

How to Deepen Your Relationship with Touch and Sex

“Passion comes easily in the early days of a relationship. Almost every word, glance and touch vibrates with lust. It’s nature’s way of drawing us together. But after the captivating rush of desire, what is the place of sex in a relationship? Besides pulling us in, can sex also help to keep us together to build a lasting relationship? Emphatically, yes. In fact, good sex is a potent bonding experience. The passion of infatuation is just the hors d’oeuvre. Loving sex in a long-term relationship is the entree.”
Dr. Sue Johnson in Hold Me Tight

Much of what we hear in popular culture and from some self help gurus is that passion is a passing sensation, which fades as a relationship matures. The high intensity of sexual desire that characterizes the beginning of your relationship is thought to inevitably diminish with time. Unfortunately, too much emphasis has been placed on the mechanics of sex: positions, techniques, and toys to enhance physical bliss.

When couples feel secure in their relationship, then emotional connection creates great sex and great sex deepens the emotional connection. For emotionally accessible, responsive and engaged couples, sex becomes intimate play where sexual needs, deepest joys and vulnerabilities are shared. Sexually satisfied couples are truly ‘making love’.

Happy couples attribute only 15-20% of their happiness to a satisfying sex life. On the other hand, unhappy couples believe that 50-70% of their unhappiness is due to an unsatisfying sex life. (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003). The reason sex is such a big issue with unhappy couples is because it is the first thing affected when a relationship begins to falter. It is not usually the real problem, but more of a symptom. It is a bit like the “canary in the mine” warning a couple of danger. It signals that the couple do not feel emotionally safe with each other. The security of our emotional connection defines our relationship in bed as well as out.

The most common physical sexual problems are low sex drive for women and premature ejaculation for men. This is not surprising. When women are unhappy in relationships they typically feel alone, emotionally disconnected. If they are seeking reassurance that they are valued for who they are as a person and do not receive it they shut down sexually. When men are unhappy, they often focus more on their sexual performance and their own release rather than focussing on pleasing her. When she senses this, it can make her feel more alone and sex becomes less pleasurable for her. This reinforces his sense of inadequacy, and the sexual issues continue, increase and then are seen as ‘the’ problem for a couple. Most often, when couples can create a secure emotional connection, their sex life improves automatically.

Deepening Your Connection through Touch and Sex

If you or your partner is not feeling emotionally secure and safe in your relationship, it will not be possible to have a constructive conversation about improving the quality of your sex life. I have written in previous articles about how to create a greater sense of security by [learning how to stop destructive conversations](#) and [how to de-escalate conflict](#). [Appreciating the vulnerabilities of your partner](#) is also a prerequisite for deeper conversations. For those of you in more secure relationships, you must have the courage to reveal your own deeper desires and needs and have [the courage to ask your partner for the love you need](#). (Click on the links to find these articles on my website.)

If you and your partner are feeling emotionally secure, then below are a few suggestions to deepen your connection through touch and sex. Some of these may be very hard to do. Perhaps more attention on touch than sex would be good place to start. Remember to stay open, responsive and engaged as you have these conversations. Try these and have some fun!

1. With your partner, recall a time in your relationship when sex was really satisfying. The person who tends to initiate sex less goes first. Share the story of this pleasant and happy experience with your partner in as much detail as possible. Talk about what you think made it so memorable. Then the other person shares a different story.
2. Have a conversation about "If I was perfect in bed." One person begins by saying: "If I were perfect in bed, I could, I would _____, and then you would feel more _____." Share at least three responses with each other.
3. Think of all the ways touch can show up in your relationship. For example, holding hands while out together, a spontaneous hug while making dinner together, giving a shoulder or back massage or brushing her hair. Take turns telling your partner your favourite nonsexual ways of being touched.

Touch can be enjoyable in and of itself as a way of connecting emotionally. It does not always have to lead to sex. Spontaneity, anticipation, surprise can create the right mood. Touch is a powerful expression of love. Sex can then be simply for fun, as way of getting close, a straight forward release, a way to deal with stress, a route to romance, a place of tender connection, or a burst of passion.