



ENTERTAINMENT

# Intimacy Coordinator Tells Us How Actors Stop Themselves From Getting Aroused During Steamy Sex Scenes (Exclusive)

By [Nicole Massabrook](#) | Updated on: July 20, 2024

A reader asks *Us*, "How do actors stop themselves from getting aroused during sex scenes?" The racy moments in *Challengers* and on shows like *Outlander* have made *Us* wonder about this very important question too, so we checked in with [intimacy coordinator Brooke M. Haney](#) for the inside scoop.

Haney, who's worked on *Elsbeth*, *Mayor of Kingstown* and *Harlem* and recently wrote *The Intimacy Coordinator's Guidebook: Specialties for Stage and Screen*, revealed that those moments are not so sexy behind the scenes.



"Here's the thing," Haney tells *Us Weekly*. "This isn't actually very common. We're at work, right? With the lights bearing down, microphones, a couple of cameras in your face, director, DP [director of photography] and other necessary crew watching on monitors, it's just not that sexy. However, sometimes bodies have physiological responses that are outside of our control. When that does happen, I tell the actor to do a few push-ups or some jumping jacks. That moves the blood to a different location and we're all good."

Of course, many stars have found love while at work. Long before they had two kids, **Ryan Gosling** and **Eva Mendes** had sex scenes in 2012's *The Place Beyond the Pines*; **Rose Leslie** and **Kit Harrington** (who married in 2018) had *Us* feeling hot and bothered while above the Wall in *Game of Thrones*; and **Anna Paquin** and **Stephen Moyer** shared more NSFW scenes than we can even remember on *True Blood*, eventually tying the knot and welcoming twins offscreen in later seasons.

While Haney confirms they have witnessed some onscreen love interests blossom into real relationships offscreen, their job is to make sure they keep the love scenes professional.

"One of the jobs of an intimacy coordinator is to make sure that we are making everything on set be work, and part of that can be 'closure practices,' particularly when I work with younger actors. If I'm working at a college or something, I'll do some sort of closure practice or de-role technique," they explain.

The practices help actors get out of character. Haney notes that while the actor's mind knows they're faking it all, the body doesn't realize that. These techniques help actors differentiate between



Sam Heughan and Caitriona Balfe's steamy 'Outlander' sex scenes inspired a question from an Us Weekly reader. Sony Pictures Television

"I'm not going to be in charge of controlling what actors do on their own time, that's their business," they say. "But when we're at work, it should never be about their personal relationship. It should be about the characters."

The intimacy coordinator emphasized that no matter how realistic the scene looks or how much chemistry you see while watching, your favorite shows and movies are only simulating sex.

"It's always fake," Haney says. "So any real sexual act is a no-no. And we close the set for scenes of intimacy, so only anyone that is required to be either on set or on monitor in order to get the shot can be around for those. So we might take a crew of 50 or 100 down to eight or 10 for those scenes, and that's for the privacy of the actors and also for the protection of the crew. Most of us don't go to work and see our coworkers walking around naked. So it's about everyone's professional work environment."

Haney also noted that audiences don't just have the actors to thank for those deliciously steamy scenes. There are plenty of people working behind the camera to bring those sparks to the screen.

"The audience should think it's real, and the actors should feel like it's fake," they share. "That's what the choreography is there. A lot of credit goes to the editor, the director and the editor. Film and TV is such an editor's medium, and the DP, how that shot is taken is telling the story. But a lot of it's the choreography as well. If we're trying to tell a comedy, how much bounce do we put in it, or what's the wildest position I can get your body in with legs flying in the air? As opposed to if it's a series and we've been waiting for these two characters to connect for so long and the audience is just dying to see their chemistry, then where's the eye contact? How slow is the touch? How does it build and get more intense? It's really about the choreography."

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