Letter From a Sexpert

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Words of advice from ISU Human Sexuality Instructor, Amy Popillion.

LETTER FROM A SEXPERT

As the instructor for nearly 700 students per year taking the Human Sexuality course at Iowa State University, I definitely hear my fair share of stories about students’ experiences related to sexuality—not to mention the family, friends, and even random strangers who, upon hearing that I teach “sex class,” often fill me in on various sexuality-related trials and tribulations. Some of these stories are empowering; some are heartbreaking; and some are just plain funny. The one thread through all of these is the need people have for talking about sexuality as a part of who they are, for asking questions, seeking information and finding validation that they are “normal.” All of this is a reminder of the need for increased education and information about issues pertaining to sexuality—mostly the need for people to have healthy, honest, safe, and open conversations with their partners, families, friends and health care providers.

Prevalence of sexual images in the media, sexual messages through songs and common myths about sexuality can give the impression that having an exhilarating and satisfying sex life is just a matter of knowing how to use your “stuff,” however, we know differently. The foundation of a positive and satisfying sex life is good communication. Research shows that couples who communicate well in the bedroom are more likely to feel happy with their relationship and engage in sex more frequently. Now that’s a reason to start talking about sex, right?!

Open communication about sexuality also contributes to a person’s overall health and well-being in other ways. Being able to have frank and honest conversations about sexuality helps people make informed decisions. It is important to know what level of risk you are taking related to potential for STIs (sexually transmitted infections), unintended pregnancies, or even recognizing if you and your partner are (or are not) on the same wavelength related to commitment. According to research, the majority of couples show their consent to engage in sexual intercourse by saying nothing at all. Why is it the majority of couples might find it easier to “do it” rather than talk about “doing it”? Part of this lies in the fact that talking about “it” can create a higher level of intimacy, which in turn brings about more expectations, fears, feelings of commitment, fears of rejection and so on. Add to that the amount of controversy surrounding many issues such as contraception and abortion, and we can quickly see how in some ways it may seem easier to just stay quiet.

I challenge you to not remain silent and speak up. Speak up on issues related to sexuality. Have those potentially awkward conversations with your loved ones. Once you get past the discomfort, I really believe you will be glad you did. Talking about sexuality does not mean we are promoting sex. It just means we are recognizing that humans are sexual beings from birth to death, and by talking about it, we acknowledge the significant role it plays throughout our lives. Talking about sex does not make us perverts, nymphomaniacs or any of the sorts, it makes us more informed, more aware, more comfortable, more open and more likely to experience health and well-being in a vital aspect of our lives.

Enjoy reading the Ethos staff has put together for you about love, sex and relationships. More than anything, I hope they will be the impetus for several conversations about sexuality.

Sincerely,

Amy Popillion, Ph.D., CFLE
Senior Lecturer, Human Development & Family Studies

Alcohol

We all knew there had to be a reason for those crazy college hook-ups. Though many do not like to admitting it, because alcohol relaxes the body and reduces inhibitions. It is considered an aphrodisiac. Wine is especially known to relax and help to stimulate the senses. Drinking wine can greatly enhance a romantic rendezvous, and when done right, can lead you on a more erotic course. Send the message of your intentions by treating the wine as you would your lover. Careless the glass, savor the flavor, dip your lips, let your senses devour its every thickening sensation.

CHOCOLATE

It’s not just the gift-giving gesture that gets women going. PEA, phenethylamine, is a chemical in chocolate that releases dopamine in the pleasure center of the brain. However, it is metabolized in the body quickly, so it never hurts to have a little extra on hand. For the ultimate sexy chocolate treat, melt some chocolate and use it to dip in aphrodisiac fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, or mangoes

RASPBERRIES

The sexual appeal of this tiny fruit is credited to its shape and texture... Described as “fruit nipples”, they’re perfect for hand feeding your partner and make for a sensual experience when pressed between teeth. Eat them over a bowl of frozen yogurt with chocolate on top for some extra sexual oompf.

COFFEE

A cup of Joe to get you in the mood? Caffeine is known to stimulate and awaken, but too much and it becomes a depressant. Serve a small cup of coffee mixed with some cocoa and a dollop of whipped cream to lice off your sweetheart’s nose, and you’ve got a sweet treat to keep you up all night.

Aphrodisiacs

First used in ancient times as a remedy for sexual anxieties, aphrodisiac foods have been found by scientists today to stimulate senses and yearning for some action within hours. While we make no promises that eating these foods will guarantee a roll in the sack, it is romantic to share food with another and a fun way to experiment in the bedroom.

Head to your local grocer and toss a few of these items in the sack to whip up a recipe for lovin’!

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