

# TOOLS TO LIVE YOUR BEST SEX LIFE

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## KEY TOOLS:

- Letting go, overcoming and unlearning
- Seeking, choosing and practice
- Openness to experience, paying attention and focusing
- Structure and alliance
- Emotional maturity and tolerance
- Knowledge of partner and partner's body/desires/feelings/exotic wishes
- Depth & Empathy



(Kleinplatz, Ménard, Paquet, Paradis, Campbell, Zuccarini, & Mehak, 2009; Menard, et al., 2015)

## LETTING GO, OVERCOMING, AND UNLEARNING

Every sexual education story consists of pieces of valuable and accurate information as well as misinformation, knowledge gaps and potentially overly rigid views. The shortcomings of our earlier sex education that we carry with us can inadvertently interfere with our adult sexual relationships. To live our best sex lives, we must let go of, overcome, and unlearn counter-productive and destructive messages about:

- Gender & gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Body image
- Sexual interests
- Sexuality

## SEEKING, CHOOSING, AND PRACTICE

Contrary to the common expectation that great sex should happen “naturally,” great sex requires thought, intention, and effort. The choices and active efforts that we make go far to cultivate fulfilling or disappointing sexual experiences. We must carefully consider the sources of information that we seek out, choose to rely on, and put into practice as these resources (such as books, websites, therapy, groups, workshops, or talking with others) shape what we think, believe, and expect from our sexual experiences.

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*REGARDLESS of sex, sexual orientation, health status, age, or economic status, optimal sexual experiences are cultivated through being present and encouraging intimacy, connection, communication, authenticity, transcendence, exploration, and personal vulnerability.*

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Photo credit: Cullan Smith

## OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE, PAYING ATTENTION, AND FOCUSING

Life brings roadblocks, unexpected events, and changes that we didn't plan for. So do our sex lives. The more open we are to new experiences, the more aware we are of our experiences as well as the experiences of our partner(s), and the more focused we are on what really matters (as opposed to what we believe "should matter"), the better we are able to adapt to changes. When we embrace both expected and unexpected changes and approach our sexualities with a genuine desire to learn, doors open no matter what hurdles are thrown our way.

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## STRUCTURE AND ALLIANCE

Many of the factors that support optimal sexual experience have nothing (directly) to do with sex. For instance, partners who share common values (including physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, financial, and philosophical in addition to sexual values) are more likely to have better sex. Likewise, the sense that partners are on the same team, share similar perspectives, and embody similar experiences as "peers", creates an invaluable underlying bond. Like a fine wine, the flavor of sexual relationships can become more refined with time.

## EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND TOLERANCE

Healthy sexual relationships require healthy relationships and healthy relationships require healthy individuals. Partners who are able to self-soothe and tolerate anxiety are much better equipped to face sexual changes than those who are not. Furthermore, partners who allow the other the freedom to change and develop and who are not threatened by the idea of change are far better equipped to get the most out of their sex lives than those who do not.

## KNOWLEDGE OF PARTNER AND PARTNER'S BODY/DESIRES/FEELINGS/EROTIC WISHES

The best sexual experiences are those that tie in a variety of senses from all throughout the body in a delicate and thoughtful symphony of sensations. Pleasure, desire, and erotic wishes are enjoyed most fully when explored non-judgmentally and as part of an ongoing collaborative discovery process

## DEPTH

Sexual depth is intrinsically tied to emotional depth. Likewise, intimacy is about more than just sex. Intimacy embodies a sense of connection, love, trust, and safety. Emotional depth and intimacy create space where great sex can happen. In contrast, relationships which feel disconnected and unsafe shut down pleasurable sexual experience.

## EMPATHY

The most fundamental tool to promote optimal partnered sexual experience is empathy. Empathy consists of our attentiveness and sensitivity to the needs and experiences of our partner(s). Empathy is the foundation for flexibility in the face of whatever challenges come our way and sensitivity to what matters most.