

MANAGING THE SEXUAL ASPECTS OF WHOLENESS

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Sexuality is a vital aspect of wellness as Whole Person Health. Like any other aspect it can be abused, to our detriment.

Here are some ways of understanding how sexuality can be “whole” and thus promote our wellness of body, mind, spirit and relationships. How we manage our sexuality is the result of *information, maturity, values* and *spiritual empowerment**. Thus, one’s own sex education, counselling, ethical decision-making and spiritual guidance will often be necessary.

I. SAFE SEX: The A, B, C and K of Sex!

Safe sex will enable sexual wholeness by avoiding HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. It will also avoid unwanted pregnancy, the trauma of infidelity, as well as most cases of persons being “used sexually”.

- **Abstain** as much as possible *outside of a lifelong committed relationship i.e. before it or after ending one*. This applies to while one is single, separated, divorced or widowed.
- **Be faithful** when in a lifelong committed relationship. (For religious persons this means marriage)
- Use a **Condom** *if you decide not to abstain*.
- **Know**: i) Know you and your partner’s status with regards to: HIV *infection* or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). ii) Always know your partners’ status with regards to: *fidelity*
-Always use a condom *if you don’t know any of these*

Abstinence and **Being faithful** are the safest. Outside of this, never neglect **Condoms**. Always **Know** your partner’s status re: STDs (including HIV) and their fidelity, is essential.

* This article has content useful to persons who are religious. For those who are not, general psychological principles still apply.

II. INFORMED, LOVING SEX

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For our sexuality to promote our wellness we must be informed about what is its purpose and about its relationship to love.

- **Understand *what “love” means.*** Love is not mainly “to get” comfort such as companionship, sex or being looked after. These only come as by-products! *Love is mainly “to give” and care for the wholeness of the other.* Attraction is part of romance, but love and its affection is what keeps romance alive. If each partner gives and cares - putting the other before self, then it will be a “win-win” and not a “win-lose” relationship. You both win. No one will lose out. Then companionship, sex, and being looked after (mutually) will come!
- **Understand the *differences between males and females. Read about this and learn from your partner and others.*** Let us not treat the other as if they are like us. Meet the gender related needs of your partner! This is what love and informed sex are about.
- **Discover the wonderful *place of sex in a lifelong committed relationship and make the best of it.***
 - Sex as *showing love and affection*
 - Sex for *building committed intimacy or closeness.*
 - Sex for *fulfilment of mind and spirit* as well as body
 - Sex as the possibility for *responsible procreation* (having children) in healthy persons of reproductive age

Would you agree that sex for *fulfilment of self* only without considering the other’s need as a priority, is individualistic and irresponsible?

Sex is a *gift and vocation* or calling from God to be used for His purpose of *loving Him and neighbour as self.* Its use is to build up the other while fulfilling one’s own well-being.

III. SEX AS A SERVANT, NOT MASTER

The healthy mature person “rules, or governs,” his or her sexuality and uses it for good. He or she doesn’t let sex rule him or her!

- **Discover sex as a “gift” and “vocation”.** How much can we agree that sex is a “gift” from God? It is a gift to be used as part of a “vocation” (or calling) from God for two to be in a solemnized lifelong committed relationship. Sex is not a ‘commodity’ to be used primarily to gratify oneself, to merely entertain or to gain power, money, influence, or as a commercial marketing tool. It is this use of sexuality that gives it power over us through uncontrolled temptation, addiction and regret. Sex is *to be used to build up* each other at the same time as gaining pleasure.
How can one achieve sexuality as a non-addictive gift and fulfilment?

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- **Discover being a “whole” and self-sufficient person**, whether one is in a sexual relationship or not. *That is, discover that one can have a fulfilled single life without necessarily being in a sexual relationship.* In other words we can discover being whole *inside* or *outside* and *before* a relationship. In this way we will avoid codependent relationships where one uses others to make them feel whole. What one needs is not to be *emotionally dependent* on others. At the same time no one is ever totally *independent of others*. Partners need instead to be *interdependent*: mutually supporting each other while as whole persons themselves. People who seek happiness primarily in a sexual relationship or who feel that they can never be happy without it are being codependent. They make themselves *open to being abused or becoming an abuser*.
- **Try Sublimation.** Sincere Christians are aware of their temptations. Nevertheless they believe that *depending on God’s power and guidance in prayer as well as being involved in a lot of healthy activities such as fellowship, sports and hobbies can enable abstinence while at the same time one is being whole and fulfilled.* *This is called sublimation.* Interestingly this spiritual path to honourable celibacy is a part of several world religions.

Sublimation also brings personal growth!

- If you are not married, celibacy is an adjustment to a deliberate lifestyle without sex *for positive reasons*
- See *celibacy through sublimation as a viable option in the fulfilled single life to enable abstinence* (the best form of safe sex)
- **Even in marriage, celibacy through sublimation may be unavoidably necessary at times**, such as, if ones spouse is ill or unavoidably overseas for a while. This celibacy, through sublimation will **prevent infidelity** and thus unsafe sex.

By the way, celibacy does not mean we allow ourselves to be unattractive or not to compliment the beauty or handsomeness of others! The celibate person can still admire and be admirable. The sexual person is still a sexual being.

IV. RESPECTFUL SEX

Without respect for the other and respect of self, sexuality can become sick and destroy our self confidence and dignity. Sex becomes unsafe and it will become our master.

- **Avoid being a victimiser or victim in an abusive or coercive relationship.** Give respect and demand it. Get professional help for either of these situations that may be happening to you.
- **Get help for sexual addiction.** Having sex just to please a habit demeans all who are involved.

- **Get help for *phobic attitudes or behaviours* in relation to sex.** To respect sex is to cherish it in an appropriate relationship and not to be afraid of it.
- **Be properly educated about the practical approaches** that will help both you and your partner get the best out of safe and “loving” sex. It is disrespectful not to do the best for the other as well as for one’s self.
- Rather than treating sex as a goal on one hand, or as something cheap, inferior or a necessary evil on the other, **see sex as an aspect of the love, attentiveness, tenderness, and respect that will help you to encourage the physical, mental, spiritual and social development of your partner. This is how sexuality promotes wholeness.**

CONCLUSION

Sexuality is our wonderful *friend* if it is safe, informed and loving, if it is our servant and respectful. Unsafe, uninformed and selfish sex, sex as master and disrespectful sex is our *enemy*. It will injure.. It will open up our bodies to killers such as HIV/AIDS. It will open up our bodies, mind and spirit to abandonment, emotional hurt, greater loneliness, and grief. Guilt and loss of self esteem can also result.

Remember, with God’s help and the help of others, “all things”, including healthy sexuality, are possible!

- How do you feel about the understanding of sexual wholeness?
- Perhaps you could use a journal to write out your own philosophy of sexuality that promotes wholeness of mind, body, spirit, and relationships.
- What do the significant others in your relationship, home, wider family, church, and workplace, etc. feel?
- What literature can you use to inform yourself further?

Have a happy and healthy sexuality!

Reviewed and edited June 2024