

Where: PR2 - Topic 1 – Module 1.3 – Video 17 on Video resources: “Your brain wants you to have sex. Here’s how that works”

<https://youtu.be/4DJ0F-UFF4g>

Encoded into our brains and bodies is our desire for sex. It’s evolutionary. All living things are driven to reproduce in a way that’s beyond our conscious control. So, no matter your sexual orientation, or your actual interest in having children, your brain wants you to have sex.

When you see the object of your desire, the hypothalamus fuels your lust, stimulating the production of sex hormones testosterone and estrogen from the ovaries. That’s why someone may reports higher levels of sexual motivation around the time of ovulation, when estrogen levels are highest. A sexual activity begins in your arousal increases, your brain deactivates regions such as the prefrontal cortex which regulates important functions like rational behavior and self-awareness. So, you may feel like you are losing sense of yourself or your self-control. Meanwhile, activity in areas like your cerebellum ramps up rapidly. The cerebellum helps produce emotion, making you feel connected to your partner. But it also increases muscle tension throughout your body, setting the stage for orgasms. And in the moment of climax, 30 different regions of your brain go wild. Areas like the hypothalamus or nucleus accumbens are highly active. That’s why orgasms affect not only the genitals but also respiratory and circulatory systems and tighten parts of the body including the stomach and tights. And your brain receives thousands of pleasure signals from your fully engaged nervous system. Other brain regions, like your lateral orbitofrontal cortex shut off, creating the out-of-body sensation you may feel during orgasms. The activities last about 10 to 20 seconds. The pituitary gland sends out prolactin, which creates that post-sex afterglow and a drowsy-lazy feeling.

Meanwhile, within about one minute of orgasm, the hypothalamus also releases oxytocin, known as the bonding hormone. It’s joined by other mood boosters, which can flow for up to 5 minutes, and that’s why sex feels so good to your brain, even long after the big moment.