

Open and Effective Communication about Sex – John & Julie Gottman

<http://www.gottmansexblog.com/2011/07/open-and-effective-communication.html>

Why is sexual dissatisfaction such a widespread problem? Well, it's not the fault of our bodies. Physiologically speaking, the penis and clitoris are quite simple in the way they work. If sex were left up to these two then there would be no problems and they would have a fantastic carefree romp. Their relationship is wonderful and pleasure-giving. They "get" each other.

What actually makes sex "complicated" is that in addition to our physiology, there are also two brains involved. As a result, a good sex life requires talking, touching, and knowing one's partner romantically and erotically, and establishing and maintaining an emotional connection that makes both people want to be excited, or carefree, or playful, or open, or vulnerable, or erotic with one another. The good news is that great sexual relationships *become a whole lot easier* if we are able to talk to one another about sex.

Talking: The First Step

How well do you actually know your partner's sexual desires, their likes and dislikes? On the surface this may seem like an easy question to answer. Most people have at least a rough idea of what their partner would say, but what about when it comes to such topics as masturbation, libido and orgasm, the actual specifics? Are there certain "taboo" subjects that make you feel awkward and perhaps intimidated to talk openly about with your partner? Well, we certainly don't want you to feel like you are limited in any way, so let's try an exercise designed to help you begin facilitating open and effective sexual communication. This partial exercise from our upcoming "Gottman Sex Kit" deals with building "Love Maps" of your partner's sexuality so you can better know and respond to their personal needs.

Sexuality Questions to Ask a Woman

- 1) What do you like about your body? What about your body do you feel good about?
- 2) What makes sex more romantic and passionate for you?
- 3) What is it like for you when you have an orgasm? What are the physical sensations? What do you feel?
- 4) After orgasm do you feel satisfied or fulfilled? What do you need from me? Do you need to feel tender and close? Are you sleepy? Do you feel energized and wide-awake?
- 5) Many women say that they have lower sex drive than their partner. Is that true for you? If so, is that a problem?

Sexuality Questions to Ask a Man

- 1) Many men say that they want and expect that ALL sexual contact will lead to intercourse and their orgasm. Do you feel that way?
- 2) What do you find most erotic and arousing?
- 3) What can I do to improve the arousal and the experience of orgasm for you?
- 4) Some men say that they have higher sex drive than their partner. Is that true for you? If so, is that a problem?
- 5) How do you prefer to masturbate? Can you show me?

There are no right or wrong answers here. Remember this should be fun and enlightening with the goal of this mini-exercise to get you to know your partner better.

The Power Of Talking

According to our research, fifty-percent of heterosexual women who say they discuss their sexual feelings with their partners are very satisfied with their relationship. Compare that to a nine-percent satisfaction rate among women who do not discuss their sexual feelings and you begin to see the power of talking.

Talking is huge. While it's not the only thing that successful couples are doing, it is a fundamental part of getting to know one's partner intimately. You must be able to have open discourse in order to establish and maintain the emotional connection that makes both people feel desired/desirous. And if you do have open sexual discussions, you'll begin to feel more playful and erotic with one another.