According to a recent survey, 75 percent of married women say a good sex life is “important or very important” to them. Good to know. So why aren’t we having more of it?

An informal poll of my fellow mom friends revealed that most are like me—struggling to carve out time to “get busy” with our husbands. And even if we manage to find the time, it’s not that easy to get in the mood.

“After a long day of running around, taking care of the kids, and finally getting them into bed, the last thing I want to do is have to think about my husband’s needs, too,” admits one of my girlfriends, who insists on remaining anonymous. “Now that we have two kids, we have sex maybe once a month.” She shrugs.

“But it’s not high on my priority list right now.”

My friend should rethink those priorities, says Debra Herbenick, Ph.D., a research scientist at Indiana University. “Sex is important as it helps people feel connected,” says Herbenick, author of Sex Made Easy: Your Awkward Questions Answered—For Better, Smarter, Amazing Sex (Running Press, 2012). “It’s a way to have fun with your partner, to see a side of them that no one else gets to see.”

If you’re not happy with the quantity or quality—or both—of your sex life, don’t despair. Even the busiest parent can take steps to improve their love life, which will improve their relationship as well. It’s win/win.

1 Ditch the guilt

First step: Forget about feeling guilty. “Sex is important, but at the same time, I hate when people beat themselves up over it and have such high expectations,” says Herbenick. “Completely forget about what everyone else is doing. There’s always that one friend who talks about how much great sex they have or how they sneak into bathrooms at parties to do it. Let go of the idea that that has to be you.”

By letting go of the guilt, you’re less likely to have sex only to please your partner, which doesn’t necessarily address the problem. “Focusing on the quality is much more important,” explains Herbenick. “When people focus on the frequency, they try to fit it in and try to do it so they can check it off the list and think, ‘now my partner’s not going to nag me.’”

It’s intimate sex—where the two of you feel truly connected—that really helps strengthen your bond.

2 Share your feelings

A better sex life may not start between the sheets, but at your kitchen table. “If you’re feeling bad about a low sex drive or low sex frequency, talk to your partner,” says Herbenick. “If you’re worried about it or disappointed, they probably wish they were having more sex or better sex, too.”

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