

Sex as a Conversation – John & Julie Gottman

<http://www.gottmansexblog.com/2011/07/sex-as-conversation.html>

We're all comfortable with the term "body language," but how comfortable are we actually talking *about* our bodies? When it comes to sex, Westerners seem more comfortable with *SHOW* than with tell. When it comes to expressing how our bodies feel and what works and doesn't work for us—sexually—our language skills are limited.

Try this out. Imagine your lover/wife/husband. Now imagine looking into their eyes and saying, "Can you go down on me for longer?", or "Do you like when I play with your nipples?" Or "It's uncomfortable when you tug on my testicles." Can you say *testicles* or *balls* without laughing?

The good news is, it's okay to laugh. Maintaining a sense of humor about sex is healthy, and productive, so long as you're not laughing from embarrassment. Being shy doesn't have to stop you from opening up about what you want; especially if you're in a loving, committed relationship. The more comfortable people are with each other outside the bedroom, the easier it is to talk about what's happening—or not happening—in bed.

Think of sex as a conversation

Intimate conversations about sex are best when both people are comfortable and engaged; when they flow easily from one topic of conversation to the next; when people are learning new things; and when the conversation is done and both parties are still thinking about what was said—when they want to talk *more*.

That's what sex should be like. It should keep you on your toes, or on your back, or in the air—wherever you want it—it should NOT become scripted and boring. If you always stick with the same prescribed things, eventually even the most interesting sex will become boring. Instead of an exciting exercise in companionship and discovery, sex turns into a routine. Not that routines are necessarily bad, but sometimes they can become dull and uninteresting.

How can a couple who've fallen into a rut get out, and how can a couple who are concerned about this prevent it from happening? *The answer to both of these questions is: Open Communication.*

Start by creating a "Sex Love Map" of your partner's preferences, thoughts, wishes, hopes and fantasies. A "Sex Love Map" is like a road map to your partner's inner sensual world so you can better know who your partner is sexually, and sensually. This involves asking questions and *memorizing* the answers. Make sure to try and suspend judgment and criticism as you do this.

If you're thinking, "no that's not for me," or "my partner wouldn't like that," then the following information might help change your mind. In a recent study, researchers Hatfield and Rapson interviewed a large number of married couples about sexual intimacy and found that while both men and women 'wished their partner would be more brave and tell them EXACTLY what THEY wanted sexually' these same men and women were 'reluctant to tell THEIR partners what they wanted'... How unfortunate!

Try to keep an open mind. Think of talking intimately as just a fun flirty way to give someone instructions. Lack of communication is the only thing coming between you and *coming*. You're only a few words away from a body-shaking-toe-curling orgasm.

What do you want? How do you want it?—Softer, harder, anal, outdoors, romance?—Do you just want a better blow job? Play show and *TELL* with your partner. Using intimate talk is a great way for people to put their desires into words and to build confidence and intimate trust. When you make a request and your partner is able to fulfill it and vice versa, it increases closeness and encourages *reciprocation*.

On the other hand, mutual reticence to communicate has greater effects than just lessening frequency of sex; *failure to communicate can cause an ever-widening chasm to form between partners*. Resentment builds because there is an expectation for each partner to intuit what the other wants, and the less information they have to go on, the more often partners fail in their attempts to please each other. By focusing on each other, and respecting each other as evolving beings in an evolving relationship, passion is much less likely to wane.

According to Pepper Schwartz, Ph.D.— a well known sociologist and sex expert—couples who communicate openly, in an egalitarian partnership, “share more positions and experiment more...because they have a relationship in which both partners have the power to suggest, innovate, and break out of role expectations” Talk as much as you play. Talk while you play. By expanding your erotic vocabulary you’ll also be tapping into your erotic imagination—bringing fantasies and previously hidden or unknown aspects of your sexual self to light.

You and your partner will have fun getting to know new parts of each other physically and emotionally. These conversations and flirtations are opportunities to give voice to your kinkiest thoughts... Aren’t you tired of sitting around in the shallow end when you know amazing sex is attainable?

Psychologist and author David Schnarch says that because couples are unable to articulate the changes they desire for their sex lives, they resign to their current state and over time, ‘sex becomes pedestrian’. Why is that the case? As over-saturated as the media is with sexual imagery and messages, there is still a pervasive underlying *shame*. Sex is ‘sexiest’ when it’s made to seem intimate, or explicit. This can cause confusion in how we discuss our own sexuality.

We want to be sexy. We want our partner to find us sexy. We want to be desirable and we want our partner to find us desirable, and (sometimes) even irresistibly, devastatingly attractive. These are universal truths. Ultimately we want an active lover who shows us how much we are desired. Herein however lies a paradox, because we have also been fed the heterosexual messages that men marry ‘good girls’ and women want a man who ‘knows what he’s doing’.

These mixed cultural messages leave us tongue-tied in the bedroom. Women don’t want to be perceived as *unfeminine* or *slutty* for being direct about their desires, and men don’t want to look *perverted* for wanting to try new things—or worse, *incompetent* because they haven’t tried something already. When it comes to exploring sexuality, many people worry about how their partner will perceive them if they start changing in bed. How can a quiet person become more assertive, or what about a dominant person wanting to take a passive role? Over time couples get used to what their sex is like and as a result change can feel threatening.

Most people have a certain style they’re accustomed to and maybe it’s good, but the intensity that was there in the beginning has often fizzled into something more *pleasant* than *invigorating*. In many areas of life, sameness and consistency works well. Sex, however, isn’t necessarily one of those areas. Not if you’re longing for heat and spontaneity—statistically speaking there is nothing more likely to kill passion between partners than habituation.

Intimate talk allows you to make room for the element of surprise in a safe space. You’re gaining your partner’s trust and curiosity. Don’t worry about your partner seeing you differently. What’s sexier than showing your partner a sultry piece of you that the rest of the world will never expect?