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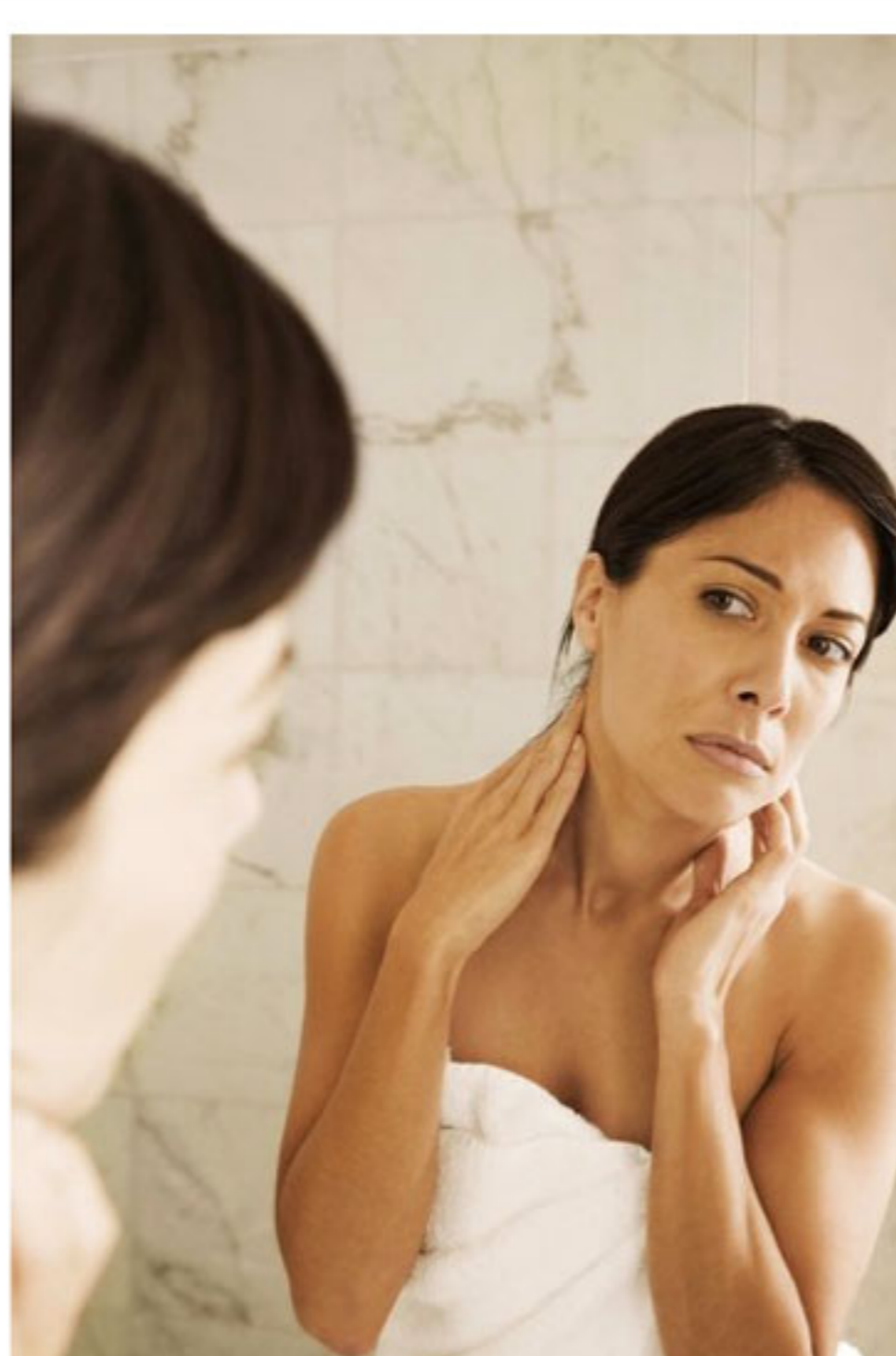
Tips for women over 40 to naturally increase their libido

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Libido over 40 (Garry Wade / Getty Images / Imagebank / July 23, 2012)

Jen Weigel
Lessons for life

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You're over 40 and your desire for intimacy is not what it used to be. Men can pop a pill, but what about women? According to Laurie Steelsmith, a licensed naturopath, the answers to increasing your sex drive won't be found in a pharmacy.

"There are several ways for women to boost their libido and sexual function through natural means, not through a drug," said Steelsmith, who co-wrote the book "Great Sex, Naturally: Every Woman's Guide to Enhancing Her Sexuality Through the Secrets of Natural Medicine." "There is a strong link between a healthy libido and what I call your foundation of health, which is diet, exercise, removing toxins, and your mental health."

While diet and exercise can be a popular conversation starter, addressing one's sexual needs is more challenging, Steelsmith said, because the topic among women is often considered taboo. (In fact, during our interview over the phone, Steelsmith had to stop the conversation to ask her mother to leave the room while we discussed the different types of orgasms a woman can experience — she claims there are five, by the way.)

"I think most women are more comfortable having sex than talking about it," Steelsmith said. "Which is interesting because we have this oversexed culture on the one hand, in the media and on television and in the movies, and on the other hand we don't want to talk about it."

Steelsmith spent years researching the body and mind connection, and how our mental and physical health impact the libido. She said removing toxins from our diet and lifestyle is critical to maintaining a sex drive because "chemicals are causing headaches, gas, bloating and skin rashes. This makes you tired, and you're not going to have the same sexual energy, vitality and response."

Another factor that influences whether we feel like having sex is our age, Steelsmith said.

"When you're 23, your hormones are raging and your sex tolerance is through the roof," she said. "You can stay up all night and still pass the exam the next day. As we get older we don't have those same reserves. As our hormones change and our bodies change, we have to adapt."

And while popping a pill seems like an instant solution for men, Steelsmith said, those pills "will cause an erection, but it still doesn't do anything to improve their libido. It's important to note this."

Here are Steelsmith's tips for women to reactivate their mojo:

Shore up your foundation of health.

"If you ingest chemicals and don't consume minerals and vitamins, and you don't exercise, your sex life will suffer," she said. "I have a smoothie every day with specific ingredients that increase my overall vitality and I notice a difference ... A healthy body and mind are essential for a healthy libido."

Strengthen your pelvic floor.

"The pelvis is one of the most dynamic areas of your body," she said. "We need to make a conscious effort to keep the pelvic area toned. The best known modern exercises for enhancing pleasure and pelvic strength are Kegels." (Introduced in the 1940s by physician Arnold Kegel to treat urinary incontinence.) "Kegels will increase blood flow to your pelvis."

Take herbal aphrodisiacs.

Steelsmith noted that there are some herbs, "like ginseng and reishi (mushrooms)," that she said have been in use for thousands of years. "Ancient cultures have used these medicines to nurture and nourish their sexual energy."

Treat yourself.

"This is all about female empowerment," she said. "Love yourself. You can't continue to help anyone else if you can't help yourself."

jweigel@tribune.com

Twitter: @jenweigel

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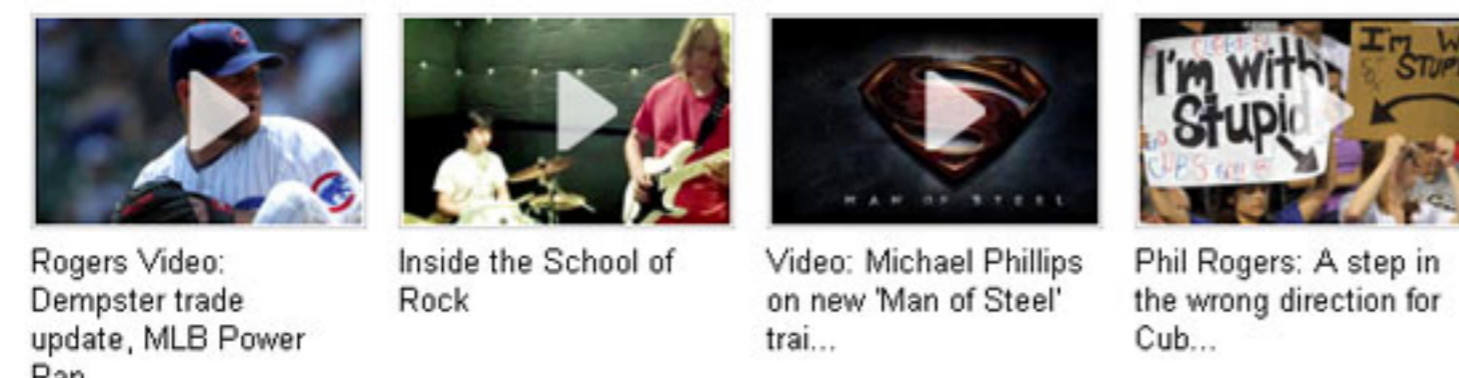
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