

INSIGHTS THAT MY CLIENTS HAVE TAUGHT ME

PURPOSES OF SEX

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What couples don't talk about can be more damaging to their relationship than what they do talk about.

Research tells us that for the average woman, it takes four to six years after she becomes sexually active before she learns to have an orgasm. Research also tells us that the biggest obstacle to having a good sex life is lack of communication, specifically not having an open and honest dialogue between the couple.

Back in the 40's and 50's, men and women knew better than to even try to have a meaningful talk about sex. Women expected that men knew how to please them. And men assumed they knew how to please a woman (after all, they had been pleasing themselves for years with great success!). And, because men "knew," they were not open to feedback. And, women were afraid of hurting their man's ego and making him angry, so they never said anything. As a result, many women learned to fake their sexual experience.

Having a good conversation about sex does not mean just asking the other person "Was it good for you?" There are much better questions that can open the door to a great relationship.

One of the questions that needs to be asked is:
What is the purpose of having sex?
One answer could be: To have children.

Yes, that is true, but don't stop there. We seem to have a lot more sex than we have children! There is a lot more to sex than just having children.

Since very few couples sit down (before they start having sex) and ask each other that question, problems can develop. If one person is doing it for a physical release while the other person believes they are doing it "to celebrate our love," the resulting conflict can certainly lead to hurt feelings and resentments. All behaviors have purpose for the person doing the behavior. All behaviors do not necessarily have the same purpose for other individuals, and herein lies the seeds of conflict.

To get couples to begin developing their communication skills, it is important to know that the purpose of having sex may vary from person to person and even from day to day with the same person. There is no right purpose for having sex. Nor, do you both have to have the same purpose for having sex. There will be no problem if you both understand that tonight you may each be doing it for different reasons and it is OK with both of you.

Over the years, I have listened to my clients and have developed a list of purposes for having sex.

1. Sex as a way to celebrate our love
2. Sex for the physical release, to relieve tension
3. Sex because she wants to give him something he wants
4. Sex to get pregnant and establish independence from her parents or to get welfare
5. Sex to avoid intimacy
6. Sex to avoid loneliness
7. Sex to safeguard fidelity and keep him in the relationship (If I don't give it to him, he will get it somewhere else.)
8. Sex because it feels good. Sex is the most fun you can have without laughing out loud
9. Sex as a way of avoiding conflict
10. Sex as a way to get affection
11. Sex as a way to get physical (skin to skin) contact
12. Sex to prove/confirm ones sexuality
13. Sex to increase self-esteem
14. Sex to mask anger (rape)
15. Sex for revenge

16. Sex motivated by boredom
17. Sex for dominance and control
18. Sex because of social or peer pressure
19. Sex as a distraction from depression
20. Sex as rebellion
21. Sex for atonement
22. Sex because of guilt
23. Sex because you are feeling sorry for the other person
24. Sex as ways of establishing ownership and/or that you are mine
25. Sex as a way of getting reassurance of your sexuality:
 - a. Women who have had hysterectomy or mastectomy
 - b. Men and women who use sex after a big fight as reassurance that the relationship is still OK
 - c. Older men whose sex drive is waning

There is no right answer when it comes to sex, just good communication. The better the communication, the better the sex.

Tonight, the question to ask each other is, "What is your purpose for having sex?"

The dare is, are you willing to risk being open and honest in your communications with your partner? Do you both have to have the same purpose for having sex? Are you willing to accept that your differences do not make wrong, they make interesting? Are you willing to risk rejection?

When you hear the word risk, many people think about loss, abandonment and pain. But without risk there is no gain. If you or your partner find that honesty is too painful and results in fights, then find a therapist who can help you both to listen to each other.

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