

## Sex – It does a body good

Sex is designed to cause, deepen and celebrate oneness.<sup>i</sup> Additionally, of course, it can result in children. But, what is becoming increasingly evident is that a good marital sex life produces many additional benefits.

### Sex elevates mood and decreases stress

Several studies correlated regular sexual intercourse with overall life satisfaction.<sup>ii</sup>

Sex elevates mood in general but is particularly effective at reducing the stress reaction.<sup>iii</sup> This may be related to the higher levels of oxytocin post-orgasm.<sup>iv</sup> One large study concluded that women having unprotected sex were happier than women who had protected sex.<sup>v</sup> On the other hand, stress decreases available sex hormones leading to lower sexual desire.<sup>vi</sup> So, while sex decreases the stress response, stress may also reduce the sexual response.<sup>vii</sup> If you or your spouse is stressed and sexually unmotivated, sexual activity, as an act of faith, will actually help.<sup>viii</sup>

### Sex increases sexual desire for women

There is evidence that sexual activity increases a woman's levels of circulating estrogen which enhances mood and sexual receptivity. Higher estrogen also increases the sexual responsiveness of female genitalia. Additionally, unprotected sex introduces seminal fluid into the vagina which contains many sex hormones including those which increase female libido.<sup>ix</sup> So, preliminary studies suggest that, for women, sex increases the desire for sex.<sup>x</sup>

### Sex can make you more mentally stable

Several studies indicate that people who struggle with persistent negative states (i.e. neurotic) are as satisfied with their marriage as non-neurotic people if they have frequent sexual relations. Similar results have been found with those predisposed to certain psychiatric disturbances.<sup>xi</sup>

### Sex can reduce the risk of heart disease

A 2001 Queens University study found that having sex two or more times a week reduces a man's risk of heart attack or stroke by half. Researchers found that even when adjusting for age and other risk factors, frequent sexual intercourse - twice or more a week - was correlated with lower incidence of fatal coronary events. Upon a 10-year follow-up, those who reported an intermediate or low frequency of sexual intercourse — less than once a month — had rates of fatal coronary incidences twice that of those who had reported high frequency of sexual intercourse. A similar pattern is seen with women<sup>xii</sup>

### Sex boosts immunity

People who have sex once or twice each week have 30% higher levels of IgA, an antibody secreted by glands that combats microorganisms entering the mouth & nose.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Sex modulates pain

Just prior to orgasm, oxytocin spikes at 5 times normal levels. This surge of oxytocin increases brain endorphins which decreases pain. Also, for women, the post-coital surge of estrogen decreases some of the discomfort of PMS. Finally, distractions can reduce the perception of pain.

## **Sex aids bladder control**

Sex strengthens the pubococcygeal muscles which aid in bladder control.

## **Sex is helps lose weight (or at least not gain as much weight)**

Regular sexual intercourse decreases weight gain.<sup>xiv</sup> How? Well, weight loss or reduced weight gain is caused partly because sexual intercourse increases blood levels of testosterone for men and women which is a thermogenic hormone (i.e. burns calories); partly because the 'feel good' effects of sex can substitute for the 'feel good' effects of food and partly because an active bout of sex burns around 200 calories and even small effects like this add up to significant weight maintenance or loss over time.

## **Sex modulates the menstrual cycle for women**

A series of studies performed from 1975 to 1986 by behavioral endocrinologist, W. Cutler and colleagues at Stanford and Columbia demonstrated a relationship between the frequency of women's sexual activities and the timing of their menstrual cycles. These studies found that women who engaged in penile-vaginal intercourse at least once every non-menstruating week had cycle lengths that were more regular than women who had coitus sporadically or who were celibate.<sup>xv</sup> A follow-up study that controlled for age supported Cutler's findings that women who had penile-vaginal intercourse one or two times a non-menstruating week had greater menstrual regularity than celibate women.<sup>xvi</sup>

Frequent sexual activity may also enhance fertility. Studies of menstrual cycle variability and frequency of intercourse have demonstrated that regular intimate sexual activity with a partner promotes fertility by regulating menstrual patterns.<sup>xvii</sup>

Also, regular sex decreases some of the negative symptoms associated with being peri-menopausal. Women who had weekly sexual activity have fewer "hot flashes" and tend to age more slowly.<sup>xviii</sup>

## **Sex decreases the odds of contracting prostate cancer for men**

Some urologists believe that infrequent ejaculations increase the odds of male prostate cancer. This is thought to happen because the prostate acts as a concentrator of certain substances (e.g. zinc, citric acid and potassium are concentrated up to 600 times) possibly including carcinogens. Note: multiple partners can increase a man's risk of cancer by up to 40% through the increased risk of STD's. A study recently published by the *British Journal of Urology International* asserts that men in their 20's can reduce by a third their chance of getting prostate cancer by ejaculating more than five times a week.

## **Sex makes you look younger and more confident**

In a study at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in Scotland, a panel of judges viewed participants through a one-way mirror and guessed their ages. Those who looked seven to 12 years younger than their age (labeled "superyoung") were also enjoying lots of sex - four times a week, on average. The higher levels of estrogen sustained by sexually active women makes hair shiny and skin supple.

Several sex therapists claim that regular sexual activity increases confidence. In one study, sexologists were asked to classify the gaits of various women walking down the street but were blind to their sexual histories. Guess what characterized the group whose gait was described as more fluid, energetic & sensual. You've got it – they had a much higher frequency of penile-vaginal intercourse. The other groups were described as either walking with locked or flaccid muscles.<sup>xix</sup>

Sex may not just make you look younger. It appears to increase longevity. Preventive gerontologist Michael Roizen, M.D., after reviewing over 25,000 studies linking lifestyle factors to longevity, estimates that having sex a couple of times each week may add nearly two years to your life. He writes, "Having more sex for men, a higher quality of sex for women, correlates with being younger."<sup>xx</sup> Neurophysiologist

David Weeks, M.D., of Scotland's Royal Edinburgh Hospital, writes: "An active sex life slows the aging process."

## **Sex** (that your kids don't know you're having) **is great for your children's emotional health**

When you and your spouse have a strong stable bond that is not shaken by life difficulties, your children feel it. They may not appreciate the role sex plays in causing and repairing that bond but they do appreciate the security that they experience because of it.<sup>xxi</sup> One therapist puts it this way, "The truth is kids thrive in homes with deeply connected parents."<sup>xxii</sup> This is true even if or especially if the kids are **not** the center of attention. Children who are the focus of most or all of their parents' energy do not become emotionally healthy.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Raskin says, "Ironically...hyper-mommys often become anxious, angry and depressed which decreases libido and even the time for sex but drug treatments for the emotional effects of being perfectionistic, decrease libido and inhibit orgasms....Indispensability is a seductive demon for mothers. On the one hand, it feels great to be the favored one in the eyes of your children or on-looking admirers. On the other hand, some (parents) need and demand that affirmation from the very ones they are supposed to be giving themselves to."<sup>xxiv</sup>

- <sup>i</sup> See, *The Pleasure Bond*, Masters & Johnson for the psychological explanation of sex and attachment. There are biological studies connected with oxytocin and bonding and of course, the Bible which seemingly knew this and more all along. This paper might tend to cause the reader to forget that while sex enhances life and enhances a marital relationship, a growing and satisfying relationship is critically important for a satisfying sex life. For instance, the happier a woman is in her relationship, the greater the frequency of sexual contact, orgasmic nature of that contact and interest in sexual variety according to several studies summarized by Goldstein & Davis in *Women's sexual function and dysfunction: study, diagnosis and treatment*, Irwin Goldstein, Susan R. Davis, p.78
- <sup>ii</sup> Brody, S., & Costa, R. M. (2009). Satisfaction (sexual, life, relationship, and mental health) is associated directly with penile-vaginal intercourse but inversely with other sexual behavior frequencies. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 6, 1947-1954. This effect is not seen in other kinds of sexual activity like masturbation possibly due to the higher levels of prolactin released during penile vaginal intercourse compared with masturbation (i.e. see, *The post-orgasmic prolactin increase following intercourse is greater than following masturbation and suggests greater satiety* Stuart Brody and Tillmann Krüger, *Biological Psychology* Volume 71, Issue 3, March 2006, Pages 312-315). Brody has conducted many studies focused on the differential effects of penile-vaginal intercourse compared with other forms of sexual activity.
- <sup>iii</sup> Charnetski, Carl J. & Francis X. Brennan. (2001). *Feeling Good Is Good For You: How Pleasure Can Boost Your Immune System and Lengthen Your Life*. Emmaus: Rodale Press, Inc.
- <sup>iv</sup> Low levels of oxytocin are correlated with higher incidence of anxiety disorders (CNS Region-Specific Oxytocin Receptor Expression: Importance in Regulation of Anxiety and Sex Behavior, Bale, Tracy L. et. al. *The Journal of Neuroscience*, April 1, 2001, 21(7):2546-2552). Increased levels of oxytocin have been shown to reduce stress and alter an individual's response to stress (Weeks, David J. (2002). "Sex for the Mature Adult: Health, Self-Esteem and Countering Ageist Stereotypes." *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 17(3), 231-240). Oxytocin nasal sprays reduce stress.
- <sup>v</sup> As reported by Gordon Gallup a psychologist at the State University of New York in *The New Scientist*
- <sup>vi</sup> Stress hormones cause sex hormones to bind to a circulating protein (sex hormone binding globulin), making them unavailable to bind to cells related to libido (Laura Berman, Ph.D., director of the Berman Center for women's sexual health in Chicago).
- <sup>vii</sup> A study from the University of Göttingen, Germany suggests that lower sexual activity leads to greater willingness to take on more work, leading to more stress and thus less sexual interest (no citation is provided but the reference is found in *More sex means less stress*, Valerie Frankel, MSNBC.com)
- <sup>viii</sup> 2 Samuel 12:24 David comforted Bathsheba through sex.
- <sup>ix</sup> These male hormones are absorbed within a half hour of sexual intercourse. Ney P. G. "The Intravaginal Absorption of Male Generated Hormones", *Medical Hypotheses* 20:221-231, 1986
- <sup>x</sup> Sex Therapist Michele Weiner Davis, author of *The Sex-Starved Wife* says, "The more you have sex, the more likely you'll be to continue to produce testosterone, one of the primary hormones responsible for sexual desire."
- <sup>xi</sup> *Frequent sex protects marital happiness for neurotic newlyweds*, 12/12/2010, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*; *Alexithymia Is Inversely Associated with Women's Frequency of Vaginal Intercourse*, Stuart Brody, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Volume 32, Number 1 / February, 2003 (Alexithymia is considered to be a personality trait that places individuals at risk for other medical and psychiatric disorders it is characterized by: 1. difficulty identifying feelings and distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal; 2. difficulty describing feelings to other people; 3. constricted imaginal processes, as evidenced by a paucity of fantasies & 4. a stimulus-bound, externally oriented cognitive style.)
- <sup>xii</sup> Davey Smith, George, et al. (1997). "Sex and Death: Are They Related? Findings from the Caerphilly Cohort Study." *BMJ — British Medical Journal*, 315, 1641-1644; See Palmore, E. (1982). "Predictors of the Longevity Difference: A Twenty-Five Year Follow-Up." *The Gerontologist*, 22, 513-518; For female effect see Abramov, Leon A. (1976). "Sexual Life and Sexual Frigidity Among Women Developing Acute Myocardial Infarction." *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 38(6), 418-425
- <sup>xiii</sup> Carl Charnetski of Wilkes University
- <sup>xiv</sup> Brody, S., & Kruger, T.H.C. (2008). Penile-vaginal intercourse decreases weight gain. *Medical Hypotheses*, 71, 812-813.
- <sup>xv</sup> Cutler, Winnifred B. (1991). *Love Cycles: The Science of Intimacy*. New York: Villard Books
- <sup>xvi</sup> Burleson, Mary H., et al. (1991). "Heterosexual Activity and Cycle Length Variability: Effect of Gynecological Maturity." *Physiology & Behavior*, 50, 863-866.
- <sup>xvii</sup> op.cit. Cutler
- <sup>xviii</sup> *The Futurist*, June-July 1999, p.34
- <sup>xix</sup> *A Woman's History of Vaginal Orgasm is Discernible from Her Walk*, Aurelie Nicholas, MA, Stuart Brody, PhD, Pascal de Sutter, PhD, and François de Carufel, PhD, *Journal of Sexual Medicine* Volume 5 Issue 9, Pages 2119 – 2124.
- <sup>xx</sup> "RealAge: Are You as Young as You Can Be?"; Roizen is the chief wellness officer for the Cleveland Clinic.
- <sup>xxi</sup> *Marital Disruption, Parent-Child Relationships and Behavior Problems in Children*, Peterson & Zill, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 295-307; *Of Human Bonding*, Rossi & Rossi, p. 346
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Great Sex for Moms*, Valerie Raskin M.D. (Raskin is a psychiatrist, sex therapist)
- <sup>xxiii</sup> *Hyper-parenting: Are you hurting your child by trying too hard?*, Rosenfeld & Wise
- <sup>xxiv</sup> op cit