

Five Myths About Intimacy

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I wanna start with the basics. There is so much cultural mythology about what sex is and isn't that I'm going to be addressing over and over and over again within this book. But I've found these five overarching myths that I bump into over and over again. I swear, if I could just banish these myths, everything else would fall into place. But then I wouldn't have a job and I'm not sure what else I would be capable of doing to save the world... I'll have to marinate on that one.

Myth One: Only Certain Types of Sex Are Real Sex

There is a ridiculous idea that certain types of sex are real. Or, at least, more valid and preferable to others. When we think of "real sex" we usually think partnered penetrative intercourse. But *do you know how many people have active and fulfilling sex lives and do not engage in partnered penetrative intercourse?* Or, for that matter, how many people have a lot of partnered, penetrative intercourse and still have epically miserable sex lives?

What actually IS sex?

- A consensual act
- Between one or more people
- Involving the stimulation of the vagina, vulva, clitoris, penis, testicles, or anus
- For the purpose of pleasure and/or emotional or social connectedness.

Oral sex? Still sex. Solo sex? Still sex. There are not categories of sex that are superior to others. Unless the categories are good sex and bad sex. And you get to define those for yourself.

Myth Two: Sex is Intuitive and Natural

We have this idea that sex should be spontaneous. And that we just sort of "get" what our partner wants. That we are going to run across a field of flowers in slow motion to each other. That everything should be free-flowing. And it will be amazing all the time forever with the right person.

Oh, please. What complete bullshit.

I can vouch with all my years of clinical experience (never mind all my years of, um, experience) that that kind of sex generally happens with the people that are the worst possible matches, and in relationships that are completely unsustainable. Insecure attachments with ill-suited people cause a big chemical of rush that's fun for a minute. But as most of us have learned the hard way, relationships like these mean you are hanging on for the ride as long as you can, but this ain't someone you bring home to momma.

Sustaining an enjoyable and long-lasting sex life with long term partners takes fucking *work*, y'all. And communication. And effort. And yes, calendar management. You

don't spontaneously run into the dentist to get your teeth cleaned right? You make a plan. Making space for sexual intimacy is often also going to require some planning for execution. Not having a slow-motion field of daisies experience doesn't mean your relationship is a sexual failure.

When I did my TedXSanAntonio talk "Sex, Shame, and Silence" back in 2013 (and go Google that shit if you haven't seen it, I'm still proud as fuck of it!) someone complained on Twitter that my definition of sex (the same one I used above) didn't include the word "natural" in my definition. Now, sexual interest may be natural (unless you're asexual, demisexual, or graysexual, which makes it definitionally unnatural) but how we have sex? *not that natural*. We are constantly inventing ways to make it weird, interesting, complicated, and technologically advanced. Even professional pervs like the famous sex researcher Alfred Kinsey (who was known for tying up his nut sack with a cord and jamming a toothbrush up his dick) would be all, "Damn, y'all," if he saw what we were up to now.

Sexual desire may be natural. But expecting sex itself to fit some category of natural means we are setting up ourselves for a lot of stigma and shame. Ain't nobody got time for that.

Myth Three: Sex Education Isn't a Universal Necessity

The US is the most sex-obsessed country that never talks about sex in pragmatic ways. It's everywhere. Every car ad is pervy AF. Your steak dinner? Sex was used to sell it in some way, shape or form. But sex education itself? Not acceptable. Just writing a sex column in the newspaper for the past three years has gotten me in hella trouble with the academic establishment. But if there is so much out there that isn't so natural and isn't so intuitive, then we need to have those conversations.

And you know who we need to have these conversations with? *Every-fucking-one*. Kids. Parents. People with intellectual disabilities. People with physical disabilities. People with severe chronic mental illness. Older people with changing bodies. LGB people. Trans folk. Poly peeps. Kinksters. We all need access to information about safe, healthy, and fun sex that meets our needs and our desires.

Myth Four: Sex Is Not That Important In the Grand Scheme of Things

Ok, actually it isn't, *if everything is going well*.

If the sex is good, it's 10% of your relationship. If it's bad, it's like 90%. Is sex the most important thing in the world? Of course not. But people in Flint, Michigan are still in need of clean water, and I bet they also still care about their sex lives and don't like it when things aren't going well.

Sex is important to most people. It's an important part of how we connect. And communicate. And it often operates as the sparkly glitter-glue that helps keep relationships together.

If it's important to you, it's empirically important. Don't let anyone diminish that for you.

Myth Five: Certain People Are Fundamentally Undesirable (and You Are Probably One of Them)

Thank you, media for continuing to perpetuate the myth that there is only one kind of attractiveness and everyone else is just destined for misery and solitude.

Unless you're an epically unbearable asshole, there's someone out there for you. Your quirks and flaws (whether real or perceived) do not make you unworthy of great sex and wonderful love affairs.

I don't care how long you have been under the impression that you are an ugly duckling. I promise you that there are a decent number of people out there with a duck fetish. And there is nothing sexier than someone who loves their life and is out there enjoying it. That's how all us regular, flawed people find our partners. (Or on OKCupid. Semantics.)