonna decide to get sexually engaged with you and then start feeling desire a few minutes later.

[00:37:46] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. Okay. So, you know, as I think about those three types, whether I'm an initiator, whether I'm receptive, knowing that chances are I'm married to somebody different than me and may be resistant, is there a place I can go to get some quick tips, some quick help about how I can continue to love my spouse better?

[00:38:00] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Definitely. We've laid a lot of that out in the book. And then the, uh, secretsofsexandmarriage.com, the website, we will have some resources there as well, some articles and links to getting help, you know, if you're, uh, resistant.

Uh, that can be tough to figure out what's going on. And, and you'll probably need some help in figuring it out.

[00:38:20] **Brian Goins:** Yeah. And we know there's a lot of other reasons why my spouse may not be interested in sex that, that don't have anything to do with desire type. And so we're gonna start talking about more of those in the episodes.

It could be their level, it could be off, it could be some pain or some hurt from the past. And we're gonna dig into more of those. We also have a lot of bonus material where we ask Dr. Mike very specific questions, and you can find that down below in our podcast series. We wanna provide as much help as we can, cuz our goal really is, how do we help you become more connected so that your intimacy and your sexual intimacy could be more rich?

So I think a lot of couples are asking, “What do I do with this episode? How can I move towards more connectedness when it comes to sexual intimacy?”

[00:39:00] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** And I think the answer has to be, “Sit down and talk about it.” And explore one another, like Dr. Mike said, figure out what is your pattern. Do you tend to have to make the decision first, and then you start feeling it later?

And if you're the initiating person, hearing your spouse talk about it, again, don't take that personally, like there's something wrong with you. Now, hopefully that can free you. So one of the things that Dr. Mike always says is that in order to have a good conversation about this, you need to have sort of reasonable communication skills.

If this is gonna be triggering, if this is gonna be hard for you to have a conversation about without somebody getting upset, without somebody

checking out, well, maybe there's some communication skills you can work on just in general, in your marriage, not just on this topic. And then come back together again and talk about it.

[00:39:53] **Dr. Michael Sytsma:** Because it's difficult, you don't avoid it, but if it's going to cause damage, then getting some assistance, getting some help.

[00:40:00] **Brian Goins:** Right. Exactly.

[00:40:01] **Shaunti Feldhahn:** So we would suggest, I mean, for the whole book, honestly, One of the big to-dos that we suggest to people is that they read the book together. So if this seems to you like, “Oh my goodness, we are in that two-thirds where we are different patterns,” read this chapter together and use it as a starting point to talk about it.

[00:40:19] **Brian Goins:** Right. I think what you'll discover, it's kinda like what I've discovered anytime that I read a, a great book that's giving me good advice, it's practical, that we know is saturated with the truth of, of the gospel. There's a sense of, I'm, I'm more safe to have the conversation. You're giving me language that I wouldn't normally use.

You're, uh, giving me a certain type that now I can identify with and go, “Oh, that's probably why I think that way.” And that's, and that's okay. And so I think for the couple to come together, and again, our goal is for you to be more connected in this area, to rediscover that benefit that God has for you in sexual intimacy.