

Module Four

# When She Has Shut Down

*“Female sexual shutdown is not stubbornness, low drive, or withholding – it is a protection response, and it will not reverse until its causes are addressed directly.”*

**Complete this worksheet individually before sharing with your spouse. Honesty here is more important than comfort. There are no wrong answers – only honest ones.**

MODULE FOUNDATIONS

- 1 Sexual shutdown in women is almost always a symptom of something upstream – emotional disconnection, unresolved conflict, feeling unseen, or the accumulated sense that sex is something done to her rather than with her.**
- 2 Contempt is the single most reliable predictor of female sexual shutdown – when a wife feels criticized, dismissed, or disrespected, her body will eventually refuse what her mind has not yet named.**
- 3 Unaddressed sexual trauma – from before or within the marriage – is far more prevalent than either spouse typically acknowledges, and it shapes the sexual response in ways that require specific, patient, informed care.**
- 4 Many wives in shutdown have tried to communicate what they need and been dismissed or met with frustration – the shutdown is often the result of concluding that words will not work.**
- 5 Recovery requires the husband to lead with sustained, non-sexual affection – physical warmth with no agenda, over a long enough period, that the wife’s nervous system begins to relearn safety.**

SECTION

**Naming What Is True**

*This worksheet requires unusual care. If the wife is in shutdown, she should complete her section privately and share only what she is ready to share. Nothing here should be used as evidence in an argument.*

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<b>Wife's score:</b>	--	<b>Husband's perception:</b>	--	
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**2. For the wife: How long have you been in the place you are currently in? Was there a specific moment, event, or season that began the shutdown — or has it been a gradual withdrawal?**

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**3. For the husband: When did you first notice the shift in your wife's availability? What was your initial response — and looking back, was that response part of the problem?**

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SECTION  
2

**What Is Underneath**

*These questions are designed to surface the actual causes of shutdown — not assign blame, but name what is driving the response.*

<b>Feeling emotionally disconnected</b>	<b>Past sexual trauma</b>
<b>Unresolved conflict or resentment</b>	<b>Body image or physical shame</b>
<b>Feeling criticized or disrespected consistently</b>	<b>When I've communicated my needs, I have not been heard</b>

**5. For the wife: Have you ever tried to communicate what you need in order to feel safe and present — and been dismissed, minimized, or met with frustration? What did you say, and what happened?**

**6. For the husband: Is there a pattern in how you respond to your wife's unavailability — pressure, guilt, withdrawal, or silence — that you are now willing to name as part of what has sustained the shutdown?**

SECTION  
3

## What Recovery Requires

*Recovery from shutdown is not a decision — it is a direction. These questions identify what that direction requires from each spouse.*

**7. For the wife: What would need to be consistently true about your husband's behavior — over a sustained period, not a single gesture — before your nervous system would begin to trust that intimacy is safe?**

**8. For the husband: Are you willing to offer sustained, non-sexual physical affection — with no agenda, no expectation, no timeline — for as long as it takes? What makes that genuinely difficult for you?**

SECTION  
4

## Both Voices

*The wife shares first. The husband listens without responding until she is completely finished.*

**10. For the wife: What is the one thing you most need your husband to understand about where you are — that you have not been able to say, or that you have said and not felt heard? For the husband: What is the one thing you most want your wife to know about what her shutdown costs you — said not as a complaint but as an honest expression of what you are carrying?**

**MY ANSWER:**

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**MY SPOUSE'S ANSWER:**

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SECTION  
5

## Commitment

*Recovery from shutdown is not a single decision — it is a direction. Name one specific, sustained commitment each of you is making.*

**MY COMMITMENT:**

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**MY SPOUSE'S COMMITMENT:**

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*“A wife in shutdown is not broken. Her nervous system is functioning exactly as designed. The problem is not with her, but with the relationship.”*