

# Boo Hoo: No More Pitching Woo

## The myths and realities of Lesbian Bed Death

by Gina Daggett

Say the words "Lesbian Bed Death" and many couples will claim that it's an old (lesbian) wives' tale and that their sex life has always—without a hiccup—been an erotic breath of hot air. Probe a little more, though, and they just might tell you the truth.

Coined by University of Washington professor Pepper Schwartz, Lesbian Bed Death is a phenomenon that occurs in relationships when sexual activity wanes after the honeymoon period is over.

But according to Wendy Blenning, a licensed clinical social worker in Portland: "It's not just a lesbian problem. This is an issue for all people. My practice includes a lot of gay, lesbian, trans and bisexual folks, as well as heterosexuals, and they are all coming in with the same kinds of issues. This is an intimacy thing."

Other therapists say lesbians may be more susceptible to a waning sex life. "I see more les-

bian couples with sexual challenges than other types of couples," says Portland licensed clinical social worker Beth Richman.

Perhaps it's not that dykes are prone to Lesbian Bed Death, she adds, but instead that they "suffer from more fear of a dying sex life and are more proactive about it than other folks. Maybe this is because we have the term."

If this speaks to you like the Gospel, don't be discouraged—it's not the end of your relationship. Keeping sex hot in a long-term monogamous union requires effort.

"I see sexual problems as I see any other," says Richman, a 32-year-old who identifies as a dyke. "It's a matter of isolating the problem, exploring where it came from, being conscious and aware, being kind to yourself during the process and then addressing the problem in a gentle but direct way."

There are a lot of reasons lesbians seem to

slide into virtual celibacy. While the issues vary, *Just Out* has identified some of the common bedroom chillers.

### Negative body image: "I hate my body"

Issues surrounding body image are a huge player in the bedroom. Lesbian sex guru Joann Loulan tackles this in her book *Lesbian Sex*. "Insecure feelings take a constant toll on our sex lives," writes Loulan.

Women with disabilities often feel an added burden, as do some women with weight issues. "After years of internalized messages, it may be difficult for some fat women to feel relaxed, to express needs and to feel free to let go," writes Loulan.

Stacy Bias, founder of *TechnoDyke.com* and the mastermind of *FatGirl Speaks*—an annual festival celebrating size, self and sexuality—echoes Loulan. "Being a fat woman provides its own set of unique challenges in the bedroom," she says. "Fat women face such a daily barrage of insult and injury from both mainstream media and society expectations in general that feeling sexy and owning your sexuality is a near Herculean feat."

"Fat women also seem to have a hard time feeling connected to their bodies," notes Bias, who says the negative messages in the world cause them to disassociate themselves from their skin. "Sex can be less pleasurable for some because it can take a great deal of effort to crawl out of our minds."

### Overbonding: "People ask if we're sisters all the time"

Contrary to popular lesbian belief, one plus one does not equal one. "When you think about what makes a spark, it's not two of the same things," says Blenning, who has been providing mental health services since 1978. "We've got to have some kind of friction."

"But bonding is not a bad thing," she



"Being a fat woman provides its own set of unique challenges in the bedroom"

—Stacy Bias

Continued on Page 26

### Big City Produce

722 N Summer at Albina  
local folks, local produce, organics. etc  
(503) 460-3830

It's Missing Cilantro.

2 blocks { PCC Cascade Killingsworth Alberta I-5

### YOUR BENTON COUNTY & SALEM FAMILY REAL ESTATE CONNECTION

I support GALA choruses!

## Congratulations Newlyweds!

(541) 758-1234 x 211  
e-mail: clarkshouses@aol.com

**Bryant Realty Inc. GMAC**  
1575 NW 9th Street • Corvallis, OR 97330

### It's a you parade.

**Herzog-Meier** D. Fulps/George Kettner  
503-644-9121 • cars@herzogmeier.com Drivers wanted.

## Raines Globe Travel

Person to Person Travel Planning  
International Specialists  
Vacation Packages • Cruises • Tours • Group Travel

Downtown Salem Since 1948  
129 Commercial NE • 503-399-1800 • 800-971-7210

Call Chris for personalized service.

www.ncnm.edu  
503.552.1551

**Imagine...**  
Doctors that treat your whole person  
The clinics of  
**National College of Naturopathic Medicine**  
Honoring the Healing Power of Nature

## BALM

Health is Beautiful™

### URBAN HEALING RETREAT

- Holistic skin care practice of Anne C. Heenan, nurse practitioner
- Massage
- European facial treatments
- Microdermabrasion
- Superficial chemical peels
- Natural nail care
- Waxing services

503.517.8565  
4031 SE Hawthorne Blvd • www.BALMonline.com

## It's My Pleasure

Arousing Gifts & Romantic Accessories

Corner of Sandy and NE 64th  
White house with picket fence  
503 280 8080  
3106 NE 64th • Portland, OR 97213

## WESTOVER HEIGHTS CLINIC

Offering general internal medicine and excelling in sexual health care

Serving the community for 22 years

2330 NW Flanders  
Suite 207  
503-226-6678