

# A Frank Discussion of Marital Physical Intimacy



# What will we discuss tonight?

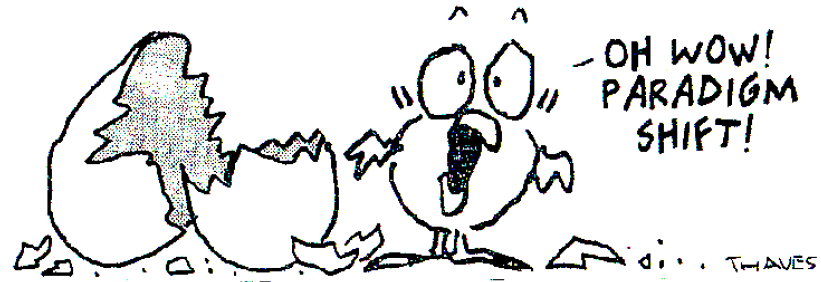
- A new paradigm of the role of physical intimacy in marriage
- Why sexual relations are important for marital harmony and growth
- Gender differences in sexual activity
- Causes of common problems
- Practical ways to improve physical intimacy



# A Shift in the Paradigm of Married Sexuality

## Common perspective – Marital sex is:

- A specific physical act
- A need?
- A drive?
- A duty?



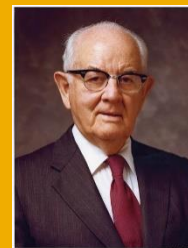
## A more useful perspective - Marital sex is:

- A resource for marriage enhancement; not just a reward for “good” behavior
- An opportunity for growth
- A broad range of activities: Anything inappropriate to do with someone other than your spouse
- A skill developed through practice
- An ongoing conversation
- A force field around marriage – protection from attack and shock

# Marital Sex is ordained and approved of God

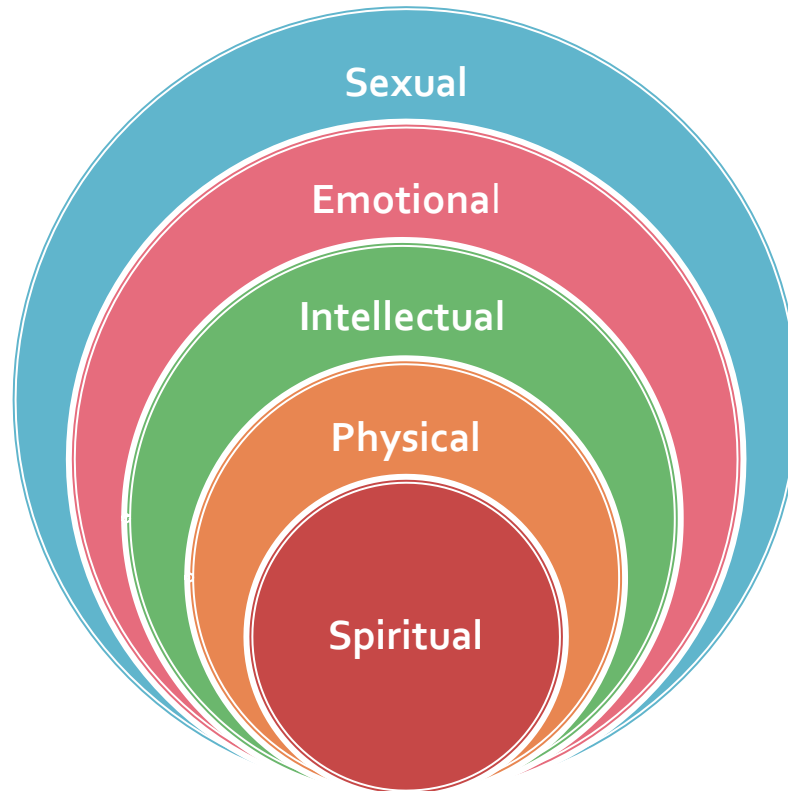
“The Bible celebrates sex and its proper use, presenting it as God-created, God-ordained, God-blessed.”

*President Spencer W. Kimball*



“A couple is to become one in establishing their marriage as the first priority in their lives. They allow no other person or interest to have greater priority.” *Handbook 2 - Administering the Church*

**You are a complex being, and sexuality is one of your important traits.**



Sexuality and Spirituality are vital parts of your wholeness

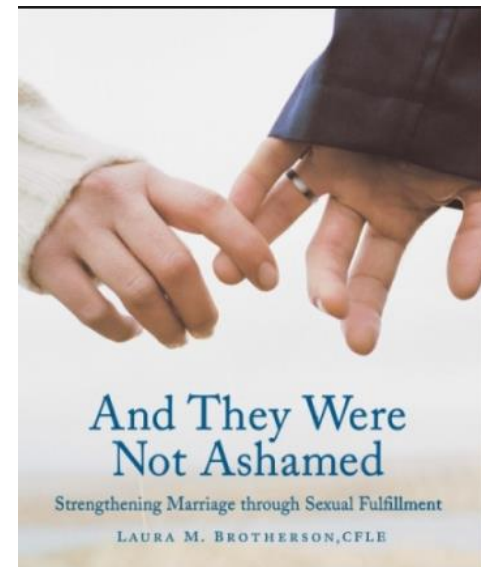
# Are Spirituality and Sexuality opposites? Does increasing one diminish the other?



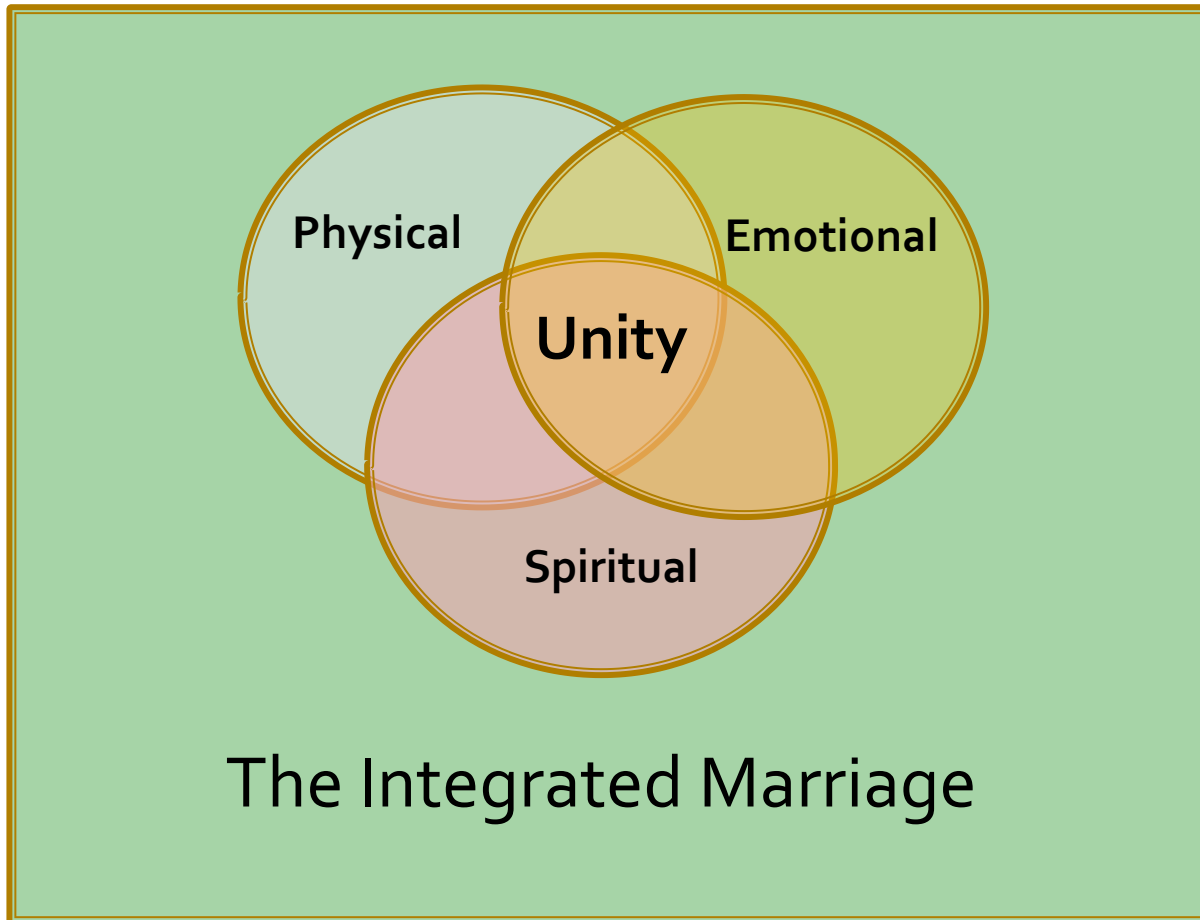
# We were created as sexual beings

“When a woman or man has not yet fully embraced herself or himself as a sexual being, designed that way by God, it will undermine all other efforts to create a strong and healthy relationship in marriage.”

*Laura Brotherson*



# Marital Unity is the Fusion of Spiritual, Emotional, and Physical Intimacy





# Why is marital intimacy so often a source of frustration and disappointment?

- Lack of understanding
- Unrealistic expectations
- Negative conditioning
- Gender-based sexual differences
- Individual differences
- Affected by all the other stresses and strains of the marriage
- Differences in priority



# Unrealistic expectations cause serious disappointment

- It will be great from day one!
- What problems? Sex just comes naturally....
- What skills? Sex just comes naturally.....
- I can have all the sex I want!
- My spouse has a duty to meet my sexual needs
- I will have sex only when it suits me
- It will be easy to adjust to my spouse
- My husband is responsible for making me feel sexual
- If my husband loved me, he would know what I like
- I bought her lots of stuff. Why does she avoid me?



# Negative Male Conditioning

- You can't be both sexual and spiritual
- Responsibility is far more important than desire
- Always put wife's feelings first
- Concerned about "lust"
- "My needs don't matter"
- "Nature will teach us"
- "Women just accommodate men, they don't need or want much sex"

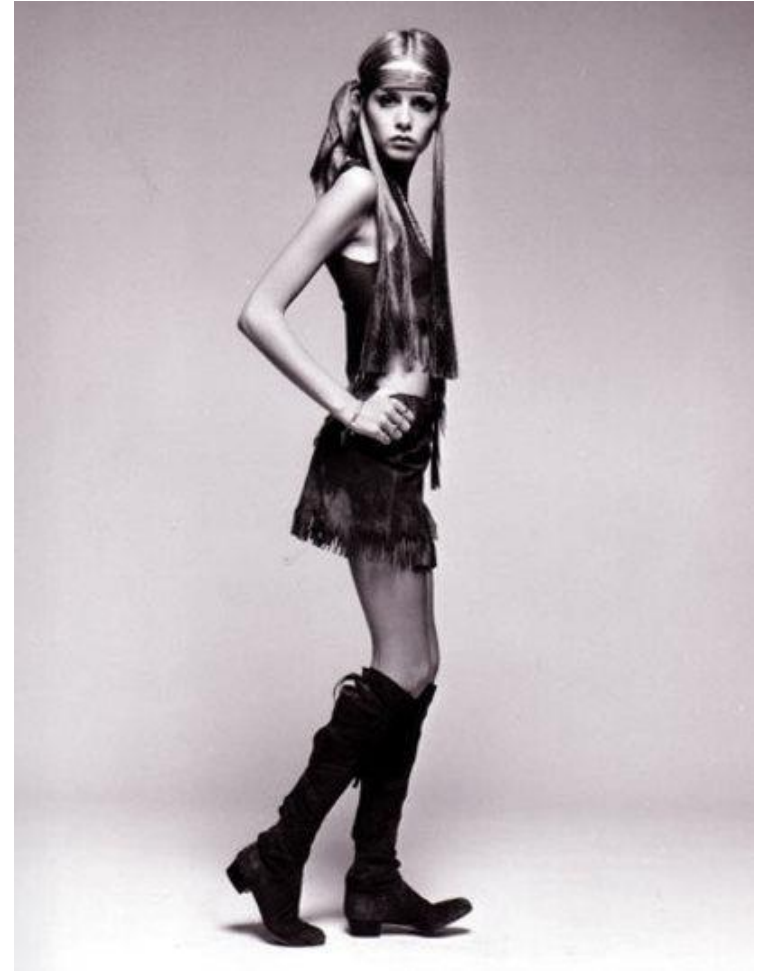


# Negative Female Conditioning

- **Family:**
  - Girls are the passive keepers of virtue
  - Parents embarrassed; offer little or no practical information about sex
  - Women do not own their sexuality. Virginity is prized and sexuality is dangerous.
- **Church:**
  - Believing that your purpose is to make others happy relegate sex to a duty.
  - Youths absorb shame from misinformed sources for natural sexual yearnings.
  - Immorality is always equated with sexuality.
- **Society:**
  - Media shows sexual aggression and aberrations rather than long-term marital fulfillment.
  - If women are not young, slender, and beautiful they do not deserve passion.



# Negative Female Conditioning



# Gender Based Sexual Differences

## WOMEN

- ❑ **Hormones:** constant fluctuation
- ❑ **Interest:** think about sex less often
- ❑ **Multi-sensory stimulation:** taste buds, sense of smell, hearing, skin - more sensitive
- ❑ **Brain activity:** at rest 90% still active, difficult concentration, need calming
- ❑ **Cultural role:** passive

## MEN

- ❑ **Hormones:** stable, but 20 times more testosterone!
- ❑ **Interest:** area that triggers sexual desire 2x stronger– think about often
- ❑ **Visually stimulated**
- ❑ **Brain activity:** at rest 10% active, great concentration, looking for excitement
- ❑ **Cultural role:** aggressive

# Men and Women Respond to Sex Differently

## WOMEN

- Need love to desire sex
- Desire is primarily emotional
- Slow and satisfying
- Need time to warm up
- Stimulated mentally
- Indirect stimulation –  
contextual: the brain is a woman's  
main sex organ (romance)

## MEN

- Need sex to feel love
- Desire is primarily physical
- Fast and intense
- Ready to go
- Stimulated visually
- Direct stimulation

# Men and Women Respond to Sex Differently

## *(continued)*

### WOMEN

- Desire follows arousal
- Difficulty in focusing is the enemy of desire for women
- Fatigue, cold, pain, worry, and the ever-present "to-do" list often get in the way
- It is hard to remember to desire
- Women need to focus on themselves and their own passion to have an orgasm

### MEN

- Focusing on Sex is generally not difficult for men
- Men can ignore external distractions
- There is physical pressure which is a constant reminder
- Husbands have a high desire to see their wives satisfied



# Sex should be an act of eloquent communication instead of a region of communications breakdown

*Though it seems impossible, an inhibited husband and wife can make love for a period of years without ever verbalizing their feelings or frustrations on this important aspect of their lives. The more unspeakable the subject, the greater the pressurization. And . . . anxious silence leads to the destruction of sexual desire.*

*Dr. James Dobson*



# Think of sex as a privileged conversation

*A private channel used only with your spouse*

## What makes a good conversationalist?

- Enthusiastic
- Engaging
- Informed, educated
- Articulate
- Interested in you
- Practiced
- Humor
- Asks questions
- Listens well
- Variety

## What is the purpose of conversation?

- Entertainment
- Persuasion
- Comfort
- Apology
- Adventure
- Fun
- Sharing, getting acquainted
- Gratitude
- Solace

# Sexual functionality is a complex process

“I'm just not in the mood” could be caused by:



- ❖ Medical issues
- ❖ Emotional Issues
- ❖ Spiritual issues
- ❖ Education issues
- ❖ Preparation Issues

# Continuous rejection = sexual neglect

- *“Certainly I want friendship, compassion, common goals etc. But I want her to feel and express feelings for me that she does not have for her best friend or her brother. I feel like a roommate, or some kind of business partner in managing a household and raising children. I want those things too, but I also want to be her lover and I want her to want that too.”*
- *“It is not so much the frequency of sex that matters, but the frequency of rejection. Occasional rejection due to fatigue or other understandable reasons doesn’t count as rejection. But rejection that comes in the form of “I just don’t have those kinds of feelings about you, so leave me alone” does count, and those feelings add up over time.”*
- *“The only explanation I could come up with for a consistent pattern of rejection would be that she just does not love me in the way I love her, and the way I want to be loved. Erotic love has disappeared, and we are just friends, tied by kids, perhaps some other common interest and a mortgage, but not by any passion. Such a relationship would be qualitatively different from the marriage I thought I was entering into.”*
- *“Here is a list of the feelings I have from his not wanting/desiring me sexually: Abandoned, unimportant, inadequate, ashamed, bitter, lonely, cheated, uncared for, confused, unfairly treated, rejected, ugly, deceived, stressed, unnecessary, defeated, humiliated, betrayed, lied to, manipulated, mistreated, neglected, not cherished, not listened to, unwanted, sad, vulnerable, wasted, worthless and wounded. ”*

# The Power of the “Lower Desire” Partner

- Knows partner has no easy alternatives
- Can do nothing and still be in control
- May feel superior spiritually or emotionally
- Can easily redirect cause away from self
- Can use sex as manipulation
- Is able to fulfill own needs without meeting needs of partner



# Negative Sexual Management

## LOWER DESIRE SPOUSE

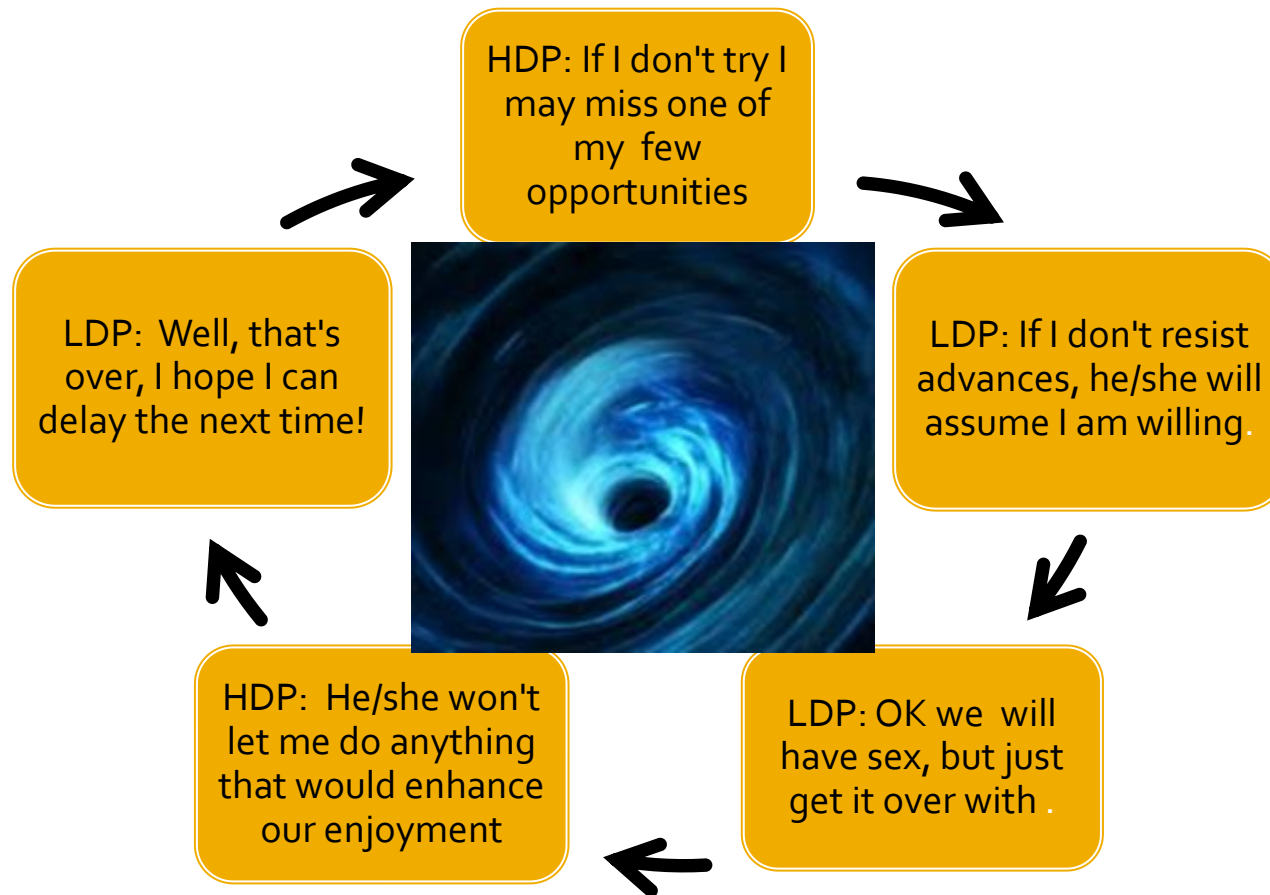
- Hope problem will go away
- Avoid research/med help
- Shun topic
- Accuse partner
- Reduce touch, tenderness
- Separate bedtimes
- Refuse counseling
- Over-schedule so there is no time for intimacy

## HIGHER DESIRE SPOUSE

- Demands, anger
- Shaming, withdrawal
- Physical force, manipulation
- Extra-marital intimacy
- Pornography
- Self accusation
- Over accommodation
- Give in/give up

# Couples expend a lot of emotional energy attempting to manage their own and each other's desire

## The "All or Nothing Spiral"



HDP = High Desire Partner LDP = Low Desire Partner

# Positive Sexual Management

## Lower Desire Spouse

- Question negative thoughts
- Eliminate medical issues
- Work on emotional conflicts
- Understand importance of physical intimacy
- Educate self about desire
- Create environment of intimacy
- Make time
- Set as priority
- Initiate sex at times
- Take responsibility for own sexual fulfillment

## Higher Desire Spouse

- Limits requests
- Assesses moods
- Creates positive situations and ambiance
- Distracts self with other activities
- Makes thoughtful advances
- Tries to educate/negotiate
- Suggests counseling





For the lower desire partner,  
sex requires a leap of faith

# The Power of Oxytocin

- Antidote to stress
- Promotes bonding
- Increases sexual responsiveness
- Critical in female sexual arousal-boosted by estrogen
- Occurs naturally, but can be consciously induced
- Especially beneficial to brain function in long-term relationships (over 20 years)



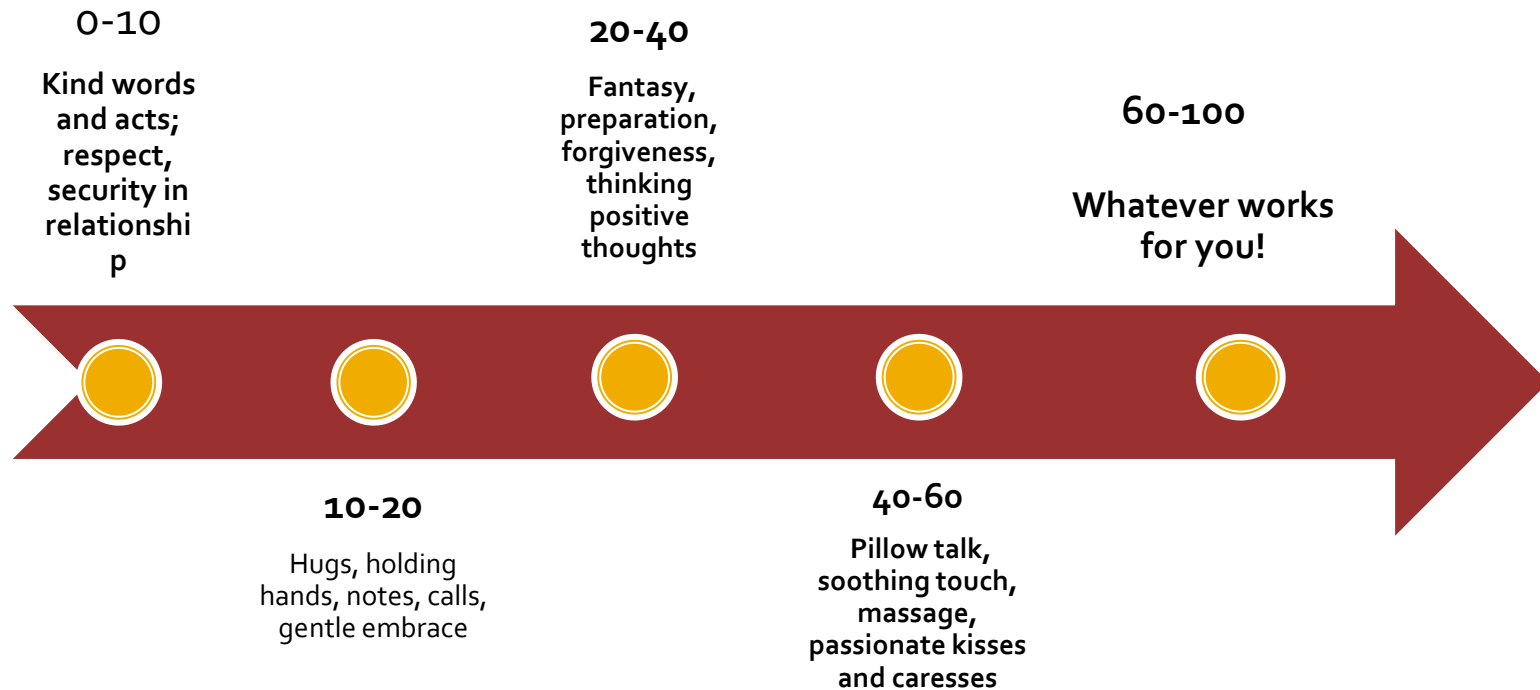
# The Power of Marital Friendship

*"The determining factor in whether wives feel satisfied with sex, romance, and passion in their marriage is, by 70% , the quality of the couple's friendship. For men, the determining factor is, by 70%, the quality of the couple's friendship. So men and women come from the same planet after all." Dr. John Gottman*



# Satisfying sex needs an atmosphere of intimacy to ignite passion

*Sex is anything you do that would be inappropriate with someone other than your spouse.*



*Men and women have a responsibility to set priorities, create the mood, and make appropriate preparations that enable them to come to the bedroom with a positive attitude about physical intimacy.*

# PRACTICAL THINGS TO DO TO HELP WITH INTIMACY

## **During the day**

- Hug 20 seconds at the comings and goings of your day
- Touch in public and throughout the day, hold hands, sit together in church
- Think about the problems your spouse confronts and help where possible
- Seriously question every negative thought you have about sex
- Let yourself fantasize and anticipate intimacy with your spouse
- Plan one romantic thing you can do every day for your spouse
- Make a list of the reasons why you fell in love with your spouse
- Connect during the day- phone, text, notes left, email- just to say "I am thinking of us."

## **Take your better self to bed**

- Decide to go earlier TOGETHER!
- Create an oasis from the world: Turn off computers, TV, phones
- LDP, don't say "no", say "maybe", think "maybe"

## **Create an environmental "buffer zone" that invites the mood that lets intimacy happen**

- Goal – create some emotional distance from problems and stress (especially for women)
- Don't talk about kids or try to solve problems; focus on positive conversation
- Put the kids to bed early, regularly – You are the Boss!
- If children are older, say that Mom and Dad need their private time
- Take time to relax
- Set a mood with light, aroma
- Create different music playlists for different moods: playful, relaxing, passionate
- Make your bedroom a sanctuary, clean and inviting
- Garments were never meant to be a shield and protection from your spouse
- Work on your friendship, sharing, having adventures, fun

# Surprising Health Benefits of Sex 2-3 times per week

- **Relieves Stress**
  - magnifies happiness
  - equivalent to \$50,000 year income increase
- **Boosts Immunity**
  - fewer sick days
  - fights colds and flu
- **Improves overall fitness**
  - helps with weight loss
  - burns calories
- **Improves cardiovascular health**
- **Reduces pain**
  - migraine relief
- **Improves sense of smell**
- **Boosts self-esteem**
  - Improves Body Image
- **Improves emotional intimacy**
- **Potential cancer prevention**
- **Reduces risk of heart disease**
- **Reduces depression**
- **Allows for better sleep**
  - promotes relaxation
- **Increases longevity**
- **Promotes higher youth hormone levels**
  - makes skin more radiant and supple
  - look younger
- **For Women**
  - strengthens pelvic floor muscles
  - Better bladder control
  - improves fertility
  - promotes regular menstrual cycles
  - relieves menstrual cramps
- **For Men**
  - Improves prostate function
  - Reduces prostate cancer risk

# Physical Intimacy Summary

- Physical intimacy is fundamental to the wholeness of a marriage.
- Men tend to be intuitive in their sexual desire, while for women, desire is more often a decision.
- Understanding and confronting the barriers to desire can give you the power to overcome them.
- Both partners needs to jointly face sexual issues with patience, education, faith, and love.
- Sexual intimacy is a tool to heal other parts of our marriage