

6

Positive Sexuality

All those aspects of a couples physical and emotional relationship (to include affection, endearment, romance, passion), that have a positive long-term impact on the growth potential of the Couple.

Positive Sexuality:

In a world filled with high stress, busy work schedules and heavy responsibilities, single men and women are often hungry for something positive in their lives. When young adults leave home for the first time they are faced with the daunting challenges of living independently in a complex society; at best, it is a difficult and lonely task. The pressures of finding a job, relocating to a new residence, and making new friends are stressful. Meeting someone that is interesting and fun brings a high point to the daily routines of responsibilities. It generates a new enthusiasm for having a special person to look forward to doing things together and to having a little entertainment and fun above the mundane. Sometimes these newfound relationships move too quickly into sharing and experiencing physical sexual exchanges - well before the emotional compatibility of new relationship is amply investigated by each.

Some consider it unnecessary to maintain high sexual boundaries. "After all," they think, "this is a sexually liberated society". But our society has experienced an alarming divorce rate. Seventy-five percent of first marriages now end before the five-year anniversary; a 15% increase from just 10 years ago. Additionally, there are an unprecedented number of children that are the products of loosely bound or unworkable relationships. Unfortunately these 2nd generation children have little mentoring from a Love based relationships. Later, when they reach maturity, they are poorly prepared for courtship and mate selection.

Maintaining high boundaries does not mean that the relationship cannot experience physical sex. It only means that the couple should not lower their

boundaries ahead of the level of commitment required in a meaningful relationship. It means that in the early stages of relational growth they should put energy into exploring and developing their understanding of each other, through *Unlimited Disclosure*, and begin to assess their *Values* and *Beliefs* in developing a *Collaborative Lifestyle*. When the relationship is ready, and the couple has progressed sufficiently in developing emotional intimacy, the appropriate time will present itself for a more enduring *commitment* that is reflective of the couples desire to stay together.

Ultimately, it is the individual that benefits from this type of relaxed, progressive investigation into relational growth. As the individuals take the time to get to know one another for who they are, to identify the values and beliefs of themselves as well as their partner, they begin to blend these values and then actively decide to increase the level of commitment from that of a roommate relationship (convenience) to actively doing what it takes to solve the problems we encounter in the relationship, then the couple is ready to develop the positive sexuality of the relationship. Granted this is not something many of us do, but it does not change what is healthy and less painful overall. The benefit of finding ways to better work on your relationship is enhanced if you avoid the many pitfalls which ultimately doom a relationship.

The emotional pain of a broken heart is the most personal and excruciatingly difficult experience anyone can endure. Potentially it can have a profound impact on our personal feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, and as well as our future vulnerabilities in a “new” relationship. Unfortunately, I have worked with many men and women who looked dejected and lifeless as I see them sitting in my office, as though all the life was sucked out of their souls, and then they tell their stories of heartsick rejection by someone they believed they “loved” and I hear the pain in their words and see the pain they have through their body language. I experience their anguish that the relationship that thought was ‘love’ is over. Yet, in my work with these hurting souls, I could find little or no evidence of a healthy relationship.

Often they ruminate self-destructive thoughts of personal failing, blaming themselves for not trying hard enough, for not being flexible or for being too rigid. Their own thoughts reinforced to them that it is their fault they broke up. Finally,

emotionally exhausted from self-blame and countless days of “thinking about it”, they put themselves into a deep depression of hopelessness. They became self absorbed in their personal pain, long since abandoning any resemblance in logic or rational thinking. At this point, the person is ripe to begin another devastating relationship as they now seek someone to relieve their pain. It was because of these types of clients that I developed the “Love Chart Exercise” in an effort to breakdown their personal irrational beliefs.

Representative of Emotional Commitment

I'd like you to recall my definition of “*Commitment*”: “***I will spare no emotional energy in developing a Collaborative Lifestyle that we may stay together.*** *Sparing no emotional energy* means that I will work to understand myself, and do what is necessary to eliminate any obstacles that impede my ability to advance our emotional intimacy. This emotional connectedness is the hallmark for a Love relationship because it requires me to *do* what ever is in my power to “fix myself”. I identify my stuff, I work to know myself and evaluate what my part in the problems in my past relationships were and fix them. By continuing to work on myself, I optimize my potential to develop a *collaborative lifestyle*. Whew!

Each partner in a Love relationship obligates themselves to this level of effort, and willingly invests the time and energy to promote the continuation of their Love expression. It is *not* about me ‘conforming’ to my partners demands because they expressed doubt in our relationship. Nor is it about me succumbing to your demands because “if I don’t you will leave me.” Fear of abandonment is a powerful negative motivator; it shuts us down emotionally as we react to salvage our serenity! A Love relationship is not based on ‘fear of abandonment’, it is based on a durable relationship that manifests confidence and trust in each other. So *Emotional Commitment* is not just about being physically available in a Collaborative scheme, but rather, it is about “working together” in sharing and individually expressing emotional energies that assist us in facing the unpredictability of life.

When I emotionally commit myself, I am telling you that I have made a decision to work diligently, and with a sense of purpose, to stay with you. I am saying that I

will do whatever it takes to make me a better person in ways that assist our relationship to grow into Love. I am not just telling you that I will change wherever necessary for us to be happy; but I am showing by my actions that I will promote the continuation of this relationship by facing my own emotional challenges in making me a better fit for you. As each person does this, equitably and for each other, the Love relationship manifests itself into a wonderful expression of connectedness between two people that have made a decision to maintain their future together as a couple.

Validated by Passion and Romance

An Emotionally Committed Couple sets themselves apart from other relationships as displayed by the depth they share in knowing and understanding each other on an intimate level. The depth of their individual disclosures reflect their most private experiences, and surfaces deeply anchored feelings and emotions. This brings an awareness of each other, and to each other, that is unique and special. They see beyond the outer appearances and develop an appreciation for what makes them tick. That is, because I know you by your private disclosures to me, I understand what you are feeling in, or about, a given situation. Each partner understands the nuances of the other; and expressions of joy, fun, and enthusiasm take on a deeper, more intimate meaning. (No wonder they enjoy their time together as they share a flavor for being together that is unmatched by any other.) They manifest energies that are positive and enduring; they attract goodness to themselves and radiate to those around them positive well being, a zest for life, and endless curiosity.

Couples who are in Love relationships display a sincere appreciation for being together, and a tremendous satisfaction in expressing themselves emotionally whenever possible. Quiet moments alone are high points in busy schedules as they seek out and mandate time to share in romantic opportunities. Their romance is not limited to quiet dinners, or solitary times; it is the continual expression of their treatment of each other. It is their 'special' way of communicating through touch, body language, and eye contact that selectively validates their pleasure in being together. It is the energy that flows from one to the other as they touch, hug and

nurture. They re-experience the intensity of their live by exploring and experiencing the joy and pleasures of travel, vacation and holidays. They reflect a passion for life as they express intrigue and curiosity for the world around them.

The emotional commitment of a couple in a Love relationship radiates harmonious feelings to every one they contact. It is the way they talk to each other, the way the touch, the way they talk about life and their desire for the future. The Love couple lives and expresses their inner most emotional commitment everyday of their lives. Friends can sense their passion and joy for each other and observe the romantic expressions by the way they touch, talk and taste life together. They have a synergism that is exclusively theirs, and unchallenged by the pressures and complexities of life.

Never Manipulative

I have experienced clients that were bound and determined to “win” someone over who was not interested in them. Specifically, they devoted themselves to changing their appearances, tastes and desires so that they would be more appealing to the individual they has selected. However, for all the changes they made, there was no reciprocating effort on the part of the other person to similarly adapt or change; the whole idea of “collaboration” was ignored. I have had other clients change themselves for the sole purpose of attracting a mate, they are wrong.

Both of these are manipulation! That is, they are leading the other person to believe they are the right selection. Yet, in time, the “changed” person begins to revert to his original self, and disaster takes place. Rarely does change made to please or attract another person last. Changes made for self-improvement are noble lifelong assets that will enhance relational harmony. Whereas changes that are made without authenticity will ultimately end in relational confusion.

When a person manipulates the emotions of another they make a grave mistake. Manipulation is wrong. The sole purpose is to mislead another into doing something that they would not have ordinarily done. Unfortunately many believe that “if” they can “win” someone over, that the Love relationship will endure and they will stay together indefinitely.

I have seen far more women do this than men. Under the misguided belief that they should accommodate the man they are courting, they place at secondary importance their own tastes, beliefs or desires. Years later, when they are struggling with children, chores and careers her tastes interests and beliefs re-surface and take priority resulting in a lose of interest in tending to the desires of their marital partner and her abandonment of such notions. Now in a turn of events, the husband is faced with unexpected situations as he suddenly becomes aware he doesn't know or understand his partner at all.

Never Impulse Based

Far worse than *manipulation* is *impulsivity*. I had a couple come into my office that "fell in love" on their first date. They married within 2 months of meeting and had 3 children in as many years. Now here they are in my office hurt, frustrated, angry; without a thread of understanding for each other emotionally. Granted they were comfortable together in the first years, but they confused comfort for being together as evidence of their Long-Term compatibility. As their family grew, and the financial, physical, and emotional strains of raising a family multiplied, neither was capable of managing the demands. The stress of dual work schedules, shared parenting responsibilities, and endless bills pounded them relentlessly. Now they could only reminisce at their first date, and barely recall how this all happened.

Impulsivity is never an asset. If something is good it will remain good whether you take it on "instantly" or a little at a time. I would rather a couple slow things down, and thrash out the good/bad in their emotional readiness for a long term relationship -- because there is no downside. IF the relationship is going to work, it will work just as well if taken cautiously. But if it is a bad fit, the individuals will have the opportunity to recognize this and stop investing emotional energy into a lost cause. Remember what I said about the emotional pain of having your heart ripped from your chest. Every effort should be made NOT to be impulsive in any relationship. The short term gains of speeding up a "commitment" will more than be offset by the dysfunctions of a divorcing couple that struggles to maintain the emotional health of their children in the presence of the emotionally damaged and often devastated parents.