

MARITAL COUNSELLING

SEXUAL FULFILMENT IN MARRIAGE

I. The Purpose of our Sexual Relationships

God created us to have sexual pleasure. Procreation is not the only reason for this relationship. It is also for pleasure. It is a means of relating to each.

"For married people, frequent sexual intercourse, like the caresses and endearments of which it should be the climax, is healthful and right and promotes happiness and morality."

John R. Rice

II. The Problems of our Sexual Relationships

There are several problems which are common in a marriage relationship. Masters and Johnson of the Reproductive Biology Research Foundation estimates that at least 50% of all married couples have some difficulties which are sexual in nature. These range from minor to major in their scope.

1. Expecting too much from the sexual relationship.
2. The woman expecting to reach an orgasm every time she has sexual intercourse.
3. Considering sexual intercourse as only for procreation.
4. Using "sex" as the only method of displaying affection.
5. Using "sex" as a weapon to get what you want.
6. Seeing sexual fulfilment as something wrong or dirty in the bond of marriage.
7. Using the bond of marriage as a license for perversion of sex (anything goes attitude).
8. Not discussing parenthood and birth control (can create frigidity).
9. Overlooking the need for physical cleanliness (our nose is sensitive to undesired odours).
10. Overlooking the need to be sensitive to each other's needs as well as to the correct timing and approach.
11. Overlooking the fact that you'll still have to battle sexual temptation (impure thoughts, enticement, etc.)
12. Problems with the husband's premature ejaculation.
13. Problems with the wife being pre-orgasmic.
14. Reaping problems carried over from the early part of the relationship as well as the way an individual was raised.

II. The Problems of our Sexual Relationships (Contd.)

The initial lack of sex or the gradual withdrawal of it from a marriage will create negative relations. Many conflicts surround such things as frequency, the place any sexual activity occurs, position, or the type of sex play. The common sexual problems can be grouped into the following four main categories. From Norman Wright "Marital Counselling."

A. Emotional - A healthy sexual relationship can be blocked because of worry, fear, anger, or even hatred. On the other hand, feelings of love, worth and affection can enhance the response. Therefore, feelings and attitudes play an important role in a healthy sexual relationship.

B. Intellectual - Even at times when sexuality is so openly discussed, ignorance abounds. Most people do not want to admit their lack of knowledge when they believe everyone else is well informed. People can be misinformed in understanding such things as sexual response, anatomy, male/female uniqueness, or love making techniques. Every couple is different in what pleases in what displeases them.

C. Psychological - Fear of being hurt, becoming pregnant, or even being unable to perform, along with depression, stress, guilt, or disgust are just a few of the common blockages. Past experiences, early childhood training, or even a negative environment can be contributing factors. Some suggest that anxiety is the common denominator of all sexual dysfunctions.

D. Physical - Illnesses such as hepatitis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, as well as heart and lung diseases can all decrease sexual desire. Another common cause is that of drugs. Alcohol has two basic effects. It releases inhibitions, but it also acts as a sedative which lessens the sensations and responses. Barbiturates have also been proven to be impede a healthy sexual relationship.

III. Ten Objective Questions to Ask

1. Are you in love with the body or the person you are married to?
2. Do you have, along with the feeling of pleasure, a feeling of reverence for your partner?
3. Do you care more about the other person than you do about yourself.
4. Are you willing to take the responsibility and accept it joyfully?
5. Do you enjoy being with each other so much that it hurts to be separated a long time?
6. Do you enjoy each other without the constant need for physical expression?
7. Do you have a protective attitude toward your partner?
8. Do you feel that you belong to each other?
9. Do you understand each other?

IV. The Secret of Staying in Love (by Dr. Ed Wheat)

The secret of staying in love is found in one very powerful word: **INTIMACY**. Intimacy (derived from a Latin word "*intimus*", meaning "*inmost*") refers to the state of being most private or most personal in a relationship. It depicts a special quality of emotional closeness between two people in which both are constantly alert and responsive to fluctuations of feeling and to well-being of each other. It will demand time and a conscious effort by both partners.

Dr. Helen Kaplin said, "*A high degree of intimacy between two lovers or spouses contributes to the happiness and emotional stability of both.*" She warns that "*without intimate relationships, we tend to get lonely and become depressed.*" This can begin to happen according to Dr. William Appleton, in the first year of marriage. Here are some of the strands that make up the bond of intimacy between a husband and wife:

- physical touching of affectionate, non-sexual nature
- shared feelings, imparted secrets
- open communication and honesty
- intellectual agreement on major issues
- spiritual harmony
- similar values held
- genuine understanding
- mutual confidence, abiding trust
- signs of love freely given and received
- mutual responsibility and caring

These strands can be pieced together with time, your will, knowledge and patience. God chose one year (Deuteronomy 24:5) of concentrated togetherness for newlyweds in order to establish the patterns of intimacy that would last a lifetime.

This is a very serious matter. After surveying 100 marriage counsellors across the country the former president of the American Association of a Marriage and a Family Counsellors, Dr. Frederick G. Humphrey, stated that nearly half the cases brought to marriage counsellors involved adultery. The two main areas that were cited as contributing factors were deprivation at home and attractions away from home.

It was also found that marital affairs were common during mid life age even for people who had strong convictions. The first reason was that the grip of passion could not hold reasoning intact. The second reason, was that the wife had become so overly responsible as a mother that the everyday trials and difficulties took precedent over maintaining her appearance or tending to her husband's needs. Here is also where the husband can help by doing everyday chores and also taking his turn with the children.

V. Prescription for a Superb Marriage

If you want the best marriage, you must give your partner the best you have:

Blessing
Edifying
Sharing
Touching

A. Blessing - The Bible commands us to practise blessing each other. It comes from the Greek word "*eulogia*". It is derived from two words "*eu*" meaning "*well*" and "*logos*" meaning "*word*." We must learn to speak well even if our fiancée's speech at the present time is harsh, critical or insulting (I Peter 3:10). You can bless in three ways:

1. Simply by doing things.
2. Showing thankfulness and appreciation.
3. Requesting God's favour through prayer.

B. Edifying - This word means to build someone up. It can be done by cheering one another up and by increasing each other's self-worth.

"Make thy love larger than my worth"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The word "*edifying*" is derived from the Latin word "*aedes*" which means "*a hearth or fireplace*." A fireplace has an emotional association. It is a place of cosy warmth with loving relationship. The Bible encourages us to edify one another (Romans 14:19; 15:2; I Thessalonians 5:11).

A husband edifies by praising his wife. A wife edifies through her loving response. The Greek word for "*edify*" is "*oikodomeo*". It is derived from two words "*oikos*" which means "*family home or house*" and "*demo*" which means "*build*".

C. Sharing - This could touch all areas of your life -- your time, activities, interests, concerns, ideas, innermost thoughts, spiritual walk, family objectives and goals. Sharing will demand that you give of yourself and listen to your partner.

V. Prescription for a Superb Marriage (Contd.)

D. Touching - God made us with hundreds of thousands of microscopic nerve endings in our skin to sense and benefit from a loving touch. It can calm our fears, soothe pain, bring us comfort, or give us the blessed satisfaction of emotional security.

The reason we don't touch each other more is because of our western society. It frowns on or ignores touching apart from sex. Touching can be done simply by snuggling, cuddling, sleeping close together (once married) and sharing through a simple touch.

Several books that cover the topic of the sexual relation within marriage that are recommended reading are:

“The Act of Marriage” - by Tim and Beverley LaHaye

“Intended for Pleasure” - by Dr. Ed Wheat