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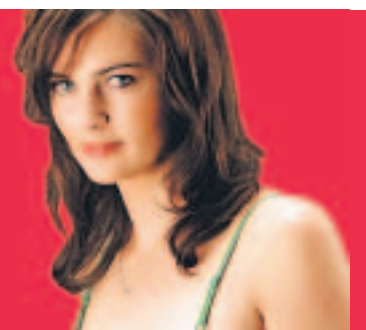


Melburnian Bec Hill has made her choice.

CHASTE CHOICE

When to have sex is a personal choice. Some people jump at the chance, but others prefer to wait till those wedding bells chime. MICHELLE READ asks, can you miss something you never had?

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?



“Despite the fact women are biologically able to do so, many cannot reach climax.”

According to Brauer and Brauer, the average orgasm is 10 seconds long and the average frequency of intercourse, once or twice a week. This translates to 20 seconds a week, 1min, 30sec a month, and about 18 minutes a year. The authors ask us to consider how many thousands of hours we think, worry and daydream about sex when, in a 50-year time-span, we experience a total of 15 hours of orgasmic ecstasy.

That is, of course, if we're even having orgasms.

Infants as young as five months old are capable of experiencing orgasms. But despite the fact women are biologically able to do so, many cannot. Kinsey's studies in the 1950s reported only 14 per cent of women were multi-orgasmic; by 1970, the number increased to 16 per cent. And today, it's about 15-25 per cent.

But sex is much broader than a tally of how often someone gets off. How we feel and express ourselves sexually relates to our vitality and health, our emotional and spiritual life, and to relationship intimacy.

That said, it's hard to top the blissful rush of rollercoaster orgasms jolting through one's body.

We are designed to experience immense pleasure, but the world often hinders our receptivity. Old school gender norms, conservative or religious constraints, past abuse/traumas and comparing ourselves to impossible-to-attain images of beauty, are common factors which inhibit women's sexuality.

There was once a time when I, too, was orgasm-astray. Lost to

understand how to attain the big O. The elusive bang. Frustrated that “it” – whatever exactly “it” was – wouldn't happen. But there's good news: 90 per cent of women who've never had an orgasm will be able to experience one.

I found the secret to being multi-orgasmic in a book about tantric sex in my early 20s. The answer lies in breathing. Yes, breathing.

We can stimulate and direct sexual energy throughout our bodies by using our breath. Relaxation counters distracting repetitive thoughts. Orgasms happen when we allow our body to move as it wishes, without seeking to control it.

Next time you're in bed, direct your attention the part of your body that's feeling good. To increase and amplify the physical sensation, breathe energy into that area. Notice the warm tingling feeling. Then concentrate on spreading this sensation out to the rest of your body.

Orgasms originate between the ears, not the legs. Authors Mantik and Maneewan Chia discuss this in terms of paraplegic or quadriplegic people who have no sensation below the waist. Yet, they still experience orgasm when their chest or neck is stimulated. The Brauers also found the brain waves of women having intense vaginal orgasms mirror the same brain wave patterns as people deep in meditation.

It's a mistake to place all responsibility about having or not having an orgasm on your partner. Really, it's all about you. Your head. Your feelings about yourself and your body. Your ability to let go.

– DR BELLA
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When a celebrity who launched her career with the leaking of an explicit home sex tape publicly swears off the bedroom, it's clear there's a movement brewing.

Paris Hilton has famously sworn off sex for a year while she concentrates on the career that began with that Rick Salomon home video.

And she's not the only celebrity to lock up the chastity belt.

Britney Spears, Mandy Moore, Jessica Simpson, Hillary Duff and even our own Australian Idol Guy Sebastian swore, with varying degrees of success, not to have sex until they were married.

Melbourne comedian Bec Hill is one of thousands of young Australians who have followed their lead and promised to keep their virginity locked down.

“You don't realise how many people out there have made this decision, because a lot of people are scared about talking about it,” she said.

“I know quite a few people who have made the decision, but are scared to say it because they don't want to be ridiculed.”

It's a decision that even the staid parents of the

younger set can have trouble understanding.

“My mum is proud but at the same time she keeps saying, ‘Well, if you change your mind it's OK, you know, you're old enough now so it's legal,’” Hill said.

“My parents have always been supportive of every single area of my life, including my sex life, or lack thereof.”

Hill decided when she was a teenager that she would wait until she was married to have sex.

Like many young Australians, her choice was partly religious – she chose to start attending services at the Uniting Church at 14 – and partly her own common sense.

“It's just because to me personally, I think sex is an incredibly intimate thing and there's only one time that you can do it for the first time,” she said.

“I'd like to save it for the person that I know would appreciate it the most and the only way you can truly be sure that person is going to be the best for it is after you marry them.”

The most recent major study into Australian sexuality, the Australian Study of Health and Relationships, found more than three quarters of men and women thought sex before marriage was acceptable.

The survey led by LaTrobe University, questioning 19,307 people and completed in 2005, also found that people were having sex earlier.

Most young Australians in their final year of high school said they had experienced some form of sexual activity.

The average age both men and women had sex was 16.

Making the choice to wait until marriage when most of her peers were exploring their sexuality was difficult, Hill said.

“In the past it has gotten very difficult because you do get to the point where you think, ‘I'd really like to do it’, because if you fall in love with someone you want to express that in all areas of your life.

“But if you're with someone who understands it you're not going to upset them because they understand your decision.”

Hill's mates have been similarly supportive.

“It's quite funny, in high school when I told my friends I decided that I got teased, not in a harsh way, in a friends joshing way,” she said.

“So I had lots of friends talking about buying me all sorts of sexy gifts for my 18th birthday ... but I also get lots of friends coming up to me and saying they really respect it.”

Hill, who has been in a relationship with fellow

comedian Andrew McClelland for four months, said choosing not to have sex before marriage was often difficult.

While her partners had understood her choice, she admitted to feeling jealous of those who previously had sex.

“It partly makes me feel a bit jealous because I know there's been someone else who has been further than I have and quite possibly they haven't been as close to this person as I have,” she said.

“So it hurts a little bit but it's not going to bother the relationship, if you really like each other then that's not going to affect it.”

Hill said physical contact was important, but she set limits to ensure temptation didn't ruin her resolve.

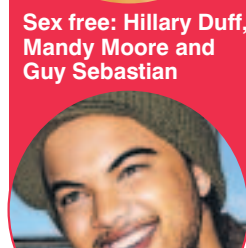
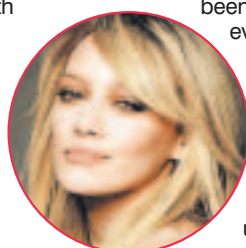
“My limit is intercourse... of course anything up to that is temptation and it's easy to lead on from that,” she said.

“I still think that being physical in the hugging and cuddling is very important and that's in any relationship.”

Hill joked she might end up “a 40-year old virgin” but refused to rush into marriage based only on that,” she said.

“But I like to trust my instincts when it comes to that and know that I wouldn't rush into it.

“I know a few couples who are now married who made the decision and they're very happy now, as you can imagine.”



Sex free: Hillary Duff, Mandy Moore and Guy Sebastian