



Let's talk about

SEX

If the passion is missing from your life, it doesn't have to be gone for good. **Alexia Santamaria** meets relationship expert Gary Douglas, who says there is plenty you can do to revitalise your sex life, whatever your age. In fact, he says, sex keeps you young!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FIONA TOMLINSON**

“Embrace exuberance,” advises Gary Douglas, below, who believes many people give up on life's enjoyments, including sex, way too early.

MANY OF US will remember a time in our lives when arriving at work sleep-deprived and bleary-eyed due to a wild night of passion was a regular occurrence. Whether it was with a long-term partner or a “friend with benefits”, sex was plentiful and exciting. For some, that's still the case, but for others those are but fond memories. Gary Douglas, author and relationship expert, says it needn't – and shouldn't – be in the past.

“Having sex right into your latter years gives you an orgasmic quality of life,” says Gary, author of *Sex Is Not A Four Letter Word But Relationship Often Times Is* and *Divorceless Relationships*. “Sex keeps you young. So many people give up on life way too early and believe because they are over a certain age they should stop dressing up, stop having sex and stop enjoying their lives in general.”

If Gary is the embodiment of that statement, we should

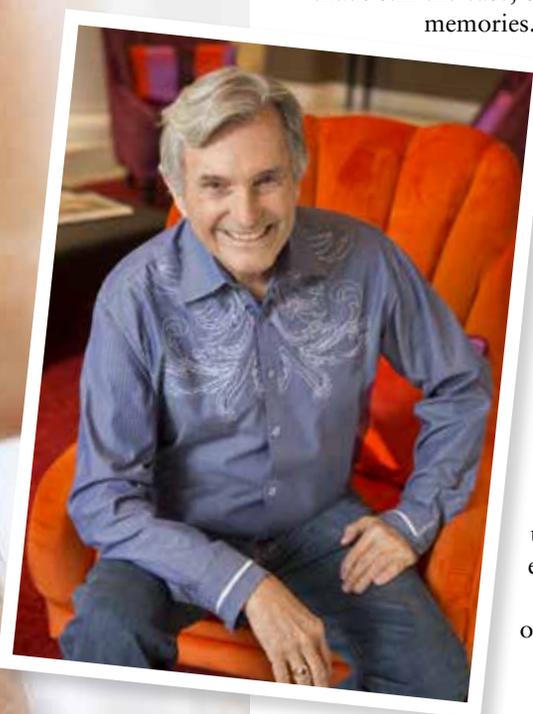
all listen to what he says. This septuagenarian is double-take handsome, physically fit and with a big old twinkle in his eye. He still rides wild horses and travels the world teaching Access Consciousness, a set of techniques designed to improve your life.

Gary laments that for many, it's not the golden years when the decline in sex sets in. Many couples in their 40s, or even 30s, experience diminishing passion. Kids come along, life gets busy and suddenly an early night and the prospect of sleep is much more attractive than a roll in the hay with your beloved.

“The stats are astounding,” says Gary, quoting American figures that show 85 per cent of people are having sex five times a week, but 85 per cent of that sex is between those aged 25 to 35. “This means they are having it about seven times a week and everyone older than that is getting it twice a year!”

He adds, “Most people have sex at least three times a week in the first five years of marriage, then once a month in the second five, and twice a year in the third five. After that it's about once a year, if at all.”

In New Zealand, we're not doing too badly, but there's a definite decline as the years advance. In a Nielsen survey commissioned by *Metro* magazine in 2011 the number of people having sex once a week or more dropped steadily with age. In the 65-plus bracket, almost half of those surveyed weren't having sex at all. ➤



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“It’s so important to retain that exuberance of living,” says Gary. “People seem to have this idea that life has to get more conservative as they age. That’s absolutely not the case. Sadly, some others just give up on sex because they are actually in the wrong relationship but can’t admit it due to time and history together. It’s a hard call to make, but it’s pretty difficult to have a good sex life if you’re not with the right person.”

SO WHAT DOES he suggest we do to avoid losing our vibrancy and sexuality? “Oh there’s plenty you can do, but probably the first thing is to make sure you’re with the right person. Look at your relationship and list the things that need to change for you to be happy. If there are more than five that would require your partner to change who they inherently are, you probably need to walk away. It’s a tough call, but leopards don’t change their spots and you both need to be happy.”

If the relationship is OK (or at least, salvageable) a simple attitude change can be a good start. “Choose to be happy, choose to do what your body loves, choose not to become invisible but to really embrace that exuberance,” says Gary. And even if your relationship is not heading for the divorce court, he believes that improving the quality of your daily interaction will ultimately result in better and more frequent sex.

“Something we teach in Access Consciousness is to destroy and re-create your relationship every day. Don’t hang on to all the arguments and judgements of days and years gone by. Start each day afresh. New things are fun, so start each day as a new page and see if it makes your relationship closer. I worked with a couple who had been married for 25 years and after learning to do that, they were like teenagers again.

“It’s all that build-up and judgement over the years that puts distance between people. When people take an honest look at their relationship and work on

it, the sex definitely improves. And if the sex improves, you do it more often, even if you are tired and busy.

“Most importantly, don’t divorce yourself for someone else,” he adds. “The trouble with so many relationships is people stop being themselves to please their partner. You need to be two whole, separate people, doing the things you love, and only then will your union – and real intimacy – really thrive.”

He also advocates making sex less meaningful. While that might sound odd, he maintains that if you over-think it and attach judgement or meaning to sex, it limits your enjoyment. This is important

for couples and single people alike.

“For singles, thinking too much about whether the person loves you, would be a good future partner, will judge you if you do this or that diminishes the energy of the act. For couples, getting too serious about the whole thing can kill the mood and make you less excited about doing it again. You need to be able to cuddle like puppies, or laugh hysterically and have no judgements on what sex should be. Make it fun!”

He also talks about not having expectations and of giving freely to the other person in bed without counting on anything in return. “It’s an exchange modality we’re all stuck in,” he says, talking about couples who get stuck in patterns and give-and-take responses. “Just give your energy and love to your partner and think less about the trading of physical acts.”

And finally, there’s good old-fashioned maintenance. “Taking care of yourself makes you feel more attractive, and when you feel sexier your partner feels more attracted to you too.” He says this is important both for couples and for those trying to attract a partner. “Find the sexiest part of your body and show it off a bit more – I’m not talking thigh-high miniskirts, just something that highlights the best of you.”

He tells a fabulous story about a woman looking for love. “She was in her late 40s, 150kg and was getting no attention. Sure she was on the big side, but she had a fabulous rack. I told her to show a bit – not too much – more cleavage and she started being asked on dates regularly. She felt sexier and was transmitting that vibe, and men were lapping it up.”

Life, love and sex are to be enjoyed, says Gary, and if you feel life is a chore, you can never be happy in a relationship, let alone in your intimate moments.

“Rather than trying to fix things in the bedroom, fix things outside of it and the rest will come. Discover what your body and mind love and don’t use age as an excuse to stop living!” ■

FIVE TIPS FOR SAVING YOUR SEX LIFE

1 Make your partner dinner, and spend the whole time asking them questions about themselves and their day. Undivided attention and wholehearted listening is a rare commodity in the modern age and is a great way to break down barriers that can form between couples.

2 Foot massages are wonderful and a great way to move on to bigger things. Massage your partner’s feet, also focusing on the pressure points behind the heels.

3 When in bed, don’t forget that the skin is the largest organ in your body. Use your whole body and learn to be totally sensate in every inch of your skin rather than just focusing on sexual organs.

4 Try not to have an idea in your head of how things are going to pan out when you go to bed with your partner. Follow your intuition and read their energy, even if it doesn’t end up in sex but rather talking and cuddling all night. Take the pressure to perform off and it will come more naturally.

5 Start developing a sense of gratitude for your partner and all their positive attributes. It’s amazing what taking the focus off their faults and on to their good points can do.

