

A man in a bowler hat and a woman in a red corset and floral skirt are in a dark, smoky setting. The woman is holding onto a rope that hangs from the top of the frame. The man is looking at her. The background is dark with some smoke or mist.

Our poll revealed that eight out of 10 of you use fantasies to help reach orgasm. But what do your erotic thoughts really mean? *Cosmo* explains...

You close your eyes and let your mind run wild. Where will your sexual fantasy take you tonight? Professor Brett Kahr, psychotherapist and author of *Sex And The Psyche*, spent five years researching both men's and women's sexual fantasies. He discovered that these are basically erotic daydreams but with an immediate and direct *physical* effect. Your blood pressure rises, your heartbeat becomes quicker and your body becomes more sensitive to touch. And not only that: research shows that the more sexual fantasies a woman has, the more sexual desire she has. Here we take a look at the four most common fantasies for women – find out what they mean, and how they can secretly spice up your sex life...

# Your sex fantasies

## D.E.C.O.D.E.D.

### Fantasy 1 SHOW-OFF

You might think that getting turned on by the idea of sex in a public place makes you a show-off, but it's actually likely to be the opposite. Whether you fantasise about doing it in your office, a nightclub or in the back of a taxi, it's your fear of being seen that gives you the thrill. "Imagining you could be seen, or perhaps get caught, makes your body release endorphins – feel-good hormones," says sex guru Dr Pam Spurr. "Combine those with oxytocin, a hormone released during arousal, and you've got a powerful sexual cocktail." A study published in *The Journal Of Behavioral Research And Therapy*

found that having sex where you might be seen is not just a common fantasy for women, it's also one of the most arousing.

But however erotic the thought of it, actually having sex outside could earn you some time inside. Luckily, there are ways to get the kick of exhibitionist sex without breaking the law. First, let your man know the idea of being seen gives you a thrill. "Tell him you've always fantasised about sex on a hotel balcony or on the beach," says pleasure coach Dr Sadie Allison. "It doesn't matter where the place is as long as he gets the idea that you're into the thrill of potentially being seen." Then, if he's into it

too, have sex at home... but make it public! Choose a window facing the street and put up Venetian blinds, lace or nets (be careful of back lighting and silhouettes, though). You can even buy one-way opaque window film that allows you to see out but no one can see in, giving you the feeling of being exposed to the outside world.

Alternatively you could bring an extra 'eye' into the bedroom in the form of a camera. "Knowing you're being filmed makes you behave differently," says Pam. "And that can be part of the buzz." But, she warns, delete it all immediately afterwards in case it falls into the wrong hands.



## Fantasy 2 THE TALL, DARK STRANGER

What is it about that faceless, nameless man? Whatever it is, a lot of women fantasise about sex with him. "Women are natural pleasers and try very hard to please their men. Sex with a stranger can be tempting because you may feel more open to express your needs," says pleasure coach Dr Sadie Allison. "You can also tell him exactly what to do without fear of offending him or hurting his feelings."

It's also about being naughty without risk. "Women who fantasise about sex with strangers want an opportunity to 'safely' explore breaking the rules," says sexologist and author Dr Logan Levkoff. "In our minds, we can have one-night stands but without any repercussions." Luckily for you, it's possible to get the benefits of stranger sex – the excitement of someone new, the lack of rules and the potential for greater creativity – without cheating on your man or risking your safety by picking up random men. You need to open up about this fantasy to your man – but tread

carefully. The idea that you fantasise about sex with a strange man is unlikely to be a huge turn-on for your guy, so phrase this one carefully. "Say you want to try something different," says Dr Ian Kerner, author of *Passionista: The Empowered Woman's Guide To Pleasuring A Man*. "Rather than, 'I want to pretend you're someone I don't know,' go for, 'Let's dress up and pretend to meet for the first time all over again.' That sounds more loving and romantic, but the end result works the same."

Sex guru Dr Pam Spurr suggests making it feel real by using different props – wigs, different clothes and perfume. And make sure he gets in on the act too: tell him he can be James Bond, a gangster, whatever it takes to get him into the idea. "Plan ahead," says Pam. "Book a hotel room, arrange to meet at a bar nearby that neither of you knows, and arrive separately. Once there, catch his eye, flirt a little, then go back to the hotel room to complete your performance." He'll be begging for an encore. >



### Fantasy 3 WHEN TWO BECOMES THREE (OR EVEN MORE)

Sex is like breakfast – cereal monogamy gets very samey. But throw in a banana or a soft, fuzzy peach and suddenly it seems mouthwateringly delicious. Fruity fantasies about sex with more than one person – male or female – are very common and merely indicate a love of new experiences, not that you want a three-in-a-bed romp. For example, research from the University of Toronto showed that women were notably more aroused when shown footage of a naked woman doing a workout than when they saw naked men doing yoga. It doesn't mean they're lesbians. "Many women are turned on by the idea of exploring another woman's body, and doing it in the company of her own boyfriend makes it less intimidating and an erotic experience for everyone," says Sadie.

To avoid inviting the green-eyed monster to join you between the sheets, take things slowly. "Mention that you had an erotic dream involving another man or woman – preferably not someone

you know – and watch his response," says Ian. "If he seems into it, feed him some more details." Then try introducing it in the bedroom. By 'it' we mean the idea, not an actual person – *Cosmo's* sex coach, Rachel Morris, says that's a huge risk to take with your relationship. You may think you're both fine with it – the reality is often very different. "Talk about what you'd do to the other person if they were in bed with you," says Sadie. That can be incredibly erotic without the risks associated with bringing a third person into your bed." Need inspiration? Watch episode 16, season 4 (*Freedom*) of *Grey's Anatomy*, where Dr McSteamy and Callie Torres make out as she describes her lesbian thoughts about Dr Hahn.

Alternatively, bring more bodies into the bedroom the easy way: use a mirror. "Watching your own bodies during sex can be just as sexy as watching erotica," says Ian. "You get to see the action from different viewpoints, which makes it feel fresh and new."

## Fantasy 4 IN & OUT OF CONTROL

With your boss giving orders at work and your friends telling you how to live your life, it's little wonder you dream of taking control in the bedroom. "It's a common fantasy because it allows you to do what you like," says Pam.

The great news is that you can come straight out and tell your man about your domination fantasy. Why? Because more men fantasise about being dominated than about dominating you, according to the thousands of fantasies collected by author Nancy Friday. "Men love to be dominated because it releases them from the pressure to perform," says Ian. "Plus the idea that he can then give you – this powerful woman – an orgasm, actually makes *him* feel empowered."

But before you whip out your handcuffs, set out some ground rules. "Decide on a 'safe' word that can't be misconstrued; 'Coventry', for example," says Pam. "He can use this if he wants you to stop." And start by tying him up with something breakable – edible shoelaces (see [www.online-sweets.co.uk](http://www.online-sweets.co.uk)) or a ribbon in a bow.

Have him sit in a chair rather than on the bed too. "This makes for a dramatic shift in the power balance," says Pam, "because you can tower above him in your killer heels, then make him beg to be released as you tease and pleasure him."

Letting him call the shots can be liberating for you. "If you're too focused on your partner's pleasure, which many

women are, it can be difficult to reach climax," explains Pam. "By removing control, you are helpless to do anything but enjoy the pleasure he's giving you." And, she adds, it also makes you feel desired. "It's as though his lust for you is overpowering, and that's sexy."

Explore this type of fantasy with care, however, as it's all too easy to feel as though you genuinely have no control, and that's scary. First, discuss a safe word (as before), and second, start without using any form of tying – you can easily feel submissive without it. Have him hold both your hands together above your head with

one of his hands, and with his other he can pin your hip to the bed/floor/wall. "This puts you in a position of vulnerability – but it's safe," says Pam.

Before you take it to the next level, with blindfolds for example, make sure he's into it. "You may love the idea of being overpowered, but he might find it hard to reconcile this with the respect he feels for you out of the bedroom," says Pam. "Up the stakes a little more every now and again, but be sure to have regular sex without any role-playing in between. That way you'll retain the loving intimacy you've built but still be able to keep things spicy." >

## Inside HIS sex brain

Men's predilection for pornography — 48% of them view it online, compared to 9.5% of women — makes them more likely than we are to fantasise about what they see. Male porn tends to feature multiple partners, according to Professor Brett Kahr's study. Does that mean your man secretly wishes your flatmate would join you between the sheets? Not necessarily: "Sexual fantasies are usually explored during masturbation," says Dr Pam Spurr. "While he's in bed with you, the chances are that he's thinking only about you."

## THE TABOO FANTASY

**A**lthough sexual fantasies, however bizarre, are mostly harmless, they can indicate deeper emotional issues that need to be addressed.

It's common for fantasies to be dark and even dangerous — and it's not strange for them to contain ideas that would be totally off-limits in your actual sex life. This doesn't mean that you want to feel pain, fear or humiliation for real — it's a fantasy — and the point is that you *do* have ultimate control over what's happening. Your imagined scenario — whatever it may be — is merely enabling you to better enjoy sex, so don't be scared by it.

"Most women can easily distinguish between reality and fantasy," says Dr Brett Kahr. "For a small proportion of women, however, it can be an indicator of past abuse that has not been processed."

The desire to feel severe pain during sex can be a sign that all is not well inside that head of yours. "Masochism is a state wherein a person derives sexual pleasure from feeling real pain," says Brett. But it's important to differentiate between enjoying it when your boyfriend roughly grabs your bottom, and getting a sexual kick out of feeling real pain. "The need to feel humiliated or physically abused in order to be aroused could be a sign that you have unresolved issues related to sex."

If you feel worried about your fantasies, you can talk to someone at the Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships ([www.tccr.org.uk](http://www.tccr.org.uk)) where trained staff can help you. **T**