5 LANGUAGES

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5 Sex Languages
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INTRODUCTION

In your hands you are holding a roadmap to sexual pleasure for you and the one you love.

We often try to sexually express love to one another the way we want to be loved without understanding our partner usually has an entirely different sex language. This can leave at least one partner feeling less than satisfied. In response, the other partner will often try harder and harder to please the unsatisfied partner—still using his or her own sex language.

When two people keep giving love in their own sex language, it can lead to frustration and a lack of fulfillment that can continue for years. (Sadly, some couples persist in this for decades.) This frustration or lack of fulfillment can begin to poison one or both partner's overall level of satisfaction in the marriage.

What if ...the misunderstanding, frustration, aggravation, and dissatisfaction all went away?

What if ...each partner was handed a roadmap for bringing incredible, predictable sexual pleasure to his or her loved one throughout the relationship? Wouldn't such a manual be totally worth your time to read? Well, you're in luck. This is what awaits you in this book.

The first step on this journey is to understand that your sexuality is as unique to you as your loved one's sexuality is to him or her. With that foundational belief in place, you can continue your journey of discovery into your loved one's sex language. His or her sexual language is almost certainly different from your own, which can allow you to stretch, sexually. And when you do, your partner can have more sexual pleasure. Even over decades, the new sexual compatibility you forge will strengthen your marriage bond in amazing, incomprehensible ways.

This book is not a manual of positions and erogenous zones. There are many books on that. And though we will discuss those, they are not the focus of this book. Instead, our goal is to teach you ways to make sexuality a strength and how your partner desires to be made love to, guided by the knowledge of his or

her sex language.

Once you learn your partner’s sex language and “speak it” fluently, you will be on the road to a lifetime of sexual pleasure.

Doug Weiss, Ph. D.

1. FUN

There is no way I could start a book on the five sex languages with a general introduction. If you are like me, you would quickly flip through all that information—as meaningful as it might be—and get right to the first sex language to see if it is the language of you or your partner.

This book will do much more for you than help you identify your sex language, as well as that of your partner. As you read through this book you will gain knowledge and insight that will help you stop arguing about sexual frequency, agree with what's acceptable in your bedroom, and identify roadblocks that could be keeping you from an awesome sex life. My encouragement is to devour the first five chapters, and then assimilate the other principles. After you have done that, you will have quite possibly the best sex of your life.

It is important to understand that sex languages are innate with you and your partner. The object of the chapters ahead is not to teach you strategies to make your partner more like you, or change his or her sex language to yours. It is to teach you how to accept and work with his or her sex language to help you bring your partner greater sexual pleasure.

Each chapter in this book that focuses on one of the five sex languages is broken down into three sections. The first section describes the healthy version of the sex language. The second section of each chapter describes the immature or unhealthy version of the sex language. The final section in each chapter gives tips for application to your sex life.

Healthy

The fun sex language is just that: fun! For the person whose sex language is fun, pleasure during the sexual encounter includes fun. The partner whose loved one's sex language is fun has a variety of ways to insure his or her partner a great sex life.

Spontaneity

It is my observation over twenty-five years of counseling couples, that those

whose primary sexual language is fun will resist any attempt to structure or plan sexual intimacy if they sense it will not be fun. Those whose sex language is fun want to have sex in the creative moment of now, or soon.

> “Those who sexually express love through the sex language of fun believe the best sex is unplanned and in the moment.”

Spontaneity itself is symbolic and has great meaning to the person with the fun sex language. The fact that their partner is thinking of them in a sexual way in the moment—whatever moment that might be—is by itself fun and pleasurable to them.

Location

Those with the fun sex language enjoy the many different variables of sexuality. One of these variables is locations for sex. To fun sex language people, sex in various locations is awesome. They may well relish the difference and creativity of having sex in a tent outside, in a hotel, on a beach, in a closet, at the office, or even in a car they are test-driving.

To those motivated by the sex language of fun, engaging in sex in different locations tells them their partner is thinking of them in a sexual manner “everywhere,” and that they want to create a new, fun sexual encounter. Even if the sexual activity itself is similar to what they do at home, it *means a lot more* to the fun sex language person that it took place in a different location.

Different

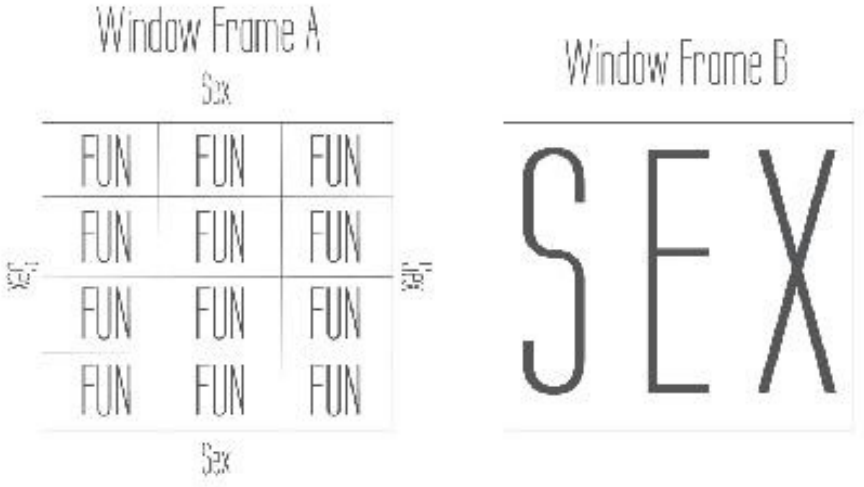
Those innately motivated by the fun sex language are also titillated by different. For them, engaging in different types of sexual activity is not about reaching a higher or different level of orgasm. It is about having fun with different sexual acts.

The variety in sex they engage in isn’t about seeking pleasure for themselves, but more in the spirit of, “We should try _____ just for fun.” The fun sex language person is more open to starting sex in one position, and then trying

other positions or behaviors (sexual or other), to achieve orgasm.

The window frame graphics below can help you quite a bit, especially if fun is not your sex language. For the fun sex language person the window frame looks like Window Frame A. For others, sex can look like Window Frame B.

For the person motivated by the fun sexual language, sex is part of the fun, but not the totality of it. For these, fun is the open window frame. Sex makes up the window of many panes. Others think fun is the fun, and not that fun is the fun sex is in.



Look at these graphics to visualize how two people who love each other madly can look at the same thing so differently. The fun sex language person sees sex almost like a fly views the world: many facets of the same image. Others might just see the same thing as one whole image: the image is fun and sex is part of the fun.

Neither way of seeing sex is right or wrong. It just is what it is.

Later on, I will address how to accept the reality of your partner's difference in sex language. However, I thought it would be helpful to see how a fun sex language person sees sexuality.

Creativity

You might be thinking, *isn't different the same as creative?* If so, fun may not be your primary sex language.

Different is exactly that. It means trying a different sex act or a variant of it. Creativity involves bringing other elements—movement, different pacing, verbal stimulation, and more—into an already familiar sex act.

The fun sexual language person might want to bring honey, whip cream, body paint, feathers, lotions, and more into sexual activity. The variety of bringing something creative into the activity is very significant for the fun sexual language person.

When you bring desired creativity to your sexual partner, it means you thought of them before sexual activity begins. You thought he or she might want to try x, y or z. By engaging in sexual activity in creative ways, you make it not only unique, but fun, which makes it very special for him or her. Fun and sex together are amazing for the fun sex language person.

I have just one caution here for you if fun is not your sex language: Creativity is not required every time you have a sexual encounter with your fun sex language partner. Just understand that to help your partner have a great time with you sexually, creativity can be very helpful.

“When you bring desired creativity to your sexual partner, it means you thought of them before sexual activity begins.”

Experimenting

The Fun Sexual Language Person may be open to experiment sexually but for the purpose of having fun. They have to be them and not disconnected from themselves.

The Fun Sexual Language Person will be up for sexual experimenting if it sounds like fun. Fun is the value, not just pure experimenting. We will get to them in a little bit. With all experimenting make sure both adults are willfully connecting (not being pressured). Being pressured will not feel like fun and resentment may occur.

If you’re going to experiment with a Fun Sex Language Person a great idea is to

ask them for several ideas that they might think might be fun. Usually they will have a few of these floating around at any moment.

Pleasure

The fun sex language person finds great pleasure in combining fun with sex. The fun is the bigger window. As with all five of the sex languages, the combination of primary sex language and sex maximizes sexual encounters with his or her partner.

In the case of the fun sexual language person, fun with sexual activity on a regular basis (not necessarily every time) allows them to experience heightened sexual pleasure. The pleasure comes from the fun.

Immature

Evry sex language has a healthy, mature expression, and an unhealthy, immature expression, to varying degrees, as on a continuum. In Western culture there is far too little teaching on genuine, relationally healthy sexuality. Therefore, from our teenage years onward, many of us are exposed to sexual images and information from the most unhealthy and least relationally focused sources.

This information then becomes harmful, and can actually limit or damage our sexuality and how we express it. When this occurs, our sex language can be hijacked and misapplied, preventing us from getting our sex language needs met optimally.

In the next few pages I will share with you some issues faced by immature fun sex language people. In these pages and throughout the book, I will share principles and practices I have used effectively to help thousands of men and women move from less functional or object sex to having the absolute best sex of their lives, relationally.

Selfish

Wherever you see immaturity, you will see selfishness at work. Maturity allows one the *genius* of being able to equally think of others and oneself at the same time, regardless of the subject.

When you are immature, your sex language becomes a demand on your partner instead of an invitation to learn about you and your sexuality. This selfish “it’s about me” attitude often permeates the marriage or relationship, not just the couple’s sex life.

“ When you are immature, your sex language becomes a demand on your partner instead of an invitation to learn about you and your sexuality.”

Risk-Taking

The immature fun sex language person will misinterpret the desire for fun for a desire to add risk to sexual activity with his or her partner. It is true that risk can heighten the chemical response to the brain when combined with sex. However, the immature fun sex language partner is willing to go beyond fun and safety for his or her partner, and move the bar to call risk fun.

Risk is exactly the opposite of fun. Fun can be experienced very safely, without risk of harming or exposing one’s partner to shame. Risk, regardless of how small or large, inherently exposes one or both partners to potentially lose something. Risk can involve physical, sexual, or emotional harm. It can involve exposing one’s partner in a manner that is not fun for him or her.

One example of loss is when one partner comes to believe his selfish partner doesn’t have his back, sexually. The seeds of that belief can grow like a vine and potentially strangle the marriage or relationship.

The immature fun sex language person is willing to involve other people, real or online, in sexual behavior under the guise of getting his or her risk needs met. They seem to give little thought to the fact that they are leaving the partner vulnerable to embarrassment, disease, or financial devastation.

Often, the immature fun sex language person uses coercion, anger, silence, or pouting to manipulate his or her partner into risky behavior. Even if the partner does oblige, he or she might feel disrespected and resentful for doing so, which can violate trust and undermine the relationship.

Any or all of these can be characteristic of the person motivated by the fun sex language who is immature in his or her sexuality.

Illegal Behaviors

Farther down toward the end of the continuum of risk is illegal behavior. This person may ask to have sex in a public place where it is illegal to do so, which could have other consequences for one or both partners. In the name of different or creative, immature fun sex language people could be more willing to participate in illegal sexual service, though it can damage them and their marriage.

The immature fun sex language person might also engage in voyeurism, exhibitionism, frotteurism, or other types of illegal behavior to “scratch the itch” produced by their misunderstanding of their sex language.

Demanding

An immature fun sexual language person will often demand compliance with his or hers sexual ideas. The invitation, “Hey, let’s try this...” becomes, “You will do this ...or else!” If the partner doesn’t do whatever thing the immature person demands, he or she will threaten with some type of hell to pay. He or she does this to whittle down and wear out the unwilling partner, and to move him or her toward capitulation, promising that once he or she complies, the shaming, name-calling, anger, or silence will stop.

This doesn’t work. As soon as you actually do what this person wants, he or she will want it again or issue yet another “creative” demand you must do to prove you “truly love” him or her (or make some similarly manipulative statement).

I know a man who bullied his wife into sexual behavior involving another man. The man finally got his wife drunk and the act occurred. Though she was damaged by this sexual experience in spirit and in soul, he would not stop bullying her, demanding that she be “open-minded” and try it again. This goes back to the selfishness that is so much a part of sexual immaturity.

Controlling

Those whose sex language is fun, who are also immature, will often be very controlling inside and outside the bedroom. They know the buttons to push that create dominance for them, whether it be anger, rejection, silence, sleeping in the other bedroom, or any combination of these and others.

They often use their partner's goodness, naivety, or sincerity of love as weapons against them. They do this to control and/or coerce their partner into participating into what he or she considers risky or undesired behavior.

Like any bully, once you give in to his or her tactics—whether anger, financial control, or threatening no sex— and do what he or she demands, the bullying only gets worse. The more you give in, the longer and harder the path will be to reclaim your sexual voice in the marriage or relationship.

Dominating/Humiliating

An immature fun sexual language person will not value a soul, a being, or a person more than his or her desire to experiment sexually. I have seen this immature desire for different, creative, and fun sexual activity put people on a path to risky, unsafe, and inhumane activity.

Regardless of which side you are on, to humiliate a soul during sexual activity, or to allow yourself to be humiliated during sexual activity can cause one to disregard the soul of the other as irrelevant. The immature fun sex language person is either part of the script or writes the script, while his or her partner plays a role or becomes an object—not a person. To this immature person, people are not people, but things to manipulate or control to some end.

"Regardless of which side you are on, to humiliate a soul during sexual activity, or to allow yourself to be humiliated during sexual activity can cause one to disregard the soul of the other as irrelevant."

The difference here is that the immature has little to no regard for the partner. The healthy fun sexual language person would consider the boundaries of safety and the personhood of his or her partner. He or she would play within those

boundaries or have a healthy conversation with his or her partner about the limitations in his or her sexuality.

There are several reasons I write about the healthy and immature in these sex language chapters. First, I definitely want everyone reading this to have the best sex life possible for them in their marriage or relationship. The second reason I write about both is so that if one person (or both) is sexually immature, he or she will understand how this is limiting his or her sexuality.

For over two decades, I have seen tears and smiles as couples in my office take the amazing journey of learning and accepting one another's sex languages. Life, like sex, is about growing. As you read an area you need to grow in, that is great. Often in my life, I have been given information in an area in which I needed to grow ...but only grew in that area when I was willing to do so.

So relax as you as you walk this journey on your sexuality and learn. It makes no difference whether that road is smooth or bumpy, but all the difference that you stay on it.

Application

If you have a fun sex language, that is great. Knowing your sex language can change your marriage or relationship, and even your life. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Accept that this is your sex language or the sex language of your partner. Don't fight it. Don't wish it were different. Just move toward acceptance.

2. Be realistic with your expectations of yourself and your partner's participation. Remember, your partner's sex language is likely different from yours, and you will be trying to honor one another. Be patient, graceful, and forgiving.

3. Remember, the goal of *5 Sex Languages* is not that your sexual activity be in your sex language sex every time, all the time. That would be unrealistic and you would only express one-sided sexuality. However, at times, you and your partner can make honoring one another's sex language the objective of some of your sexual encounters.

If you have fun as your sex language, take some time with your partner to communicate what might be fun for you both, sexually.

To do this, get out a few sheets of paper and write each of the following headings on a separate sheet:

Spontaneity
Location
Different
Creativity
Experimenting

This is an exercise for you both to participate in since your mutual sexuality is, well, mutual. I recommend you both brainstorm five to ten ideas each to move both of your brains toward realizing the goal of having fun. Both of your creativity will be ignited in this brainstorming session. Some ideas will be easy to incorporate, while others will be more elaborate (a bed full of roses). Make the most of being sexual with the partner who has fun as a sexual language.

Out of these brainstorming sessions will come more than just a lot of fun ideas for sexual activity together. You will also feel a great sense of sexual acceptance from your partner who has been looking for a language or paradigm by which to express his or her sexuality. Also, you will reignite that sense of sexual teamwork that couples often lose over time. By itself, this reenergized teamwork can energize you both to have a much more amazing sexual life than you ever had before!

2. DESIRE

It is possible that one’s sex language is formed out of one’s sexual history, psychological journey, or independent of all that, simply innate. Even if innate, sex languages are uniquely expressed by each person. This is important to understand.

On your journey to discover and accelerate your energies into your partner’s sex language, you might be tempted to make it make sense to you. I caution you here: This often ends in failure and frustration. Even men and women with a healthy perspective misunderstand their partner’s sl

In most cases your grid (set idea of how things should be) will not match up with your partner’s sex language. That is exactly why it is important, as an adult, to accept your partner’s sex language as opposed to trying to fit it into or change it to match your grid. Especially in marriage, you must view your partner’s sex language as one you will explore and enjoy for decades—one in which you will become more proficient and expert over the years.

Recovery circles share a popular saying which is the opening of “The Serenity Prayer”: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.” This wisdom is important to embrace to keep from pathologizing, demonizing, disliking, being frustrated by, or worse, rejecting and not enjoying your partner’s sex language.

The desire sex language is perhaps the most absolutely delicious sex language, once fully understood by its possessor and accepted by his or her partner.

The primary pleasure in the desire sex language is just that: desire or feeling wanted—even craved—by one’s partner. Just as with all sex languages, the “buttons” (so to speak), are all on the inside. (That is what makes this book totally unique on the topic of sexuality.)

When the desire sex language person feels desired or wanted, and this is combined with sexuality, it takes him or her to an amazing place of sexual pleasure and satisfaction. The feeling of being desired flows through both

partners. When combined with the physical pleasure of sex, the desire sex language person experiences a multidimensional sensory cocktail that optimizes his or her sexual pleasure.

> “The desire sex language is perhaps the most absolutely delicious sex language.”

(Once you learn your partner’s sex language [no matter which one it is], you can bring an incredible amount of pleasure and satisfaction to him or her. You can experience a transcendent, positive warmth that will radiate beyond the bedroom.

Pursued

The desire sex language person thrives in and needs to live in an atmosphere and environment in which the overall theme is, “I want you.” This person absolutely loves sexual conversation and gestures outside the bedroom. This person enjoys slight sexual touches throughout the day or week.

If you are a desire sex language person you must remember that if your partner does *not* share this sex language with you, your fondling or groping might be met with resistance. Using your sex language on them is a “currency exchange” that simply won’t work.

The desire sex language person enjoys teases like this in the morning: “I want you tonight” or, “I want to make love to you, so don’t work too hard today.” These comments stay in his or her heart all day long. (Two cautions here: Don’t tease a desire sex language person early in the day and then, for no significant reason, change your mind. And don’t bring it back up later when you normally have sex. This can injure this person, especially if done on a consistent basis.)

Since the desire sex language person enjoys being desired, he or she can have difficulty accepting change he or she believes is not legitimate. If the person is immature, this felt rejection can be internally overwhelming, and he or she may become angry or pout.

In keeping with their preferred, “I want you” environment, desire sex language

people thrive on playful, sexual texts or voicemails . If you have a desire sex language partner, it is likely you can think back over the last month and recall many instances of touching, teasing, calling/texting, or telling him or her something that stimulated his or her sexual desire for you. If this is rare and your partner cannot make you want or desire him or her, a part of him or her is left unfulfilled and dissatisfied.

Creating this environment for the person you love isn't that difficult. However, it will take some intentionality as you It will also require some reinterpretation on your part to uncover and replace negative conclusions about your partner's sex language as "needy," "demanding," and so on. If embraced, your partner with a desire sex language can feel loved in a powerful way.

Plans

Unlike fun sex language people who revel in spontaneity, desire sex language people like to know about expected sexual activity in advance . The reason isn't devious, mechanical, or made-up. They actually savor the time between the suggestion and act of sex.

This doesn't mean you have to schedule sex for the week (although most desire sex language people would not be opposed to such an idea because of the thoughtfulness). However, giving your desire sex language partner some lead time is a great idea.

"You know, I'm watching you get ready for bed, but I really want to make love with you in a little while," would shout, "I want you!" to the desire sex language person. He or she would be receptive if you walked into the laundry room, groped him or her, and said: "I just wanted to make sure everything is still there. I want to feel more of you after the children go to bed."

"If embraced, your partner with a desire sex language can feel loved in a powerful way."

Having lead time can be fun for you both. Once you know this about your desire sex language partner, you have a myriad of ideas to tease, play with, and enjoy in his or her language.

Special

This is kind of like a plan, but more extravagant. Now, what I am about to share isn't an every day or week experience, but a consistent intermittent event. Making a planned time for special lovemaking. One idea could be a weekend getaway. While there, scatter flower petals on the bed, make the surroundings special, or do something special like slowly take off your partner's clothes—anything you think he or she would enjoy.

A "special" sex time together could involve wearing new lingerie, scenting the bed, or any of hundreds of ideas that say: "I want you. I desire sex with you and nobody else ...just you." These intermittent encounters reinforce that you really do want or desire your partner sexually.

In these ways and many more, you create an overall atmosphere of desire over the decades of your marriage or relationship. These special encounters convey or reinforce the message that you desire only your partner. When a desire sex language person truly believes you desire him or her, not only will you intensify his or her sexual pleasure, but you will make his or her very life better.

Thought Of

This part of creating atmosphere is often like what we discussed in the warm-up stage of experiencing sexuality. The "thought of" I want to share is kind of the dessert of the atmosphere of desire.

This can be done shortly after orgasm, or even days after a sexual encounter. It is to simply thank your partner for sexuality. This will usually be accepted as positive commerce. Many times a day we say thank you to people for many different things ...and typically these involve much less effort than sex.

A "Thank you for being my lover," can make your desire sex language partner again feel your appreciation and desire for him or her. Your call or text recalling and thanking your partner for an encounter adds allure to the day and tells your partner you will desire him or her in the future as well.

You are probably getting the idea by now that with this sex language, to be different, it is more about the environment of sexuality than creative sex itself. The desire sex language person just wants to be wanted. When this is accepted (not scandalized), appreciated, and understood by you or your partner, he or she can enjoy sex and the entire relationship from the perspective that he or she is in it with you. He or she gets to have sex with someone who wants to make love with him or her as well.

Immature

Every sex language has a more mature and less mature version. Desire is not an exception. If you have a desire sex language partner, it is important to truly evaluate how well you have done so far in making him or her feel truly wanted by you.

If you are married to a desire sex language partner, and you have only made sex tolerable, treated it as unimportant, or put little energy into messaging loudly and clearly that you desire him or her sexually, he or she will feel deprived of a much needed ingredient in his or her soul.

> “The desire sex language person just wants to be wanted.”

When you send the message that you don’t desire him or her sexually, it will feel to him or her like you don’t desire him or her at *all* as a person. He or she can begin to feel used, confused, or suffer silently in significant pain because of the absence of this in life.

This is important to mention, for if a desire sex language person is sexually neglected, his or her partner without that sex language might interpret his or her partner’s legitimate desire to be wanted as immaturity. This would be a bad conclusion on his or her part because the desire sex language partner cannot change his or her sex language, so he or she feels condemned to partner in life with someone by whom he or she does not feel wanted.

Scratching

Immature desire sex language people can utilize sex to try and meet many of their emotional and relational needs. However, sex—no matter how good—cannot meet all their needs. They commonly disrupt relationships within and outside their family.

In the narrative they create, friends, neighbors, and even family members become the ominous, indefinable “they” (other people) who are the problem, and the reason they cannot comfortably maintain healthy relationships. They have not reached the mature place where they recognize they are the single common denominator in the series of relationship tragedies they have known. They have yet to see that their irresponsible behavior, language, and more actually repel people and create pain for others.

As a result, they have a magnified desire to make sex the cure-all for their global need to be wanted or desired. They do not recognize that those needs are actually met by a community only when they have been responsible, honest, dependable, and thoughtful on a consistent basis within that community. Their immaturity makes the needs they expect in marriage or a primary relationship to meet ever greater.

Sadly, they are wired to be desired and wanted, but by being selfish, demanding, moody, and more, they create an atmosphere around themselves that repels others.

If this describes you or someone you know, I highly recommend counseling. The only way out of this is to recognize how one alone—no one else—is creating the life one lives, and gain skills to change and grow.

To those in this immature state, sex is the medicine of being desired condensed into one “hit,” so to speak. In contrast to those who are mature, they create an environment where they are wanted or desirous to be around, and being wanted by their partner sexually is the icing on the cake. Sadly, immature desire sex language people can make sex the entire cake—icing and all—for their needs.

Right

Because immature desire sex language people make sex the scratch for a global

itch, they can get obsessed with what they consider “right.” They move into a space where they believe there is a “right” way to have sex. Like a magic key, this soothes their immature soul. The way this happens can vary from person to person.

For example, they might want a certain sequence of behaviors in sexual activity. If the sequence is right, it means their partner loves them. Often, they are not concerned about their partner’s sexual needs or satisfaction—it’s more about their own.

In another version of right, they might have encoded certain specific things that scratch their itch. Words, combinations of words, and even the volume of words can become the focus of their sex life because of the itch they believe is being scratched. Their hyper focus on this can lead their partners to feel they are performing sex instead of making love or being made love to.

The hardest version of right is that immature desire sex language people tend to want to try extreme sexual behavior. They believe deeply that there is a magical sexual “it” to find, and that when they find “it,” they will feel wanted or desired. This is different from being creative or fun with sex, because it has an agenda; to find the magic “it.” This journey can be decades long because sex alone cannot meet the need of being desired or wanted.

Again, the issues immature desire sex language people face can only be solved when they address their emotional or relational immaturity.

Worship

In more extreme cases of immaturity in this sex language, their strong desire to be wanted by their partners gets twisted and morphs into a version where they desire to be worshipped. All religion aside, they want to be obeyed and overvalued. They want to rule over their partners, and expect them to pledge unquestioning allegiance to their relationship and sexual relationship. Positioning themselves as “greater than” shows the twist in their desire sex language.

In my opinion, humans are innately flawed, and thus disqualified from being worshipped. The desire to be above questioning, and refusal to face their flawed thinking and decisions (or weakness of any kind) are all marks of immature desire sex language people who crave worship. They struggle with the ideas of equality in relationships, being flawed in relationships, and even being human in relationships. Their “one-up, ‘greater than’ ” choice to mask their humanity shows up not only globally in marriage, but also sexually.

Demanding feels more like commanding sexuality or certain sexual behaviors. Threats of out-of-control anger, and the future loss of sex or money vibrate through the sexuality of the couple when one seeks worship rather than a healthy wish to be desired.

Object

Partners of immature desire sex language people often feel like things or objects to them. Their souls, hearts, and opinions—no matter how brilliant—are routinely disregarded. Once they come to like an object, performing sex like an animal at the zoo performing tricks to get a treat from its owner, something slowly dies in them. Their sense of being a person during sexuality slowly dwindles. Their desire for sexuality as a thing encroaches on their desire to be sexual at all.

At some point, their system of avoidance of sex becomes the focus instead of the disconnected way they feel during sex. This lonely, hollow feeling can make sexuality feel like rape. Male or female, their desire to avoid their partner begins to change or affect the marriage/relationship.

Living as an object in someone else’s world means living in an immature person’s world. They are left feeling they are there to merely water their partner’s sponge, sexually, as their own sexuality gets drier and drier. Their own sex language is not only not heard or addressed, but dismissed as irrelevant by their immature desire sex language partners.

Sexuality is only part of a relationship or a part of life. Yes, it is indeed a beautiful part, but can never be the whole. As in any sex language, the more

mature a person is the more mature his or her sexuality can be.

“Sexuality is only part of a relationship or a part of life. Yes, it is indeed a beautiful part, but can never be the whole.”

The beauty of what I get to do, day in and day out, during marriage intensives in Colorado Springs, is see people with all different levels of maturity become amazing people and lovers. I also see couples navigate their usually different sex languages and create together a mutually beneficial and deeply satisfying sexuality that grows dynamically over the entire season of their marriages or relationships.

3. PLEASURE

If either partner is a pleasure sex language person, and this is accepted, both can enjoy a journey through a variety of sexual pleasure. This person gets the enjoyment of discovering his or her pleasure—and in many cases, the pleasure of his or her partner.

When pleasure sex language people think about sex, they move into ideas of creating, expanding, and experimenting with the experience for themselves and their partners. This is different from the fun sex language in that the experience need not be a new one, per se. They desire what they are seeking as a result in a new pleasure. They might have sex in a place or position they have used before, but with a variable to see if it takes them or their partner to a different pleasure sensation.

Inside the pleasure sex language motivated person is a near intuitive map of pleasure. This map is multidimensional (so you can enjoy this ride for the rest of your life).

Learning

Pleasure sex language people have a desire to learn the variety of pleasure zones they can enjoy. They don’t mind reading or experimenting to see if “such and such” increases or expands a sense of pleasure. They actually think about how taking longer, being more aggressive, where to place their hands, where they want to be kissed, or multiple things moving at the same time might possibly increase pleasure.

There is an intentionality in their learning through experimentation or education. They seek to take themselves, you, or both to a higher zenith or different experience of pleasure.

“Inside the pleasure sex language motivated person is a near intuitive map of pleasure.”

If you are the partner of a pleasure sex language person, encourage the learning aspect. Your partner is not obsessed. He or she just has a desire to learn about

sex and experiment with you...or for you to experiment with him or her.

Growing

The pleasure sex language person has a concept of sexuality that is ever growing. He or she is not like many men and women I have counseled who genuinely look at sex in a decidedly one-dimensional manner. Their beliefs and behavior are more along the lines of, “Well, we figured out one way to do it, so that’s good enough.” They have a stagnant, flat perspective of sexuality.

This is definitely not the case for a pleasure sex language person. He or she sees sexuality as near unlimited, expanding, growing, evolving, and multidimensional. He or she sees sex as a world to explore.

Imagine a photograph of someone standing at the bottom of a mountain with a backpack, thermos, walking stick, and a great hat. The mountain is sexual pleasure. In his or her heart this adventurer thinks, *I am so looking forward to exploring this place completely, camping here, climbing here, looking at this view, smelling this, tasting that, swimming here, and basking in the sun of pleasure with my lifelong partner!*

If this does not describe you, you might have a different reaction to this climb. But if you’re a partner, I encourage you to grab your walking stick, hat, and the rest, and try to have a good attitude on the hike.

Being Known

The pleasure sex language person has a real desire to be known and explored sexually, but also to uncover other differences in his or her being. He or she enjoys it when his or her partner gets involved in the adventure into parts of sexuality with a good attitude about doing things differently. He or she just wants to see what these parts might do to increase his or her pleasure in various phases of the sexual encounter.

In your discovery of him or her on the pleasure journey, he or she will discover new things about his or her body, sexuality, emotions, spirituality and just about himself or herself, generally. This discovery is greatly valued by the pleasure sex

language person.

“The pleasure sex language person has a real desire to be known and explored sexually...”

The mature version of the person motivated by this sex language likes going on—even taking his or her partner on—the sexual pleasure journey. Each journey is unique and can be exquisite to the pleasure sex language person if he or she is allowed be himself or herself in the sexual encounter.

Expanding

Now, because the pleasure sex language person has such an intuitive understanding of the vastness of pleasure, he or she also seems to gravitate toward the idea that pleasure expands. As they mature spiritually, physically, emotionally and even sexually, they expand their experimental repertoire.

Like any artist, they touch into an ever expanding notion of pleasure. In the mature pleasure sex language person, this is not about them or past sexual encounters being enough. It’s about believing in a galaxy of pleasure that expands as they explore.

They didn’t know that when certain words were spoken to them they could expand their engagement, excitement, or pleasure during sex. They didn’t know that another word after a sexual experience could wash over their entire being—soul, body, and spirit—like a refreshing, cool wind, and take them to a uniquely different level of relaxation or comfort. They could not understand this until these words were spoken to them. This expands the sexual galaxy for the pleasure sex language person.”

“It’s about believing in a galaxy of pleasure that expands as they explore.”

In a future situation, if asked to be sexual and it brought a new arousal or expectation they never experienced before, it would again expand their sexual galaxy. The pleasure sex language person enjoys these expansions when they

happen, whether spontaneous or thought out, because they like to see what will happen.

Wholistic

Of all the sex languages, this one is the most wholistic in its intuitive understanding, expression, and creativity of sexuality. Regardless of their sex, male or female, those with the pleasure sex language understand they make love to the whole person. Conversely, when their whole person is being made love to and connected with during sexual activity, it maximizes their enjoyment.

Their deep desire is that within the sexual experience, their entire selves will connect with their partner's entire selves. Their pleasure can be very spiritual and deeply internal in sexual encounters. Their next encounter may be more vocal or even slightly more aggressive. The pleasure sex language person honestly desires to explore the entire range of pleasure together with his or her partner.

Feedback

The desire for feedback may not be totally unique to the pleasure sex language individual, but it seems to be common. Those with this sex language may actually think more about the wholistic sexual experience for themselves or their partners. If they have thought through a sexual experience for their partners, they have put more time and thought into it than they would for just a quick, spontaneous encounter.

I compare this to your partner making you a ham and cheese sandwich for dinner as opposed to a soup, salad, meat, and your favorite vegetable and dessert. If they put forth more effort, their desire for praise for it goes up as well.

If you are a pleasure sex language person, you may be able to go to greater depths sexually than your partner may be able to go (or desire to go). If this is your sex language, it is definitely going to be necessary to negotiate with your partner if he or she is motivated by a different language.

Immature

Sadly, every sex language has an immature manifestation. If someone is emotionally, morally, or spiritually immature, his or her sexual expression will most likely be immature as well. The immature expression of the pleasure sex language has some common characteristics.

Techniques

The immature pleasure sex language person still has a longing to experiment to enjoy a variety or expansive pleasures. Due to spiritual and emotional underdevelopment, regardless of the reason for this immaturity, they will tend to focus more on the body pleasure of sex.

Their ability to connect spiritually and emotionally is limited, so the body aspect of sexuality is mostly what they have to experiment with to grow, sexually. This can cause the pleasure sex language person to focus on technique (to a fault, at times). This focus on technique can cause their partner to experience something less than lovemaking, and much more like just sex. Their partner can feel like the technique needs to be just right for the person to be engaged, sexually.

When the technique is more of the focus, it is usually solely for the pleasure of this sex language person. They want their own bodies to go to different places and be experimented upon more than they want their partners to experience pleasure.

More, More

The immature pleasure sex language person is still on a journey focused on expanding pleasure during sex. Due to the fact that making love well requires a full person experience (spirit, soul, and body), this immature person is limited in his or her sexuality. When you are immature in these areas you generally experience far less fulfillment and contentment in all phases of sexuality.

These people miss out on the depth of the lovemaking encounter. This leaves them to want more and more of body sex as they try to scratch the itch of a full person sexual experience, but bring only one third of themselves to the bedroom.

This pressure for more and more can easily turn into more and different, which can stress the sexuality of this person's partner.

Don't worry. In future chapters I will discuss spiritual and emotion development. I will also give tools couples can use to grow together emotionally and spiritually so they can increase their sexual pleasure over the course of their marriage.

Better

The immaturity of the pleasure sex language person can make sexuality feel more like a sport camp than the hike up the mountain I described earlier. The mature person wants to go here and there, but enjoy the view, smell the flowers, and be with his or her partner along the way. The togetherness of the hike is very valuable to the mature sex language individual, whether male or female.

The immature expression of the pleasure sex language can turn this into a sports camp with a "we need to do this, that, four of these, and two of those " mentality. The person wants to direct more of the encounter than give his or her whole being to the partner trying to make love to him or her.

They won't necessarily see it this way because "if you love me you would want to pleasure me" can be the default feeling and logic of the immature pleasure sex language person. Both partners getting better at sex is more valuable to the immature people with this sex language than getting more connected with their partners.

"Better" can also feel like a treadmill of performance, as it represents linear thinking. Bringing only one's body to the party is quite different than expanding one's mutual galaxy of pleasure (the motivation for the more mature people with this particular sex language).

Not Enough

The partner of the immature sex language person can experience a side effect of his or her partner's focus on "More, More" and "Better." If you're told, "More! More!" and "Better!" it can inspire some, but for most, over time, it only deflates

their sexual desire.

I remember a CrossFit trainer telling me the goal of CrossFit was to continually get better and better. “How do you know you’ve arrived at better?” I asked. His answer was, “There is no better.”

When this attitude comes from the immature pleasure sex language person, his or her partner can become unmotivated, sexually (except if he or she is extremely resilient or codependent). For that partner, a low grade message of “I am not enough” can creep in. This can harm the marriage or relationship.

“Bringing only one’s body to the party is quite different than expanding one’s mutual galaxy of pleasure...”

When the partner gets to the place of “I am not enough,” this is a journey into a sexual black hole— not a galaxy. This can actually demotivate the partner from doing anything in the area of sexual experimentation. If this continues, it can actually move the partner more toward the desire to avoid sex than have it. For it becomes about sex, not making love, and performing, not engaging with the whole person of the partner, sexually.

Pleasure Priority

I need to make clear one aspect of immature pleasure sex language people. For them, the pleasure of a sexual encounter can become greater than the actual value of the person. For instance, I have heard such people—men and women—demand sex when their partner is sick, just had surgery, or going through a very difficult family circumstance.

It is a very dangerous place for a relationship, when pleasure becomes the priority over the person of the partner. It relegate the partner to object status as opposed to amazing human being with infinite value status. Worse yet, it makes the partner an object for sex rather than a human being with whom to relate, creating a very slippery slope. Sadly, some partners allow themselves to be sex objects in a system they have created with their immature pleasure sex language partner in which they serve a sexual purpose in exchange for something they want, quid pro quo.

When this happens in the heart of the immature pleasure sex language person, a sense of sexual entitlement—even enslavement—begins to take root. Sadly, this limits both participants from having a fully engaging and satisfying sex life with each other. The immature person can only bring his or her body. If his or her partner accepts the role of sex object, most likely, he or she will not be able to see himself or herself fully during sex, and can begin to shut off his or her heart during sex.

Feedback

If this person is giving during sex with his or her partner, because of his or her immaturity, he or she will feel the giving of himself or herself to the partner. This isn't always true, but because he or she gives to the partner (except if he or she is truly independent), he or she will want feedback from the partner on how good he or she was. Feedback on his or her sexual performance can become a ritual demand.

Now, of course, though they expect partner feedback, they do not necessarily want to hear honest feedback. Be careful of this if you are in a sexual relationship with an immature pleasure sex language person.

The flip side of this feedback request is, they may also desire to give unsolicited feedback to their partner. They will typically give honest feedback. The upside of this is, their partner will hear about it if he or she was awesome. The downside is, the partner will hear about it if he or she was not awesome. This critique might even include detailed instructions with roadmap for how he or she can do better the next time. They are not necessarily trying to be critical or mean, but in their quest for a better sexual experience, they may well believe their feedback is helpful to their partner.

As with all the sex languages, there is a mature and immature version of the pleasure sex language. Anyone can be anywhere on this continuum as he or she grows sexually in his or her sex language.

In the pages ahead, I share many ideas that can lead mature sex language people to probably the best, most connected sex they have ever experienced. Read on!

4. PATIENCE

The patience sex language is like a long, cool drink on a summer day, when understood by one's partner. If misunderstood, it can become a point of frustration in the relationship.

Space

Between sex languages there is commerce for people motivated by them, causing them to value their own sex language more highly than other's sex languages. In the fun sex language, spontaneity has a high value. In the desire sex language, affirmation is highly valued. The patience sex language person places a high value on space.

Space has two very distinct elements in relation to the patience sex language. First, it is a safe, secure location, as free from interruptions as possible (i.e. locked down). The second element of space is a protected amount of time. The patience sex language person values relaxation and a safe amount of time to be sexual and enjoy sexuality with his or her partner. For this person, love, sex, and relationship are all spelled S-P-A-C-E. The commitment to share safe, protected time with him or her translates to: "I value you. You're attractive. You're desirable."

Although a quickie might be tolerated here and there, if these become a pattern for sexual behavior, this person will feel frustrated and less loved. Setting aside a set time or sex is very important to him or her. This doesn't have to be a scheduled routine, but consistency says, "I am making space and time for you." Remember that set aside time is the currency for the patient sex language person, not necessarily the sex itself.

"The patience sex language is like a long, cool drink on a summer day, when understood by one's partner."

For this person, making time also means not rushing off to do something else right after lovemaking. He or she must be given sufficient time before, during, and after sex, and must not feel rushed. (To avoid threatening or interrupting the

space and time he or she needs, children should be asleep or not in the house.)

Since time is sacred to this person, make sure you have time for being sexual and protect that time. For your patience sex language partner, you must not only make time, but take your time during each phase of sex.

Later on in this book, I will share more about the phases of sex and what each person in each sex language desires in each phase. However, it is important to understand that for your patience sex language partner, the time you spend during each phase of sex determines his or her level of engagement and pleasure.

Consider foreplay, for example. For the patience sex language partner, plan fifteen to forty-five minutes of foreplay. This is where they are. You are not going to change them or their sex language any more than they are going to change you or your sex language.

If, however, you can accept that time is key to your partner's pleasure, then to be an optimal lover to him or her, taking time is very important. The earlier in your marriage or relationship you accept this, the easier and more satisfying your sexual relationship will be for both of you.

Touch

This point isn't universal, but often applies to the patience sex language person. The type of touch or scratching that typically gives this person pleasure is the very light, barely touching type.

However, almost all patience sex language people really enjoy a lot of touch, though of course, over a longer period of time than most, and in a safe place. To be thoughtful, you probably have to plan to touch this person for fifteen to forty-five minutes.

If you are not a patience sex language person (and most likely you're not, if you married one), the great amount of touch time he or she requires can seem extreme, even selfish. It is important to realize whether the story you may have told yourself about your partner's desire for long periods or foreplay is positive or less than positive.

It is also important to realize that a story is not a fact. For example, if someone doesn't respond to your hello at work, it is a fact. It might also be a fact that he or she didn't see or hear you.

To think that the person is a snob for not saying hello, or that he or she must simply have been distracted by things on his or her mind are both stories. The story you tell yourself about a fact is the narrative you create to interpret a fact.

The fact is, protected space and time increase pleasure for the patience sex language person, sexually. You could create this story: "My partner is selfish and needy to want so much touch for so long! Why can't he/she just get to sex already?" You could also create this story: "My partner loves to be loved by me, relax into me, and feel me on the inside through touch before we make love. This is like baking a fantastic dessert. No need to rush. I know it's going to be fantastic!"

The story we tell ourselves is our responsibility. Be careful of the story you tell yourself about your partner's sex language, regardless of the language.

To the patience sex language person, time and space say, "I love you." The touch says, "I really love you." Together, they foster a wow experience for the patience sex love language person. This may not make sense to anyone but a patience sex language person, but sometimes, basing sexuality in time and touch is as good (sometimes even better) than the sex itself for him or her.

> "Be careful of the story you tell yourself about your partner's sex language, regardless of the language."

Gentleness

Typically, the patience sex language person is not into the rough style of sexuality—not in any way. For example, he or she will not respond positively to being spoken to harshly, coarsely, or loudly during any phase of sexuality.

I am not sure how this works, but clients with this sex language report to me that they desire gentleness expressed consistently, without disruption, even in the orgasmic phase—no forcefulness or loudness of any kind. Steadiness during

sexual activity feels reliable to them. Reliability of motion with their partners is treasured, not aggression.

Patience sex language clients have explained to me that they trust or lean into the orgasmic experience through consistency and reliability. Over time, this allows them to relax into a motion that brings great pleasure. Consistent stimulation of one or more areas at the same pace releases them to experience greater pleasure.

Afterwards

After orgasm, don't be in a hurry. Don't mention the other things you desire to do or return to doing after lovemaking. Remember, for the patience sex language person, space and time are currency.

Take time during the afterglow as well. Cuddling, spooning, more light touching, kind words, gratitude, and more are all very meaningful. For patience sex language partners, the sexual encounter is over *after* the afterglow period of closeness and provides them with closure to the entire experience.

Understanding the patience sex language partner is not complicated. He or she just wants space and time, and gentleness throughout the lovemaking experience. Space and time allow him or her to feel valued, honored, and desired, and give them the most pleasure during all phases of sexuality. Some partners lack this understanding of their patience sex language partners, and they challenge their partner's desire for time and gentleness instead of working with that design.

Accepting and enjoying who their partners are, sexually, can be a greater challenge for partners of patience sex language people. They must not only understand their partner's design, but choose to accept and enjoy it as well. They must not try to challenge or change their partner's design.

> "He or she just wants space and time, and gentleness throughout the lovemaking experience."

Immature

Just as with all the sex languages, there is an immature version of the patience sex language. Every immature expression of this sex language comes down to

making most, if not all, of the sexuality about this particular sex language.

The immature patience sex language person is demanding or controlling in sexual encounters. Lovemaking can seem overly planned and even scripted by this partner, not mutually decided upon by both partners. It evolves into a system of "the way sex happens with us." This system becomes almost obligatory to the immature patience sex language person: "If we are going to have sex, I need you to _____, _____, and _____."

Now, again, if this person has not acknowledged or valued his or her sex language, this may be a reaction to feeling disrespected sexually for years. If this is not the case, the truly immature patience sex language person will demand long, drawn out sexual foreplay, and then orgasmic and afterglow phases.

If sex doesn't go their way, they might get very angry, vindictive, and resort to shaming or hurting their partners. This will usually carry over and impact the entire relationship or marriage.

Another way this immaturity may manifest is in attacks on the sex language of their partners, calling them selfish for wanting sex any other way than long, safe, and slow. Their partners might even be called names if they want different or louder sex, or more sexual experimentation. Again, this is immaturity, but with insight and negotiation a couple can work through the beauty of two different sex languages in their marriage or relationship.

The Script

The immature patience sex language person is trying to get a legitimate desire met: to be given significant space and time, and gentleness in sexual encounters. These give them optimum pleasure throughout the sexual encounter.

When the desires of the person with this sex language aren't met in healthy ways, or he or she has no way of communicating his or her language to his or her partner, a script may evolve. As I wrote earlier, this person will ask you to touch him or her for a certain amount of time, and in a certain manner. He or she might well demand you stay with him or her after sex.

The problem may not become the script. Some partners just accept this as the

only way sex will happen between them and their partners –if they want sex, they have to do it their partner's way.

The problem comes when their partners want to deviate from the script. The immature patience sex language person might even stop the sexual encounter and ask, "What are you doing?" or say, "You know what to do!" At this point, the problem becomes what happens in the partner. His or her voice is not heard, and his or her sex language or desires seems to be dismissed as nonsense, unimportant, or irrelevant.

The script can then become a place of resentment. It can actually become negative reinforcement for the partner: when the partner thinks of sex, he or she thinks of "all the work I'll have to do" instead of the pleasure of sex. Over time, this resentment can build and actually lessen the partner's desire for and frequency of sex with his or her partner. The script can itself become a symbol of the sexual selfishness of the immature patience sex language person.

Growth

The immature patience sex language person will want to live in a sexuality that is pretty much the same every time, all the time. He or she prefers sex to be the same (if possible), whether in his or her twenties or nineties. He or she rarely sees sexuality as an area of growth, just like all other areas of their life. Figuratively, he or she would rather go back to the same vacation cabin every year than see new places or interact with new cultures.

Sexuality is best if it grows, regardless of sex language. Even the patience sex language person can stretch and grow if he or she chooses to, and is open to the idea that sex is about sharing, variety, and mutuality, not control. If they resist growth, any desire, conversation, or attempt to grow sexually will be met with an immature response. He or she could simply refuse to talk about sex and make accusations and demands ("You don't love me!" or, "Accept me as I am!") instead of opening up to sexual growth and maturity.

Shooting down growth and maturity ideas is a very common practice for the immature patience sex language person. If you are the partner of the immature

patience sex language person, and every five years (or even every ten) you get up the courage to talk about your sex life together, you might well be met with, “That’s all you want to talk about!” and the conversation is over.

“Sexuality is best if it grows, regardless of sex language.”

Again, immature people of any sex language have difficulty seeing their contribution to the problem. With help from professionals who understand the *5 Sex Languages*, they can work through this. However, it is important for their partners to understand that before their immature partners change and open up, they may well become more intense emotionally and/or engage in spiritual bullying. To keep going they must remain mindful that overcoming immaturity in this sex language is worth the battle. Pushing through will bring the dual rewards of both partners being heard, sexually, and each actually enjoying the sex language of the other.

Ironically, it may take a great amount of patience, support, and guidance to get the immature patience sex language person to grow past rigidness and into acceptance of both his or hers sex language and his or her partner’s.

5. ACCEPTANCE/CELEBRATION

The acceptance/celebration sex language is unique among the sex language. For the acceptance/celebration sex language person, the pleasure of sexuality is wholistic. It's about the entirety of a person being accepted and/or celebrated during sex.

Sexuality for this person is definitely a whole person experience through which he or she both receives and gives sexuality in a whole being experience. As we walk through this sex language, be prepared to go deeper into this person's heart. He or she makes love with his or her heart, and desires all of you to make love to all of him or her.

Acceptance

The pleasure for the acceptance/celebration person is that his or her partner genuinely accepts him or her. This person's partner must love and accept who he or she is, not just his or her body, face, or sex moves. He or she must trust his or her partner's acceptance.

Even in the nonsexual aspects of their intimate relationships, they enjoy that their partners like them, are proud of them, and are generous with celebrating who they are as wives/husbands, team players, parents, their little idiosyncrasies, and more. When they take off their clothes for their partners, they enjoy feeling confident that their partners like what they see, and see no criticism in their partners' eyes. This acceptance from their partners is the pleasure of this form at sexuality.

For them it's like swimming naked together with no shame. They know their partners like being with them where they are.

"Sexuality for this person is definitely a whole person experience through which he or she both receives and gives sexuality in a whole being experience."

Safety

The acceptance they give and receive allows them to feel totally safe with their partners. This safety is about much more than whether or not the door is locked. It is more like a sacred safety: “I can trust you with all of me,” and “you see me and you like and enjoy me.”

This safety of soul, spirit, and body is what allows creativity and enjoyment for those with this sex language. He or she is not trying to get somewhere with you, but is already somewhere with you and feels accepted and safe. This safety is like his or her sacred garden, only you are invited. If you can genuinely be you while you’re making love to this person, he or she knows you like “the garden,” so is relaxed, comfortable in himself or herself, and feels able to grow.

Celebration

The celebration aspect of this sex language starts way before even one article of clothing is shed. Those with this language love to feel celebrated, whether you are celebrating his or her intelligence, hard work, body, problem solving, relationships with friends and family, and even the way he or she is thoughtful toward you.

This person tends to be a giver. When you acknowledge this and how awesome, amazing, and incredible he or she is, it sets the mood and tone. It shows you genuinely see him or her. You see his or her generosity, relatability, service, and all-around awesomeness.

For this person, to be seen and validated is acceptance. Acceptance and celebration stimulate him or her. It makes this person think, *I still wow you*, which only builds the desire to wow more. Celebration is like soul candy to this sex language person!

Wholistic

When making love to an acceptance/celebration sex language person, you are making love to a whole person. Unlike those with other sex languages who compel people to go someplace different (or nowhere), this person wants to be where they are with you, and to be seen by you there. This person is more about you seeing him or her than trying something new, different, or exciting. For you

to be with him or her is enough. He or she accepts all forms of language in all sexual phases. You can speak spiritual, emotional, or sexual language, as long as it's about him or her and connecting to who he or she is as a wholistic person.

This sex love language person may not have a specific "trigger" phrase or word that takes him or her to a certain pleasure place. Just the fact that you can see any part of him or her, and are able to voice your celebration is pleasurable to him or her.

Relaxes

The whole being of the acceptance/celebration sex language person relaxes when he or she feels acceptance from a partner in his or her heart. He or she finds relaxation or trust in his or her partner's love and celebration brings significant pleasure.

For example, when you lay your head on the lap of your partner and allow all the weight of your head to rest on him or her, as the weight transfers, your whole body trusts you are safe and relaxes. This trust is significant. It is as if the soul, spirit, and body say, "You're safe! It's okay! Relax and enjoy the ride." This shifting into relaxation is actually a shifting into you. This is a part of the sexual pleasure for the acceptance/celebration sexual language person.

"The whole being of the acceptance/celebration sex language person relaxes when he or she feels acceptance from a partner in his or her heart."

Valued

Unlike some other of their sex language friends who might be on the adventure of combining elements of risk in sexuality, this sex language person just appreciates you already do love and accept him or her. That you value him or her, and give your heart, time, body, and soul to him or her has deep meaning. The acceptance and celebration sex language person sees you and them, wholistically.

By seeing you seeing them, he or she feels valued. That look of, *Wow, you're my*

lover and my friend, and I want to be with you in this way, shouts value to him or her. Being precious, important, valued, and yours alone (and you, theirs), says to him or her, “You are valued.”

This value is, again, intrinsically sacred to this sex language person. Therefore, conversation about making love or sexuality needs to include wholistic language. This person doesn’t see sex as an unattached part, like an organ he or she can pull out and play with, but as a part of who he or she is. For this person, sexual adventure is contextual—about them—and does not check the, “Hey, we did this,” box. Whether male or female, for them the language needs to stay wholistic and relational.

Gratitude

There may be words with spiritual impact for those with the acceptance/celebration sex language. Words that may have greater value to this person are those of gratitude, and mostly gratitude for who he or she is and what is happening here and now. Discussions of past sexual encounters or adventures probably have higher value to other sex language types.

For these people, discussions with their partners on what they might do or try sexually in the future might not have the same value. This is not because these people aren’t sexually creative, but that their sex language is just different from the others. Again, they are focused on the present.

They are encouraged by the appreciation for who they are expressed by their partners. For those in this sex language, sharing with them the pleasure you have with them in the moment can be very affirming.

Words of gratitude create energy toward you. These words affirm all of who your partner is to you while with you in a sexual manner. Words of gratitude shortly after a sexual encounter are received as positive and affirming by the partner with the acceptance/celebration sex language.

Immature

This sex language of acceptance and celebration also has an immature version.

Again, this immaturity may be due to neglect, trauma, sexual abuse, addiction, or even a personality disorder. This “stuckness” in life can also cause someone to remain quite stuck in his or her sexuality.

Me

For the immature, sex (and life in general) is about them being celebrated. They can demand that the focus be on their pleasure, or their skills in pleasuring you. They are amazing and they have a felt need, not a desire, to have you proclaim their awesomeness to them.

Their real life behavior may be riddled with bad choices, inappropriate communication, selfishness, and not being that nice of a person, but you better not discuss any of this with them, or you may suffer their wrath. Their irrational perceptions of themselves also flow into their sexuality.

If you dare to venture outside the realm of praising them, they might hear this as criticism. It is quite a challenge for them to hear legitimate feedback as healthy and constructive. If this is attempted, it will typically be met with repeated attacks, whether in cruel language or passive-aggressive retaliation. This immaturity will limit your relationship and your sexual relationship.

“They are encouraged by the appreciation for who they are expressed by their partners.”

Role

In the immature version of the acceptance/celebration sex language, in sexuality, the partner of this person will feel like he or she is performing a role rather than being related to or connected with. He or she will usually be the cheerleader or audience for his or her immature partner. In the cheerleader role, he or she is expected to praise the immature partner throughout the sexual encounter for whatever is being done. This can make the partner feel as if he or she must regularly fill up the emotional or self-esteem balloon of his or her immature partner during sex.

As the audience, the partner is to praise the immature partner and applaud every

touch, act, or gesture given. Over time, this audience partner will feel the weight of this expectation to the point where he or she feels it's still more about giving to their immature partner, even if they are being kind, sexually.

Ideas

For the immature person with this sex language, sexual ideas are closely attached to who he or she is. If he or she gives an idea during a sexual encounter, and it is met with any resistance (or worse, criticism), it can be deeply wounding or feel like rejection to this person. He or she will feel the partner rejected him or her entirely—especially his or her sexuality. This can turn a sexual encounter that was going quite well into an explosion.

This explosion might be characterized by anger, rage, crying, or in immediate shutdown or withdrawal. The immature person doesn't have the skill to deal with perceived rejection, so he or she might do something extreme in response. If this person does get off track, it might take a while for him or her to calm down or forgive you.

Remember, for this person, his or her ideas are not mere thoughts, they *are* him or her. As a partner, you know that you pick a fight if you do not want to go along with a particular idea of your immature partner with this sex language.

Sex & Love

In the immature version of the acceptance/celebration sex language, love and sex can be interpreted as the same thing. If you don't want to have sex for, really, any reason except severe health issues, this partner will not understand, and will pout, get angry, and again, often feel intense rejection.

This immature partner will honestly feel his or her partner does not love him or her if he or she doesn't want to have sex. This immature person, male or female, can rely on sex as an affirmation of who he or she is, or of who he or she is to the partner. For instance, if a seventy-year-old man loses an erection (which could be very normal) the immature partner with this sex language will think he doesn't want her, is rejecting her, or that she is ugly, old, fat, or any number of other unloving things.

Another example is the thirtysomething young man who gave his wife four children. Though she is exhausted at the end of the day, he asked her for sex. In the kindest way, she told him, “Can we make love tomorrow?” In response, he stormed out of the bedroom saying, “It’s all about those kids; not about me.”

If you won’t have sex with him or her, in his or her mind it becomes, *You don’t love me, want me, or like me, sexually*. This is an emotionally charged belief, so it will take time to calm the immature person who thinks it, and much negotiation to encourage him or her not to put sex off until the end of the world.

Value

The immature aspect of value is the belief that, *I am my sex*. When someone believes he or she is sex, sex becomes extremely important. In this case, sex can become the simple measure to this person on: the state of the marriage, health of the relationship, whether or not his or her partner loves him or her, if the partner believes he or she is attractive, if the relationship is going to make it long-term, and so on. This immature person uses sex as a symbol or measure of love. The value of sex can become so heightened in the immature partner’s mind that his or her partner might feel incredible pressure to perform or have sex to stabilize him or her.

The overvaluing of sex by the immature acceptance/celebration person can create a strain on the marriage or relationship. It can move a couple into a performance relationship where,“You don’t love me if…” (and the “if” can get really silly). If you have ever found yourself moving down this road, you might want to get professional help.

King Baby

This is a classic Freudian term. This describes an immature person who acts like a baby when things don’t go the way he or she wishes. Remember, sex language seems to be innate, so we often don’t change much about how we receive the most pleasure in sex.

This sex language wants and desires acceptance when met with questions. These

can make the immature person feel like a reject for being who he or she is. He or she can get angry or punishing when met with resistance because, “Who dares resist the king (or queen)?” If he or she is met with an inconvenient fact, discussion, or opinion, it can create a crisis.

All of this can be outgrown, of course. I suggest the book, *Emotional Fitness (Weiss)*, for this person, to help him or her mature emotionally. Also, he or she would have to address any trauma or addictions in his or her life in order to become all he or she can be in and outside the bedroom.

6.ROADBLOCKS

All of us want to have an awesome sexual life with our partners. Unfortunately, many of us may have one of the three major roadblocks before us that can keep us from having awesome sex lives if not addressed.

The roadblocks I am focusing on here are not interpersonal, communication issues, and so on. Those would be joint issues both partners would work on together (though I will get into that to some degree). The roadblocks I will focus on here are the three biggest individual roadblocks I have seen in my office over the past twenty-five years that keep individuals from experiencing a maximal sex life with his or her partner.

These roadblocks may affect you personally. If you see something to address I suggest you take personal responsibility and take action. Overcome that limiting roadblock in your sexuality and emancipate yourself to enjoy a life of increased sexual health and freedom.

You may not be affected by any of these roadblocks. That would be awesome. However, you might be married to or in a committed relationship with someone who struggles with one, two, or all three of these issues. If this is your situation, be supportive as your partner seeks help.

If your partner refuses to address these issues, they will continue to impact your relationship and sexuality, and take note that this is a conscious decision on their part not to grow in these areas. If this is the case and your partner chooses not to grow, but his or her choice is impacting you and your relationship, you might want to seek counseling. Some people, by nature, want to grow and change. Others fear growth and change, so they can resist seeking help, even in areas where such growth would improve all areas of their lives.

“Overcome that limiting roadblock in your sexuality and emancipate yourself to enjoy a life of increased sexual health and freedom.”

In most cases, these roadblocks came into place before the two of you even met.

And these are in no way you or your partner's fault. These are individual issues which can, with personal responsibility and support, be overcome and make you and/or your partner stronger people and better lovers.

You are not the cause or the cure for your partner's roadblock issues. As he or she takes responsibility and grows and heals, you can celebrate this, but you are powerless to make it happen for him or her, regardless of your love, beauty, sexuality, money, and more.

Abuse

You might have grown up with very good parents, had pretty good friends, and gone through the normal bumps in life every now and then, but life was good. You knew you were loved and safe your entire childhood. Sadly, many have experienced all types of abuse growing up.

These children or adolescence were physically abused, and been hit intensely without any purpose. Some were physically neglected growing up, and did not receive the medical attention or other help they needed. Immature, addicted, or mood disordered parents might have inflicted emotional abuse on them or neglected them. Yelling, shaming, falsely accusing, and more can damage souls if this was the environment in which they grew up. Some children and adolescents were neglected emotionally and unable to be honest or share feelings in their homes, or were not supported in aspects of their uniqueness (another form of neglect).

Sexual abuse is a huge problem, and can impact up to 30 percent of women and 15 percent of men. Abuse can have a wide variety of impacts, from feelings of worthlessness, shame, fear, or lack of trust, to overcompensation, over-performing, over-giving (in relationships), poor boundaries, or rigid boundaries.

Sexual abuse can affect the sexuality of victims as well. They might react to the trauma by being hypersexual with themselves or others. They might also suffer diminished desire for sex or lose their desire entirely as a reaction to this trauma. Sexual abuse can also impact their ability to connect emotionally with their partner. The abuse survivor might go into a disconnected blank space or fantasy

state during sex.

Sexual neglect can also happen to a child or adolescent growing up. In such cases they are given no sexual information—not on body changes, the meaning of sex, relational ideas involving sex, or standards for sexuality. Since they have no ideas about the act of sex or meaning of sex for themselves they experience quite a range of impacts, depending on their first sexual encounter.

Abuse or neglect can impact people very differently. And many people have done well in working through their abuse or neglect issues. Those who have had these experiences and not sifted through the issues related to them can encounter roadblocks, regardless of their sex language. They may be limited in giving their sexuality or receiving their partner's sexuality both inside and outside the bedroom.

Addiction

This roadblock to sexuality is one not as widely thought of as the abuse roadblock, but it can definitely affect your sexuality or the sexuality of your partner. If you are addicted to anything— alcohol, drugs, sex, food, gambling, and so on— it robs you of emotional, spiritual, and moral development. I have worked with thousands of addicts in my center and this is so true.

Regardless of age—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or any other—the addicted person will reason and emote like a 13-15 year-old. He or she faces great challenges when trying to define a clear sense of right or wrong, or in taking responsibility for his or her behavior. He or she lives in a fantasy, a world in which an individual can do as he or she pleases, without any consequences.

All addictions negatively affect the sexuality of a person to some degree. I can't tell you how many of my addicted clients have gone into recovery, and even a month in, began having the best sex of their lives with their partners. They were able to move from immature object type sex into a mature, connected, relational sex with their partner.

Sex addiction is one I have specialized in treating for over twenty-five years now. This addiction brings its own unique set of difficulties for the addict and his

or her partner. As with other addictions, it robs the person of emotional, spiritual, and moral development. Sex addiction comes with added layers of secrecy and shame, which limits his or her ability to be authentic inside or outside the bedroom. It has an increasing distraction element to it that insidiously steals from the marriage or relationship. Hours of pornography, masturbation, sexting others, or arranging sexual hookups or relationships with others become huge impediments to a great sex life.

Also, all the sexual conditioning and comparing create dissatisfaction or false expectations that can definitely impact the sexuality of a relationship or marriage. The impact of betrayal on the partner also becomes an issue in the sex life of the couple when one is a sex addict. When one partner lies about his or her behavior on a regular basis it impacts the sexuality of the couple.

“All addictions negatively affect the sexuality of a person to some degree.”

The impact of getting an STD is also a factor when the sex addicted partner engages in sexual contact with other people. The threat of job loss, financial loss, and one’s reputation taking a hit can also be factors in sexual relationships. Regardless of type, addictions impact who we are entirely. Immaturity in the addicted partner causes multiple direct and indirect impacts on a couple’s sex life.

You might want to know the general characteristics of addiction to assess whether you or your partner have an addiction. If you feel you do, get help so you can be healthier and have a great sex life. (Read more about this a few pages from now.)

In the field of psychology we use a diagnostic statistical manual (DSM) to identify disorders. The criteria below explain in clear terms the characteristics for addicts from the DSM ideas of addiction.

Addictions usually include any three of the following characteristics:

1. Do more of something for a longer period of time than expected.
2. Unsuccessful attempts to reduce or stop the behavior.

3. Spends a great deal of time acquiring or recovering from the behavior.
4. Behavior affects social or work life.
5. Reducing or not participating in normal social, occupational, or recreational activity to pursue the behavior.
6. Continuing to do the behavior knowing that it has caused problems.
7. A marked tolerance for the behavior (meaning it takes more to get the same effect).
8. Withdrawal symptoms if not doing the behavior.
9.Doing the behavior to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

Anorexia

I am not talking about food anorexia here, in which one starves oneself or becomes addicted to doing so. This is intimacy anorexia.

Intimacy anorexia is the active withholding of emotional, spiritual, or sexual intimacy from one's partner. Everyone else might view the person as warm and wonderful, however, the starved partner feels alone, disconnected, often unnoticed, or even unwanted in his or her relationship with the intimacy anorexic.

> "Intimacy anorexia is the active withholding of emotional, spiritual, or sexual intimacy from one's partner."

Below are the characteristics of intimacy anorexia:

Busy

The first characteristic of the intimacy anorexic is being so busy that he or she has little time for the partner. This is a very common characteristic of most intimacy anorexics.

This doesn't mean the partner travels all the time, though this could definitely be a way he or she avoids intimacy. It typically shows up in more subtle ways. For example, the intimacy anorexic keeps himself or herself busy to have little time for his or her partner. I will break this down into two categories: inside the house and outside the house.

Inside the house, an intimacy anorexic keeps so busy that it leaves little time for his or her partner. He or she may stay constantly busy doing housework e.g., cleaning this or that, and rearranging things.

Children also provide several ways to avoid one's partner. The intimacy anorexic might devote an inordinate amount of time to helping a child with homework without involving his or her partner. Or he or she might help a child on a school or home project, but exclude the partner.

I know some anorexic couples that buy and live in fixer-uppers that keep them constantly working on projects, leaving them no time for caring or intimate connection. Others are readers who avoid their partners by reading newspapers, the latest novel, or self-help books. Others are writers who endlessly write instead of relating to their partners. Still others sleep so much that they avoid connecting with their partner.

Technology is a dream for intimacy anorexics. I ideal. While his or her partner in another room waits to relate, thspend hours ingdoing and so on Though they may actually feel they are relating to others in this way, even so, they are disengaged with their partners.

There is older technology that is another terrific device that allow couples to be in the same room together, even sitting right next to each other, but not relating. That's right; I'm talking about the TV. This device should be called the intimacy zapper. It puts both partners in altered states, separated from one another. When they do come back to reality, they are too tired to even talk. By the time they pry themselves off the furniture it's time to collapse into bed.

Computer games and video games are also a way for anorexics to distract themselves from their partners. These games have become very realistic. Saving a false world from destruction, for example, is often more valuable than connecting with the one you said you would love, honor, and cherish. In in-home avoidance, strategies need to be addressed or avoided for recovery from intimacy anorexia.

"...an intimacy anorexic keeps so busy that it leaves little

time for his or her partner.”

Outside the home, there are a number of avoidant strategies intimacy anorexics employ to actively withhold intimacy from their partners. These activities are often very positive, so easily justified by the intimacy anorexic. Those who do volunteer work to avoid intimacy have a cause they are helping which can justify their absences. The religious person could be saving the world, yet still intentionally withhold connection or intimacy from his or her partner. The person who overworks avoids intimacy while justifying the behavior through work to create more money. Then there are the golfers and sports participants or fans who are loyal to themselves and a team, but not intimate with their partners.

“Busy” can take so many forms it could be a book all by itself. Any of these behaviors could be fine if those practicing them stay connected with their partners. In the absence of connecting, “busy” becomes a type of avoidance intimacy anorexics actually employ to withhold intimacy—or even the potential for it.

Blame

Blame is an anorexic characteristic that is nearly universal. When an issue or problem arises in the marriage; the anorexic first blames or puts responsibility for it on his or her partner before becoming cognizant he or she contributed to the problem or issue. As you understand anorexia better, you will learn that an intimacy anorexic wants to be in the “good box” all the time, and find it undesirable to be flawed, irresponsible, thoughtless, careless, or bad.

Blaming is almost reflexive for many anorexics. It can be amazing to observe how much the emotional survival of the anorexic is at stake if he or she is found to be flawed, like the rest of us. Often they can’t face their intentional withholding honestly. They do not see that starving their partners directly affects the behavior they receive back from their partner.

“...an intimacy anorexic wants to be in the “good box” all the time...”

Withholding Love

The anorexic often has a difficult time perceiving the intangible nature of withholding love. To withhold love is to not give your partner *love the way you know to do, or how they have asked to be loved. Each one of us wants to be loved, yet we all experience love in many different ways. Your partner may want emotional sharing, long walks, a thoughtful note, or gift that says, "I was thinking of you." Some just want help around the house or with the children. Your partner needs to be shown love. The anorexic already knows how his or her partner wants to be loved, but withholds it.*

How do you know what type of love your partner *needs, and if you are withholding it from him or her? Anorexics convince their partners that they love them in the way they receive love. This leads him or her to the decision to marry you. Go back to when you were dating and ask yourself what meant a lot to him or her. Second, when you really get in trouble in your marriage, or the marriage is threatened, what do you do to make up and show you care? Finally, answer this as if your life depended on it: How does your* partner *feel your love the most? If you're an intimacy anorexic, and you agree now that you know how your* partner *receives love, then why are they doing without it? If you don't have a clear, rational reason, then let me suggest that you are actively, intentionally withholding love from your* partner.

"The anorexic already knows how his or her partner wants to be loved, but withholds it."

Withholding Praise

The withholding of praise is also a significant recurring behavior for intimacy anorexics. To withhold praise is to refuse to share with your partner what you view as his or her positive qualities as a person and positive impact on your life.

Go back to, "as if your life depended on it... " If you had to write ten things that are amazing and positive about your partner or how he or she is impacting your life in a positive way, my bet is, you could absolutely make a list pretty quickly. If you're an anorexic, think about the last week or month and how frequently you

intentionally praised your partner. How often do you praise your partner *in front of his or her family, friends, or even the children? If you're the* partner *of an anorexic, reflect on this as well: When was the last time you received heartfelt praise from your partner without asking for it?*

All of us have amazing, positive qualities. Over time, anorexia closes this positive vision and tends to focus on the flaws of one's partner. If you haven't been praising your partner regularly for who he or she is and what he or she does, may I suggest that you could be actively and intentionally not praising them.

"To withhold praise is to refuse to share with your partner what you view as his or her positive qualities as a person and positive impact on your life".

Withholding Sex

By far, of all the behavioral characteristics of intimacy anorexia, withholding of sex is probably the easiest to measure, and at the very least, most obvious. Withholding sex from one's partner is anything one does to avoid having sex, including sabotaging sexual encounters or not connecting emotionally during sex.

You can tell if you are the partner *or the anorexic by recalling the last time you had sex. It might not be as easy for the anorexic to remember the last time he or she sabotaged a sexual encounter, whether it was before, during, or after it. It is even harder for the anorexic to remember withholding emotionally and spiritually during sex, or of giving all of himself or herself to his or her partner. Any of these behaviors could be an example of withholding sex. (In the Intimacy Anorexia workbook, I give some of these examples):*

• *During sex, do you look at your partner or close your eyes?*

•*Do you think of other things to do during sex?*

• *Do you fantasize about others or porn during sex?*

• *Do you communicate positively during sex?*

• *Are you silent during sex?*

• *Do you act as if you dread sex?*

• *Do you hurry your partner to get it over with?*

• *Do you leave your partner emotionally or physically after sex?*

• *Do you shut your partner down when talking about sex?*

“Withholding sex from one’s partner is anything one does to avoid having sex, including sabotaging sexual encounters or not connecting emotionally during sex.”

Withholding Spiritually

The characteristic of withholding spiritually is also only noticed by the partner. I have had clients that were spiritual leaders, pastors, rabbis, and even medicine men who didn’t connect spiritually with their partners. To withhold spiritually is to withhold spiritual connectedness from one’s partner—regardless of faith practices (or lack thereof)— so there is no genuine, spiritually connective behavior with him or her. The anorexic might be religious to the hilt, but the spirituality is not authentic in the presence of his or her partner.

I’ve heard countless excuses for this, especially from the religious anorexic, (regardless of faith): “I do this just by myself.” “It’s not my personality.” “My partner is too spiritual (or not spiritual enough), so I don’t connect with him or her, spiritually.” Regardless of the rationalization, there is an absence of spiritual connection between the intimacy anorexic and his or her partner.

“To withhold spiritually is to withhold spiritual connectedness from one’s partner—regardless of faith practices (or lack thereof)— so there is no genuine, spiritually connective behavior with him or her.”

Feelings

This characteristic can be described as being unwilling or unable to share feelings with one's partner. Having difficulty sharing feelings is also a universal characteristic of the intimacy anorexic. As we stated earlier, addictions hinder emotional development.

If you're the partner of an intimacy anorexic, you may have difficulty remembering a time when your husband or wife voluntarily shared feelings with you without having to write the "emotional check" for the experience. If the anorexic's image of the marriage is threatened, or he or she really blows it somehow, you can expect some feelings being shared. But this fades away a week or two after the activating event.

The sharing of feelings is an act of authenticity that can be scary, difficult, or both, for the intimacy anorexic. The anorexic's unwillingness or inability to share feelings can be intentional, to not give you love the way he or she knows you like it. At some point, this could legitimately be a skill deficit. In such a case, when he or she does the Feelings Exercise with you, you will both experience real effort and connection. While doing the Feeling Exercise, if the anorexic is not trying to connect, and simply appears to be checking off a box, you will experience the "unwilling" part of the addiction to withholding.

"The anorexic's unwillingness or inability to share feelings can be intentional, to not give you love the way he or she knows you like it."

Criticism

Ongoing or ungrounded criticism that leads to distance in the marriage is the seventh characteristic of intimacy anorexia. This can include low-grade put-downs toward one's partner, focusing on what he or she does wrong, or just regularly criticizing his or her bad ideas. Ungrounded criticism has little to do with reality. This strategy may be used to push the partner away or throw him or her off the trail of something. Either way, it intentionally creates distance.

Criticism in this category does not need to be spoken. So many partners have told me that their husbands or wives don't actually verbalize their criticism, but

they can feel it constantly anyway.

If criticism is an active strategy, the intimacy anorexic will be much faster at making a list of what's wrong, defective, or weak about their partner than what is amazing. Criticism can also be employed in a binge tactic to push away one's partner when intimacy or sex seems to be expected. This would include: birthdays, holidays, and right before vacation. This is the intimacy anorexic pushing the partner away so he or she doesn't have to give to the partner emotionally or sexually.

"Criticism can also be employed in a binge tactic to push away one's partner when intimacy or sex seems to be expected."

Anger/Silence

My experience with intimacy anorexics is that not all use silence or anger as characteristic of their intimacy anorexia. However, those who use anger or silence as a characteristic do so with a vengeance. This intimacy anorexia characteristic can be described as any use of anger or silence to push away, punish, or control one's partner.

I have spent countless hours listening to stories from partners and intimacy anorexics alike about using anger or silence toward their partners. Sometimes the examples are extreme, including times when the intimacy anorexic won't talk to his or her partner *for days or weeks—even while living in the same house. The anger explosion is often over something minor, and is a great tool to push the partner away and avoid giving one's heart to them.*

If the intimacy anorexic uses anger or silence as a tool in the anorexia, the partner can expect it often. If the intimacy anorexic chooses recovery, to conquer this behavior, he or she will need consequences for it.

"This intimacy anorexia characteristic can be described as any use of anger or silence to push away, punish, or control one's partner."

Money

The characteristic of controlling or shaming one's partner about money is probably the least common among intimacy anorexics. However, those who employ this use it with an iron fist. Most of the anorexics who control or shame with money do so by keeping their partners ignorant of household finances, give them an allowance, make their partners ask for money, or refuse to allow their partner to have a credit card or checkbook.

However, there is another side of controlling through money. I call it "controlling through abundance." This partner*, male or female, has substantial money, but has many controls over it. Their attitude is, I buy you everything, so don't complain about a lack of intimacy, love, or sex. This type of controlling by money isn't as obvious as control by not giving.*

Shaming one's partner about money can also be a part of this intimacy anorexic characteristic. In this case, it's perfectly okay for the intimacy anorexic to spend money on whatever he or she wants, but the partner *has to account for everything, or is put down for purchases—even legitimate ones.*

"Most of the anorexics who control or shame with money do so by keeping their partners ignorant of household finances..."

Free

At the beginning of the chapter I said I would throw in a free characteristic. Well, here it is. The keyword here would be, "roommate." The partner of the anorexic feels like (or even stated) he or she feels like a roommate. I have heard this comment from partners so many times that I often add it to the end of my assessment of clients for anorexia.

Characteristic	As I'd Respond	As I Think My Partner Would Respond	My Partner's Response

Busy	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Blame	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Withholding Love	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Withholding Praise	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Withholding Sex	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Feelings	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Criticism	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Anger/Silence	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*
Money	*Y N*	*Y N*	*Y N*

If you answered yes to five or more questions, intimacy anorexia is most likely present in your relationship. There is hope! Intimacy anorexia can go into full remission. Over the years, I've helped numerous clients who hadn't had sex for ten years or more due to intimacy anorexia. Often, within six to eight weeks of developing their intimacy skills, these clients not only began having the best sex of their lives, but both partners actually started liking each other again.

Regardless of your battlefield (sexual abuse, addiction, or intimacy anorexia) you can become sexually successful. I have counseled men from all walks of life with these issues— some with all three— and have seen their sex lives make an incredible turnaround.

What follows below is an outline of a very practical non touchy-feely approach for overcoming each one of these battlefronts. In my counseling practice, I have assisted my clients in winning these battles thousands of times. The outline

works if you do the work that needs to be done.

If you have read to this point, you may not have any of these challenges to work through. If you don't, be thankful! You might just want to glance through this section for general information, though, because these issues are very prevalent in our culture today, so you may be able to pass on some help to someone else I will never get the opportunity to meet.

"Regardless of your battlefield (sexual abuse, addiction, or intimacy anorexia)

you can become sexually successful."

Resolving Abuse

Regardless of the gender of your perpetrator, or the age difference, the following exercises can help tremendously in overcoming abuse issues. It will help you gain closure for past painful events. In case you need more help than afforded by these two exercises, seek the guidance of a professional counselor who specializes in healing the abuse that has happened to you or your partner.

Symbolic Confrontation

Realize that when you experienced abuse, all of you—entirely—was affected. Even if you didn't want to be, you were. Moreover, when someone is sexual, they are absolutely the most vulnerable they can be. So if a sexual perpetrator uses you as a sex object, it affected you in all three parts of your being (spirit, soul, and body). Physical and emotional abuse impacts you significantly as well.

Not all, but many traditional therapists are ineffective in handling abuse because they try to deal with this three-dimensional problem using a one-dimensional method. The process I am about to outline engages all three parts of your woundedness.

Note: As a word of caution, before you start the symbolic confrontations, if you have heart trouble or other health issues, consult your physician first.

Prepare your offenders list –Write a list of the offender(s) in your life. List the

offenses they committed, your age at the time of each offense, and a brief description of the offense.

Example:

• When I was seven years old, a neighbor boy had me…

• Dad left me when I was nine.

• A female babysitter forced me, at age twelve, to...

• A stranger in an adult bookstore did…

Rank these offenses in order of intensity, with the number "1" identifying the offense in which the highest level of abuse experienced. Next, you will confront each perpetrator symbolically, one at a time (an explanation of how to do this follows). You will confront one person per day, starting with the worst offender. I usually recommend that you give yourself 1-3 days between confronting each perpetrator.

Symbolic confrontations have four components that are all very important:

1. Write your anger letter.

2. Read your letter out loud.

3. Warm up for your symbolic confrontation.

4. Carry out your symbolic confrontation (hit the target).

I will detail each step below. Before starting, turn your phone off and make sure you have complete privacy for your confrontation.

1. Anger Letter —Write down the name of your offender, if you know it, and then write him or her a letter expressing all your feelings. Do not mail the letter — it is strictly therapeutic for your own recovery. If you could put this person in a chair, strap them down, and gag them, what would you like to say to them regarding what they have done to you? Include in your letter the effects his or her actions had on your life, your relationships, and your sexuality. Don't hold back any thoughts or feelings, and don't worry about your language, either. More than likely, abuse has dramatically affected your life and kept you from being

completely sexually successful. Your perpetrators deserve the rage you feel about them.

2. Read the Letter Out Loud—Now read your letter out loud as if to your offender. This is an important part of the exercise as well. As you read the letter, feelings will swell up inside of you. This is normal. The next step will help discharge that trauma.

3. Warm Up—Get a racquet or padded bat (usually available wherever bats are sold). You'll also need a mattress, pillow, or punching bag. Using your bat, strike the mattress with small, medium, large, and extra large hits. Practice doing this a time or two. Also, warm up your voice by saying "no" with each hit, louder and louder. Although this may seem awkward at first, it is essential to your symbolic confrontation, which will enable you to release your rage.

4. Hit the Target—Now go at it with your padded bat on the mattress. Really let that mattress have it (as it symbolizes your perpetrator). You can hit, yell, kick, or do whatever you need to do to get the rage, shame, and hate out of you, and back on your perpetrator where it belongs. It's their shame you have been carrying all these years, not yours. This last step can take anywhere from ten minutes to an hour, depending on the ordeal you experienced and how deeply the pain is lodged inside of you. The more emotion you let out, the better you will feel afterward. You are now taking the bullet out of your being—spirit, soul, and body—and giving it back to the person responsible for inflicting you with it.

This is how a symbolic confrontation takes place. I have personally done this exercise with each of the offenders in my life. This gave me a concrete place and time for when I pulled the bullets out of my soul and began to heal.

I have noticed that everyone's experience with symbolic confrontation is quite unique. Some feel different immediately afterward. For others, it takes a few days before they realize they are free of the bondage that once strangled them.

Symbolic Releasing

In this second step you will not address your anger. Instead, you will release yourself from the perpetrator. You may have heard it said that forgiveness is

more for you than for anyone else. My personal and professional experience concurs that after doing the symbolic releasing, forgiveness is very therapeutic.

In this exercise you will need two chairs and privacy. Again, turn off the phone and make sure everyone is out of the house. Turn two chairs to face each other.

There are three phases to this exercise. I will walk you through each one.

Phase 1—Sit in one of the chairs (chair A). From that seat you will role-play the perpetrator. You can use your perpetrator's name if you know it. If he or she was a stranger, you can give him or her a name or simply say, "I am the one who abused you."

Acting as the perpetrator ("Fred" in this exercise), face chair B. Imagine yourself sitting in chair B. As Fred, you can own the abuse, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. Be sure to acknowledge the costs to yourself—the victim. Be specific and don't just say, "I'm sorry." Instead, if Fred was an adult who forced you into oral sex as a child, you may say something like, "I am the one who made you perform oral sex. I used you like other boys I had victimized. You were just an object to me when I did this to you. I know I must have damaged your life. I hope you can heal. I now ask you to forgive me."

Phase 2 – After the perpetrator has appropriately apologized to you, then physically get up and move to chair B. In chair B, role-play yourself receiving the information from your perpetrator, just role-played. You have just heard him apologize and ask forgiveness for the acts he did to you, and the effect they had on you.

In chair B, you can respond *any way you like*. You may not be ready to release the offender at this time. Whatever your thoughts or feelings are, verbalize them out loud to the perpetrator. The purpose of this exercise is for you to be honest. Releasing the offender at some point is a gift you can give to yourself. His or her life moved on, whether you "let them off the hook" or not. By forgiving and releasing the offender, you are *not* approving of what he or she did to you. You are simply releasing that behavior from having an influence in your life any longer.

If you are unable to forgive or release the offender at this time, try this exercise again in a month or so. However, if you were able to let go, move on to Phase 3.

Phase 3—Physically move back to chair A and resume the role of the perpetrator. Now you need to respond to the forgiveness or releasing that has been extended toward you. This concludes your symbolic confrontation. Fred would say something like, “I don’t deserve your forgiveness, but thank you for forgiving me. I hope you can live free from the pain I caused you.”

This is a powerful exercise for most people. As you complete it you can fully say goodbye to this chapter of your life.

From this point on, at least for the majority of people who complete this exercise, you will be able to view the abuse as part of your history, but no longer suffer the effects of it. This is similar to bearing a scar from an accident, but no longer suffering the pain of it.

I hope that all who need to heal from the lingering effects of abuse will complete these exercises. They have changed thousands of men and women’s lives. If you still struggle with the impact of sexual trauma after doing these exercises, I recommend you see a counselor who specializes in sexual trauma.

Overcoming Addiction

Overcoming an addiction can be one of the hardest, but most life-changing things someone can do in life. The grip of addiction is real, and so are the principles for healing. Here are some general points on addiction, and a few suggestions for those who struggle with sexual addiction.

1. You have to be honest that you have a problem.
2. You have to be willing to take full responsibility for the problem. (I tell my clients, “When you’re the problem, you’re the solution.”)Educate yourself about your particular addictions.
3. Get into a Twelve Step support group or addiction recovery group specific to your issue.
4. Call someone from that group every day for at least ninety days.
5. Get a sponsor in the group.
6. Get professional help if you are failing.
7. Focus on the positive you are fighting for.

“Overcoming an addiction can be one of the hardest, but most life-changing things someone can do in life”.

These sex addiction suggestions are taken from the books, *The Final Freedom: Pioneering Sexual Addiction* and, *101 Practical Exercises for Sexual Addiction*. I recommend the sex addict do all the above and consider these ideas as well:

1. Block all access to the behavior (i.e. a porn blocker, quit social media, etc.).
2. Set consequences for acting out behavior (i.e. pick up trash for two hours).
3. If the addiction involved others, break off all contact with them.
4. Do an assessment to find out what type of sex addict you are. (There is a test available at www.sexaddict.com, or call a counselor trained by www.aasat.org.)Make arrangements to do a three or five-day intensive in our office.
5. Consider doing quarterly polygraphs to verify sobriety and re-establish trust.
6. Educate yourself on the impact on your partner (i.e. Helping Her Heal DVD, Partners: Healing from His Addiction available at www.drdougweiss.com).

Healing Intimacy Anorexia

Intimacy anorexia is its own process of healing and recovery. Much like the addiction suggestions, get educated (*Intimacy Anorexia: The Book, Intimacy Anorexia: The Workbook, Intimacy Anorexia: The Steps*, as well as our *Married and Alone* series). Both joining a telephone group for intimacy anorexia, and doing a three or five-day intensive with us could be very helpful to you.

In this book we will discuss what we call the three dailies (two feelings, two praises, and spiritual connection). These are great for every relationship, but imperative for intimacy anorexia. The intimacy anorexic should take full responsibility to initiate these exercises, and give himself or herself a consequence if the activities have not been initiated by a certain time each day. For example, if Sue is the intimacy anorexic, she would initiate. She would set a 9 p.m. deadline for completing the dailies, and if not completed, she would give John a thirty-minute massage, starting at 9:01 p.m.

“Regardless of the roadblock you may have, there is always

hope if you are honest and willing to do the work."

In a future chapter we will discuss a sexual agreement. For the first sixty days, the intimacy anorexic initiates all sexual encounters. He or she would set consequences for not doing so. So if Tony is the intimacy anorexic, he would ask Jan to be sexual, with an agreed upon frequency each week. If these goals are not met, he would give himself a consequence (i.e. clean toilets, sleep in garage, or give $100 to the political party he doesn't vote for).

Regardless of the roadblock you may have, there is always hope if you are honest and willing to do the work. I have worked with men and women who had one of three, two of three, and all three roadblocks. They did the work and now have amazingly healthy relationships or marriages, and also are now having the best sex of their lives.

You may need to face and overcome your roadblock. Decide for yourself what you need to do to have an amazing relationship and sex life!

7. ASK

I want to take you into my office. It's the last day of a couple's intensive. Beginning Monday and following, we have addressed sex addiction, intimacy anorexia, sexual trauma, and severe structural issues in the marriage. As we begin the last day, the couple has begun to like—even love—each other again (or more deeply) because of all the skills they learned in the intensive to that point.

The last day of the marriage intensive is sex day. We walk through some pretty sensitive conversations as we explore the subject together. Interestingly, most don't know their partner's sex language before the intensive. We work through hurt feelings, misunderstandings, miscommunications, resentments, fears about sexuality in the future and more.

I recall one couple to my office one morning I will call them Ken and Claire. Both Ken and Claire were in their late fifties, had raised their daughters, and actually appeared to be doing well. They were both graying blondes, and stylishly dressed. Ken was a successful corporate man who made plenty of money, which allowed his family a country club lifestyle, private schools, extravagant vacations and other upper class amenities typical of those at that level of income.

During the week we had to address Ken's sexual addiction, which had led to several affairs. We also had addressed Claire's extreme intimacy anorexia and a few other things. On that last day, it was sex day for Ken and Claire.

We had already discovered several sexual issues that have or will be addressed in other chapters in this book. We finally reached the moment when I asked Ken and Claire what I had asked many other couples on sex day: "So, how are you both at asking each other for sex?"

When I asked this question, their reaction made it clear they thought I had asked some crazy, unwanted question, or was making some derogatory insinuation. Neither seemed to know how to respond. A long, awkward silence followed, and I just left it there in the room, hovering like a spaceship. After about a minute of silence and awkward looks, I said, "Never mind...you answered my question."

Their response to this question was somewhat typical, and I let them know this. I explained to them as I had so many others that most of us never learned how to ask our partners for sex. We don't learn this in high school, college, church, or from our family...and certainly not from pornography. We are young, we get married, and we create interesting ways of communicating about sex (or should I say, miscommunicating).

I'll give you a very common example as an illustration. To do so, I will leave Ken and Claire in the room and recount a story of another couple I'll call Adam and Charlotte.

One day, Adam had a pretty good day at the office. He thought about Charlotte in a romantic and sexual way throughout the day, and couldn't wait to make love with her that night.

Upon arriving home that evening, he was greeted at the door by two little boys screaming, "Daddy's home!" This greeting rolled and tumbled into the backyard. Along the way, he found Charlotte and gave her a quick kiss before continuing through the back door. In the backyard, Adam enjoyed wrestling with the boys and then kicked a soccer ball around with them.

A few minutes later, Charlotte motioned for them to come in for dinner. Dinner went well and Adam cleared the table, helped with dishes, and helped the boys with their homework. Charlotte cleaned up the house and did laundry. Then came bedtime and baths, the brushing of teeth, pajamas, story reading, and a couple attempts to keep the boys in their room. Adam and Charlotte both wrapped up their personal routines and went to bed.

Then it happened. Adam made his move (mind you, without saying a word), by lightly touching Charlotte's back. He had been looking forward to sex all day long. Charlotte did not respond.

Adam thought he had just asked for sex. Charlotte had not perceived the question, and did not know what Adam was thinking.

Adam tried again, but got no response from Charlotte. For her part, after a long day at work and evening tasks, Charlotte was very tired and had been drifting off

to sleep when Adam touched her.

Adam was frustrated. He had been a “good boy” all day. He ran through the day in his head: *I got up at 5 a.m., showered, did some push-ups, drove thirty minutes to work, put up with my boss, dealt with office politics and team issues, barely ate lunch, rushed home (another thirty minutes), played with the boys, helped clean up, helped the boys with homework, and even put the boys to bed...and this is what I get—a cold shoulder?*

As he thought more and more about the injustice of his life, he began to fume. Charlotte, who had been asleep for a few minutes, was abruptly awakened when Adam huffed, “Fine!” He left the bedroom to sleep on the sofa, he was so mad at Charlotte for rejecting him again, sexually. Charlotte was confused, but too sleepy, so she rolled over and went back to sleep.

Most couples have had a few nights like this. It kind of goes like this: he doesn’t ask, but he does, and she doesn’t respond (knowingly or not), he gets mad, she is confused (or not). He then ends up on the sofa. If you have lived it, you know exactly what I mean.

This was the problem that left Ken and Claire staring blankly at me as I asked how they asked each other for sex. Their silence said a lot, but I wanted to hear them articulate their methods of sexual communication.

Ken jumped into the conversation to rescue Claire from an awkward moment, saying, “Well, doc, I really don’t know how to ask. It’s not like we ask a question. It’s more like I give her the blue-eye look, and she acknowledges it in some way, like with a smile or a kiss, and then I know I am allowed to proceed. It’s like I get the green light and I am allowed to touch her. I can feel it on her body that she is open to the idea.” I thought I kind of saw the look he gave, and how it worked: smiling at me like he hoped he was correct—like a small boy in a classroom.

Charlotte’s nod affirmed what he said. “Claire,” I said, “How do you ask Ken for sex?” She gave me one of the blankest stares a woman can give. We went back to silence, but Ken and I both waited her out. Her response was classic for a female intimacy anorexic: “I don’t ask, Dr. Weiss—I just don’t ask.” Ken’s head

stopped nodding, as if he was intentionally being still so as not to do the wrong thing. “Why not?” I continued. “I just don’t,” she said.

At that point in our intensives, given these responses, I typically address the issue of sexual responsibility (which I will unpack in a future chapter). After explaining some of that, I decided to focus on Claire a bit more.
“Do you think Ken would like to be as
ked for sex?”
“Of course!” she shot right back. “He would like that and probably a few other things, as well!”

I could see Claire had become defensive because we were in an area where she was intentionally holding back from Ken and not asking for sex as part of her intimacy anorexia strategy, and she knew it. We were talking about who she had been in their sexual story their entire marriage.

As we moved through some feelings from both, it was clear Ken was definitely aware of the pain of not having been pursued or wanted sexually for decades. He sat very still when I asked Claire, “How do you think it feels, never to be asked to the sexual ‘dance,’ so to speak?” Her lack of awareness, silence, and attempts to not answer the question made it obvious she was uncomfortable with acknowledging Ken’s clear feelings of sexual rejection from her. As we progressed through, Claire brought up Ken’s betrayal, but knowing her behavior preceded the betrayal by twelve years, she relented and acknowledged that would be painful.

Then I had to move the conversation into the future and address the kinds of sexual initiation each wanted, and if they wanted something clearer than the blue-eye, green light initiation.” Their eyes lit up when I explained to them, “You do realize that you are going to have sex many hundreds or thousands of times between now and when you die?” They both thought for a minute and realized there was a whole lot of sex ahead of them.

“Now, let’s move into the future. If you’re both going to legitimately have sexual responsibility like adults in this relationship, you’re both going to have to get good at asking each other for sex.”

This was met with the deer in the headlights look, or, as they say in Texas, “a

cow looking at a new gate" look. Neither had a clue about what I was talking but, at this point, they were not resistant, just clueless on where I was going with the process.

I had them do what I have almost every couple do in a marriage intensive. I got up out of my very comfortable, large brown leather chair, walked across the room, grabbed two plain black chairs, and set them about two feet apart. I had Ken and Claire leave their comfortable, brown leather chairs to sit facing one another in the black chairs. I explained that asking for sex is just a skill. It is a skill one can learn and develop to the point where asking one's partner for sex is as easy as asking for a peanut butter sandwich.

Of course, at that point, I didn't think Ken or Claire believed me. However, both were willing to learn something new to have something new and better in their marriage and sexual life together.

I have to give every couple instructions on how to do this exercise effectively. Like physical exercise, form is very important to exercise. So it is with the "Asking for Sex" exercise. As I share these guidelines to Ken and Claire below, take note, because most likely you and your partner should do this (especially if asking for sex in a clear manner is not a strength in your relationship or marriage).

I began by saying to Ken, "Ken, let's start with you. I want you to ask Claire in a clear way to be sexual with you. Now, before you start, here are a few guidelines:

"First, I don't want you to use 'you' statements like, 'Do you want to…?' Instead, I want you to utilize 'I' statements like, 'I want to…' " Ken nodded that he understood.

"Second, I don't want you to be vague in any way. I don't want something like, 'Do you want to go upstairs?' Honestly, she won't know if she is agreeing to sex or getting a paint brush." They both smiled.

"Finally, but just as important, I want you to maintain eye contact when you do the exercise. So look Claire in her eyes when you ask."

With the guidelines in place and agreed to, I began the exercise.

“Ken, in some clear way, I want you to ask Claire three times to be sexual with you. Now, before you start, let me give Claire some directions. Listen in as well so when she asks you, you will know how to respond.”

Then I addressed Claire. “When Ken asks to be sexual with you, I want you to respond in the positive zone in word and in energy. I want you to avoid neutral words like ‘okay,’ ‘sure,’ and ‘fine,’ or neutral energy. I want words like, ‘great,’ ‘awesome,’ ‘glad you thought of that,’ ‘you bet,’ and ‘I would love to.’ Responses like that not only say yes, but say so from the heart. He is going to ask you three times, and then you are going to respond. When Ken is done, we will switch. Claire, you will ask and Ken will respond positively [to which Ken nodded vigorously].”

I gave Ken the cue to go and he began. When Ken and Claire asked each other the first set of three times, they were still awkward. So I had them repeat this until they had each done three sets of asking each other for sex. By the time they completed the exercise they were much more relaxed.

Then I gave the final instruction, asking them both to commit to asking each other at lease two sets for two weeks. They agreed to do this.

I am happy to say that during a follow-up session a month later, asking for sex was not an issue at all for either of them. Ken and Claire were asking for sex back and forth, and having sex consistently more than before. They were both glad they had taken the time to practice the exercise.

I wish only clients in our intensives had difficulty asking for sex. But in the last twenty years of my career, I have been doing marriage conferences regularly all over the United States and other parts of the world as well. also . (Imagine that!) I can say with great veracity that this is a huge problem for many couples.

In those conferences, just as I did with Ken and Claire, I have couples follow the same directions for asking and responding to being asked for sex. Often, we have done several other activities to help couples develop intimacy prior to the Asking for Sex exercise.

However, after doing the exercise I will ask the crowd (which may include hundreds of couples), “How many of you would say this is the hardest exercise you did at this conference?” Regardless of where I am in the country or world, many people will raise their hands acknowledging this particular lack of skill in their sexuality.

Asking for sex is an important part of enjoying your sexuality and the sexuality of your partner. By initiating sex with you on a consistent basis, your partner sends a very clear message of desire for you.

I realize that not every couple struggles in this particular area of sexuality. Some have been clearly asking each other for sex for decades. To these I say, “Congrats!” that this is a past and current strength of your sexuality together.

However, you might be reading this and it is making you feel tense. The thought of asking your partner for sex seems, at best, peculiar—at worst, terrifying.

I recommend you and your partner give this a go and do the Asking for Sex exercise—a complete set of three times. That means a total of nine times asking and nine times responding. Then discuss what you felt and experienced. After you discuss it, if that area is fine, just move on. However, if asking is not a strength keep doing it together until both of you are equally good at asking for sex.

Remember These Guidelines

1. Use “I” statements, not “you” statements
2. Nothing vague
3. Maintain eye contact
4. Respond with positive words and energy

Another chapter will go deeper into asking each other for sex based upon one’s particular sex language. That will be much easier to do if you practice. Below is a check off area for more days to practice.

1.	8.	15.
2.	9.	16.

3.	10.	17.
4.	11.	18.
5.	12.	19.
6.	13.	20.
7.	14.	21.

I wish you the best sex life ever. Like many things in life, it starts with asking. Happy practicing!

8. RESPONSIBILITY

As a couple you may have sex thousands of times between now and death. I know I am personally looking forward to each encounter with my lovely wife over the decades ahead of us in our marriage.

However, sex can be one of the least understood and least discussed subjects in the couple's relationship. Honestly, I am amazed that some couples even have sex as often as they do.

I'll never forget a couple I saw over two decades ago, Dane and Stacy. They are unforgettable for several reasons. First, they were both very attractive people in their early thirties. Second, they were in above average physical condition for their age. They had no children. They were successful. He was a doctor in his own practice and she was a successful nurse.

They had lots of money, lots of time, lots of opportunity, but they were having sex only a few times a year. That's what they both agreed was the problem they wanted to solve when they walked in my door.

I asked them some of the roadblock questions I normally ask couples. I asked Dane the questions about sexual addiction, pornography, sexual abuse, masturbation, low thyroid, and low testosterone, but he seemed to have no issues with any of these.

I asked Stacy questions about addiction, abuse, rape, abortion, and pornography, but she too seemed to have no real issues with any of them, so I switched gears. Obviously the past was not where the problem was for this particular couple. Their problem appeared to be in the present.

I then asked Dane a Captain Obvious question: "How often would you like to have sex in a given week?" He promptly (though sheepishly) answered, "Two to three times per week." This was in the normal range.

Then I asked Stacy the same Captain Obvious question: "How often would you like to have sex in a given week?" She looked me straight in the eye and responded with great confidence (in a way that reminded me of an elementary

school child giving her teacher what she knew to be the right answer): “Two to three times a week.” Okay, that was good and healthy.

I sat back for a moment because, honestly, their answers made this a bit confounding. They were having sex three to four times a year, but they both wanted sex two to three times per week.

“Okay,” I said, “so you’re both wanting sex two to three times a week, but you’re having it less than quarterly.”
“Yes,” they both nodded.
What happened just after this was truly amazing to me.
“Dane, why do you think you are having sex so little?” I asked.

“Well, I wait and wait for her to want to have sex,” he said. “This goes on for weeks. Then I get very mad at her for not wanting sex for all those weeks. I know this is passive-aggressive, but then I don’t want to talk to her, so I busy myself with work, exercise, or something. After weeks of that, somehow we start talking, like each other again, and then I know she wants to have sex.”

I asked Stacy the same question about why they were having sex so rarely. Her answer was quite amazing.

“I wait for weeks for Dane to want to have sex. He doesn’t ask or hint in any way that he is interested in sex. Then I get really rejected, feel unwanted, and think I am ugly and fat—which I know isn’t true, but that’s the way I feel. I get hit on all the time, but he doesn’t want me. Then I go into my polite, short answer thing for several weeks. I mean, who wants to be around someone who doesn’t want you, right? Then, somehow, we start talking again—like actual conversations. I start feeling close to him, and I think he wants to have sex, so then we do...and the sex is great. But then we do this same crazy cycle again and again.”

A few things are very interesting about this couple’s responses. You have two people who really want to have sex. In fact, they both want it regularly. They both depict the same cycle, so it is probably close to what is happening. However, something very curious was missing from their description of the cycle they repeat again and again.

From what they told me I couldn’t figure out two things: Who did they believe was responsible for sex to happen inside their marriage, him? Her? Both? Who actually initiated the sex? From both accounts of the story, it sounded like sex just somehow happened at the end of their “crazy cycle.”

How did two bright people who both want sex, and have good sex when they do, get into such a mess? This question loomed in the back of my brain, and I knew they were paying me to help them leave with an answer.

“Who is responsible for sex to happen in your marriage—or to ask for sex in your marriage?” I asked Dane.

“Why, she is!” he said. “She’s the woman, and I don’t want to be seen as pushing myself on her or being demanding, as if all I want is sex all the time—like some dog that hasn’t eaten for a week.” His answer intrigued me.

“Stacy,” I asked, “Who is responsible for sex, or to initiate sex in your marriage?” Stacy, again very confident, said without hesitation, “Of course it’s the guy’s job to initiate sex.” Interestingly, she didn’t really have a reason why she believed this. She said it with an inflection of certainty—that she was saying something everybody knows.

The reason why this otherwise successful couple was not having sex very often became a bit more obvious at that point. It was also slightly humorous.

“I think I understand the problem,” I said. I am confident my eyes were smiling as I said, “You both fully believe that the other person is to wholeheartedly initiate sex with you. You not only believe this, you behave this way as well.”

It had become obvious why this cycle of “not asking—misunderstanding—pulling away from each other—holding on to hurt feelings for weeks—feeling rejected and angry—then after weeks, coming together for sex once a quarter” had taken hold.

I wish Dane and Stacy were the only couple I encountered in my career that experienced huge sexual misunderstandings brought on by ideas they formerly believed about sex, gender, and responsibility. If such ideas are not discovered and discussed, they can wreak long-term havoc on relationships or marriages,

potentially for decades, cause all types of hardship for couples.

This is why it is so important to know what your partner believes and why. You will then both have a clear understanding of what each believes, and be better able to enjoy your sex languages. You can negotiate and create a common understanding about sexuality, and do so with a clearer understanding of where your partner is coming from.

You Think

Many couples have never really had a conversation about who is ultimately responsible for sex to happen in their relationship. I know this sounds basic, but I am repeatedly amazed at what people actually think about this and how rare it is that they have discuss it with their partners. In the graphic below, both you and your partner should check the boxes that most closely reflect your thoughts. Then write out what you believe in response to the questions that follow.

Him	Her
I believe that _____ is responsible for sex to happen in our relationship. He She Both	I believe that _____ is responsible for sex to happen in our relationship. He She Both
Why? _____ _____ _____	Why? _____ _____ _____
What did you learn about yourself? _____ _____ _____ _____	What did you learn about yourself? _____ _____ _____ _____

What did you learn about your partner? _____ _____ _____ _____	What did you learn about your partner? _____ _____ _____ _____

Let’s Talk

Ultimately, however, the two of you agree that responsibility will work as long as you both agree. You don’t want to be like Dane and Stacy, both making incredible assumptions about sexuality, gender, and responsibility for sex happening inside of their marriage.

Here are some random comments I have heard from men as to why they believe the woman should be responsible for initiating sex:

• She ultimately controls whether we do or not anyway.
• It’s polite.
• I don’t want to be a bully.
• I only like sex if she’s into it.
• If she doesn’t ask, she doesn’t want it.
• She knows when she is ovulating.
• She knows when she is done with her period.
• Only she knows when she’s not tired, doesn’t have a headache, or if the room is too warm/cold, and so on.
• I hate the excuses so I just wait. That’s all I can do.
• If it’s not her idea, all I get is service sex, and that’s worse than not having sex.
• I have no idea why it’s up to her. It just is.

Here are some reasons women said they believe it is the man’s job to initiate sexuality in the relationship.

• He thinks about it all the time.
• I don’t have a voice anyway.
• He is stronger.
• He has more testosterone.
• That’s what my religion says.

• He’s moody if he doesn’t get “it” when he wants it.
• It’s better to do it than pay the price.
• I have enough to think about with kids, work, and the rest.
• He can handle the sex department.
• Men are more sexual.
• Men are initiators. Women are followers.
• I’m not aggressive anywhere else in life, so why should I be in sex?
• If he wants it, he has to ask.

Again, there is nothing innately wrong if a couple decides that one person is nearly 100 percent responsible for sexuality and initiating sex. However, there are some innate issues that can come with one person managing the sexuality. Let me walk through some of these unintended or unforeseen consequences of one person being fully in charge of sex.

Resentment can occur when one partner is totally in control of anything in a marriage or significant relationship, whether it be money, children, household chores, friendship, spirituality, or other aspects of the relationship.

When one person totally controls an area, even if the couple agrees, there is the possibility resentment will grow. Here are some examples:

• “You never let me see the money.”
• “You never help with the children.”
• “You don’t help at all around the house.”
• “It’s always your way or the highway.”
• “I guess I’m just your slave.”

Comments like these often come from couples when a system or cycle evolves over time, usually without much of a discussion or vote, resulting in resentment and anger. The partner stuck with the responsibility resents the other person (even if they agreed initially). After a period of resentment over the imbalance or inequity of assigned responsibilities, anger will tend to build up in the person who does all the providing, cleaning, raising children, and so on. Anger moves to more conflict if the system doesn’t find a truly agreeable balance.

Anger can show up in a passive-aggressive manner through overspending,

overeating, not cleaning up after oneself, or statements like this: “I know you want to go on a date with me, but I’m going out with my friends instead.”

Entitlement can be a symptom of a system out of balance. “I work, they don’t!” or, “I deserve it” or, “I’m at home all day...so I deserve it.” Often entitlement is a sneaky snake in the garden that whispers, “What you do or provide has greater value than what they provide.” Entitlement doesn’t look at the whole system, just the piece that justifies a greater value. Entitlement can lead to all kinds of dysfunctional behavior because once you’re entitled, you’re often entitled big time.

When one person controls a significant area of the relationship, the victim role can become the fragrance in the relationship. The person who actually provides the service feels he or she is a victim of his or her partner, or the circumstances. Being a victim can lead to all kinds of unhealthy thoughts and behaviors.

When you take the idea of one person being totally in control of a significant area of a marriage and see the great potential for danger in it, you can imagine how magnified these dangers become when that area is sex. When a couple agrees to be exclusive sexually in a relationship they are saying, “I will trust you with all my sexuality.” So if the partner in control of the sexuality area is unkind, thoughtless, selfish, uncreative, or damaged in some way, it can be very challenging for the other partner (incredibly challenging if this partner has no voice).

In other areas, you can make changes. You can get a job, hire a maid service or nanny, and so on. But when it comes to sex in an exclusive relationship or marriage, outsourcing is not an option. This can create a higher—even toxic—level of anger, resentment, entitlement, or victimhood.

Many times when I discuss this with someone who doesn’t want to hear about it, I have to review something I wrote in my book, *Intimacy: The 100-Day Guide to Lasting Relationships.*

I will stop here to talk about marital sexual responsibility. The focus of this is on sexual maturity. Regardless of our physical age, in our sexual maturity, we can stay in a child or adolescent stage of development, or grow into the adult stage.

We might be age sixty and still a child in our emotional, financial, spiritual, or social development. A child in these areas wouldn't know how to share feelings, handle money, express mature spirituality, or initiate and develop friendships. An adolescent in any of these areas would be further along, but usually with some limitations. An adult in any of these areas would be competent.

It also true, however, that you can be an adult in one area (say financially), but socially have no friends. Also, you might be a spiritual giant in your community, but unable to handle money. Physical age does not in any way guarantee maturity in any area of life.

Having said this, I want to talk about sexual maturity. You could be eighty and still be a sexual child or adolescent. Sexuality is an area in which few people really question their maturity. It is the most interesting phenomenon. I think people think, I am having sex (at least sometimes), so I must be sexually mature. However, neither physical age nor frequency of sex are a guarantee of sexual maturity.

"Physical age does not in any way guarantee maturity in any area of life."

I want to highlight a few key characteristics of a sexual adult, adolescent, and child. I want to start off with sexual adulthood, then sexual adolescence, and then sexual child.

Before I get into this, I must say that it doesn't matter where you are, currently. You can mature in any area of life through education, practice, and accountability. The fact that you're reading this book is proof that you can learn and grow. And you can move further along in your sexual growth regardless of what stage you are currently in, even if you are a mature sexual adult. I am still growing sexually, and I hope to until "death do us part."

Development

Sexual Adult- Sexual adults accept themselves sexually. They no longer strive to be some cultural, religious, or pornographic ideal. They have found their sexuality, and are comfortable with it. They understand at a deep level that

sexuality is part of who they are all day long, not just when the clothes come off to participate in a sex act. They are lovers outside of the sexual act. They know what they enjoy giving and receiving sexually, and may experiment, but within the limits of who they are sexually. They won't be bullied, manipulated, or shamed sexually, because they themselves have accepted their sexuality.

A second characteristic of a sexual adult is that he or she pretty much accepts the sexuality of his or her partner, which can mean different preferences (i.e. sex language). He or she is sensitive to serving his or her partner sexually without violating his or her own sexuality.

> "Sexual adults accept themselves sexually. They no longer strive to be some cultural, religious, or pornographic ideal."

Finally, sexual adults maintain and value sexual integrity. This has two applications. They value the sexuality of the marriage or relationship, so they protect it from people or influences that could weaken or damage it. They aren't looking on Craigslist or Facebook, or flirting to get attention. They have integrity inside the marriage or relationship. If they say they are going to be sexual on a regular basis, they are. They show up for sex in a mutual attitude of heart, not service.

Sexual Adolescent- Sexual adolescents look different from a sexual adult. Having sex or not having sex is mostly about them. In this development level of sexuality there is very little "us," and mostly "me." The sex act is mostly for them, or they control most of what happens during sex. It must fit what is acceptable to them.

Second, sexual adolescents are often unaware of their partner's sexuality, sexual need, desires, or sex languages—nor is this important to them. They will rarely educate themselves about their partner's sexual desires, but might have volumes on helping their partners serve them better, sexually.

The sexual adolescent gets angry about sex in three ways. He or she gets mad for "having to" have sex. This person can get or stay mad because sex is expected of

him or her. If you want sex, this person will punish you because in victim terminology, sex should not be “demanded.” Nor should you expect him or her to have sex.

“...sexual adolescents are often unaware of their partner’s sexuality, sexual need, desires, or sex languages...”

The sexual adolescent gets mad if he or she cannot have sex, even if for some legitimate reason: sickness, pregnancy, car wreck, a partner’s family member in the hospital or dead, and so on. This person is likely to pout, get angry, call the partner names, sleep on the sofa, or stay silent for hours or days as retribution for not having sex with him or her.

Finally, the sexual conversations with a sexual adolescent seem to be more immature and cheap—not really about making love or intimacy. This person’s vernacular and conversation may seem better suited for a guys’ school locker room or girls’ bathroom at a bar (and not occasionally, but typically). This person really can’t have a sexual conversation without sounding like *Maxim* magazine, or worse.

Sexual Child- A sexual child can be any age. Such a person might be sexually underdeveloped due to bad parenting (or lack of parenting) in the area of sexuality. However, in other areas he or she may have developed beyond his or her parents, though still choose to be stuck.

Sexual children do not really see themselves as sexual. They see sex as something they do or have to do rather than an extension of who they are toward their partner.

A sexual child will rarely initiate sex. They find initiating sex difficult because of their lack of sexual development. If you’re married to or in a committed relationship with a sexual child, this can make the cycle we talked about almost inevitable.

The sexual child will rarely talk about sex, and any time his or her partner does, claims “all you want to talk about is sex,” even if the last such conversation the couple had was a decade or more ago. A sexual child is just that, a child. He or

she tends to get stuck on, “No!” and, “Mine!” This emotional state toward sexuality makes it almost impossible to have sexual conversations about frequency, physical aspects, or pleasure. He or she wants to avoid sexual conversations at all cost.

> “A sexual child will rarely initiate sex. They find initiating sex difficult because of their lack of sexual development.”

I think you can see why it was beneficial to cover this material prior to exploring mutually responsible sexuality. Dane and Stacy didn’t have issues with sexual maturity like some couples do. They were given the ideas of sexual agreement and sexual maturity and moved right along. However, for some, before mutually responsible sexuality can even be addressed, they must make some movement toward mutuality, which may require one or both relationship partners to grow in his or her sexuality.

In a mutually responsible sexuality both partners ask each other for sex on a regular basis.

The usual pushback statement I get on this is, “I never say no when he/she asks.” That sounds good, but in actuality, by not initiating sex one can clearly send any of these messages to one’s partner (even if one does not feel this way):

Imagine for a moment what it would feel like if this is what you believed your partner believes about sex—especially sex with you. I can tell you from my nearly thirty years of counseling experience that when one partner does not initiate sex, his or her partner comes to believe one or more of the statements above.

When you initiate in any area of the relationship, you give value to that area. For example, when you initiate an exercise program, take responsibility for finances, or keep an area of your house clean consistently, it clearly means you give it value.

> “Imagine for a moment what it would feel like if this is

what you believed your partner believes about sex—especially sex with you”

When you initiate sex instead of just receiving it, you send an entire set of beliefs and emotions into your partner’s heart and sexuality. These messages generalize your desire for your partner, and sex with him or her. Here are some of those messages partners have told me they felt when their partners initiated sex with them consistently:

- I am wanted.
- I am needed.
- They want sex with me.
- I am attractive.
- They actually have regular sexual thoughts about me.
- I am valued.
- I am important.
- Sex with me is desirable.
- I’ve still got it.
- I am hot.
- I turn them on.
- They like sex.
- They like sex with me.
- I make my partner sexually happy.
- My partner is sexually hungry for me.
- My partner has a sexual appetite for me.
- They need and want me sexually.
- I am good at sex.
- Sex matters to my partner.

Now, imagine what this person feels like inside a marriage or intimate relationship. Yes, he or she feels wanted, attractive, sexually confident, and more secure. Initiation gives value—it just does. By your behavior you decide the way your partner might feel about you sexually—even how he or she might feel about himself or herself, sexually.

As you discuss sexual responsibility for your relationship, I strongly encourage you to discover if your partner’s beliefs prevent a mutually responsible sexuality.

In my nearly thirty years of counseling couples, I have found that sexually mutually responsible couples tend to be much more healthy, engaging, and creative than those in solo responsibility systems. Solo systems can work as long as both partners are in full agreement, and neither partner resents the other for not being a sexual adult in the area of initiating sex. My encouragement is to have the discussion, agree on the issue of responsibility, and then walk into having a great sex life together.

9. AGREE

One of the most important things I have learned in working with marriages or significant relationships is the power of agreeing. When a couple agrees on a system or way of thinking, or doing life together, there is more harmony in the relationship.

This can be true of agreeing on small things: who takes out the garbage, who pays the bills, how much to put in savings each week, what is worthy of going into debt for, spirituality, how often we date, and more. When both partners agree, there are no battles in the agreed upon areas anymore, and there is peace in the land (so to speak).

If you are married or in a long-term committed relationship, you have traveled the road of discovering—and hopefully resolving—areas of disagreement. In the next few pages, I want to walk you through a familiar, but often an unlanguaged process couples go through to get into agreement in an area.

I feel this discussion is particularly helpful before we explore the potentially loaded subject of sex. When you understand the process a couple goes through when moving from disagreement to agreement, you will be better able to monitor your progress as you move through any possible sexual disagreements to sexual agreement.

Sexual agreement means a couple agrees on the frequency and kind of sexuality, and (as we will explore in the next chapter) what is agreeable to the couple, sexually. This sexual agreement is very peaceful and sexually relaxing to both partners in the relationship.

1. Discovery

Discovering conflict inside a relationship is absolutely normal, healthy, and going to occur no matter how long the partners know each other. Discovering conflict rarely happens in a predictable or scheduled manner. It’s like scheduling a cold or a car accident—it just happens.

Things might well be going along with you two pretty well when ”it” happens.

You know what I mean by ”it.” It is that almost magical moment when you suddenly find yourself in a topic for discussion you didn’t foresee or plan and – whammo – you realize you disagree slightly...or horrifically.

You could be talking about one of the children, a neighbor, a political or spiritual subject, or that in-law experiencing challenges in life. You or they make a less-than-thought-through statement and—whammo—it could be hours before you both recover from the difference between you that you’ve discovered.

Don’t worry, life is set up in such a way that this will most likely happen until “death do us part.” You both come from a different family of origin, system, and life experience. You have different types of relationships with friends and family. You may or may not have to deal with different values, spiritual experiences, sexual encounters, or previous relationships or marriages. Then you both bring to the table inherent differences due to culture, being male or female, and birth order.

If all that isn’t enough to interact with, you have money, politics, and neighbors as well. Then when you think things are calm, life itself throws changes at you to help expose your personal uniqueness, differences you have with each other, and emotions that go with those differences. Some of these have to do with children, adolescent changes of life, hormones, moving your household, job changes and issues, death of people you care about, and many others.

2. Paradigms

There is an interesting dynamic that occurs when a couple has a disagreement. When disagreement occurs, the paradigm each places on couple conflict can itself become the problem and limit the couple from expediting or moving toward agreement.

A paradigm is simply the way we look at something. In this case, it is how each partner looks at couple conflict. Sometimes these paradigms are “shoulds” each believes, sometimes emotionally charged ideas, and sometimes ideas each has carefully thought through. (Caution: Your paradigm for conflict in other relationships may or may not vary from your paradigm for people who are

married or in a long-term committed relationship.)

“A paradigm is simply the way we look at something.”

I want to start with just a random list of paradigms I have been exposed to as I have worked with couples for over a quarter of a century. Here are some of those paradigms:

- Perfect couples don’t have conflict.
- If you loved me you wouldn’t disagree.
- This means we are unraveling as a couple.
- Conflict means you’re mad at me.
- Conflict means you reject me.
- Conflict means I am stupid.
- Conflict means I am not enough.
- Conflict means I am worthless.
- Conflict means somebody is wrong.
- Conflict means somebody is right.
- Conflict means we are not happy.
- Conflict means we can’t be happy.
- Conflict means our children will be screwed up.
- Conflict means you’re going to get out of control.
- Conflict means I won’t be heard.
- Conflict means I won’t be validated.
- Conflict means I won’t be understood.
- Conflict means it’s all over.
- Conflict means we are never going to get along.
- I must capitulate to show I love or respect my partner.
- It’s better to lie and just pretend you agree.
- It’s not important enough so just let them have their opinion about that.
- I don’t want to ever argue.
- This could lead to a bigger fight.
- If I am quiet he/she won’t know I disagree.
- I must win (they must lose).
- There are no rules to conflict. Game on!

I could write pages more about the interesting things some people almost reflexively believe or feel about conflict, or equally interesting ways they

respond to it. Of course, not everyone has what I call an interesting perspective about conflict. Others, through their family of origin, personality, conflict training at work, or counseling, have a more helpful way to look at conflict:

• This is normal.
• The quicker we get to why we disagree the better.
• We are going to learn something about each other.
• Of course, we are different.
• Seeing things differently brings balance or wisdom.
• I can understand and validate a view even if I myself don't hold it.
• I can experience my feelings and have conflict without being manipulative.
• I am on a journey to learn about my partner.
• Learning is the purpose of disagreement.
• We will be stronger than before this discussion.
• Being respectful is really more important than being right.
• No conflict justifies rudeness, ugliness, or name-calling.
• I just need to state what I am feeling, thinking, or believing, and not change the other person.
• I am not perfect in my beliefs, so I can change them without shame.
• There are some guidelines for conflict, and if I disrespect them or the other person I will apologize without being asked.

Again, I could write much more about the beliefs people have about conflict. In the space below, write out some ideas you currently hold about conflict, and have your partner write out his or her ideas as well. Then, be honest. Look at your behavior during conflict to help you assess what you actually believe, not what you wish you believed.

Person 1's Ideas	Person 2's Ideas
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now write down ideas you'd like to follow during conflict.

1._____
2._____
3._____
4._____
5._____
6._____
7._____
8._____
9._____
10._____

If conflict is a challenge for your relationship, I recommend you read the "Fighting Fair" chapter in my book, *The 10-Minute Marriage*.

3. Repeat Conflict

I wish this really wasn't the process, but in reality, many couples disagree again and again on exactly the same issue (topic, person, or circumstance) for days, weeks, years, or decades. The couple is not able to go deeper into conflict on the issue. The couple might choose not to discuss it, but it still comes up. They might not be skilled enough to resolve the conflict by themselves, so they don't reach out for help from others to resolve it. Finally, life keeps giving the opportunity for this issue to reappear, so the couple keeps having the same conflict conversation.

4. Getting to the Origins

If a couple wants to not repeat a conflict, it is best that they resolve it. However, to resolve the disagreement, they are going to have to find out where the opinions of both people come from by making themselves students of one another. Disagreements might be based in long held beliefs partners have that were never challenged before the relationship. Also it could come from an unchallenged family belief system, tradition, or spiritual community.

You might also discover the reason for the conflict is totally emotional and

spring from feeling fear, rejection, like not enough, unworthy, or others. If a person has primitive emotional skills this could stay locked until he or she gets better at expressing and processing emotions. I would highly recommend my book, *Emotional Fitness,* to break through conflicts based on emotion.

> “Emotions can be huge players when a couple is stuck in a repeat conflict.”

When it comes to sex or initiating sex, more than one of my clients has said they felt emotionally shut down, and for a variety of reasons. They wanted to be more sexual, but could not seem to break through. After even just one session doing exercises from my book, *Emotional Fitness,* they were able to feel, manage, and switch their emotions, and have the sex they had always longed for that night and thereafter.

Emotions can be huge players when a couple is stuck in a repeat conflict. When the couple probes more deeply into a conflict, it can expose each partner’s erroneous ideas or clear misunderstandings. Getting to know the origin can take a while, but it is time well spent. Discovering the origins can be very illuminating.

I remember early in our marriage when Lisa and I had a conflict over garbage. That’s right, garbage. As we discussed it we learned we had two different garbage experiences. Lisa saw her mother walk quite a bit of garbage down the driveway to the curb, but remembers always thinking that if her dad “loved” her mom, he would do it. So, to Lisa, taking out the garbage meant I loved her. I grew up in a totally equalitarian garbage family, in which everyone walked the garbage to the curb. In our family, we stacked the garbage as high as we could in the containers. If you were there when it fell over, you took it outside. Once we got to the origins of our conflict we could get through the garbage disagreement and come to our own agreement. We have not disagreed about the garbage for over twenty-nine years.

5. Get to the Beliefs

Once Lisa and I got to our origins on the garbage issue, we could get to the

beliefs. Lisa's beliefs created as a child were:

• Men should take out the garbage.
• Taking out the garbage means the man loves you.

My beliefs about garbage were quite different:
• Garbage is an equal opportunity.
• Garbage is not a gender specific job.
• Garbage has nothing to do with my love for anyone.

I know the garbage illustration might seem trite, but it's a good one. Now I'll share a whole list of core beliefs men and women have about sex. Partners' varying core beliefs can make any conversation about sex quite challenging for couples.

• Sex is bad.
• Sex is dirty.
• Sex is one position.
• Creativity in sex is perverted.
• All men want is sex.
• Sex solves all problems.
• Sex is love.
• Sex is really important.
• Sex is not important.
• The man should initiate sex.
• Sex is to make the man happy, not me.
• If I enjoy sex I am a slut.
• Sex is for reward.
• Controlling the other person sexually is my job.
• I have to want sex to be sexual.
• Only _____ sex is acceptable.
• I am abused, damaged.
• All sex is humiliating.
• I can't get enough sex.
• It must always be different.
• I have to have you do _____ to be happy.
• I can't be enough sexually, so why try?
• You are not enough sexually, so try harder.

• I can only have sex at a certain time or place.
• She must have an orgasm for it to be good sex.
• Sex is beautiful.
• Sex is fun.
• Sex is creative.
• Sex is a way to get to know you.
• I want to please you, sexually.
• Sexual experimentation is acceptable.

I think now you probably see why I spent some time on the process of moving from disagreement to agreement. If you have strongly held thoughts about sex, they will come out as you try to agree on sexuality.

6. Resolve, Compromise, or Accept

Once a couple moves through their origins and beliefs about a conflict, they are ready to move toward agreement. As a counselor, I have seen agreement wear three different hats.

The first is the agreed-upon position hat. Wearing this, the couple actually resolves the issue and creates an agreed-upon position on it, even if they previously disagreed. When this occurs, both people usually have a good feeling about it, so future discussions do not reactivate the disagreement. A reoccurrence of the issue only reinforces their mutual agreement.

The second is the compromise hat of agreement. Truly, sometimes this is the best hat or the only hat a couple can live with and stay harmonious. In some situations, each partner is on the opposite end of a continuum. I'll use the issue of giving teenagers money as an example. One parent might say, "Give the child $50 a week to spend." But his or her partner's position is: "We give no money to teens. They must work or figure out how to make money." The compromise could be: "We will pay for chores that are above and beyond keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy. They can determine the amount of money they earn based on how much work they do around the house." This is an example of a compromise. It honors former positions held by each partner and offers a solution both can support and agree on.

The last hat of agreement is one of excepting the differences. In some cases, differences cause what feels like a stalemate. In some cases, a couple must simply agree to disagree—to disagree respectfully—not with resentment or ill feeling, just a recognition of disagreement on one issue. If each partner can accept the other's position, and that each is a different person with different feelings and thoughts, this too is a form of agreement.

Sex

Let's talk about agreeing in sex. If you find yourself in this stage of disagreement, decide your next step. However, I find couples that actually agree on sex have a more relaxed and enjoyable relationship than those with strife in this very important aspect of marriage or relationship.

In the next few pages, I want you to agree on two important aspects of your sex life. In the next chapter you will decide on the "agreedients" of your sex life. Let's get this agreeing started.

Frequency

I remember sitting in a hotel in downtown New York City after a marriage conference. In that conference we discussed frequency of sexuality. At the end of that segment we held a question and answer session. Participants submitted their questions anonymously on pieces of paper. Many of the questions had to do with men and women asking about their partners' lower sexual desire. This question of frequency is almost always asked at these types of conferences.

The frequency question hits at the core of each partner's sexual beliefs. Is sex one person's domain or a mutual domain? What I mean is, if one person only wants sex one time a week or less, is this a unilateral decision for both people, or is it up for mutual discussion? In a healthy relationship frequency of sex, like many other areas and issues, is a mutual decision.

I must stop here and mention that sexual bullying is so common in relationships it is scary. Sexual tyranny or monarchy in a relationship or marriage can be very challenging, but keep in mind the bully needs his or her partner's cooperation to have all the sexual power. Also, if one partner in a couple struggles with

intimacy anorexia, the discussion of sexual frequency can bring sexual tyranny to the front burner as well.

I will presuppose that that you have a healthy relationship, and are able to come to a mutually agreed upon decision with your partner about the frequency of sex. If this is not true of you and your partner, you might want to get this squared away (with professional help if need be) to have a shot at a healthy mutual sexuality.

As you think of sexual frequency I want you to consider your stage of life, age, health, and schedule so you can be realistic when considering what is realistic. For example, a woman might want sex four to five times a week, but she is a pilot and realistically, home only three days or less in a given week. So your sexual frequency should not be a wish for how often you want sex as if you had nothing else in the world to do. In your discussion on sexual frequency, look for doable sexuality that is realistic given your current lifestyle.

“As you think of sexual frequency I want you to consider your stage of life, age, health, and schedule so you can be realistic when considering what is realistic.”

Each partner should write down on a separate piece of paper how often he or she would like to come together sexually in a given week. Both of you has a number in mind. If that number is the same, congratulations, you are in the minority that has either already negotiated well, or married someone with a very similar sexual appetite. However, most couples need to negotiate on the sexual frequency issue.

As I see it, most couples tend to navigate this negotiation in one of two ways. In the first, negotiation is fairly straightforward. If one person desires sex four times a week and the other, two times a week, each person moves toward the middle and both agree to compromise and make love three times a week. In the second, couples negotiate frequency by rotation. This simply means that one week, they have sex four times a week, and the next week they have sex two times a week. If both agree, this also seems to have the fragrance of fairness, so

both are content with this negotiation.

Management

Sadly, one lesson of life is that much of it needs to be managed to be successful. Look at areas of your life like time, money, friendship, work, spirituality, exercise and health, and more.

In the pages that follow, I will share some options couples have created together for managing their sexual lives. As you read these, you will probably find one that makes sense for both of you. Implement it to gain deeper sexual understanding.

Option 1: Pick Days

This option is very straightforward. You already have your frequency established. So you need only pick the days of the week you want to come together for sex.

If you have chosen a frequency of sex twice a week, you could decide : one time on Tuesday and one time on Friday. A three times a week schedule might be Monday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Option 2: Split the Week

In this option, the couple divides the week into sections. They assign who will initiate sex within a certain range of days. For example, if a couple wants sex two times a week, one partner might get to initiate sex Sunday through Tuesday. The other partner might initiate sex Thursday through Saturday. If they want sex 2-3 times a week, they might agree that either can initiate on Wednesday.

Option 3: Rotate Weeks

This is also a straightforward solution for some couples. Basically, each person is given a whole week to initiate at the agreed upon frequency. One week, one partner initiates sex. The next week, the other partner initiates sex. The couple just keeps rotating the week, and each partner knows whose week it is to initiate sex.

Option 4: Rotating Days

Couples that want a fluid number for their sexual encounters in a given week often choose this option. In this option, each person is given a total of three days to initiate sex. When one person initiates and the couple comes together for sex, the next day begins the other person's three-day turn to initiate sex. In this option, a couple could have sex every day or 2-3 times a week.

Whether you pick days, split the week, rotate weeks, or find some other idea—whatever works for you is great. Once you actually agree on frequency and manage that frequency successfully, you are on your way to enjoying your sex language on a known basis.

10. AGREEDIENTS

You have traveled some important ground in the sexual aspects of your relationship if you have read this far. Congratulations! And as we say in Colorado, “Enjoy the view, there is more ahead.”

Earlier we explored the importance of couples being in agreement. In previous chapters, you agreed upon sexual responsibility as well as sexual management. In these pages I am going to continue to take you out to deeper waters so you can be even more in agreement, sexually.

To express this concept, I felt the need to create a new word: “agreedients.” This is of course the best of two words. The first word is “agreement,” which we are pretty clear on at this point. The second is a shortened version of “ingredients.” I define ingredients as “separate items utilized to create something.” Agreedients are what two or more people agree upon to create something. I use agreedients to express how both partners agree upon sexual behaviors that will form their unique sexual relationship.

Before getting into specifics of your agreedients, I will share some things that can impact you and keep you from easily walking into your agreedients. I have no agenda in sharing these. Nor do I have any interest in influencing your agreedients. I just want to share some of the common bumps I have seen couples hit as they roll down this road of agreedients.

“Agreedients are what two or more people agree upon to create something.”

1. Uniqueness

Every sexual relationship is totally unique to the two people involved in it, and the time of life of each one. Every person’s body is unique in build, flexibility, color, aroma, and more. And everyperson’s sexual personality is different—and can change over time. For example, the wildly sexual teenager can mature and establish limits on what he or she is willing to do, and how frequently.

Every person is unique and, in a different manner, brings to the relationship his

or her own sexual preferences, willingness, or even hunger to participate in sex. Each person brings his or her own level of selflessness or selfishness into the sexual relationship.

Each person brings his or her own level of volume to speak or make noises during sex. Also, each person brings a uniqueness of words to speak during sex, as well as a preference for words or noises to hear from his or her partner during sex.

Each sexual partner in your life leaves you with deep impressions of what sexuality is, and of specific sexual boundaries. Why am I talking about uniqueness? If you have experienced X, Y, or Z behavior, sounds, positions, or places, you may never experience any of them in your marriage, current relationship, or even in the same relationship years later. What happens to humans in sex and life in general is, we begin to generalize our experiences. For example, everyone in the world must love having a Starbucks latte in the morning because my friends and I do.

Sexual generalization can be very tricky, and sometimes, a toxic thing in a marriage or committed relationship. First, we'll explore this from a sexual history perspective, specifically, your sexual history before your current relationship.

Each of the people you had sex with previously is different from your current partner. Each person is unique and had the type of sex with you he or she did for his or her own reasons. Previous partners may well have had different strengths and weaknesses that brought out different parts of you when you were with them. When you think, *Well, this or that person was willing to do X, Y, or Z, or liked sex better, wilder, calmer, more relational, was more focused on my orgasm instead of theirs,* and more, you can build resentment, false expectations, sexual rigidness, or over time, get a feeling of not being enough in a relationship, sexually.

Any comparisons of past partners with one's current partner is absolutely unfair. (Note: If your partner from a previous marriage or relationship was under the influence of alcohol or substances during sex, it would be especially unfair and

unwise to compare it to your current relationship.)

> “Sexual generalization can be very tricky, and sometimes, a toxic thing in a marriage or committed relationship.”

For example, suppose you dated someone and he or she was able to make the most amazing pasta you ever ate. However, the person was crazy unpredictable or had some other character defect that led to the demise of the relationship. Then you met the love of your life. Their whole package fit you and your life in an amazing way. However, when he or she makes pasta, though it is very good, it is different in several ways and not the previous person’s pasta.

Now, you wouldn’t berate, belittle, or shame your new partner for producing a different pasta dish (I hope). And I expect you would not have him or her come up with a similar dish to make you happy. You would accept the gift of the present pasta, no longer compare pastas, and enjoy the pasta life you are currently in (at least I hope so).

We don’t expect our partner to be like the other people we dated or were married to in other ways, so it would be unwise to compare, contrast, or expect him or her to be like our previous partners, sexually.

I see this more with men than women. Though the man doesn’t verbalize it to his wife or partner, deep inside, he wishes for a “pasta,” a one-night stand with a former partner who had sex with him while drunk or on coke (i.e. was uninhibited to the extreme). Regardless of gender, comparison is a very dangerous thing to do. It is incredibly helpful to be free from this ailment before you discuss agreedients with your current partner in your current relationship.

2. Trauma

In a sexual history where a partner suffered sexual abuse or rape, this can legitimately impact him or her temporarily or long-term. If a person was raped outdoors, he or she might not even be open to sex outdoors due to the unresolved trauma (though this may also be personal preference).

Sexual trauma and the effects surrounding it present issues couples must work

through. If a partner has experienced sexual trauma or rape, I strongly recommend that he or she pursue professional help. Through counseling, over time, he or she can come to live out a desired sexual life rather than one haunted by his or her abuser or rapist.

Men and women who have done sexual trauma intensives in our office have achieved remarkable results. If you were sexually abused (as I have), keep in mind, it is your responsibility to heal so you can be the healthiest sexual person for yourself and your partner.

> “Sexual trauma and the effects surrounding it present issues couples must work through.”

Also, as a survivor (or thriver) of sexual trauma, it will be very important to separate criminal sexual behavior from healthy sexual behavior to be able to engage fully during sex in your current relationship. This might be a journey, however, it is a totally worthwhile one for you and your current partner.

3. Porn

Every sexual encounter is real, be it real or imaginary. When you masturbate to porn you create real scenarios in your brain. Chemically, your brain can’t distinguish between a real or imaginary encounter.

Your brain is attracting to it and gluing together whatever encounters you have had. I can’t tell you how many of my clients have—through just the sheer number of repetitions with a porn/fantasy scenario (sometimes over decades)—created a strong sexual desire—even a fetish—for certain behavior to be played out in their sexual encounters. This porn/fantasy development (which can truly lead to a sexual addiction), can become an issue when a couple discusses their sexual agreedients.

Charlie, a married corporate executive with three daughters, came into my office. He had a sexual issue he wanted to discuss, and his wife suggested he talked to someone. As a teen, Charlie came across a certain type of fetish porn that involved a man wearing diapers during sexual encounters. He masturbated to this constantly, both through porn and in his sexual fantasies. He normalized

this behavior based on the frequency of masturbation to it, and due to seeing “real” people (all actors) portraying sex while in diapers.

After marriage, Charlie began to occasionally mention the idea. His wife, who had never in her life even looked at pornography, had no sexual reinforcement for wearing diapers during sex. Charlie reported his wife was mostly open to sexual things, but was totally turned off by the diaper thing.

> “Every sexual encounter is real, be it real or imaginary.”

Charlie kept masturbating to porn with diapers, unbeknownst to his wife. His appetite for this behavior increasingly became an issue in their marriage. He started demanding she try it, and threatened to hire someone who would do it if she refused. That was what brought him to my office. Charlie was truly addicted to diaper porn. He hungered for this more than relational sex with his wife.

Over time, the porn you watch will become a sexual hunger or appetite. A desire will begin to grow within you to act out or manifest with a real person what you’ve seen depicted in porn. If your partner has a conflict with this it can definitely affect your relationship negatively.

As it relates to the topic we are exploring here, pornography can truly influence what someone (male or female) may desire as an ingredient in his or her current sexual relationship. Knowing its origins can be helpful as you move from an individual sexuality into a mutual sexuality with mutual agreedients.

Preferences

As I shared with you, each sexual partner is unique. This is especially true of sexual preferences. A preference is just that, a preference. Some preferences are developed over time, like a preference for a certain food or drink. Take carrot juice over soda, for example. The first week or so that you drink carrot juice rather than the soda you love, it might not be your favorite. However, over time and with regular use, you could develop a preference for carrot juice over soda.

That said, some preferences are just innate. For example, one person I know does not like seafood of any kind. When I asked him if he ever ate any seafood,

he was quick to say, “No.” He innately knew he did not like seafood. In this case, others need to just accept his innate aversion to seafood. You wouldn’t get him drunk, get him to eat seafood, and then tell him he actually likes seafood.

Preferences are a tricky thing. Here is another wrinkle: A preference can change over time or through circumstances.

I’ll never forget a scene from a movie in which a couple walks down the aisle on their wedding day. We hear what the couple is thinking as they walk. The guy was thinking: *I am going to have _____ (behavior) from her the rest of my life. That’s amazing!* She was thinking: *Thank God I never have to do _____ (behavior) again. I got him to marry me!* Circumstances can change sexual preferences. This can be true if a behavior becomes a symbol of one partner’s “love for me”: sex, power, control, humiliation, or other strong emotions can change a preference for a sexual behavior.

Another factor in preferences is time. As the years or decades go by, your desire for a certain food or drink might change, yet you might think little about this. You may have hated salads for years, but start liking them (or vice versa). Sexual desires can also shift over time. You might have regularly engaged in sex in a certain way, place, or position, but somewhere along the way, the desire for it dissipated or disappeared. For this reason it is important to have significant sexual conversation with some regularity, at least annually, to discuss any shifts in preferences or mutual desire to experiment.

“A preference can change over time or through circumstances.”

Now it is time to discuss the agreedients in your current relationship or marriage. I will explore these in three categories. As you read, each partner should have before him or her a separate sheet of paper to actually create your sexual agreedients. (I was going to provide spaces below for you to fill in, but wisdom said your book might be found and give information to others that you might not want them to have.)

Positions

My heart for this book was not to create some exotic list of sexual positions for couples to try to achieve a great sex life. I believe great sex is a three dimensional experience: spirit, soul, and body. That's why we discussed the importance of intimacy during sex. Intimate sex will be more fulfilling than trying another position just to try something new. So I am not asking you to create thirty positions for your sex life. You are to create agreedients, not come up with ingredients.

"I believe great sex is a three dimensional experience: spirit, soul, and body."

On your separate sheets of paper, you will list positions you already pretty much agree on. Then you will add some new ones as long as it is understood they are for experimentation—no commitment (unless both people agree, without duress).

Places

As you did above, you will first make a list of places in which you already feel comfortable being sexual together. Most couples find it easier to break these up into categories.

Category number one is places inside your house in which you are comfortable having sex. If you still have children in the house, this may need to be qualified (i.e. in front of the fireplace when nobody is home).

The second category is places outside the house in which you feel comfortable. You can use your imagination, but again, consider this an agreement on agreedients, so make sure you both agree. Also, in this case, make sure you are private about this. (The last thing you want is a cop interrupting your sexual encounter.)

Acts

In my mind, a sex act is any sexual behavior that may or may not be sexual intercourse. This is where a couple mutually decides if their agreedients involve a certain behavior. Here the creativity can be unlimited, so I won't even attempt

to offer any template. I also don't want to risk creating an expectation or being seen as normalizing a behavior of which some readers might not approve. (This also saves me a lot of emails that begin, "Dr. Weiss, do you *really* think such and such behavior is acceptable? REALLY?!")

I have forever stayed out of the judge and jury on sexual behaviors, though I have strong opinions about behaviors that cause damage in relationships. Remember, we are talking about agreedients in this chapter. So before I conclude, just a reminder that agreedients are what two people in a relationship agree to WITHOUT DURESS. I want to make this very clear before you list out positions, places, or acts you are willing to participate in together. This is a voluntarily, mutual agreement.

Let me quickly go through what agreedients are not. Agreedients are not one partner bullying the other by pulling away emotionally or financially, or with a tone of non-sexual aggression intended to punish the partner into a sexual behavior he or she knows the other person does not prefer. If in this process you experience bullying, manipulation, rage, demands, or shaming, get professional help.

Whenever a sexual act is more important than the soul of the other person, something is off in the situation, be it entitlement, immaturity, addiction, or a psychological disorder. Sex is a part of a relationship. It is not meant to be even a symbol of the entire relationship.

Agreedients can be agreed upon. If you struggle here as a couple, start off with what you absolutely already agree upon. Then, periodically massage or negotiate any significant discrepancies. If you need help here, I would advise going to a marriage counselor before going to a sex therapist. A marriage counselor will look at the whole relationship, and then interactive systems that may be impacting each individual, and not just see it as a sex issue.

"Sex is a part of a relationship. It is not meant to be even a symbol of the entire relationship."

So do your homework, and on separate sheets of paper make a list of:

• Positions
• Places
• Acts

Create your agreedients, and then enjoy a lifetime of creativity and recreation of your sexuality together.

11. PHASES

Oftentimes when we hear the word “sex,” the image that comes to mind to define the term is the sex act itself. This is very normal, however, it is not very helpful due to the fact that sex has a pretty identifiable process as well as context or environment for each of those engaging in relational sex.

I want to take you on a journey through each phase of sexuality in a relational manner for two important reasons. First, I want you and your partner to be able to connect the often unseen dots of sexuality. By itself, this can help you navigate the sexual phases much more smoothly. Second, and actually more exciting for most, I want to connect each phase of sexuality to each sex language. This can give you a roadmap to pleasure your partner optimally in the way he or she was designed to enjoy sexual pleasure. This could also impact your sexuality as your partner learns to incorporate your sex language into sexual encounters.

Environment

Relational sex does not happen in a vacuum. The act of sex starts in all the rooms of the house, so to speak. In part, you see sexuality in who we are from birth to death. Sexuality isn’t just something we do (though some believe this), it is someone we are. Because it is something we are—an expression of self, like art, relationships, money, and social involvement—sex has an environmental context.

Here I want to jaunt through a few key factors I have seen as important for couples to evaluate in their relationship. These factors can impact the relationship, which can impact the sex life of a couple.

Dating- I have written several marriage books (visit http://www.drdougweiss.com to see them) and most, if not all of them, discuss the importance of dating. Quickly, a date is three or four hours of fun together without children or friends (although occasionally, friends might be part of a date).

Dating provides not only time together but also some fun and an escape from the

mundane activities of life. Make sure you protect dating by not bringing up hot button topics. This could sabotage the date significantly.

“Dating on a regular basis keeps a value of relief and pleasure that can help you both live a quality of life that is worthwhile, so have fun.”

Also, I recommend that couples rotate responsibility for dating. One date, he decides the date and tries to make himself happy. The next date, she decides and tries to make herself happy. This avoids the “I don’t know, what do you want to do?” conversation in the driveway.

Dating says you’re important to each other. Dating says, “Our relationship is a priority.” Dating says, “I still see you as a lover or friend I enjoy.” Dating on a regular basis keeps a value of relief and pleasure that can help you both live a quality of life that is worthwhile, so have fun.

Feelings- Processing feelings is very important in your relationship. An emotion that is stuck or unprocessed can stop sex from happening altogether for a day, week, or much longer. A stuck or unprocessed feeling can limit how engaged or present someone can be during sex, limit sex, or possibly make sex a negative experience for both.

Going back to the early 1990s, as a therapist just starting out, I recommended couples share two feeling a day. A version of this exercise is found in most of my recovery books, *Intimacy: A 100-day Guide to Lasting Relationships*. Having an emotionally open and skilled partner helps to create a safer environment for a great sex life. This simple exercise can keep you from getting those instances of emotional constipation that happen to couples with challenges in their emotional skills. If you want to quickly develop emotional skills, I suggest my book, *Emotional Fitness*.

“A stuck or unprocessed feeling can limit how engaged or present someone can be during sex, limit sex, or possibly make sex a negative experience for both.”

Along with emotions, we should discuss the topic of anger. The way you process anger can have a huge impact on your sex life. If at your core you believe that when you're angry you have the right to act immaturely with any regularity—yelling, cursing, calling names, slamming or throwing things, and shaming the other person—this could be emotional abuse or a form of bullying your partner.

These types of behavior will limit or greatly limit your partner's respect for you. Your anger immaturity can impact your sexuality and cause it to suffer immensely. Most people don't want to make love to a childlike adult. As an environmental factor, this can limit their desire to go to the next phase sexually with you.

Honor- Honoring each other is very important to the environment of sexuality. Honoring includes listening to one's partner. This shows true respect for one another outside the bedroom.

As you consider honoring your partner, you might have several grids through which you run him or her. One grid is how he or she honors you. A second grid might be how he or she contributes around the house. A third grid might be either his or her financial, spiritual, or social contribution to the relationship. Your grid might include his or her sexual appetite or level of engagement. You might have several grids for measuring whether you deem your partner worthy or unworthy of honor.

Honestly, how much honor do you have for your partner for who they are without a grid? Seriously think about this. In your mind, give this honor a level between one and ten (one="I have very little honor for my partner"; 10="I have the greatest honor possible for my partner"). Your level of honor is felt by your partner on a regular basis. If he or she feels honored by you, chances are, he or she feels respected, important, valued, and heard. On the other hand, if your partner does not feel honored by you, then he or she might well feel disrespected (regularly), unimportant, not valued (others or other things have more value), and unheard.

"Honoring includes listening to one's partner. This shows true respect for one another outside the bedroom."

This continuum of honor going in both directions is an important environmental factor of relational sex. So much so that often both partners can feel when the honor goes up or down by the quality of their sex life going up or down.

Praise- Our environment outside and inside the bedroom includes the words we speak to and about each other. It amazes me how a person can be verbally unkind or silent toward his or her partner for periods of time, but still expect a great sex life.

Remember, one of the major themes of this book is that sex is spirit, soul, and body. Your partner is a soul. Like a plant, the soul draws much of its nutrition from its environment (sun, dirt, rain). For your partner, you more than anyone else in his or her life create that environment. What are you feeding your partner? Criticism and silence or praise and engagement?

Praise is important in any relationship, and key to having a great, intelligent sex life together. Be positive about your partner both directly to him or her and when around others. In my marriage book I talk about creating a pitch of praise which encourages you to be significantly intentional about praising your partner.

As I mentioned previously, I regularly recommend giving a minimum of two praises to your partner each day. Lisa and I have done this daily for the past twenty-eight years or more of our marriage. She is worthy of at least two praises. Truth be known, I praise my wife constantly because I am privileged to have her as my wife.

“Praise is important in any relationship, and key to having a great, intelligent sex life together.”

In a relationship there are many moving parts: family, friends, the house or apartment, insurance, cleaning, cars, and so on. Life requires that we serve. How we serve and the attitude with which we do affect the relational environment and sexuality of a couple.

Personally, I have accepted my role in any environment as that of a servant. Even this very moment, as I sit on a plane headed to Houston, I am serving you by writing these pages.

Serving each other, the family, and possessions you have to maintain are important environmental issues for sexuality. It is hard, honestly, to feel sexual toward someone who is a lazy and doesn't pull a reasonable amount of weight raising the children and doing dishes, laundry, car maintenance, cleaning, yardwork, and all the rest.

I have seen both women and men so self-absorbed, immature, and addicted that they think life is about them being served, not serving. They are as oblivious to doing things around the house as any two-year-old. This inequity in a relationship as to the day in and day out aspects of life makes the other partner compensate some (or a lot) for the immature partner. Over time, this can and usually does lead to resentment. When immaturity in service persists over time, resentment can build to the point where any respect or love feels diminished significantly. This also impacts the sexual desire or energy for sex the mature person has in such a relationship.

"How we serve and the attitude with which we do affect the relational environment and sexuality of a couple."

My wife is married to a man, not a boy. If I see something that needs to be done, I do it. My wife is the same way. We serve each other practically in our environment. This attitude and aptitude to serve gives us more energy for sex and better sex because we like the person we are making love to, and are on each other's team.

Spiritually- The spiritual piece of your relationship doesn't need to be all theological or that, it just needs to be consistent. I have worked with people of no faith, atheists, Muslims, Hindus, Orthodox Jews, Christians of all types, and New Agers of all types. Your faith issues are not as important as your spiritual togetherness issues.

I suggest couples keep their spirituality consistent and simple. For decades I have recommended that couples pray out loud together—just a simple, relational (not rote) prayer. This allows both a spiritual connection together. With just this one simple commitment, I have seen couples create a dynamic spiritual dimension over a short period of time.

Remember, sex is spiritual as well as emotional and physical. If you have a spiritual connection outside the bedroom, the bedroom can be even more amazing.

Integrity- Integrity in a marriage or committed relationship is vital to the health of the relationship and sexuality. Of course, there is the importance of individual sexual integrity. This part of integrity involves sexual fidelity—to only be sexually romantic inside your exclusive relationship. Someone with Sexual integrity does not participate in pornography, masturbation, and inappropriate social media participation.

If a person has sexual or romantic secrets, even this in itself can damage the relationship and sexuality significantly. In general, having secrets is a bad idea. Having sexual secrets in a marriage or committed relationship can be fatal. Even if the other person doesn't know the facts, he or she can feel the secret. But even if he or she is not feeling it, the secret-holder is feeling it, whether through guilt, shame, or just a lack of full engagement in the relationship emotionally, spiritually, romantically, or even sexually.

Integrity goes beyond the realm of sexuality, of course. It involves other areas, such as financial integrity. It is vital that neither partner has financial secrets. I can't tell you how many times a secret credit card impacted a marriage and a couple's sex life.

"Having sexual secrets in a marriage or committed relationship can be fatal."

Integrity shows up in many other ways. Just being where you say you are is part of integrity. Following through on things and keeping your word on even small things are both forms of integrity. Being on time is a form of integrity. If you say you're going to be somewhere, being on time is important.

Sexual Communication- Since you both are sexual beings all day long, every day of your life, it would be abnormal to only have sexual communication when the bedroom door is locked.

The environment in your relationship can be as sexual as you both agree upon. I

am not talking about dirty talk. I am talking about all the forms of sexual communication: holding hands, a soft touch, the smile of desire, appreciation of each other physically, leaving the love note in the car, the text saying “You’re hot,” the flirting, and the groping and fondling.

Your sexual communication and interaction are important. This part of the environment often leads into the next stage of the sexual phases quite nicely.

Invitation

The second phase of sexuality is the phase of invitation. The invitation phase is definitely opening the door to the sexual room in your marriage or committed relationship.

Invitations can be as simples as groping a person, or even just giving a certain look. In bed, this could include a long hug or lightly touching a person’s back. These are the unspoken invitations. One couple’s invitation is one partner taking a shower (not exactly a clear message, but it worked better for them than verbally inviting each other).

The verbal invitation is much clearer, and as we explored in an earlier chapter, can really play into the sex language of one or both people. A verbal invitation, of course, can be sent by text message or emailed. Just be really sure you have your partner’s phone number or email address correct before you invite him or her. (Some of my clients inadvertently invited the wrong person!)

A verbal invitation can be clear, creative, fun, or sexually intense. Regardless, it’s a clear message, “I want to be with you, sexually.” The invitation style or delivery of the invitation can impact even the type of intensity of the sexual encounter for one or both partners. Invitations, regardless of whether they are primitive, nonverbal, physical, or verbal, can be a fun way to learn and grow toward each other, especially as you apply this to your partner’s sex language.

Being invited the way you prefer to be invited becomes a part of your sexual dance together. Even if done only some of the time, such invitations can make learning each other’s sex language an invaluable tool for creating a fulfilling sexuality.

Pre-Phase

The invitation has been extended and received. You are in the sexual room of the relationship, so now we enter the pre-phase, warm-up, or foreplay stage of a sexual encounter.

Even in most sports there is a pre-phase or warm-up stage before the game begins. In football, the players stretch, move, run, and do drills prior to the game. In basketball, they shoot the ball, pass the ball, and more. Almost every extreme physical activity has a warm-up phase, so why shouldn't sex have a pre-phase before full engagement?

The pre-phase is an important phase for you both physically, of course, but also emotionally and spiritually. You are about to embark on a triune sexual encounter where you are open and engage as one being to another.

The pre-phase can allow one or both of you to relax, get open to the other person, get aroused, creative, and open to give and receive pleasure. For some couples, this phase is short. Others draw out this phase. As you learn about your partner's sex language, you may need to negotiate the length of this phase for optimal pleasure and participation for both.

"The pre-phase is an important phase for you both physically, of course, but also emotionally and spiritually."

The pre-phase can involve stimulation in a variety of manners prior to the sex act you have chosen. The pre-phase can also be a place and time for verbal interchange—anything from a calm, soothing demeanor to a much louder dimension.

The words spoken or not spoken in this phase can contribute to or detract from the sexual encounter. As you learn to be sexual the way each other desires, this phase can be anywhere from extremely relaxing to erotic. I encourage couples to practice this phase until they find what works well, and then experiment from there.

Act Phase

This phase is the actual sex act that both have decided upon. This is, of course, a very pleasurable and personable act. Your whole person is engaged in the sex act.

Be sure to look into each other's eyes and engage the full being of the other person, and to not just do the act. In this phase there is so much going on, from kissing, talking, feeling and being felt—it is indescribable.

In this phase communication can be helpful. Talking during sex can be very important or distracting, depending on the sex language of your partner. (It is important to discuss beforehand the vocabulary your partner prefers, sexually. We will get into this in the next chapter.)

Hopefully, you created your agreedients before this so there is a mutual understanding of the range of pleasurable sexual behavior you have both agreed upon.

After Phase

The sex act itself can be amazing and fulfilling on so many levels. Your muscles and organs were transformed and engaged during it and sent pleasure throughout your body by way of your amazing nervous system. Even your brain was flooded by a huge amount of chemicals that increased your pleasure during the sex act phase.

In the after phase your spirit, soul, and body are recovering. Your body, at several levels, moves back toward normality. In this phase pleasure is still streaming through your body. During the sex act, your emotions were impacted and even your spirit may have been soothed from being touched.

This can be an important stage for a couple to reintegrate their relationship or future sexuality. Here, negotiating the preference of touch, words of praise, or stillness can be helpful in putting "icing on the cake," so to speak. Your partner is still very open to you emotionally and spiritually in this phase. By remaining in lover mode toward your partner, you can make the sex even more savored and

resolve in a sweet manner.

You and your partner deserve an awesome sex life. This discussion on the phases of sexuality is vital to the next chapter. Read on to see how to put the sex languages into each phase to create a greater experience and increase sexual satisfaction.

12. PHASES-APPLICATION

There are several reasons authors write books. Some write for money, perceived fame, or the ego boost. Others write to simply help people. I am in this last category. I love to help people. There is no greater satisfaction for me than doing an intensive in my office with a couple, and seeing them go from being ready for divorce on Monday to liking each other again by Friday, and then having great sex and moving forward.

One of the primary reasons I wrote this book is so I could write this chapter. Why? Well, I know if you and your partner actually learn from each other which sex language you both are, and apply this intentionally during every phase of your sexuality together, you can have a whole new, vibrant, and satiating sex life for the rest of your relationship. Your smiles are why I wrote this book.

In this section, just read through and tinker with your partner's sex language until you find the "sauce" that really works for both of you. Then just enjoy each other for the rest of your lives.

I must remind you again: Your sex languages will often, if not always, be different from your partner's. They might well be opposite of one another. This is the reason you may find it challenging to grow toward your partner, sexually. This is normal. If you try to compare your partner to that one-night stand or short relationship you had with someone who seemed to have the same sex language as you, it will be very detrimental. Don't compare your partner to anyone. If you can fully embark on the adventure of dancing with only your partner and learn his or her dance well, you will be amazed at how much better a lover you can be. And beyond being a better lover, you can become a better person as you learn to listen without judgment, and create with and enjoy a mutually satisfying sexuality that can last the rest of your lives.

Now I will walk with you through each phase of sexuality in all five sex languages. Most people will have environment issues to clear up in the areas of environment, dating, feelings, honor, service and integrity.

For these, you might want to get other marriage books, or do at least one session

with a counselor in person or on the phone. If these issues are deeper than that, consider a three-day or five-day intensive in our office to push through these environmental issues, grow your relationship, and have a great sex life. If I were to address these issues here, it would become at least another book for sure.

Instead, I want to address the issue of sexual communication in your relationship. Every couple communicates sexually in a relationship, even if that communication is more to avoid than participate in sexuality.

Sexual communication in the environment stage of sexuality involves three components: physical, verbal, and nonverbal communication. As we travel through each sex language I will offer suggestions many have found to be helpful. These offerings are only springboards for you both to discuss what specifically you like to hear (or not hear) in this and subsequent stages.

This tinkering can help take unnecessary bumps out of your sexual road together. This is a great need for most couples. Many times, when I've had couples practice this in my office, one person guesses what the other person wants to hear—and misses it by a mile. The partner invariably responds by saying something like, "That's not even close," or "That is a turn-off, not a turn-on." As I said, most couples need this.

In these sections, talk—really talk—and maybe discover for the first time what you desire, sexually. Often, during this phase you may even find or refind your sexual voice. As you are discover together, be patient and have fun.

Remember, sexual communication in this phase comes before the invitation for sex. It's just the way we discuss sex outside the bedroom. You're validating these sex languages and building appreciation on your side, and acceptance of your partner's sex language.

Communication: Sexual Environment

Fun

- "I love playing with you."
- "You are a lot of fun, sexually."
- "I love how spontaneous you are, sexually. Do you remember

when you _____?”“I was thinking about when we did _____ in _____ (place).”
• “When you tried _____ on me sexually, you drove me insane. I was just thinking about what an amazing lover you are.”
• “I love that you can be amazingly creative in bed. You’re amazing.”
• “I love that your creativity goes all the way to the bedroom.”
• “I feel so blessed to have a lover like you.”
• “I love that you have actually thought of fun things to do, sexually.”
• “Have you any new sexual ideas you would like to share?”
• “I love that our life and our sex is fun because of you.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Desire

• “I love that I want you.”
• “I so desire you sexually...and will for like the next 100 years.”
• “I stay hungry for you. Did you know that?”
• “I just want you to know I am thinking about you, sexually. I had to tell you because I can’t seem to get anything done today because of this!”
• “I hope we can make love this weekend.”
• “I am looking forward to being with you again, sexually. You are amazing.”
• “I am thinking about a bed and breakfast weekend because I want you all to myself.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Pleasure

• “I love discovering you, sexually.”
• “Remember when we found out that _____ happened when I did _____ to you?”
• “I love that you let me discover you sexually...and in so many other ways.”
• “I love that you grow, sexually.”
• “Thank you so much for discovering this about me, sexually: _____.”
• “I love your sexual explorations. They make me crazy about you.”
• “Do you remember what happened when we _____ , and how good that felt?”
• “It feels great to discover you.”
• “I am so touched when you discover something new about me, sexually.”
• “I love that sexually, we will grow together for a lifetime.”
• “Your sexuality is so amazing to me. You have touched and changed my life.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Patience

• “I love to touch you, like, forever.”
• “I enjoy those cozy times when you let me touch your back.”
• “I love giving my time to you before making love.”

• “I love being gentle with you.”
• “I want to be your gentle lover.”
• “I remember touching you for over _____ (time) before making love to you. That was absolutely amazing.”
• “Thank you for letting me touch you so much.”
• “I was thinking about our after-sex cuddle, falling asleep with you, and waking up...like it was a dream. It was awesome.”
• “I look forward to a couple hours to show you much I really do love you.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Acceptance/Celebration

• “I love who you are, not just what you do.”
• “You— the real you, inside—are awesome.”
• “I love the woman/man you are.”
• “You are really gifted.”
• “You are talented at ...”“I see how you dealt with that person. That was awesome.”
• “You are an amazing father/mother/friend/son/daughter.”
• “Your thoughtfulness is amazing.”
• “I just called to say I love you, and how amazing you are.”
• “I am so blessed to have you in my life.”
• “I love who you are when _____.”“Have I told you lately that I just like you—really like you?”
• “You are my best friend, ever. Thank you.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Invitation

As we said, invitation can be verbal or nonverbal. See suggestions below that you and your partner might enjoy in the invitation phase of sexuality.

Fun

• “I would like to have fun with you tonight.”
• “I’d like to make love to you in the basement. I’ll meet you there in five.”
• “Can you take off right now? I would like to _____.”
• “I want to take a drive to _____ (place) and do _____ (sexual activity) with you.”
• “I was thinking of doing something different to you. I’d like to show you now, if you’ll go to the bedroom.” “I bought you _____ for our sexual pleasure.”
• “I want to start doing _____ to you as soon as I can.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Desire

• “I really want you tonight.”
• “I am hungry for you. Can I make love to you?”
• “You totally turn me on. I want to love on you as soon as possible.”
• “I have the kids staying at your mother’s tonight so we can

make love."
• "You drive me crazy when I see you. Can I take your clothes off?"
• "I have made arrangements to go to our favorite hotel this weekend."
• Leave a card in the morning that says: "I want to make love to you tonight.''
• "Are you available to make love later tonight?"
• "I hope you want to make love because I am hungry for you."
• "You are all I want sexually, and I want you sexually."

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Pleasure

• "I want to discover you, sexually."
• "I want you to relax tonight as I please you."
• "Do you feel like exploring more, sexually?"
• "I hope to learn something about your body tonight, sexually."
• "I have something new, and am thinking of trying it with you."
• "What do you think about doing _____ and _____ simultaneously?"
• "I want you to let your explorer out to play tonight ...if you're up for it."
• "Have you thought of anything you would like to do sexually that we haven't done before...or haven't done in a while?"
• "If you were to close your eyes and dream...what would you dream of me doing to you—or you to me—that would be exciting or unique for you?"

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Patience

• “I would like to go to bed early and give you a massage for _____ (amount of time).”
• “I want to rub your feet for a half hour.”
• “Can I just touch your back for a while?”
• “I want to be gentle with you tonight when we make love.”
• “I want to take my time before and while making love to you.”
• “Can we take our time tonight as I please you?”
• “I want to hold you after making love tonight.”
• “Can we take a bubble bath before making love tonight?”
• “I’ll put the kids to bed tonight so we have more time to make love.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Acceptance/Celebration

• “I want to make love to my best friend ever...you.”“I want to take the greatest person I ever met...you...to the bedroom and make love to you.”
• “I have enjoyed being with you today and I want to make love to you.”
• “I want to make love to all of you...spirit, soul, and body.”
• “All of you is amazing and sexy. I want to make love to all of you.”

• “Can I have all of you tonight?”
• “Look at me...really look at me. I truly and fully love all of you, and I want to make love to you.”
• “I love the man/woman you are and I want to make love to you.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Sex Act

A primary time to specialize in your partner’s sex language is during sexual activity. What you say and do here can enter the deepest part of him or her and stay there for quite a while. On the other hand, not doing or saying special things during sexual activity can also stay with him or her for quite a while. Here are some ideas for you and your partner to use as is or adapt to match your personality and relationship.

Fun

• “I really enjoy you.”
• “You are really fun, sexually.”
• “I enjoy being in you (having you in me).”
• “I love that you just thought of this.”
• “I would never have thought of making love here. This is awe-some.”
• “You are fun anywhere, sexually.”
• “I am having such a good time with you.”
• “You are a fun lover.”
• “Wow, that was really different, good...and amazing.”
• “I love the way you make sex so fun and enjoyable.”

• “This is one of your best ideas.”
• “This is an amazing experiment.”
• “That feels incredible.”
• “Thanks for touching/kissing/doing _____ me/to me. It’s amazing.”
• “You are an over-the-top lover.”

Other statements you might want to hear:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Desire

• “I am so into you.”
• “You are really satisfying.”
• “You are really amazing.”
• “I love making love to you.”
• “You are an amazing lover to me.”
• “I so crave this with you.”
• “You really satisfy me, sexually.”
• “I desire to touch kiss _____ to/with you.”
• “I love your sex.”
• “Your sex is great.”
• “Let me just look at you.”
• “You are truly beautiful/handsome.”
• “The best part of desiring you is the thought of having you the rest of my life.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____
5. _____

Pleasure

• “Wow, this feels different.”
• “You feel amazing this way.”
• “I really like that.”
• “Would you like something different?”
• “Can you think of something I can do to take you further?”
• “This...right now...is amazing.”
• “This place is really incredible.”
• “I love this idea.”
• “I have never been touched like you’re doing right now.”
• “This is amazing...don’t stop.”
• “I am really experiencing you and wow...you’re incredible.”
• “Would you like more or less _____?”
• “Tell me your thoughts. What’s going on in your mind? Your body?”
• “Give your body a voice. What is it experiencing?”
• “Can we enjoy right here? Let’s stay here for a moment. This is ecstasy.”

Other statements you might want to hear:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Patience

• “I love taking my time with you.”
• “I want to go slower and feel you.”
• After lightly touching areas of his/her body, ask, “How does that feel?”

• Take time to slow down or stop during sexual activity. Then assure your partner by saying, “I am so enjoying this time with you.”
• “Take your time.”
• “We have all the time you need.”
• “Don’t rush. I want to enjoy you longer.”

Others statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Acceptance/Celebration

• “I love all you.”
• “All of you feels amazing right now.”
• “You’re a great lover.”
• “Thank you for all you are to me.”
• “I love you spirit, soul, and body.”
• “I am enjoying all of you right now.”
• “You are great at making love...and everything you do as well.”
• “You are an amazing man/woman.”
• “I love your sex.”
• “I so enjoy you sexually...and in every way.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

After Phase

The after phase is an important part of your sex life together. So finish strong in your partner's sex language. You can give your partner ongoing pleasure by loving him or her the way he or she
wants to be loved, sexually.

Fun

• "That was really fun! Thank you."
• "You did it again. That was fun."
• "That was really different."
• "When you _____ (action), I felt _____."
• "I am still reeling from what you said. That was really creative."
• "That might've been spontaneous, but wow, I am so fulfilled."
• "I love that you did that."
• "Your sexual creativity is so satisfying to me."
• "You blow my mind. That was so fun/different/crazy/wild."

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Desire

• "You were so satisfying."
• "That was so fulfilling."
• "You're a great lover."
• "You keep me crazy for you."
• "Your plans for tonight are really appreciated."
• "Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness that made to-
night so special."
• "You keep me desiring the rest of my life with you."
• "I am so glad I married you."
• "I'm so glad I have the rest of my life with you alone."

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Pleasure

• “I’ve never felt that before.”
• “That was an amazing orgasm.”
• “Thanks for that adventure.”
• “Thank you for letting me explore you.”
• “The place I found in you was really nice. Thank you.”
• “Thank you for letting me into that sacred place with you tonight.”
• “I have never been touched like that.”
• “I have never let your words in so deeply. Thank you so much.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Patience

• “I enjoyed our time together.”
• “That time with you was amazing.”
• “I love the time we had together tonight.”
• “Thank you for taking your time. I needed more of you.”
• “I love the way you were tonight...so gentle.”
• “That gentle touch was amazing.”
• “I love how you repeated what you said tonight: _____ (what he or she said).”
• “You’re like a great meal. It takes time to savor you sexually.

That was amazing!”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Acceptance/Celebration

• “That was fantastic.”
• “You’re an amazing lover.”
• “You satisfy me so deeply.”
• “I really celebrate your sexual giftedness.”
• “I love who you are as my friend and lover.”
• “You’re a total package lover, friend, and confidant.”
• “I love the sacredness you bring to me.”
• “You’re such a generous, giving lover...amazing.”
• “Thank you for being so present for me.”
• “I feel like I touched you...and you touched me back, deep inside.”

Other statements you might want to hear:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I hope you enjoy this journey together. You are aware of your sex language by now, so I strongly encourage you to practice statements you would like to hear from each other in each stage. See how they affect you sexually, and as a person.

These are in no way meant to be rote statements you recite, but life principles to stay on the path to your best ever sex. Happy trails!