Q. I’ve been having sex with my girlfriend for a while now, and she has never had an orgasm. She says she’s been close, but never there. I feel bad because I have an orgasm every time, and I want her to get to that point too. Is there anything different I could do to help her?

A. This is a common problem in relationships. We often hear from women who aren’t having “the big O”. Men often think that deep penetration will drive their girl wild. Sometimes it does, but it’s important to realize that many women do not achieve orgasm through penile-vaginal thrusting alone. The fact that you’re concerned is a great sign and step toward success.

By now, your encounters are probably causing anxiety for both of you. Show her that you care without putting pressure on her. Ask her what feels good. Where are her erogenous zones? Has she ever masturbated to orgasm? Ask her what she wants you to do. Then do it! Ask her things like, “do you like it this way? What feels good to you now? What can I do for you?” Listen carefully.

Physiologically, men become aroused more quickly than women. This is why foreplay is important. While you may get hard just looking at her, she needs more time to become aroused. Take time to talk and romance her. Slowly excite her with a gentle massage (use oil in her favorite scent). Warm her up with sensuous caresses and kisses. Stimulate her by licking and stroking the sexually sensitive areas of her body that you asked her about—maybe the breasts, neck, nipples, or back. Some women will orgasm just from the right amount of manual stimulation to the inner surfaces of the labia minora, the head and shaft of the clitoris, and the first inch and a half of the vagina.

Sexual fulfillment happens in many different ways and at different times. Few couples have simultaneous orgasms from intercourse alone. Relax. Take turns. And, enjoy.