

Relationships & Sexuality

Theresa M. Chase, MA, ND, RN

Assistant Professor, Nursing-Mental Health

Colorado Mesa University



Disclaimer

- The information provided by speakers in any presentation made as part of the 2015 NAF Annual Membership Meeting is for informational use only.
- NAF encourages all attendees to consult with their primary care provider, neurologist, or other health care provider about any advice, exercise, therapies, medication, treatment, nutritional supplement, or regimen that may have been mentioned as part of any presentation.
- Products or services mentioned during these presentations does not imply endorsement by NAF.

Presenter Disclosures

Theresa M. Chase

- The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose or list



My intentions for this session....

- ▶ To assist and support your growth as a human being in the area of relationship and sexuality
- ▶ To provide a fun, interactive and experiential learning opportunity.
- ▶ To provide you with food for thought, resources to gain and a new level of comfort with this topic.

How This Session is Different....



- “Out of the Box” approach
- Not the usual route
- I am nervous
- Your participation is essential
- That is not really me on the rock 😊

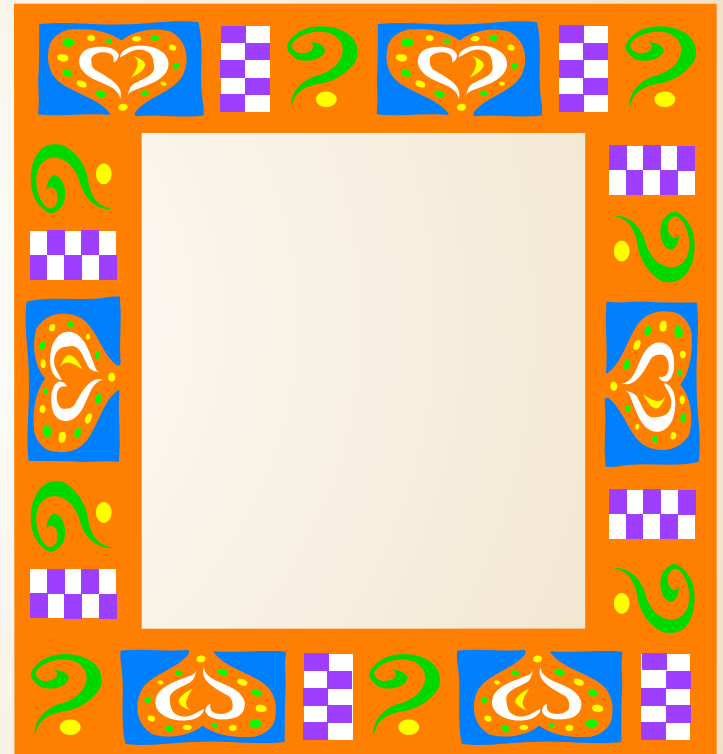
Why Me?

- ▶ Background
 - ▶ Educator
 - ▶ Counselor
 - ▶ Nurse
- ▶ Experience
 - ▶ 35+ years/educator
 - ▶ 200+ presentations
 - ▶ 18 years w/ new patients
- ▶ Training
 - ▶ Nursing
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Health Promotion
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Mental Health



Why You?

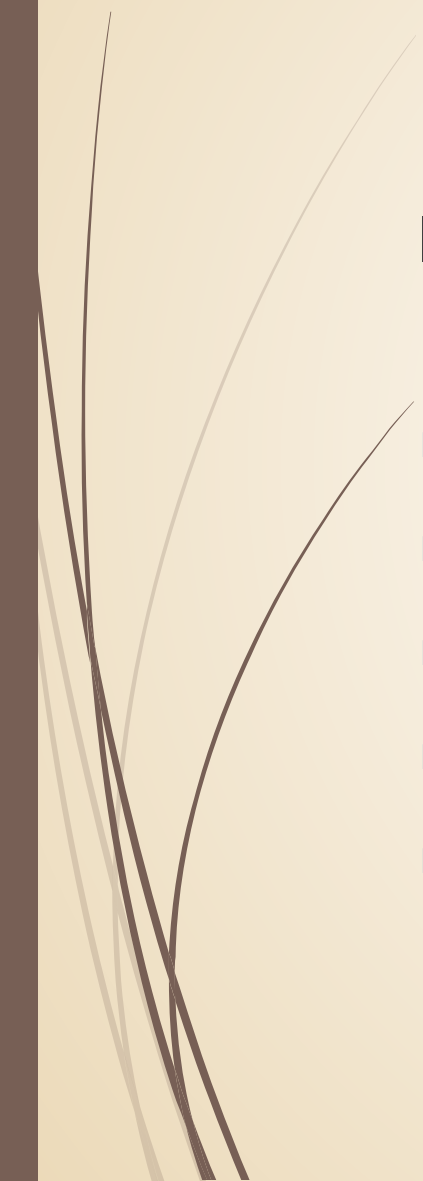
- ▶ Are you a human being?
- ▶ Do you have an interest in relationship & sexuality?
- ▶ What do you want in your life?





Are You a Human Being?

If so, then **you are a sexual being....**

- ▶ Needs & desires
 - ▶ Sexual expression
 - ▶ Relationship
 - ▶ Curiosity
 - ▶ Growth
- 



Human Sexuality

In the the broadest sense, human sexuality represents a natural extension of affection, tenderness and companionship between two people.

It is the integration of somatic, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects of well-being.

Having the ability to enjoy and control sexual reproduction and behavior without fear, guilt and shame.



Relationship

The human heart yearns for contact---
above all it yearns for genuine dialogue.

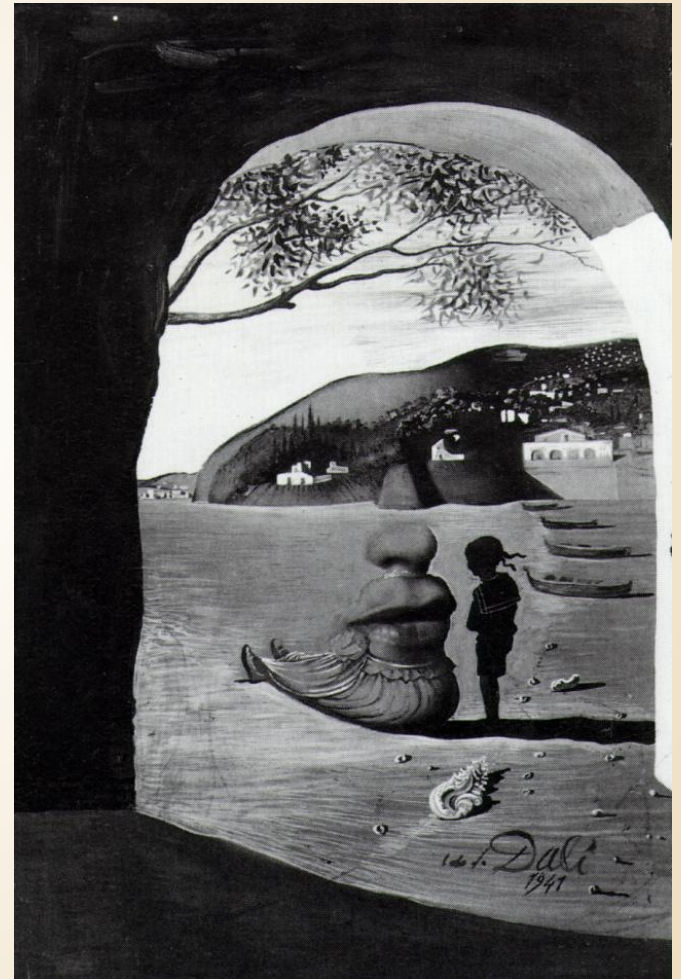
Dialogue is at the heart of the human.

To be seen, heard and met by
another.....recognized in our uniqueness,
fullness, vulnerability.

Hycner & Jacobs, 1995

Talking about Sex

- ▶ No common vocabulary
- ▶ Not easy to talk sex
- ▶ Media portrayal of sex
- ▶ Values, family, religion and culture influence
- ▶ Judgment of sexuality
- ▶ No one to listen.....





How do You Choose to Live?

- ▶ Love and sex is about promoting good feelings and enhancing a capacity for play. Ability to feel good, to play and to enjoy loving sexuality entwined with all aspects of life....
 - ▶ Physical health
 - ▶ Emotional and Mental well-being
 - ▶ Loving relationships
 - ▶ Spiritual connection.

Resnick 2012.



Barriers to Getting what you want

- ▶ Other's ideas about sexuality & you....
- ▶ Your own ideas about sexuality & you.....
- ▶ Interference of the disability issues
- ▶ Changes in roles, relationship, daily life....
- ▶ Who's there? Single, partner, marriage, no one.
- ▶ Time, assistance, function
- ▶ Body Hatred & Body Image Issues



Expanding Your Views: Learning from Others

- ▶ People with Spinal Cord Injury Reported....
 - ▶ Increased sexual imagination
 - ▶ Knowledge & creativity
 - ▶ Discovered new erogenous zones
 - ▶ Explored new positions
 - ▶ Changed time of day routine
 - ▶ Planned sex was OK
 - ▶ Spasms enhanced sexual pleasure
 - ▶ Let go of the expectation of orgasm
- ▶ Experienced pleasure and orgasm in new and different ways.



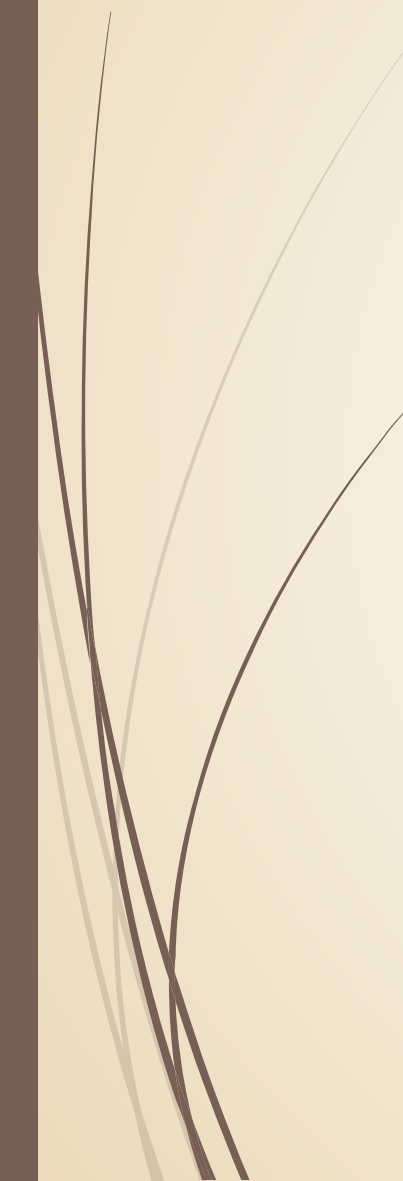
Body-Mind Basics

- ▶ Name 3 qualities you would like more in your emotional life with your partner.
 - ▶ ..
 - ▶ ..
 - ▶ ..
- ▶ Name 3 qualities you would like more of in your sexual life with your partner.
 - ▶ ..
 - ▶ ..
 - ▶ ..

How would you and your partner have to grow to make those changes?



Waking Up Your Senses Breathing Exercises

- ▶ Belly Rolls
 - ▶ Belly Breathing
 - ▶ The Complete Breath
 - ▶ Taking Felt-Sense Inventory
- 



What Dampens Desire?

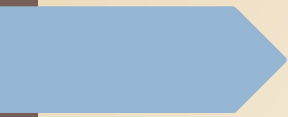
- ▶ Obvious Risk Factors
 - ▶ Stress
 - ▶ Pressures of daily life
 - ▶ Money tensions
 - ▶ Pessimism, fear, blame, power struggles
 - ▶ Depression and Anxiety
 - ▶ Despair and apprehension wipe out anything pleasurable
 - ▶ Depressed people are locked in the past
 - ▶ Trauma
 - ▶ Unresolved emotional effects of abuse
 - ▶ Emotional, physical, sexual abuse and trauma linger in the body/mind



Other Issues.....

- ▶ Desire Dampeners...
 - ▶ Partner Infidelity
 - ▶ Caregiver role
 - ▶ Daily Proximity
 - ▶ Health declines

- ▶ Desire-Dampening Physical Conditions
 - ▶ Functional changes
 - ▶ Hormone deficiencies
 - ▶ Side effects of medications
 - ▶ Illness, fatigue, limited energy



Falling in Love: The 1st time or Again....

- ▶ Falling in Love & Commitment involves brain chemistry
 - ▶ Falling in Love” stimulates dopamine & norepinephrine
 - ▶ Generates feelings of euphoria, triggers testosterone
 - ▶ “Commitment” stimulates oxytocin & vasopressin
 - ▶ Sedating effects and inhibit testosterone



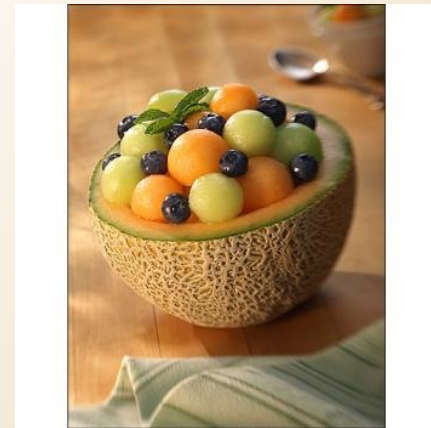
Experiments in Relationship

- ▶ 1 Minute Mindful Hug
 - ▶ Say What You Love
 - ▶ Have Fun Together
 - ▶ Holding & Breathing
 - ▶ Empathic Touch
 - ▶ Making Eye Contact
- 

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

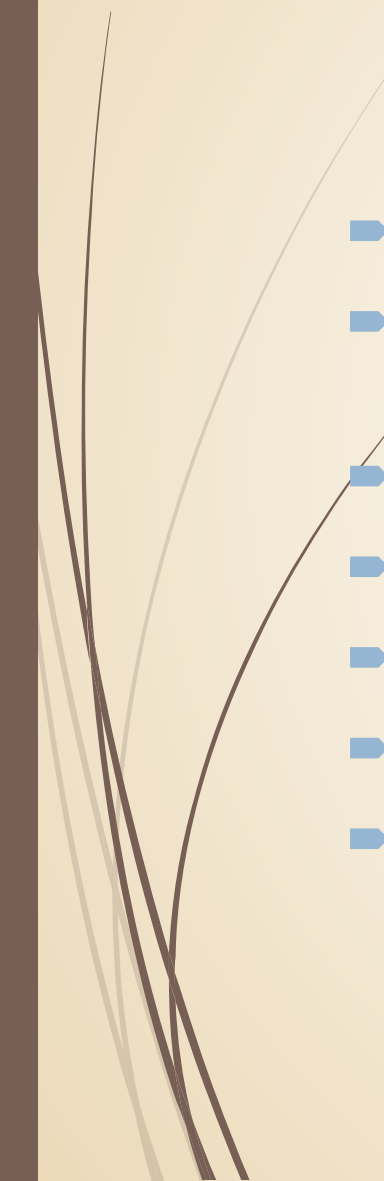


Caregiver
Spouse





What is Truly Great Sex?

- ▶ Being present, focused and embodied
 - ▶ Extraordinary communication and heightened empathy
 - ▶ Authenticity and transparency
 - ▶ Freedom to be genuinely honest
 - ▶ Feeling no self-consciousness with partner
 - ▶ Fun and Play....Sense of Humor...Laughing Together
 - ▶ Allowing oneself to be vulnerable and surrender
- 



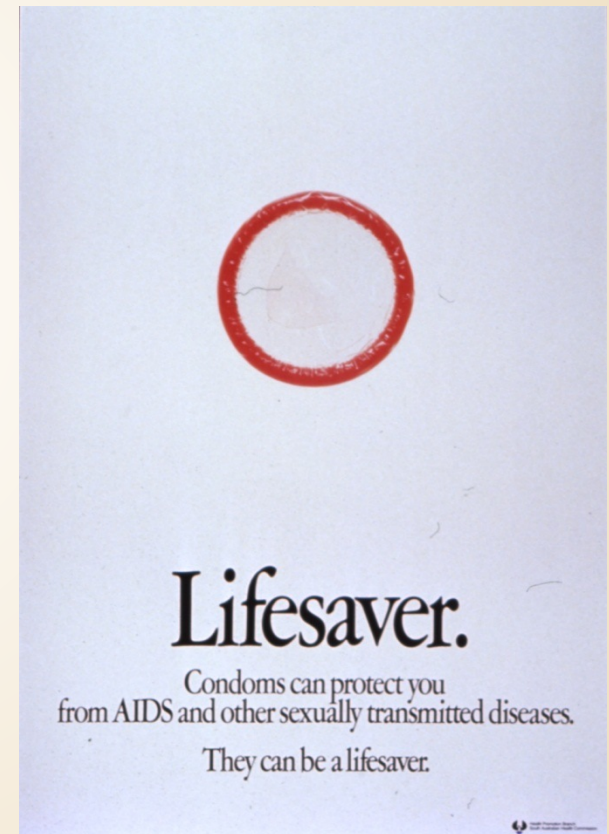
Practice Safe Sex



- ▶ Safer sex means sexual contact that:
 - ▶ Shows respect
 - ▶ Is pleasurable
 - ▶ Freely consented by both partners
 - ▶ Reduces the risks of passing on STDs
 - ▶ Reduces the risks of unwanted pregnancy
 - ▶ Is safe emotionally
- ▶ Sex is never an obligation –

Safer sex activities

- ▶ Involve NO exchange of body fluids:
 - ▶ Massage, hugging, touching
 - ▶ Self-stimulation
 - ▶ Social kissing
 - ▶ Rubbing against each other
 - ▶ Fantasy, thinking about sex
 - ▶ Kissing the body
 - ▶ Saying NO to things you do not feel comfortable about





Truly Great Sex?


Focusing on sexual performance for those with sexual concerns is counterproductive, because truly great sex and relationship is about “being in the experience” enjoying the connection, letting it unfold rather than achieving any particular sexual goals.

Kleinplatz, 2009



You are a Sexual Being.....

- ▶ There is no rush....
 - ▶ It's up to you....

 - ▶ What do YOU want?
 - ▶ Who do YOU want to be with?
 - ▶ What do YOU need?
- 

*“The real
voyage of
discovery rests
not in seeking
new
landscapes,
but in having
new eyes.”*

--Marcel Proust





References

- ▶ American Psychological Association (2011). The guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian gay, and bisexual clients. www.apa.org.
- ▶ Firestone RW, Firestone CA, Catlett J. (2008). Sex & Love in Intimate Relationships.
- ▶ Hycner R, Jacob . 1995). The Healing Relationship in Gestalt Therapy.
- ▶ Klienplatz PJ, Menard AD, Paquet MP, et al. (2009). The components of optimal sexuality: A portrait of great sex. Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 18 (1-2), 1-13.
- ▶ Liddiard K. (Spring, 2014). Sex, love & disability: Experiencing sensuality and intimacy. Abilities.
- ▶ Resnick, S. (2012) The heart of desire: Keys to the pleasure of love. John Wiley & Sons: New Jersey.