

## **Messy Sex**

### **A Conversation We All Need to Have**

This is an invitation to a conversation based on my observations. This is not a declaration of facts. I'm not a sex therapist or someone who has expertise specifically in the topic of sexuality. I am a doctor of Chinese Medicine with a former career as a psychotherapist dealing with human development. Conveniently in my studies and practice I learned of Chinese Medicine's long history of helping people with issues pertaining to sexuality. Lubrication, dryness, erection, libido, many sexual dysfunctions can be addressed by acupuncture and herbal medicine. Chinese medicine is very adept in helping with these issues. Both psychological and physiological disharmony can effect sexual function, and Chinese medicine addresses both as a whole. Instead of using Viagra, for example, a man might address the root cause of his erectile dysfunction and naturally rebalance and realign with acupuncture and herbs. The goal is not only better sex, rather an authentic relationship to ones sexuality . This conversation covers a wide range and addresses the many ways humans can be their authentic sexual selves throughout their life-cycles.

### **Reject External Projections - "To Thine Own Self Be True"**

Sex sells. There is inevitably a person sitting at his or her desk right now figuring how to use sex to sell their product, movie, song, or something. They are not thinking about what is in our best interest regarding a healthy, natural, authentic relationship to our sexuality, sensuality and desire. The motivation is to make money. The problem is that many of us have internalized these powerful messages—and when we find that we don't live up to their impossible expectations we feel unworthy, ashamed, we feel that something is wrong with us. We are humans, not machines. We are not players in porn, commercials or fairy tales. We are complex, beautiful and messy beings. Of course it would be nice to always have a strong erection, a perfectly lubricated vagina, a fiery libido, an orgasm at the perfect time, or hell, even one! (By the way, statistics show that 70% of women never orgasm during intercourse.) These expectations serve fantasies, but they're not real. I believe, at our core, we all really just want to be loved, accepted, desired for who we actually are. To do that, we need to clear away the

onslaught of external false messages about sex and ask ourselves a vital question — ‘Who am I as a sexual being?’

My professional practice and personal life affords me the great privilege to hear very intimate tales of sex and sexuality. Many of the women I know are strong, well-educated, self-aware, people. In predominantly heterosexual relationships, the stories I hear most often are of a woman’s desire to let her partner know how skilled she is in a variety of sexual acts. It’s almost as if they are presenting their sexual resumé to their partner in order to set themselves apart from other lovers. But, to what end? Do they hope a mastery of certain sexual skills will lead to love? So many women I speak with are unable to relax and receive pleasure because they are concerned about doing a good job, presenting in just the right way. The space for women to be human and messy in sexuality is just not there. This is not necessarily because their lovers are selfish or inattentive. The ability to receive is just not well cultivated.

### **Let’s Talk Men**

I have been fortunate to talk to many men about this topic too—and the consensus is that men don’t have it easier in this regard either. Women can fake their pleasure to a greater degree and obviously male physiology makes it more difficult to do that. Of course, men don’t always feel aroused, sexy or in the mood for sexual intimacy, but the culture certainly dictates that they be constantly ready and wanting sex. The pressure to meet those demands creates shame for many men. Many men have sexual performance anxiety, so the use of Viagra has become the norm. And while Viagra can be useful for some, the negative side effects can be serious— shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, sudden hearing and vision loss. What would sex look like if men had the choice to tune in to what they really desired in the moment? It could be that they want to read a book and relax. Men are also human. They are also messy!

### **What If....**

I define ‘messy sex’ as an approach to sex and sexuality that allows one’s authentic humanity to shine through. Imagine a scenario where two people come together with sex on the agenda, and a man

reaches orgasm sooner than he would like, or the woman is not perfectly lubricated or climaxing. What if there were space for all of that—absent of shame or expectations— just an invitation to be our messy, human selves? Let's take a do-over, have a nap, get a snack.

### **Shame and Sex**

Sadly, these conversations are not happening enough. I think shame is the biggest culprit. I'm not talking about the shame of having sex with someone who's not your partner, or even the shame of having a sexual appetite. I'm talking about not fitting the mold that our external world dictates. The beauty of our perfect imperfections, our vulnerability and our humanness gets lost in the search for something virtually unobtainable. One might be able to act the part and do it well, but it's unlikely that it will be fulfilling on a deep level if much of one's true self is obscured. At the point where we can really connect with our sexual selves we also may be able to get a more accurate picture of what might be going on in our bodies. We can with more clarity notice if there are any physiological issues that are impeding us from having our unique optimal sexual life? When we clear away some of the external pressure to be a certain way, we are able to honestly assess where we might need some help.

### **How Chinese Medicine Can Help With Sexual Function**

Acupuncture and herbal remedies can effectively treat sexual dysfunction—on both physiological and psychological levels. Studies have shown that erectile dysfunction in men, and the inability to orgasm in both men and women, are often connected to stress and depression.

#### **Acupuncture**

Sexual response connects to our neurological, endocrine and cardiovascular systems - all which acupuncture affects. The needles can be a very effective treatment for lack of arousal, difficulty or failure to orgasm, erectile dysfunction, and pain or discomfort with intercourse. When using acupuncture and Chinese medicine we always treat the individual, not just symptoms. The practitioner looks for root causes—and devises a treatment plan to help patients alleviate or eradicate the symptoms. With a

diagnosis and a combination of acupuncture and herbs, many patients find long desired relief from their problems related to sexuality and sexual dysfunction.

### **Some Herbs That Can be Helpful:**

#### **1. Ginseng:**

Scientific studies of Ginseng show it to be highly effective for erectile dysfunction. Those who consumed the herb have shown remarkable results in comparison to those who were given a placebo. But ginseng's benefits aren't limited to men; women can also use the plant's powerful root to fuel their sexual flames.

#### **2. Maca:**

Maca has also been used traditionally for thousands of years by native Andean people—as an important super food and medicine. It is also used to enhance fertility and sexual performance, with recent studies confirming Maca's ability to improve sexual desire and act as an anti-depressant. Therefore, it might help people suffering from sexual issues that stem from depression and lack of intimacy.

#### **3. Ginkgo Biloba:**

Ginkgo Biloba is one of the oldest surviving tree species on earth, dating back 300 million years. It has the ability to enhance oxygen utilization, and thus improve memory and concentration. Ginkgo is also proving to be an effective way to treat sexual dysfunction. Researchers found that ginkgo biloba extract increases blood flow and has a relaxant effect on smooth muscle tissue—processes important to the sexual response in women.

#### **4. Horny Goat Weed:**

This herb is native to Japan, Korea and China. Traditionally, horny goat weed was believed to be an aphrodisiac, and was administered in the treatment of sexual issues such as impotence and premature ejaculation. Modern studies have confirmed that a compound found within the herb, *epimedium*, inhibits the action of an enzyme that restricts blood flow to the penis. Epimedium, a natural substance, has a mechanism similar to pharmaceuticals prescribed to treat erectile dysfunction.

## **5. Kava:**

Kava is native to the Polynesian Islands where it was used ceremonially. Kava has made its way into the Western world due to its well-researched ability to soothe the nervous system and reduce stress . Anxiety and a host of stress-related issues contribute to loss of libido and sexual dissatisfaction in both sexes. Kava is a great alternative to assist with the psychological/emotional component of sexual issues. It is described as having a similar relaxant effect as alcohol, without the feelings of intoxication.

## **Love Your Messy Self**

The most important thing to remember is that you are unique. Human sexuality is like snowflakes or fingerprints. When we stop comparing ourselves to others or to external projections, we can relax into who we truly are. We have to be willing to embrace the awkwardness of sex—go out of our comfort zones. This means re-setting our own expectations in regard to what "good sex" is and not being discouraged or feeling shame when it gets messy or awkward. We can have a better understanding of our sexual preferences and grow closer to our partner and to our true sexual self. You may come to realize that your libido isn't as strong as others, or that you have a sexual appetite that is abundant. Both are okay and normal. Sexual desire runs the gamut. What is important to remember is this: sex is messy, but when we can approach it honestly, we can love ourselves and truly share that love with others.