

Questions to Mull Over

In conversation...how often have you heard men joking about masturbation? What nicknames for it have you heard (wrestling with the bald-headed monster, for example)? How many can you think of?

But what about names for a woman masturbating?
Not many, huh?

Can you think of times where you have denied that you masturbate to avoid feeling stupid?

Avoid "looking like a pervert"?

Avoid saying that you **do** enjoy sexual pleasure without a partner?

Avoid looking "pathetically lonely"?

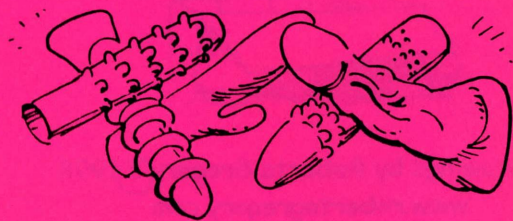
When was the last time you heard women in a film talking about masturbation (for themselves, NOT for their partner to watch)?

On a television show?

Heard about it in a song?

Sure, we can think of a few instances, but why not more?

But what about men? Why is it that masturbation is accepted as a necessary form of release for men, while women aren't encouraged to release *anything*?



So...How Do You Masturbate?

According to The Hite Report, a nationwide study of female sexuality, there are six basic types of masturbation for women:

1. Stimulating your clitoral/vulval area with your hand while lying on your back.
2. Stimulating your clitoral/vulval area with your hand while lying on your stomach.
3. Pressing and thrusting your clitoral/vulval area against a soft object.
4. Pressing your thighs together rhythmically.
5. Water massage of your clitoral/vulval area.
6. Vaginal entry.

If you have never tried masturbating but would like to try, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* suggests this:

Find a quiet time when you can be by yourself without interruption. Make yourself as comfortable as possible. Take a relaxing bath or shower. Slowly explore the shape of your body with your eyes and hands. Touch yourself in different ways. Put on music you like, keep the lights soft, light a candle if you want. Think about the people or situations you find sexually arousing. Let your mind flow freely into fantasy. Let your body relax.

Why do fewer women than men masturbate?

Why is female masturbation a taboo topic?

Why is there so little media representation of female masturbation?

Because women are not supposed to enjoy sexual activity (Nice girls don't like sex).
*Although women are often sexualized in the media, they are generally the recipients of sexual advances, not the initiators.
*It is still believed that men naturally have a stronger sex-drive than women, even though there is no evidence to back this up.

Women are discouraged from enjoying sexual activity.

*In many people's minds, the end of a sexual act comes when the man *cums*.

*The sexual double-standard of our culture still says it's OK for men to have multiple sex partners, but it's not OK for women.

*Women who enjoy sex are called either nymphomaniacs or sluts, where as men who enjoy sex are studs or "just men".

Women are taught to fear their bodies.

*Women are told not to touch themselves "done there" because it's unsanitary.

*When normal body processes, such as menstruation and pregnancy, are seen as messy and disgusting (Why don't women having babies on sitcoms ever expel an

afterbirth?), it suggests to women that their bodies are abnormal and unclean.

Why Do (Should) Women Masturbate?

- ◆ To learn about your own sexuality, and completely focus on yourself without distraction.
- ◆ Masters and Johnson found that orgasms produced by masturbation occurred more independently, more rapidly, and were of greater intensity than those achieved through stimulation by a partner.
- ◆ No commitment--a cheap date!
- ◆ To learn about how your body responds to different touches and/or fantasies.
- ◆ To explore and experiment without worrying about the needs of your partner.
- ◆ Studies prove that women who masturbate to orgasm are more likely to have an orgasm during penal-vaginal sex. (That includes dildos!)
- ◆ **SAFE SEX!** It's really the only way to get off and be completely safe from pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

Suggested Readings

Good Vibrations Complete Guide to Vibrators. Joani Blank; Down There Press.

The Good Vibrations Guide to Sex. Cathy Winks and Anne Semans; Cleis Press.

First Person Sexual. Joani Blank; Down There Press.

Sex For One. Betty Dodson, Ph.D.; Crown Paperback.

For Yourself--The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality. Lonnie Barbach, Ph.D.; Signet.

The Playbook for Women About Sex. Joani Blank; Down There Press.

WHAM was founded in 1996 by Julie Halpern, Katie Hawbaker, and Cheryl Kingma as a non-profit organization dedicated to creating and maintaining a positive space for female sexuality. We are pro-woman and male-friendly, and would appreciate any feedback or support. To share your comments, stories, or feelings you have on masturbation as a feminist issue, or to receive our latest survey, write to:

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