

SEX

“Those hot and heavy

days of teenage years had melted into more comfortable years of sexual intimacy and pleasure. Once the kids were grown and gone there were even a few years where the wildness could resurface, albeit it in slightly less flexible positions and longer periods of rest in between bouts. But as the years kept turning pages on us, our bodies continued to change and operation on demand became less and less likely to be successful. Eventually, even a touch by mistake became welcome attention and we could still dream of those days when...”

For many seniors the paragraph above might sound familiar. But for many others, the reality of sexual desire and the practice of sexual function have not diminished at all. Age may have complicated the successful completion of sexual function but the urge and drive for sex seems to be just as strong as always and for some even stronger than ever!

“Joe was not always so romantic”, the slight lady with blue hair confided in me one evening a few weeks ago. We were at a social gathering for Seniors at a local independent living facility. “Tonight he will want me to lie with him and keep him warm and make him feel wonderful!” Her cloudy eyes seemed to clear slightly as she shared this tidbit of private information. “And you know the best part?” she asked and then blurted out the answer with a devilish grin “we don’t have to worry with condoms any more”.

I must have looked dumbfounded. She winked at me as she moved toward a dapper looking gentleman of at least 85 who was beckoning to her from the dance floor. “Don’t ever slow down



sonny, unless it is to dance!” and off she swirled with her love onto the dance floor of their desires.

In my 50’s I had already found myself wishing for more intimacy and trying to figure out the beginnings of physical changes that brought aches and pains into bed as often as orgasms and lately –even more. How was it then that this couple, well into their 80’s could have such obvious delight in whatever form of sexual acts they were still able to achieve? Or was that thought just as stereotypical as the rest of society’s views on aging and sexuality?

While it is obviously true that our bodies do change, that they lose the ability to engage and enjoy in sex is simply not true. Orgasm may take longer to achieve due to a myriad of factors from medications to nerve damage. Vaginal dryness often has to be overcome with the use of lubricants. Erections of the penis can be problematic but can usually be accomplished with the help of medications or various devices and implants. Non-vaginal forms of intercourse can bring as much pleasure as they always did and sexual expression can be found through the use of adult toys either solo or with a partner. The only thing holding back sexual function for most Seniors, is themselves.

If you go into an adult sex store today you will find a surprising number of very normal looking younger men and women. There will be the newly – adult ones who hesitantly look wide-eyed at the array of intimate items, books and DVD’s and there will always be a few elderly men looking longingly at pictures of young women and dreaming of bygone days. What you will not find very often are aging couples looking for items that can help them maintain a healthy sexual life. As liberal as our society is supposed to be, using tools and toys for sex is still seen as something kinky and just for those who “can’t get any”.

As men age, and for a few younger men suffering from certain conditions and/or injury, an

unresponsive penis is devastating to self esteem and unbelievably frustrating to sexual fulfillment. Many men simply give up on sex rather than seek help or investigate alternative ways of sexual stimulation. Almost all family physicians now include questions on erections when a man has a physical after the age of 50. For most men the advent of Viagra and its later cousins has allowed this problem to be mildly irritating but certainly not devastating. For a small number of others, a wide range of external and implantable devices have proved very successful in allowing for a form of erection to occur – sufficient enough for intercourse or other sexual acts. For individuals where erections or simulations of them are just not feasible, there are still methods of inducing orgasm manually or through the aid of other stimulation like vibrators or electro-stimulation.

Some women have developed the idea that as they age they lose the desire to have sex. But given the right circumstances and stimulation they discover that not only is orgasm still delightful and possible, it may even be greater than they have ever experienced before. Without the pressures of performance demands, the stress of family interruptions and the exhaustion of employment, the hormonal changes that can have resulted in dryness, the loss of nerve sensitivity and the possible deterioration in muscle tone around the pelvic area, all take a back seat for the woman who learns to welcome sexuality back into her aging years and finds sensuous pleasure and emotional fulfillment.

Even the physical act of sexual intercourse is achievable for aging bodies. There are chairs, swings, pillows and new positions to try that allow people with bad backs, individuals who cannot get out of bed; and those who just have lots of aches and pains to engage in sexual intercourse. Individuals without partners who do not have the physical ability to manipulate themselves to an orgasm may need assistance in achieving that or in positioning a device that allows them to conduct this activity themselves in privacy. Sometimes couples may need the assistance of a trained and understanding caregiver to establish the physical

positions needed for actual intercourse. Assistance in these areas is often uncomfortable to a caregiver and many caregivers will simply not deal with sexual matters for their care recipients. **[NOTE – we are not delving into the ethical, moral or legal aspects of sexual assistance in this article but those are areas that must be carefully considered before engaging in any physical assistance with sexual needs]**

When faced with sexual situations, a caregiver does well to seek out advice from a professional who specializes in the sexual needs and function of the elderly. It is not really advisable to simply help someone to masturbate because they ask or to arrange the bodies of two individuals to allow them to have sexual intercourse. In fact, such requests would be pretty rare anyway. It is advisable, however, to become familiar with the subject and the methods and aids that are available to help with sexual expression. Making information available to seniors; providing shopping resources for supplies and equipment; helping create areas and times of privacy and educating others involved in the care of Seniors is a solid start in providing for the needs of the whole person in your care.

For more information and to see what resources area available visit the [Adult Sexual Aid](#) shopping site here.



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