

Great Sex without Intercourse

Exploring the Erotic Galaxy



What's Right for You?

Some people have strong feelings about sex and abstinence based on religious and moral beliefs, and the words mean different things to different people.

This publication looks at intercourse and other sexual activities from a health standpoint, rather than a moral one. It will give you important information that you can apply along with your own moral beliefs to come to a choice that's right for you.

SEX. Our whole culture seems obsessed with it. Sex is used to sell beer, cars, shampoo, perfume, just about everything. It's on billboards, magazine covers, TV ads, and packaging. You can't get away from it.

At the same time, we know that unprotected sex can kill, and untreated STIs can have major consequences, including infertility. Yet we are all sexual beings by nature, with natural and sometimes powerful feelings of attraction and love for others.

What's a person to do?

High Quality Sex

Nobody sets out to have a boring, frustrating, or empty sex life. You might choose to postpone sexual activity, but most people eventually want to have a happy sex life, whether now or sometime in the future. But do we even know how to define "good sex" or how to make it happen?

The researcher and writer, Bernie Zilbergeld, had this to say about good sex:

"You're having good sex if you feel good about yourself, good about your partner, and good about what you're doing. If later, after you've had time for

reflection, you still feel good about yourself, your partner, and what you did, you know you've had good sex."

This is a useful way to think about the quality of our sex lives, and it has some important implications. If, for example, we're with someone we don't really feel good about, it's unlikely we're going to have good sex. If we're struggling with body image issues or suffering from poor self esteem, we're again unlikely to have good sex. And if we get drunk or stoned we may have an experience we regret later – again, not high quality sex. Zilbergeld's definition implies that we need to become aware of our values around sex and

live by them, consciously choosing what's right for us rather than being pressured into activity we may not feel good about later.

Redefining Sex

When most people talk about “sex”, they're really talking about intercourse, or penetration of the vagina or anus. Yet this is a very limited view of what sex is, and ironically it involves the very riskiest things we can do sexually in terms of pregnancy and disease transmission. It also excludes many exciting and satisfying erotic possibilities.

It's interesting to note that when people restrict their view of sex to intercourse, they often end up having pretty boring, unsatisfying sex. In fact, it's normal for this to happen within six months to two years in relationships. Many married couples actually end up not having sex at all. Sex therapists, who help people with sexual difficulties, almost always prescribe a ban on intercourse as part of therapy. In other words, they ask couples to stop having intercourse so they can learn how to have really fulfilling sex.

Look at it this way. When you look up at the sky on a beautiful clear night, you don't usually zero in on one star and focus just on how great

Awakening your Senses: Sensate Focus

Sensate focus exercises are commonly assigned by sex therapists to help couples improve their sex lives. Begin by going out together to buy a lotion that you will use for these pleasuring exercises. Sample a variety of lotions and select one based on texture and scent that you both like. It is important that you do this together and that you both like the lotion you choose.

it is. You take in the glory of the whole sky. Well, intercourse is just one tiny aspect of sex, like one tiny planet in the vast galaxy of erotic possibilities that make up sex. If you focus on that one tiny planet, you're going to miss a lot, and you're also going to greatly increase your risk of STDs and pregnancy.

To really find out what sex is all about, you need to explore the other, highly erotic planets in the galaxy. Doing so will enhance your intimacy and your sexual satisfaction. You may very well find that you have a better sex life if you forget about intercourse and instead become a creative “galactic explorer”. (And you'll save a lot of money on sex therapists.)



Exploring the Galaxy

So what can you do to explore these other erotic “planets” and have great sex without intercourse? You might start by thinking about each of the senses – touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight – and coming up with a

list of pleasures in each of those areas. These need not be sexual pleasures; just things that bring you intense enjoyment. Mangoes, the roar of the surf, the scent of cinnamon, the feel of silk, intimate talk – these are just a few examples to get you started.

Start building sensual pleasures like these in to your life in all kinds of situations, not just sexual ones. This will begin to wake up your senses and deepen your enjoyment in everyday life.

Then bring that heightened sensitivity into your sexual life — whether that involves a partner or you're exploring on your own. See what you can bring into the bedroom that would stimulate sensual pleasure. How does a feather feel on the back of your knee? How does it feel to have a recording of the ocean playing while your partner runs the rough (or smooth) edge of a seashell along your inner thigh? Be creative.

Build this kind of pleasuring activity into each and every sexual encounter, whether you go on to have intercourse or not. Remember: the goal is pleasure and connection, not intercourse and orgasm! That's what great sex is really all about.

Sensate Focus Exercise #1

This exercise is designed to help you get in touch with all the areas of your body and learn about how and where you like to be touched, and how your whole body can respond to loving touch. It is an exercise in awakening your senses and experimenting with different sensations.

The goal is NOT to become sexually aroused, but to learn about how your body responds to touch. You might become aroused and that's fine, but do NOT proceed to having intercourse.

Each partner will take a turn at giving and receiving pleasure. Set aside at least an hour for this experience. The room should be comfortably warm and you need to arrange not to be disturbed. Turn off the phone. Warm the lotion. You might also want to use candles, music, aromatherapy, or whatever else would enhance the sensuality of the experience.

Partner A is to simply lie back and enjoy the experience. He/she disrobes and lies on his/her stomach first. He/she may want to close their eyes in order to focus more effectively on bodily sensations and feelings. Partner B should begin by putting lotion on their hands and beginning to caress and touch Partner A's body beginning just under the hair line at the back of the neck and ending with the bottom of the feet. Then Partner A is asked to turn over onto their back and beginning with the face, Partner B pleasures the front of their body, excluding the breasts and genitals. (This applies to both males and females.)

You are asked not to talk during the experience except to tell the pleasuring partner if the touch needs to be modified to make it more pleasurable. If one area is particularly pleasurable, you might want to ask the pleasuring partner to spend a little more time in that area.

The entire process should take at least twenty minutes per person.

At the end of the pleasuring, both partners might want to rest for a few minutes before trading places. Then Partner B should simply lie back and enjoy being pleased while Partner A strokes and caresses him/her using the same process as before.

Don't discuss the exercise with your partner right away. If you want to make a few notes in your journal

about what this was like for you, go ahead. Then choose a time when you can be uninterrupted later and discuss the experience using these "lead-ins":

"What I liked best about the experience was..."

"The type of touch I enjoyed most was..."

"I loved it when you..."

"Next time we do this, I'd love you to try..."

Focus on the positive, and what felt best for you, physically and emotionally. Do this exercise several times before moving to the next one.

Sensate Focus Exercise #2

Set up this exercise in the same way as Sensate Focus #1. You will proceed the same way except that this time you will include breasts and genitals in your touching. However, include them only as you include all other parts of the body – Don't spend any extra time or attention on these areas. Again, your goal is not sexual arousal, but simply becoming aware of your response to being touched, learning more about what you like. Pay attention to the sensations and feelings you experience— both the kinds of touch that enhance your pleasure and touches that block pleasure.

Again, the entire process should take at least twenty minutes per person. Repeat the exercise at least twice, and discuss the experience some time later using the "lead-ins" above.

Enjoy!