

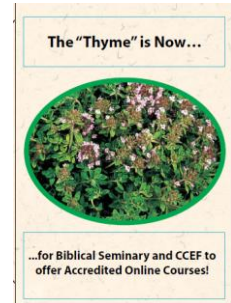


When Sex in Marriage Doesn't Work
Philip G. Monroe, PsyD

www.wisecounsel.wordpress.com
pmonroe@biblical.edu

30 Second Advertisement

- ▶ A joint venture by CCEF DE & Biblical Seminary
 - ▶ *Counseling & The Local Church* for credit!
 - ▶ January 18, 2010
 - ▶ *Dynamics of Biblical Change* for credit!
 - ▶ April 2010
 - ▶ Convert other CCEF courses to graduate credit?
 - ▶ See Biblical Seminary's table (and get your Thyme!)



▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Ponder this....

- ▶ Where does the Christian couple turn when sex is unsatisfactory; when they fail to achieve orgasm or unity in sexual expressions?
- ▶ What are some of the problems that lead to sex problems in marriage?
- ▶ Are you prepared to discuss sexual matters in a careful, clear, and God-honoring manner, *without* embarrassment?

▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Thesis

- ▶ Christian counselors and wise friends have an opportunity to
 - ▶ speak about the beauty and brokenness of sex and,
 - ▶ invite wounded individuals to explore sex problems within a holy and safe context

▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

By the end the hour you should

- ▶ Reviewed foundational truths about sex problems
- ▶ Identify the 3 main types of problems couples have in regard to sex (and their sub-issues)
- ▶ Be able to identify good assessment procedures to help couples talk about embarrassing matters
- ▶ Have some ideas about practical helps
- ▶ Recognize when sex therapy is NOT a good idea

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Foundations: Truth about sexual problems

- ▶ **Sexual dysfunction stems from multiple causes**
 - ▶ **Disease** (liver, prostate, diabetes, high blood pressure)
 - ▶ **Medicines** (beta-blockers, anti-hypertensives, SSRIs)
 - ▶ **Desire** (abuse, rigidity, hormones, stress, addiction)
 - ▶ **Expectations** (naiveté, idealism, bad experiences)
 - ▶ **Habits, skills**
 - ▶ **Relational difficulties** (conflict, abuse, affairs)
- ▶ Happily, most dysfunctions are quite solvable
- ▶ But, "Just do it", "relax", or other forms of force and manipulation NEVER work

© 2009

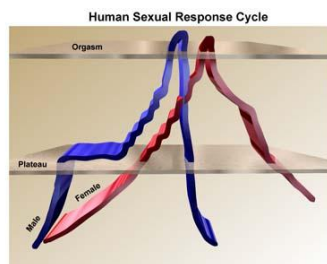
Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Foundations: Popular notion of good sex

- Desire
- Excitement
- Resolution

Problem with this model?

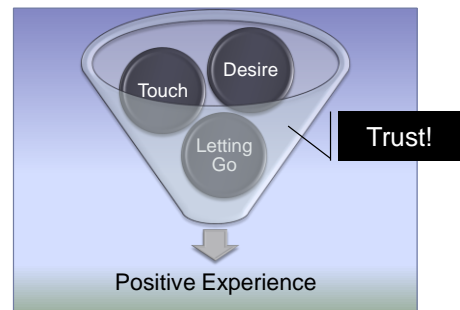
- Individual, rather than couple focused!



© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Foundations: Better ingredients!



© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Foundations: Some baseline assumptions

- ▶ God intended couples to have pleasurable sex
- ▶ Sexual desire can be a good and godly pursuit
- ▶ Good sex is defined by that which promotes oneness
- ▶ After Gen. 3: It is common for couples to struggle with their sex life
 - ▶ Deception
 - ▶ Oneness (relationship/trust) problems
 - ▶ Sins done by us; done to us
 - ▶ Failing bodies

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Foundations: Complications to godly sex

- ▶ We live in a sex-saturated, “pornified” society
 - ▶ Tons of information...much of it distorted; focused on me and on technique
- ▶ Sex is good but not the greatest good
 - ▶ Orgasms are good but do not define good sex
 - ▶ Exposure to cultural views of sex shape our views of and experiences of sex
 - ▶ From the church?
 - ▶ From the world (or Viagra)?

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

3 Types of Problems*

- ▶ His problems
- ▶ Her problems
- ▶ Their problems

*There aren't any problems that are **just** his/hers

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

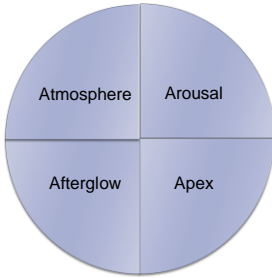
Assessment: Find the problem(s)



© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Simpler...



Christopher W. McCluskey

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Sex Therapy Assessments

Sex Therapy Questionnaire

- Surveys desire, arousal, technique satisfaction, orgasm, pain, and relationship domains

<http://wisecounsel.wordpress.com/articles-slides-and-other-things/>

Erectile Dysfunction specific questionnaire:

<http://www.aolhealth.com/mens-sexual-health/learn-about-it/a-questionnaire-to-evaluate-erectile-dysfunction>

<http://www.prolutssh.com/index.html>

- Pfizer owned questionnaires (free with registration) for male and female specific dysfunctions

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Sex Therapy Assessment Questionnaire

Directions: Sexual problems in marriage can be complex and multi-faceted. This survey will help us assess the nature of your problem and more quickly focus therapy to your needs. Your responses will be held in confidence and only shared with your spouse with your permission. Please answer questions by checking the box the most fits your current feelings and experiences.

Name					
Age					
Years married?					
Previously married?					
Typical frequency of sex?					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I find thoughts about sex with my spouse pleasant.					
2. When my spouse asks to have sex I readily agree.					
3. When I think about sex I have unpleasant memories.					
4. Sex disgusts me.					
5. Sex feels like a chore most of the time.					
6. It is easy for me to become aroused.					
7. I am usually able to stay aroused throughout sex.					
8. I am often distracted by other thoughts during sex.					
9. Our sexual activity is rarely rushed.					
10. Planning time to have sex seems undesirable to me.					
11. I regularly satisfy my spouse's sexual desires.					

- 27 items, covering
 - Desire
 - Arousal
 - Technique satisfaction
 - Orgasm
 - Pain
 - Open response

Administration and scoring helps along with suggested follow-up directions

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

His Problems

Premature Ejaculation

- What constitutes "early"?
 - Most ejaculate within 2 minutes of vigorous thrusting; some before
 - Goal: to delay orgasm by becoming aware and stopping
 - Use of medications possible
 - Is there a better goal? How does she feel about it?

Erectile Dysfunction

- 2nd more frequent problem; few seek help
- Problem
 - Blood-flow, nerve dysfunction, aging, or relationship problem
 - Ask about medicines; prostate issues; diabetes

Weak Orgasm and Anorgasmia (next slide)

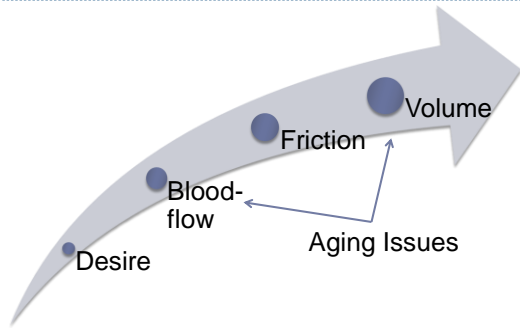
Skills, Habits, or Perception Problems

- Where is his focus? Self? Wife?
- What is his view of sex? Use of porn? Masturbation?

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Recipe for male orgasm?



© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

His problems, continued

- ▶ Do men struggle with desire?
 - ▶ YES! Don't stereotype
 - ▶ Why?
 - ▶ Discord
 - ▶ Shame (body, history, failure, etc.)
 - ▶ Low testosterone (test for total available testosterone)
 - ▶ Note that many things masquerade as desire problems

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Good questions for him

- ▶ What are your expectations for sex? Fears? Concerns? What do you consider to be good?
- ▶ Where do you first notice the problem? Desire? Arousal? Orgasm?
- ▶ How long has this been a problem?
 - ▶ Was it ever better? When did it change?
- ▶ First exposure to sex? Pornography? How often do you masturbate?
- ▶ Known medical problems? Medicines?
- ▶ Attempts to solve this problem?
- ▶ Level of trust and/or conflict with your wife?

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Her problems:

- ▶ Desire
 - ▶ 33% of random survey indicated "lack of interest" (next highest reason: lack of lubrication (22%))
 - ▶ Note the vicious cycle here
 - ▶ Why?
 - ▶ No clear Christian message on how to cultivate desire
- ▶ What is the engine for sexual desire?
 - ▶ Lust?
 - ▶ Romantic love?
 - ▶ Or...

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Why low desire?

- ▶ Health issues
- ▶ Energy level
- ▶ Depression/meds
- ▶ Young children
- ▶ Hormones
- ▶ Breast feeding
- ▶ Medications
- ▶ Painful intercourse or other unsatisfactory experiences
- ▶ How she feels about her appearance
- ▶ How she perceives her marriage partner
- ▶ Different views on frequency
- ▶ How she feels about other relationships
- ▶ Aversion due to past abuse or family culture of rigidity

One more thought...

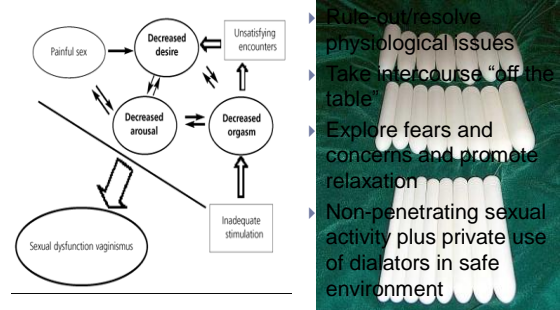
- ▶ There will always be a higher desire person and a lower desire person in every marriage
- ▶ The lower desire person "controls" sex
- ▶ This does not have to be a problem! Unless
 - ▶ The HD feels their personhood is tied up in the LD sexual desire because...
 - ▶ The LD feels guilty and a problem for being LD because...

Ideas from David Schnarch, *Intimacy & Desire*

Physiological problems

- ▶ Pain/fear problems
 - ▶ Vaginismus, Dyspareunia (pain), Vulvodynia
- ▶ Hormonal issues in cycle or in lifespan
- ▶ Medicine side-effects
- ▶ Always request careful gynecological exam and workup

Problems and solutions to pain



Good questions for her

- ▶ When you think about sex, what feelings come to mind? What would be good sex for you? What barriers are getting in the way?
- ▶ Where do you first notice the problem? Desire? Arousal? Orgasm? Pain? Trust?
- ▶ Did you ever consider your sex life good? When did the problems begin?
- ▶ What attempts have you made to solve it?
- ▶ Early experiences with sex (exposure; abuse)?
- ▶ Habits with sexual fantasy and masturbation?

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Aging and sex

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ For him... ▶ Decreased volume of semen ▶ Decreased firmness in erections ▶ Increased direct stimulation needed ▶ More likely other disease states interfere | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ For her... ▶ Decreased vasoconstriction (arousal) ▶ Increased need for direct stimulation, BUT ▶ Decreased lubrication ▶ Thinning of vaginal tissues |
|---|--|

Are we tempted to evaluate all sex by what is possible in our twenties?

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Refer to a Doctor or Trained therapist

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Aversion or compulsive problems ▶ Sensate-focus to extend his length of time until ejaculation ▶ Medical interventions for ED ▶ Medication review to deal with side effects of medications or other disease states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pain or vaginismus and the use of dilators ▶ Hormone imbalances ▶ Gynecological examination ▶ Aversion and disgust for all sexual activity |
|---|---|

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Things you can (and should!) explore

- ▶ Perception differences about "good" sex
 - ▶ What is "normal" (e.g., what constitutes PE? Use of sex aids? Simultaneous orgasms? Scheduled vs. spontaneous?)
 - ▶ Redefining healthy marriage and sex
- ▶ Unsatisfactory experiences, fears, dreams
- ▶ Barriers to satisfactory experiences
- ▶ Relationship conflicts
 - ▶ Approach-avoidance dance (often about frequency)
 - ▶ Better communication of desires and requests
 - ▶ Trust, vulnerability, and letting go of control
- ▶ Cultivating desire
- ▶ Developing alternative sexual activities when penetration or orgasm is not possible
- ▶ Protecting purity and honor of the covenant

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Prepare for these questions!

- ▶ Is masturbation okay? If my wife says it is okay? As part of our sex life? What if my doctor says I need to do it to understand how to have an orgasm?
- ▶ What about the use of sex toys? Anal sex? Oral sex? Is there anything off limits in our bedroom?
- ▶ Use of explicit books/videos in sex instruction?

▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Ethical and Boundary Goals

- ▶ Avoid all unnecessary details (watch yourself, your own fantasy life, and your interest in their sex life)
- ▶ Seek supervision; question your motives
- ▶ Avoid sex therapy in dual relationships
- ▶ Avoid all dictating or directing sexual activity
 - ▶ Goal: oneness & pleasure building; **not intercourse!**
- ▶ Know when sex therapy is NOT indicated:
 - ▶ Current/past affairs; addictions, sexual trauma; domestic violence and controlling behaviors
 - ▶ Deal with these other problems first
 - ▶ Sex therapy works only in a safe, trusting relationship

▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Sex therapy and the abuse victim

- ▶ Deal with the trauma first when possible
- ▶ The spouse will need extra support and education; Assess whether he is able to support his wife in her counseling
- ▶ Prepare them how to respond to triggers
 - ▶ Communicate!
 - ▶ Interpret!
- ▶ Encourage her to be active rather than passive in her sexuality

▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Good questions for YOU!

- ▶ Are you able to talk about sex using proper terms without embarrassment?
- ▶ Can you talk intelligently about the variety of sexual problems in marriage?
- ▶ Are you overly curious about sex?
- ▶ What sexual issues, experiences, or expectations hinder your ability to talk with others about sex?
- ▶ Are you patient, gentle, and flexible?
- ▶ Are you willing to refer for matters outside your expertise?

▶ © 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

Summary

- ▶ The goal of sex is pleasurable oneness in a trust environment
 - ▶ There are a number of threats (expectations, habits, diseases, aging, fears, conflicts)—explore, don't jump to conclusions
- ▶ There are a number of technologies and counseling interventions for desire, arousal, orgasm, pain, and relationship issues
 - ▶ Technologies are neither good nor bad but goals need to be evaluated
 - ▶ Goal: connection not penetration; patience rather than demand
- ▶ Wise "friends" encourage practical helps, look at the bigger relational picture, comfort, BUT do NOT direct
- ▶ The best technology? Your careful questions!!!



▶ Consider these helps

BOOKS

- ▶ **Restoring the Pleasure.** Cliff & Joyce Penner. W Publishing, 1993.
 - ▶ Also **The Gift of Sex**
- ▶ **Celebration of Sex.** Doug Rosenau. T. Nelson, 2002.
 - ▶ Also **Celebration of Sex for Newly Weds**

Experts

- ▶ Find out what **gynecologists** and **urologists** have a good reputation to understand and treat individuals with sexual problems; Get to know them!

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

© 2009

Philip G. Monroe, PsyD 11/16/2009

www.wisecounsel.wordpress.com

Musings of a Christian Psychologist

HOME ABOUT ME ARTICLES, SLIDES, ETC. CONSULTATIONS



pmonroe@biblical.edu

Thinking about moral responsibility and agency in TRH

NOVEMBER 13, 2009 - 1:00 PM

When Sex in Marriage Doesn't Work

Rate This

Today is the first full day of the **CCCF annual conference** in Valley Forge, PA. The conference is entitled, "Sex Matters" and so all pleasurable and breakouts are on and there. It is not too late to drop by if live in the area and want to register. Unless they will all take web-cams.

Besides the family led pleasurable sessions, Leanne Winzer (DVC Meritt God, Muhlenberg Sabbath, & **Real Sex**) will speak on Saturday. For those of you who can't come, CCCF sells mp3 downloads on their website.

Search

Meta

- Site Admin
- Log Out
- Register
- Comments RSS
- WordPress.com

Top Posts

- When is sex "real"? Why is God so hard to love when reality separates us?