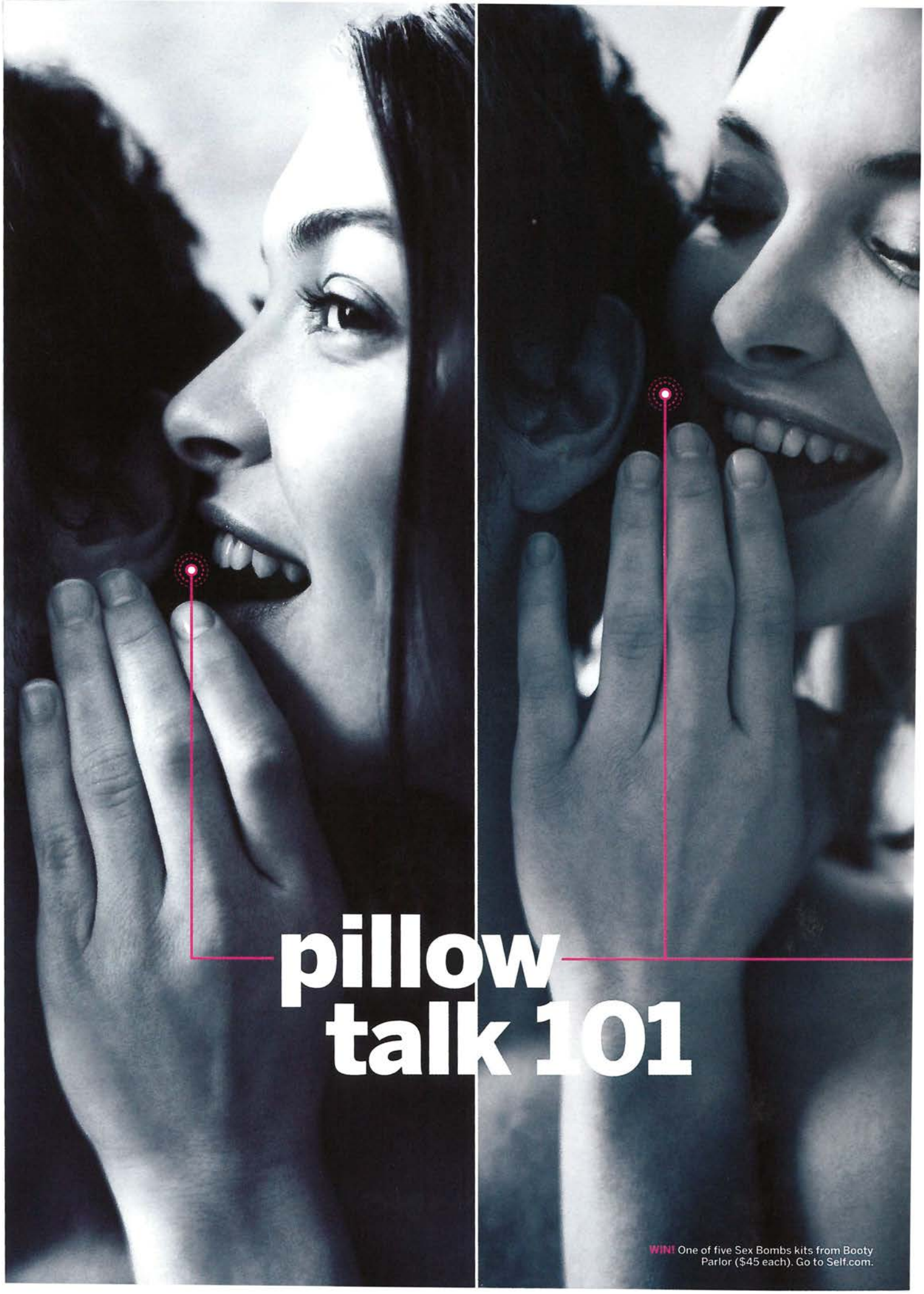

pillow talk 101

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Communicating in bed can pump up pleasure and strengthen your relationship. Want to start sharing? Our blush-free guide will help you achieve your best sex ever.

By Jenna McCarthy Photographs by Deborah Jaffe

Give women enough half-priced cocktails and the conversation is bound to turn to sex. Hence, the following happy hour exchange I took part in recently:

"I like it when he gets really nasty," purred my friend Rachel, nodding her head and suggestively swirling her martini. (I've changed my friends' names to protect their privacy.)

"Really?" the group asked, enthralled.

"Oh, yeah," Rachel continued.

"We're going to need specifics," Kelly insisted.

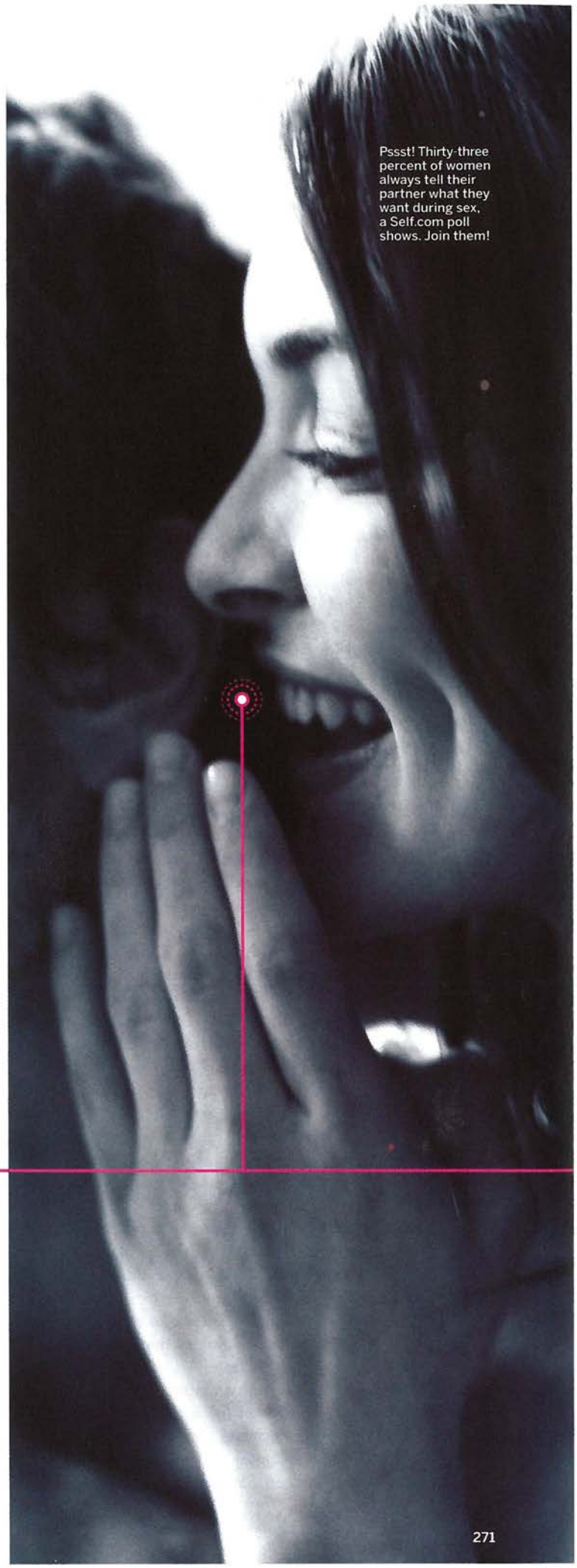
Rachel went on to explain—in glorious detail—how she and her boyfriend like to play Dr. Feelgood and Nurse Naughtypants. (I am not making this up.) They don't don scrubs or masks to get into character, she revealed; instead, their role playing centers around sexy, suggestive dialogue. Pressed to elaborate, Rachel waxed poetic about injections and engorgement and oral therapies to the point that I was getting a little flushed simply hearing about it. I actually asked her to write down some sample dialogue—this stuff was that good.

"I'm really lousy at talking dirty," I confessed, looking over her incredibly descriptive, X-rated scribbles.

"The only way you can be lousy at it is if you're not doing it at all," Rachel maintained.

It's not as if I'm completely silent in the sack, but really, anything beyond "Oh, yes" and "Right there" seems...forced. Plus, I've been with my husband for 10 years. What would he think if I suddenly morphed from mild-mannered mom into dirty-talking dominatrix overnight?

As I start researching the topic, I'm relieved to discover that one of the best parts of talking dirty is that you don't actually have to utter a single expletive or graphic anatomical word. "Describing a fantasy, a past encounter or an erotic dream in a suggestive way can still be good and naughty," explains Lynne Stanton, the gal who wrote the book on the topic. (Literally—Stanton is the author of *Dirty Talk* [Chronicle Books], a sexy little how-to that teaches eager readers to "speak the language of lust.") Timing, location, word choice and how comfortable you are with your partner all predict whether what's said in the throes will get you hot—or not. Something that's offensive at the dinner table ("You slut!") could rock your world behind closed doors. What sounds sleazy coming out of one guy's mouth ("What do you want me to do to you?") might be a total turn-on from



Pssst! Thirty-three percent of women always tell their partner what they want during sex, a Self.com poll shows. Join them!

STYLING, ROBIN PAGE; HAIR, KIRSTEN SIMITZI FOR TIGI BED HEAD; MAKEUP, NIKKI UBERTI FOR ARTISTSBYTIMOTHYPRIANO.COM; PROP STYLING, DANE HOLWEGER.

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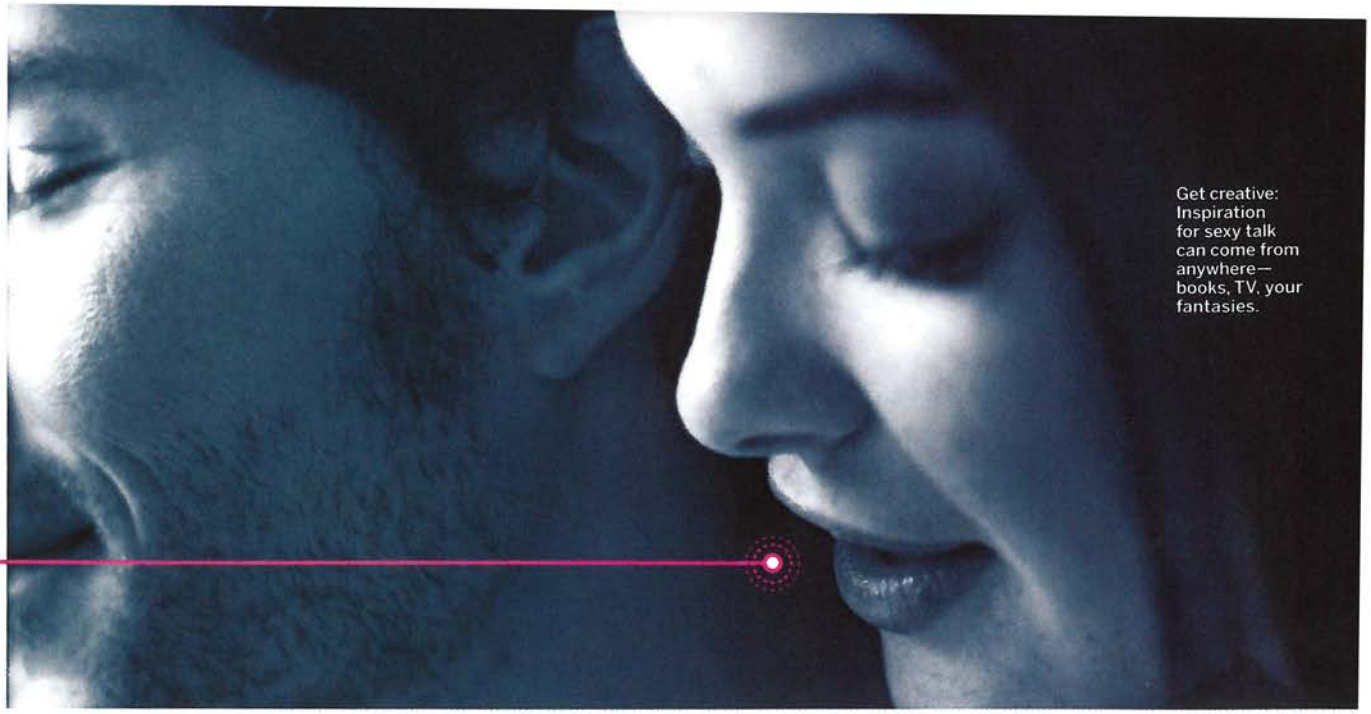

Get creative: Inspiration for sexy talk can come from anywhere—books, TV, your fantasies.

another. And not all steamy scripts are tawdry—they can be more loving than Linda Lovelace. If you're naturally tight-lipped, a strategically timed "That feels amazing" or a breathless "I love you" might add a new level of intimacy to your lovemaking.

Experts opened up about everything, including what being verbal can do for you and your relationship, how to break the ice and, of course, ways to advance your skills. The best part? When you master the art of talking in bed, you're likely to ask for—and get—exactly what you want.

THE CASE FOR COMMUNICATION

While there aren't a lot of double-blind, placebo-controlled studies looking at the effectiveness of expressing yourself in the sack, experts say this is one area that doesn't need a lot of, er, probing. "If we're lovers and we never look at each other or talk to each other in bed but have intercourse 2.2 times a week, people would say we are normal," laments Gina Ogden, Ph.D., sex therapist and author of *The Heart and Soul of Sex* (Trumpeter). "But I know from surveying thousands of women that emotional contact is absolutely critical to sexual satisfaction." Sexy talk is one of the fastest ways to establish that connection, Ogden says. In fact, 86 percent of the more than 3,100 women Ogden surveyed agreed that emotional contact—which includes verbal communication—is essential for sexual satisfaction. "For some couples it might be Shakespeare," she adds, "and for others it might be, '*Bleep* me, you *bleep bleep*.'"

One reason emotional contact is such a turn-on is that it forces both partners to be completely in the moment. "It's hard to tell your partner 'I love the way you feel,' when you're actually thinking about whom to invite to your Memorial Day barbecue," says Sadie Allison, D.HS (yes, that's a doctor of human sexuality), author of *Ride 'Em Cowgirl!* (Tickle Kitty Press).

Perhaps the most compelling reason to speak up when you're getting down is because doing so may be the easiest way to ensure your own satisfaction. "There are some things you simply don't want to discuss over lattes at Starbucks," says Barbara Keesling, Ph.D., author of *Talk Sexy to the One You Love* (HarperPaperbacks). "Talking in bed allows you to make seductive suggestions without sounding as if you're giving a performance review." Stanton agrees: "Saying, 'I'm not crazy about the way you do this' might sound critical or bossy. But who wouldn't respond positively to, 'I loved what you did to me in that hotel in Hawaii. Could you please do that again...tonight?'"

GETTING STARTED

"Maybe it's because I went to Catholic school, but I'm not comfortable expressing myself in bed," my friend Karyn admits. "Funny part is, I love hearing dirty talk, but I can't bring myself to do it."

Karyn is not alone. "The 'good girl' messages women receive growing up can make it very difficult to open up in bed," acknowledges Hilda Hutcherson, M.D., author of *Pleasure: A Woman's Guide to Getting the Sex You Want, Need and Deserve* (Penguin). "Women always tell me, 'I can't do that! What's he going to think?' But that's exactly why being vocal can be so arousing. It feels naughty."

According to Stanton, the key to becoming a bedroom bard is to begin slowly and practice often. "The more you do it, the easier it gets—and the more you'll enjoy it," she promises. It comes down to sexual self-confidence, Allison notes. "It takes guts to make that first leap," she admits. "If you need a glass of wine to loosen up, drink it. Men are easy; even if all you can manage is 'I loved the way you mowed the grass today,' at least it's a start."

Too meek to deactivate your inner MUTE button in bed? You can test the waters, and your partner never even has to know. Head to the library or bookstore and peruse the sexuality section; even skimming over the words will commence the desensitization process. Then pick up a steamy romance novel and find a juicy scene. Read it out loud until you begin to get used to the sound of certain words coming out of your own mouth. (You might want to take the book home before doing this.) If romance novels are too Fabio for you, Stanton's *Dirty Talk* has some great suggestions. Try recording yourself reading so that you grow accustomed to hearing the words, an admittedly difficult task for anyone who squirms at the sound of her own voice on her answering machine (which is probably everyone). "Be selective in the phrases you choose to copy," Dr. Hutcherson advises. "You don't necessarily want to sound like a tart, but instead a self-assured, sexy woman. The important thing is to give yourself license to shake up your usual, safe style."

Once you've mastered a handful of suggestive phrases (and can utter them without giggling or cringing), the idea of going face-to-face still may be more than you can bear. Try calling your partner

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at work and telling him what you want him to do to you later, or send him a sexy text message detailing what you enjoyed last night. He's likely to reply in kind—and as easy as that, you're on your way. "Breaking the silence the first time is the hardest part," Stanton says. "But once you try it, you're likely to discover things about each other you never knew, and your satisfaction will soar."

TURN IT UP A NOTCH

Eventually—and this may seem impossible to believe now—you will gain enough confidence to use your new erotic vocabulary in bed, up close and personal with your partner. The most natural place to start is to tell him what feels good. Sensual statements such as "I love the way your skin feels against mine" or "Your body really turns me on" are safe but undeniably sexy. (Complimenting his manhood is also guaranteed to score you major points, and you have nothing to lose by being overly generous here.) Once you get comfortable with the body-part business, graduate to narrating the action. "I'm going to slowly undress you," you might whisper, "then I'm going to kiss my way from your neck all the way to your...."

You know all that sexy reading material you've been studying on the side? Try bringing one of your picks—whether it's *Penthouse Forum* or *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—into bed and read choice passages out loud. "This can be liberating and exciting, but it still feels safe because they're not your words," Dr. Hutcherson says.

You'll also find dialogue inspiration by watching adult movies. (Yes, most porn is unwatchable, but there are female-friendly or "soft" options; Allison recommends the new *X2*, available at AndrewBlake.com, and *Jenna's Provocateur* by Vivid Entertainment. If you prefer romantic over racy, check out our list of porn-free titles on page 212.) Watch one with your partner, then talk about what aroused you, Stanton suggests. Remember, a simple "That was hot when they were in the cab" is a lot easier to blurt out than "I want you to bend me over in the backseat while the cabbie watches." Too shy to take in the film with your honey? View it solo and steal lines or scenarios to try later. He doesn't need to know what inspired you.

You might also consider my friend Rachel's it-might-sound-cliché-but-don't-knock-it-until-you've-tried-it maneuver: Create characters for yourselves—say, promiscuous receptionist and billionaire boss or horny housewife and sexy UPS guy—and imagine how these people would talk. Try, "What would you say to me if I was the sexy professor and you were a grad student trying to get me into bed?" If you really get into it, the dialogue practically suggests itself. Feeling really adventurous? Add an element of foreign intrigue; my friend Erica says that virtually anything her partner says with a Scottish accent heats things up an extra 10 degrees.

Another way to strut your newly uninhibited stuff: Show a suggestive streak at just the wrong moment, such as when he's on the phone with his boss, your in-laws are at the door or you're entering a busy restaurant. "Sexy talk can be particularly effective used at a time when you can't immediately satisfy your urges," Stanton says. After all, it's human nature to realize how badly we want something the moment after someone tells us we can't have it.

Mastering the language of lust may not come easily, but the rewards can be tremendous. "Sexy talk is a powerful aphrodisiac," Dr. Hutcherson says. "As you get comfortable with it, your inhibitions will decrease and it will become easier to relax and let go. You'll feel sexier. It's true—women tell me this all the time. What man can resist a woman confident enough to ask for what she wants in an erotic way?" So while engaging in pillow talk might not come as second nature to you, giving it a try will no doubt spice up your routine, make sex more gratifying—and bring you closer to your partner. Now *that's* something to talk about.

BAD LIBS Take this to bed tonight Remember those *Mad Libs* you loved as a kid? Try a grown-up version with your partner as a painless way to ease into bedroom banter. The phrase *fill in the blank* is about to get a whole lot hotter. —*Erin Bried*

_____ (term of endearment), would you do me a favor? It may sound a little _____ (adjective), but rather than calling me _____ (your name), would you mind calling me _____ (name of your sexy alter ego)? It's just that when I hear you say that, it makes me feel all tingly right on my _____ (body part). Hmm, now, what shall I call you? How about _____ (sexy name for your honey) or _____ (sexier name for your honey)? No, no, no, I know! I'm going to call you _____ (naughty word that would shock your mother if she heard it come out of your mouth)! Please, _____ (decided-upon name), will you help me get out of this _____ (article of clothing)? Hurry! If you don't undress me quickly, I think I might _____ (verb that in some way implies unrest)! Thank you. Now I want you to very _____ (adverb that ends in -ly) put your hands on my _____ (highly sensitive body part) and kiss me on my _____ (erogenous zone). If you want to, I will even let you _____ (sex move you probably tried in college). Good. Now, once you feel ready, I want you to take me to _____ (location). Then, turn the lights _____ (on/off), take off your _____ (article of clothing) and I will tell you some other _____ (sexy adjective) things I've been thinking of doing with you when we're alone.

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