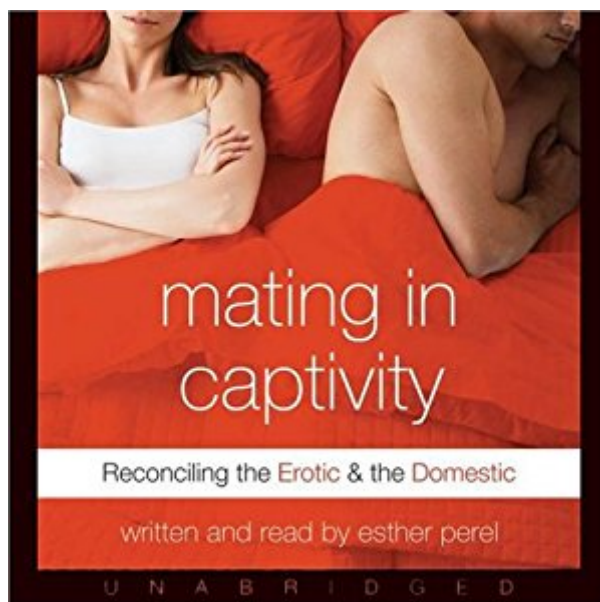


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# Mating In Captivity



## Synopsis

Why does great sex so often fade for couples who claim to love each other as much as ever? Can we want what we already have? Why does the transition to parenthood so often spell erotic disaster? Does good intimacy always make for good sex? Esther Perel takes on these tough questions, grappling with the obstacles and anxieties that arise when our quest for secure love conflicts with our pursuit of passion. She invites us to explore the paradoxical union of domesticity and sexual desire, and explains what it takes to bring lust home. In her twenty years of clinical experience, Perel has treated hundreds of couples whose home lives are empty of passion. They describe relationships that are open and loving, yet sexually dull. What is going on? In this explosively original book, Perel explains that our cultural penchant for equality, togetherness, and absolute candor is antithetical to erotic desire for both men and women. Sexual excitement doesn't always play by the rules of good citizenship. It is politically incorrect. It thrives on power plays, unfair advantages, and the space between self and other. More exciting, playful, even poetic sex is possible, but first we must kick egalitarian ideals and emotional housekeeping out of our bedrooms. While *Mating in Captivity* shows why the domestic realm can feel like a cage, Perel's take on bedroom dynamics promises to liberate, enchant, and provoke. Flinging the doors open on erotic life and domesticity, she invites us to put the "X" back in sex.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Everyone knows that familiarity breeds contempt. Especially if familiarity comes with a wedding ring

attached. A book about sex in marriage --- now there's a thin book! But here comes Esther Perel to suggest that we --- men and women alike --- have it wrong. Good sex doesn't have to end when the hormones cool. Lust doesn't have to devolve into companionship. You can be a mom and a sex kitten. And as for "intimacy"....in the bedroom, a little goes a long way. Who is this wild woman? A therapist in New York who's been working with couples and families for two decades. Belgian-born, to Holocaust survivors. Married (to her original husband). Two kids. Speaks eight languages --- including common sense. Not for Perel a how-to book of ridiculous exercises you can practice to rekindle the passion you once knew. If she had her way, you'd never consult a manual again. You might, however, write a dirty letter about all the hot things you'd like to do to your partner --- or that you'd like done to you. Or maybe you should start two e-mail accounts just for the sexual dialogue between you and your mate. But she's the mother of your child! But he's the guy who only gets his kicks from online porn! Perel has heard all that. Many times. She's not fooled --- underneath those smart New York rationalizations are hearts that still want to believe in hot sex with someone you know. The problem, she says, lie in the unspoken assumptions of most marriages. Like: To love is to merge. Wrong. Merging is what happens when you see the Other as your security. That's death to sex. Good sex requires a spark. A spark requires a gap. Cross the gap, feel the sizzle. No gap? The best you can hope for is a cuddle.

Esther Perel's *Mating in Captivity* is a book for helping marriages that are going well in every way but sexuality. The author wisely notes that the expectations of modern marriages are such that one's spouse is to fulfill one in every way. She posits that good sex and companionship exist on a continuum of tradeoffs between closeness and distances. The strength of this book is that it is thought-provoking. The challenge of this book is that its ideas are the author's, backed up by her experiences with her clients alone, with a narrow focus on a single topic. Being a graduate student in sociology, I will admit a bias for the likes of John Gottman's work in part because it's based on social science research. Perel's research is not - its subjects are her clients, and selected accordingly. Another reviewer writes that Perel uses the word "perhaps" very often - she does. This book is full of speculation and opinion. Clinician based research means that her ideas work well for her clients - as far as she knows - but anyone who has sought a therapist knows that it can be very difficult to find a therapist that one works well with. Would she be a good match for you? Maybe, maybe not. Her writing is good, and there are a couple "aha!" moments in the book. She discusses how sex is viewed in contradictory terms, and that women in particular struggle with the baggage of being "good" and being sexy. She argues that lovers need to rediscover the creativity that led them

to pursue their spouses in the first place, and to think of them more as lovers and less like the wife or husband-role with the cultural baggage that comes with this. In the introduction, Perel writes that she uses the word "marriage" to refer to "all long-term emotional commitments".

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