

HONEYMOON UNDERCOVER

THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT SEX

by Dr. Valerie Correa

Yes, this column is about S-E-X, that taboo topic that seems, ironically, to be everywhere you turn.

Our attitudes about sex are as complex and unique as we are. Even how you approach this article may speak to your attitudes about sex. Did you read this article first? Are you boldly reading it in public or secretly reading it alone? Just as we develop physically, cognitively, and socially, we have our own stories of how we grew up to become sexual beings. There are *touch points* in our lives that influence our sexual outlook. We all have experiences that shape how we see ourselves, our mates, the world, and how we approach intimacy.

And approaching intimacy you are! You are getting married. You are about to take the biggest step toward true intimacy in your life. Sex in many ways does the same thing. When partners have sex they learn many things: to be in sync with one another, to read each others' needs, to tell each other their inner most secrets, to pleasure one another, to feel mutual satisfaction, etc.

Most importantly, sex should serve as a reminder that two people can live as one. Sex reunifies, enriches and energizes a couple through respect and communication. Sex can be the superglue of a relationship when things get out of sync or stressed. Symbolically, our

bodies can communicate to our partners what is hard to say verbally. That in itself is quite an amazing tool we have, one that can help make a marriage work in tough times and enhance it during the good times.

Unfortunately, we do not always come into a relationship with positive sexual feelings or histories. Also, we do not always find a partner that is as sexually compatible as they are in other capacities in our lives. Even if we do find a mate that is completely compatible, it will predictably be difficult to maintain.

To demonstrate what pressure we can be under, let's take a look at another biological need like sex: hunger. Imagine, having to coordinate when you were hungry with someone else, the quantity of food to consume to get full, when to eat and what to eat. On top of that you and your partner would be required to both be satisfied with your meal *every time*. All of these things must be agreed upon daily. This scenario is, of course, impossible! Now imagine adding a contract requiring you to eat with one person for the rest of your life under these grand expectations. This is what we expect in marriage.

This is why sex sometimes becomes divisive. Sex often mirrors a marriage: a lot of interest at first, a lot of negotiating, who is giving, who is receiving, who is initiating, who is rejecting, who is communicative, who is silent, who is dominant, who is passive, who is vulnerable, who shuts down, etc. The majority of communication is non-verbal so we need to listen to each other with our body and our partners' as well. The clues are there, so pay attention.

Begin talking with your partner now. Decide how you are going to meet this human challenge together. Share who you are sexually, and how you can make your sex life a priority. According to studies most long-term happy couples report a mutually satisfying sex life. It is one asset you definitely will want to invest in.

FORAY TO FOREPLAY

Ways To Connect

ANTICIPATION/BUILDING DESIRE

Leave a special note or make an unexpected phone call to create anticipation.

LISTENING/BEING ATTENTIVE

Make your partner a priority. One night a week go on a date and truly listen to your partner.

ROMANCE

Give a *big kiss* as a welcome when you see your partner.

APPRECIATION

Write a thank you note and tell your partner you appreciate something that they have done.

CHORES

Do things around the house that you know your partner would appreciate (laundry, garbage duty, dishes).

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