

SEX

Common Sexual Compatibility Myths, Debunked

By [Taylor Kubota](#)



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As if dating wasn't hard enough already, people are told that they may not have a chance with someone because their immune system doesn't smell right or they aren't a match on the algorithm. In truth, sexual compatibility isn't black and white. Here are some prevalent myths that are best ignored.

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Myth #1: We can smell compatibility.

Most people are familiar with the famous [T-shirt study from the mid-'90s](#) that suggested that women subconsciously smell potential partners' immune systems and prefer those who have dissimilar immune genes from their own. No one has been able to say exactly how this could happen, and experts aren't certain [whether people even have pheromones or something like](#)

them. Even if the theorized sniff test is real, people would have to be quite close to each other for smell to have an impact on their preferences. Also, research on this topic has shown that the associations between smell and attraction may differ for women on hormonal birth control.

Myth #2: Opposites attract.

This age-old adage conjures up the image of a bad-boy, good-girl pairing. While such a combo may indeed be exciting, it's not likely to last long. "Ultimately, if you're so different as people, it can really grate on a couple," says **Megan Stubbs**, sexologist and relationship expert. Often the unique aspects of a partner start out as favorite traits and end up being the least favorite, even reasons for ending a relationship.

Especially when it comes to sex, too much difference can be a serious deal breaker. "You may not necessarily love what you're partner loves," says sexologist **Christine Milrod**, "but if you absolutely refuse to go along with it, that's going to create a problem later on, down the line." If couples are uncompromisingly unlike in their sexual preferences, that can be an insurmountable challenge.

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Myth #3: There's an algorithm for that.

Some major dating websites advertise their prowess at matching up compatible couples. There's no doubt this works for some people but questionnaires can't tell people everything about how they'll react to a possible partner. "That's all paper, and it's so hard to encompass all of the intricate nuances of personality and likes and dislikes," says Stubbs.

Couples that fit the classic template of an old, rich man and a young, hot woman don't hold up as well as many people assume either. Problems with this often go two ways, says Milrod. Either the woman wants more than the man can give sexually (because of his age) or she's too innocent. "In my practice, very frequently, I see that the force of potential incompatibility is the fact that the woman is sexually inexperienced," she says.

Myth #4: The perfect penis size.

Everyone's body is different. That goes for **penis size** and vaginas. If a man's penis is large, it can hurt a woman. If it's small, it may leave her lacking certain sensations. So, yes, size can be a problem, but people often reach this conclusion too hastily. A fix for both ends of the mismatch

spectrum often comes in the form of focusing on the woman's pleasure. When a woman is turned on, she's more likely to be lubricated, relaxed, and able to take in a large penis (remember: vaginas can fit a baby). Using **additional lubricant** can help too. Some women experience uncomfortable sensations of a man hitting their cervix but the vagina lengthens significantly when a woman is aroused. As for men with smaller penises, there are many other ways to pleasure a woman beyond penile-vaginal intercourse and many women enjoy other forms of sex even more than this standard.

Myth #5. Misaligned libidos.

Desire is a major factor in a couple's sex life, but to assume libidos have to line up is misunderstanding how libido works. "Libido can go up and down in your life, depending on stress level or workload or whether you have children," says Stubbs. She points out that many pregnant women are so inundated with people touching them all day that they really don't want to be handled anymore, even by a loving partner. Generally, mismatched libidos are temporary and can be improved through discussion and working on other parts of life that might be affecting desire, such as work stress.