

## **THE JOY OF INTIMACY**

Recently, while playing bridge, a close friend asked what had motivated me to become a board certified sex therapist. I thought about it awhile and decided it originated in my parents being consistently affectionate with one another. While in the eighth grade, after visiting in a friend's home, it dawned on me on the bicycle ride home that not all spouses hugged and kissed each time they met and left each other. It was a startling discovery. Needless to say, our home was very tranquil.

### **Emotional Intimacy**

Most of us would probably agree that emotional intimacy paves the way for physical intimacy. As we age, this belief becomes more equally valid for men and women. When we are younger the more common generalization was that for men, sex created love while for women, being loved sparked physical intimacy.

As men age, due to having external genitalia, they readily become spectators resulting in "ED". We have reached saturation levels of "ED" pharmaceutical advertising. We would be wiser to foster greater emotional intimacy rather than medication dependency. Here are ideas to consider.

### **Touch**

As humans, we need touch. Our biochemical makeup changes as we give and receive touch. Research shows that infants deprived of touch have failure to thrive; they wither and die. Marasmus describes this phenomenon. The classic text is Touch by Ashley Montague.

As aging adults we never outgrow our need for touch. We might need it more as we age and feel more insecure and seek more certainty and reassurance. A wise person said, "Make love 23½ hours a day; then your spouse will agree to have a half hour of physical intimacy." Kindness and staying emotionally connected with one another goes a long way.

### **Diminishing Desire**

You may have noticed that your libido is lessening or has totally vanished. As women's testosterone levels begin to surpass men's, this is mostly unavoidable. This does not eradicate the importance and the wisdom of making time for intimate touch. Our desire may activate as we begin caressing.

Another wise person advocates scheduling nude time together (NTT). This may sound repellant to those true believers who cling to believing that they will have that libidinous spark of spontaneity. Well, truth be told, that moment may be long gone, never to return. When you schedule time for physical intimacy, you will have something to look forward to, something to fantasize about, something to

prepare for, or something to motivate you to exercise and keep your body in good shape. We never get too old for hugging and kissing.

### **Diminishing Physicality**

Some couples believe that the demise of penile-vaginal intercourse is the end of physical intimacy. This is a huge mistake. What we physically do when we make love with one another is unimportant. What is important is that at the end of each time that we come together to express our affection for one another by touching each other, that we feel good about ourselves individually and as a couple. We feel loved. Our mood gets elevated and we have a greater sense of well-being. Life is worth living! We are flooded with oxytocin, the feel good hormone.

Of course, many couples will have uneven levels of lack of desire for physical intimacy. The spouse with the least amount of interest or desire can hopefully be persuaded if and when there is ample caring and kindness the other 23 hours of the day. It's a healthy thing to do, like brushing your teeth, dental flossing and managing food intake.

### **The Greatest Gift**

We believe that the greatest gift we give one another in our physical intimacy is abandonment. We feel free to let go and enjoy the pleasures of touching and being touched. We have arousal and abandonment. This process is necessary for us to explode and experience orgasm.

When we "make love" we are literally making a more loving life for ourselves. Sexual tension subsides and a greater sense of peace and caring ensues. The world certainly needs more love-making. Remember that song, "What the world needs now, is love, sweet love, etc."? Ahhhhh, the joy of intimacy!

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