



*Q: What is the difference between erotic and kinky?
A: Erotic is using a feather; kinky the whole chicken!*

Sex is a fundamental topic for comedians because it elicits anxiety about everything that makes us human—the way we look, the way we perform, how we prioritize, relate to others, and perhaps most importantly, it reminds us that we are animals, and that we will die². The evolutionary purpose for sex is solely to perpetuate the species.

However, there is more to life and sex than death and procreation. There are couples that regret having kids (especially in the teenage years), and couples that are totally happy without kids or sex. We have evolved to the point where, like hunting for food, an essential function has become optional.

Sex feels good, even awesome on many levels (like chocolate!) and remains a powerful drive. This force can make otherwise disciplined and principled adults of all ages engage in extreme behaviors that can take down an individual, family, organization, and perhaps a religion.

Sex still sells, both explicitly and implicitly. It's not just the skimpy clothes, it's also the deodorant. The sheer volume of advertisements, articles, entertainment, media and internet volume that utilize sex for promotion and content reflects its primacy.

Medical products and procedures such as Viagra, augmentation surgery and others to stay young, maintain and enhance sexual function are growing in scope and volume.

Sex is changing, like everything else. How much of this is bad vs. good is clearly subject to debate.

Sadly, there remains abuse, such as sex trafficking, female circumcision and child pornography. Within the “norm” of the world’s population, the middle ground, where there is no clear harm, short-term or long-term, to individuals or society, is becoming more accepted.

Gender roles are continuously re-explored and re-defined, and our understanding of the physiology and health of sexual functions becomes refined; we have the opportunity to evolve our personal and community beliefs, expectations, and experience.

Physiology

Sexual function is a truly integrated and complex synchronous activity of several systems. At the very least, these include the nervous system, hormone system, cardiovascular and urogenital systems. The neurological aspects of sexual function are several, involving central processes such as emotion (love, guilt, anger, aggression and reception), peripheral processes such as skin sensation, muscular actions and autonomic functions (heart, breath, blood flow to various regions). Sex hormones, both male and female, are required in the right ratios, as well as the adrenal, thyroid, insulin and leptin (fat) systems, at the

least. Sex hormones themselves affect libido, responsiveness, and other sexual and non-sexual functions. Conversely sexual activity independently stimulates the production of testosterone, and therefore may be “necessary” for optimal health. Whether thoughts alone or other passions can be substitutes is not clear scientifically. Orgasm may have a unique neurological (and other) functional role.

The cardiovascular system, which affects blood pressure, heart rate, and control of blood flow require a complex sequence of both sympathetic and parasympathic activity. The uro-genital and terminal gastro-intestinal systems have a vote, if only by virtue of owning some of the real estate!

Stress and Sex

Stress is defined as a challenge to a system, whether a heavy truck on a bridge or a human dealing with life. The adrenal system is the major modulator of stress. Since its charge is survival, it is empowered to divert resources, such as sex hormones and muscle for its purposes. While addressed in detail in other articles, this shock-absorber-system produces hormones that begin with the same chassis

Dimensions of Sex				
Type	Thought	Purpose	Focus	Orgasm
Procreative	It	Perpetuation of Species	Genitals	Necessary
Sensual	Me and You	Sensation, Passion	Eroticism	Emphasized
Intimate	Us	Connection, Bonding, Expression of Love	Body, Mind, Spirit	Optional

(cholesterol) as the sex hormones. When stressed, survival of the individual is prioritized over survival of the species, and so sexual hormones are diverted to the adrenal system. This is evidenced by young stressed women without periods, young men without erections, and both with depression, fatigue and loss

of libido—all signs of sexual hormone imbalance. It is estimated that up to 80% of sexual dysfunction is due to stress and not to frank medical illness.

Sex, Disability and Aging

The decline, loss or alteration of sexual dysfunction with age or other medical (and congenital) conditions is a given, and again a huge source of anxiety and humor. Just like all other de-generative processes, much of this is affected by lifestyle. Obesity, diabetes, and related vascular diseases can affect blood flow to the sexual organs; hence the discovery and role of Viagra-like drugs. However, such problems are still the minority within the realm of sexual dysfunction and dissatisfaction.

Understanding the interaction of genes, epigenes³ and environment will enable us to maintain and enhance sexual functioning in the future, apart from the newer pharmaceuticals. Biochemical imbalances, including deficiencies in essential nutrients (omega-3 oils, zinc and iodine), toxicities (xeno-estrogens in our foods, perchlorates coming from rocket fuel, lead and mercury), chronic infections (excessive antibiotics, vaccines, sugar, stress), and other traumas and stressors all affect sexual physiology.

Sex, Fertility and Contraception

In order for sex to result in a “take home baby”, there again is a long and complex sequence of events that span nine months or more³. Infertility is a growing epidemic. The reasons are several, which include older couples, environmental toxins, co-existing illness and others, beyond the scope of this article. This medical condition is discriminated against by many insurance carriers which unjustifiably deny coverage, while covering other conditions.

Connecting or dis-connecting sex from conception and fertility through birth control, and in-vitro fertilization, for example, both adds to and deletes from the stressors associated with the experience of sex.

Sexual Compulsion and Addiction

Compulsions are thoughts and behaviors that we cannot resist. Addictions are compulsive activities that have become dysfunctional. As discussed in other articles¹, these conditions, of which there is more awareness, are manifestations of neurotransmitter imbalance. Such imbalances are both the cause and the result of physiological imbalances discussed above, and can respond to improved health, including a healthy sexual relationship.

Sex and Art

Films such as “Sessions” (2012) and “Water Dance” (2000), which showcase the magnificent Helen Hunt’s courage and philosophy, serve to move us toward a higher awareness of Sex. Indeed, Art and Sex go together (alas for the Scientists) because Art is about the exploration of the human condition and the relationship between sensation, perception, emotion, thought, and action.

Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank, Freud’s protégé for a portion of their careers, disputed the role of sex vs. death in society and the motivation for Art².

States of Consciousness and Energy Systems

In the yogic tradition, imbalance, at the least, in the root (survival), pelvic (sexual), solar (will) and heart (connection) chakras can be a cause and result of sexual dysfunctions of every type⁴. Tantric yoga, while varied, explores the relationship between internal and external experience; corporal and non-corporal existence. Sexual experience of any type can be a vehicle for this exploration.

In the Chinese model, yin and yang, the female and male aspects, were created when the One differentiated into Two. Everything has a yin and yang element, which are always in relation to each other. Like “up and down” or “male and female”, there is no absolute; it is all relative.

While science has not been able to define or measure different “States of Consciousness”, clearly we are in different states before, during and after sex. How these states are induced (intentionally, ritualistically, spontaneously), experienced, and utilized (pleasure, aggression, healing, growth, connection) is a choice that every individual, couple, community and society will continue to explore as our world continues to change.

Love, Intimacy and Sex

Love is a universal force acknowledged by all peoples and religions, though unfortunately used by some to justify

harming others. Intimacy, first with self and then with others is a major challenge of adult life⁵. While our computers and cell phones connect us more immediately in many ways, “social” media even if in “3D”, may be “live” but never *alive*. Studies in the 1950’s when “Harlow’s monkeys” were cruelly deprived of their mothers’ touch during childhood clearly demonstrated the need for touch. Touch is a nutrient.

Cyberspace is not real space, and despite proposed machines such as the “orgasmatron” in Woody Allen’s futuristic comedy, *Sleeper* (1973), the magic and mystery of human touch and connection will never have a substitute. Love, intimacy and sex, while separable, can be fully integrated⁶. While rare, those who have achieved such integration inspire us all.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of a knowledgeable practitioner. The contents of this article are copyright 2013 by Michael Cheikin MD and may not be reproduced without express written permission.

Footnotes and Reading Materials (Books followed by ISBN number)

1. See Dr. Cheikin's previous article(s), especially on “Pursuit of the Ultimate Neurotransmitter Fix” as well as articles on the Adrenal Fatigue and Cortisol. Dr. Cheikin’s website, www.cheikin.com, contains related articles and other materials.
2. Lieberman, EJ: Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank. 1998. 0684-863-278.
3. Epigenes are molecules that modulate gene expression and are passed from generation to generation. The health and stressors of a parent affects their child, grandchild and later generations apart from the genes.
4. Rama, S, Ballentine, R, Ajaya, S: Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness. 1976. 0893-890-367
5. Osho: Intimacy: Trusting Oneself and the Other. 2001. 0312-275-668.
6. Schnarch, David. Intimacy and Desire: Awaken the Passion in Your Relationship. 2011. ISBN 0825-305-675.

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