

Help for Problems of Sexuality

Julie Jurich, LMFT **Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist**

A woman who had been married several years said, “I’d like my husband to kiss me passionately“. I asked if she’d requested him to do it and she said, “No, if I have to ask then he must not really want to do it.”

She was not just hoping he could read her mind, she was also engaging in carrying on a myth about sexuality, namely if someone really loves you they’ll know what you want.

Another common myth is that once you are married or in a relationship, good sex just falls into place and you don’t have to work at it.

Portrayals of sexuality in the movies encourage this. ...She just fell into his arms, their lips melted together, etc. Never mind that there is a sink full of dirty dishes and your toddler is smearing toothpaste on the floor.

With thoughts like these it is not surprising that people have a difficult time bringing up the topic of sexuality when they visit their doctor’s office. Actually men and women experience sexual problems that need to be dealt with by a professional.

In a study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center about 43% of women and 30% of men experience sexual problems, such as lack of interest, inability to achieve orgasm and performance anxiety.*

Twenty-six percent of females said they regularly did not have orgasms and twenty-three percent said sex wasn’t pleasurable. Having orgasms and experiencing pleasure for women have to do with learning about their sexuality and this is often an area that has not been explored.

For men, the number one problem was persistent problems with climaxing too early, experienced by about one-third of those studied. Fourteen percent of men said they had no interest in sex and eight percent said they consistently derive no pleasure from sex.

Different age groups experienced more specific sexual problems. Men ages fifty to fifty-nine were three times more likely to experience erection problems and low sexual desire, as men ages eighteen to twenty-nine. Younger women who were more likely to be single and therefore to have had multiple partners and periodic spells of inactivity were also more likely to express lack of interest in sex, difficulty reaching orgasm or they experienced sex as not pleasurable. Only one out of ten men and one out of six women with sexual dysfunction said they had sought professional help.

Although the availability of Viagra has increased visits by men to their doctor's office, it doesn't mean all their relationship problems are solved. Some female partners frown on Viagra because they never cared much for intercourse or lost their enthusiasm over the years.

I think men are likely to hesitate about coming in to deal with sexual problems because they think men are supposed to be ready 24/7 and eager to have sex and when they do have problems they might think they're the only one who does. Besides that, they are supposed to be strong individuals who solve problems on their own.

Women avoid coming in to deal with their problems because they think sex isn't very important for them and if their partner also avoids talking about it the topic just might not get addressed.

There are options for addressing sexual issues. For one thing, it can be helpful just to know one is not alone after reading studies such as this. People who work on sexual issues in therapy do find they can successfully relate on an intimate level with their partners. Some have said they wished they had started earlier to address sexual problems.

* USA Today, Feb. 10, 1999