

# Sexual Communication

*Talking about the hard stuff*

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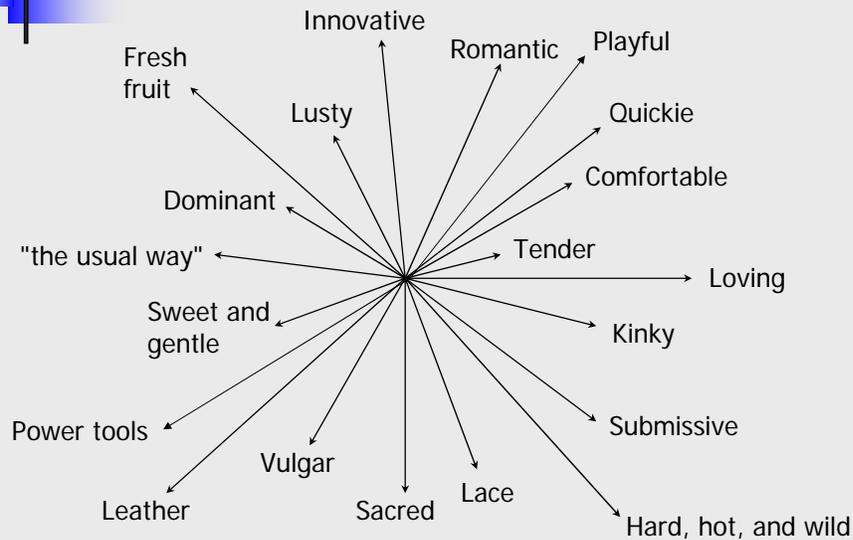
## Good sex is ..

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*..when both people feel good about..*

	Before	During	After
Yourself			
What you do			
Your partner			

## Our Full Range



## Good Sex . . . one more time

Good sex is when *people* interact and relate, not just *genitals*; in which deceit and coercion play no part; in which what's between your ears is as important as what's between your legs; in which you can plan for sex and talk about it before, during, or after the actual events; in which you can change directions or stop at any point. The goals of this intimate model of sex are pleasure, closeness, and self- and partner-enhancement, not performance or conquest.

--Bernie Zilbergeld

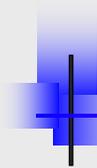


## How do we get there?

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It's *not*...

- A beautiful body
- High sex drive
- Straight, white teeth
- Great sex techniques
- It's our ability to *communicate well* about a sensitive topic within a complex relationship
- It's our understanding of *how people connect* in the complex arena of sexuality



## When It's Difficult

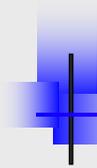
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- Initiating sex
  - Flirting, intention, transitions
- During sex
  - Directions, requests, feedback, fantasies
- Turn on's and turn off's
  - Sexual fantasies, preferences, hygiene, weight
- The relationship as reflected in sex
  - Desirability, depth of love, mutual respect, meanings
- Addressing sexual issues
  - Desire differences, pregnancy, sex after childbirth, aging, medication side effects, illness, dysfunctions, trauma, BC
- Talking to kids, parents, friends
- Talking to physicians or therapists

## Your Family Messages

- How many conversations about sex did you have in your family? Content? Tone?
- Who was conspicuously absent or silent from talks about sex?
- What was the response to your questions about sex?
- How was nudity handled?
- Did you see/hear glimpses of adult affection or passion?
- How was puberty handled? Avoided? Celebrated? Ridiculed?
- Were there rules around sexuality? Dating? Clothes?
- Were there things labeled as "forbidden"? Eg, movies, magazines, dancing?
- Were you ever caught playing doctor, strip poker, with erotica, or masturbating?
- Were you ever caught kissing or touching your date?

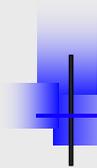




## Prevalent Myths about Sex

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- Sex should be natural and spontaneous .. without planning or talking
  - we should intuitively know what our partner likes
- Sex = intercourse, and the goal of sex is orgasm
- Sex is a performance; pleasing my partner is what counts
- There's a right way and a wrong way to "do it", to want it, and to experience it
- Sex requires an erection
  - sex is centered around a hard penis and what's done with it; size matters
- All touching is sexual and will / should lead to sex
- Partners should climax together in one mind-bending orgasm
- Sexual fantasies predict sexual behavior or preferences
- Sex implies love and commitment



## More Myths

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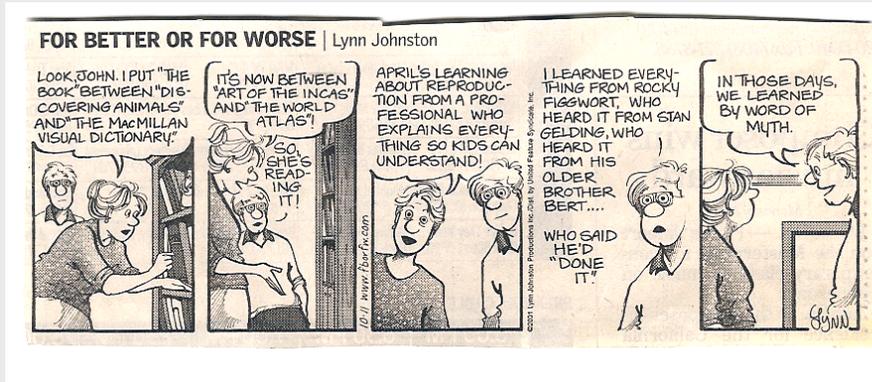
### *Myths about Men*

- Men only want one thing
- They'll do anything to get it
- A real man is always ready
- Men should be active and initiate
- Men teach women everything
- A real man is so good at sex he'll make the Earth move .. or at the very least knock her socks off!

### *Myths about Women*

- Women should reach orgasm through intercourse alone
- Women are much less sexual than men ("Nice girls aren't sexual")
- Women should know how to give good blow jobs ... and want to
- A (near) perfect body is a prerequisite for good sex

## Myths and Messages in the Media



## Impact of Myths and Messages

America has a message about sex, and that message is none too subtle. Anyone who watches a movie, reads a magazine, or turns on the television has seen it. It says that almost everyone but you is having endless, fascinating, varied sex.

**The public image of sex in America bears virtually no relationship to the truth.** The public image consists of myths, and they are not harmless, for they elicit at best unrealistic and at worst dangerous misconceptions of what people do sexually. The resulting false expectations can badly effect self-esteem, marriages, relationships, and even physical health.

-- *Sex in America*, 1994



## Guides for Good Communication

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- **Safety!**
- Good tone and timing
  - No sneak attacks
- Convey acceptance and encouragement rather than shame, blame and criticism
- Be direct and specific rather than vague and global
  - Avoid "fill in the blanks"
- Recap facts and feelings
- Check out meanings rather than make assumptions
- Curious, not furious
  - *Tell me more about that*
- I- vs. You-messages
  - DELETE "You always..." and "You never..."
- One topic at a time



## Guides for Good *Sexual* Communication

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- Acknowledge influence of family messages
- Acknowledge influence of cultural myths
  - Expectations
  - Gender roles
- Acknowledge discomfort / confront fears
  - Surfacing personal secrets
  - Being criticized, judged, or found inadequate
  - Hurting others' feelings
- Acknowledge your ignorance
- Cultivate a shared vocabulary
- Ask for what you want
- Communicate your willingness and desire to communicate
- Use all the channels



## Flirting and Seduction

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### Some Definitions of Flirting

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- making love without serious intentions
- to play at courtship
- a sudden, jerky, brisk movement
- to spring or dart
- to play or toy with something, like the opposite sex
- flighty, giddy behavior; frivolity
- a love affair that is not serious
- casual conversation with a romantic spark
- pert young hussy
- quick, not smooth or polished
- naughty or suspect



## Our Definition of Flirting

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- A special language of touch, body position, innuendo, voice tone, and eye contact that conveys interest or preference
- Keeping things on simmer, being playful
  - Adds a layer of lightness or fun to interactions
  - Couples flirt to keep their sensual relationship alive, even if only in the background
- A way to connect, to draw closer
- A way to signal a desired shift or transition
  - From conversational to sensual
  - From sensual to sexual



## The Etiquette of Flirting

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**RULE 1:** Invite without being demanding

**RULE 2:** Leave your partner feeling comfortable and complimented, even if they say "No"

**RULE 3:** A continual series of invitations and responses

- A positive response is only an agreement to flirt a little more

**RULE 4:** Invest in the process, without attachment to a particular outcome

**RULE 5:** Choose a level likely to be successful and comfortable for both



## Levels of Flirting

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**LEVEL 1:** Showing basic respect, thoughtfulness, attention, consideration

- Be nice to each other...the "Nordstrom approach"

**LEVEL 2:** Displaying affection, genuine liking, and/or love

- Research demonstrates that knowing your partner likes you has a positive effect on the relationship...DUH!

**LEVEL 3:** Being playful and/or romantic

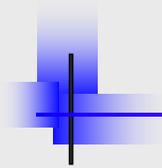
**LEVEL 4:** Being suggestive or seductive



## 4 Levels of Email

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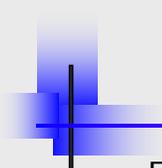
- **SUBJECT: Need groceries**
  - Could you pick up some milk and eggs on the way over tonight? It would help a bunch. Thx.
- **SUBJECT: Need groceries**
  - Could you pick up some milk and eggs on the way over tonight? How are you holding up? You said it might be a tough day. Love you.
- **SUBJECT: Eggs and dates**
  - I need some milk and eggs. Could you get some?
  - I've also been thinking about our upcoming date night. Really looking forward to having some time ALONE with you. XOXOX
- **SUBJECT: I have needs**
  - I need some milk and eggs. Could you pick some up on the way home?
  - When you get here, I have other needs to discuss. Don't dawdle. Can't wait. Add whipped cream to list.



## Talking With Each Other

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- What are some of the ways I flirt or connect with you that you like? (Take turns)
- What are some *new* ways I could flirt or connect with you that you might like? (Take turns)
- What are some flirts I've done that you consider a 1 or 2? A 3 or 4? (calibrate your scales)



## Some Final Thoughts

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- Flirting is **not** a way to maneuver your partner into something they do not want
  - It *is* a way to cultivate mutual desire
- Flirting is **not** a substitute for addressing unresolved couple issues
- Acknowledge your partners' effort
  - You can say "No" to an invitation and still say "Yes" to the relationship
  - Do your best to hear refusal rather than rejection
  - Don't miss the little repair or connection attempts
  - Be generous with positive feedback
- The process is the **real** outcome
  - Could end up honoring your partner's desire to be alone

## Sample Flirts

Smiling

*Bump each other affectionately*

How did that presentation go?

*Terms of endearment*

*Post-Its in surprise places*

Taking time to hug and kiss goodbye or hello

You have such pretty eyes / hair / smile.

Creating your own special rituals

eCards

Voice mail messages

### Chocolate

*Affectionate touch in passing or while talking*

*While we drive, I put my hand in his lap...well, mostly in his lap.*

Compliments or daily appreciations

Private jokes, private vocabulary

*The 6 second kiss and the 15 second hug*

Eye contact while talking

*Holding hands as we go to sleep*

## Thank you!

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