

SEX MATTERS with Rochelle Gardiner & Dr Dana Moisuc

Our sexual lives can be an amazing source of connection, closeness, joy and satisfaction. The largest sexual organ is the brain and it's a great place to start our focus. We often have a performance mindset – things become all about 'getting there' rather than enjoying the journey, the intimacy and connection that may be experienced together.

Sexual difficulties often arise out of other issues within the relationship. Communication is key in all relationships, and when it comes to sexual matters, this cannot be overstated. Relationships thrive on good communication and quality time. Research has shown that the ability to be assertive about our sexual desires and preferences significantly increases satisfaction in intimate relationships. It's essential to develop the ability to be honest about personal needs, thoughts and feelings. Examples of such assertiveness include the ability to talk openly and share thoughts and ideas about sex, feeling comfortable to say no to sex when you don't desire it, being able to request your partner does things that sexually excite you, and being comfortable with letting your partner know when an aspect of sex is unpleasant or unenjoyable.

Has anyone ever made you 'the problem'? It's not a great feeling. These close intimate space

don't respond well to the 'problem-solving mode'. A more helpful approach is a 'this is ours to address, not your problem to solve' angle. Be willing to support the other person and recognise your own triggers.

This is an example of how our psychology impacts. It is very useful to become aware of automatic negative thoughts about sex. Common examples include thinking your body is not sexy / attractive enough, that you won't satisfy your partner, wondering what your partner is thinking, thinking about how long it's going to take, and focussing on why you don't enjoy sex more. These thoughts can run through our mind at lightning speed and sap our sexual desire.

Sex drive is reduced when individuals are feeling stressed or angry. We all need to consider these factors and make lifestyle or psychological changes to address unhealthy stress levels and to cope with emotions. Other psychological factors of importance are mood disorders such as depression or anxiety, which have negative impacts on libido. These conditions require treatment in order to improve quality of life overall. Body image, past hurts in this or previous relationships, negative thinking, and difficulties with relaxing and maintaining a focus are just a few common issues which are

helpful to address with a psychologist.

Our sexual health and wellbeing are impacted by many factors – neurological, biological, hormonal, physical, psychological and relational. It is wise to ensure that all contributing factors are addressed when difficulties arise.

Elite Women's Health harbours a unique clinical setting on the Sunshine Coast specialised in treating sexual problems. We are well-equipped and happy to support you achieve a healthy and thriving sexual life. We are empathetic, discreet and adequately qualified to help find your unique path to wellness.

Your friendly team,

Rochelle Gardiner-Psychologist

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