

Benefits of a Healthy Sexual Relationship

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Introduction

Most people want the sexual relationship they have with their significant other to be one of the most cherished parts of life. It is common knowledge that sexual intimacy brings pleasure and connection to a relationship, but many who are sexually dissatisfied or who want to build a stronger relationship have a desire for more understanding of this topic. Many wonder what other benefits can come from a healthy sexual relationship, how their sexual relationship affects the other aspects of their lives, or if the effort to cultivate a strong sexual relationship with their partner is really worth it. An exploration of this topic shows how a healthy sexual relationship can lead to improved relationship satisfaction, increased emotional closeness and health, and a deeper connection to one's faith.

Benefits

Connection Between Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

In a nationwide survey of happy and unhappy married couples performed by Olson, Olson-Sigg and Larson, 76 percent of happy couples said that their sexual relationship was satisfying and fulfilling. Additionally, 68 percent of happy couples said that they were completely satisfied with the affection they receive from their partner and 84 percent said that they had no concerns that their partner was not interested in them sexually (David H. Olson, 2008).

In another study, newlywed married couples were tracked for 4-5 years and assessed both their sexual and overall relational satisfaction every 6-8 months. Researchers noted that a correlation emerged between improved sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (McNulty et al., 2016). To quote the study:

It is possible for higher levels of sexual satisfaction to lead to higher levels of subsequent relationship satisfaction and, within the same person, for higher levels of relationship satisfaction to lead to higher levels of subsequent sexual satisfaction.

These studies suggest that as sexual satisfaction improves, the overall relationship improves and vice versa. Ultimately, as partners seek to improve their overall relationship, efforts towards having a healthy sexual relationship should be significant.

Emotional Connection and Health

In addition to the overall increase in relationship satisfaction, there are many other benefits that come from maintaining a healthy sexual relationship. On one level, positive sexual intimacy brings joy to a relationship. As one author put it, “sexual relations are designed to lift a marriage from the profane and mundane to a higher plane...indeed, the feelings of love and caring generated through sexual union normally carry over into their nonsexual relationship as well (Stephen E. Lamb, 2000).”

Along with joy, positive sexual intimacy in a relationship also brings emotional fulfillment. In a recent study, it was shown that sexual satisfaction significantly predicted the levels of emotional intimacy between husbands and wives (Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day, & Gangamma, 2014). Bitterness, frustration, contention, and depression can all be connected to an unhealthy sexual association (Laura M. Brotherson, 2004). Emotional closeness and the health of a sexual union are inseparable.

Improving a sexual relationship can also reinvigorate a stale marriage or avoid divorce (Laura M. Brotherson, 2004). As couples strengthen the sexual intimacy they share, relational problems such as these can be evaded. On another note, Laura M. Brotherson, a renowned family educator, described how sexual relationships affect health. She said, “Whether sexual problems

cause emotional and physical ailments or emotional and physical ailments cause sexual problems is yet to be determined scientifically. But they are definitively related (Laura M. Brotherson, 2004).” It is evident that nurturing their sexual intimacy is one of the best things couples can do for relational satisfaction, emotional connection, and health.

The Latter-Day Saint Perspective

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, having a healthy sexual relationship has even greater significance. Dr. James M. Harper and Dr. Leslie Feinauer of Brigham Young University summed up the views of the LDS church towards marital sexuality and fertility:

The doctrinal views of the Latter-day Saint Church as well as many major religions of the world identify several purposes of marital sexuality: becoming one, connecting with God, strengthening the bonds of marriage, and bringing children into a family. Unfortunately, couples often understand only one or two of these purposes and ignore the rest . . . By seeking to have a balance of all the divine purposes in their sexual relationship, husbands and wives together will experience not just satisfaction but more commitment, relationship growth, and connection with God (James M. Harper, 2012).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the church’s quorum of the 12 Apostles has said that “human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God (Holland, 1998).” For members of the LDS community, building a healthy sexual relationship reaches much further than sexual pleasure alone.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is important to recognize that having a healthy sexual relationship will strengthen the bond between partners significantly and bring greater happiness to couples. Additionally, intimates will increase their emotional closeness, improve their health and avoid relational problems as strong sexual intimacy is cultivated. Furthermore, for Latter-day Saints and many other religious believers, strengthening the sexual relationship brings connection to one's faith. All seeking to develop a fulfilling, joyful and healthy sexual relationship are invited to schedule an appointment with Covenant Sex Therapy.

References

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