

Sensuality and Eroticism in Healthy Sexual Relationship

BioBalance Podcast — Dr. Kathy Maupin and [Brett Newcomb](#)

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KM: Hi. Welcome to the BioBalance podcast. I'm Dr. Kathy Maupin, founder and medical director of BioBalance Health. Today Brett Newcomb and I will discuss sensuality and eroticism in a healthy sexual relationship. Can you tell our audience a little bit about yourself?

BN: I'm a family and individual therapist. I've been in private practice in the St. Louis area for 28 years. I do workshops and seminars for corporations and others who have interest on topics like family relationships, dealing with difficult people, communication skills, those kinds of things. And I have taught at the university level for 24 years in counseling programs.

KM: And Brett is one of my consultants for BioBalance Health and has helped me with many difficult situations with my patients when I didn't have the training to help them out myself. Today we're talking about a very touchy subject for most people which is sensuality in a good way and eroticism in a good way in a relationship, not in the world of porn, but in the world of normal healthy relationships.

BN: "Normal" healthy relationships. I am not sure that there are any such things, but we endeavor to get there and one of the challenges that gets in the way of that, especially for men, has to do with issues of sensuality as opposed to eroticism. I think men tend to be more eroticized, but I am not sure that they learn in large numbers about how to be sensual. I think of classic examples, I'm sure you'll have some comments about this, but men don't pay attention to their bodies. They are actually taught in infancy not to. They are told 'that doesn't really hurt', 'do you need something to cry about'.

KM: But they pay attention to one part of their body. And that is unlike women.

BN: Well, it kind of requires attention and then that becomes, in adolescence, an okay insider thing that you pay attention to that part. But the problem comes because we don't necessarily know what our bodies feel like, what kinds of things we feel when we feel, even pain; shake it off, don't feel it. So we numb ourselves out. One of the phenomena that we talk about in doing therapy with men in particular is the phenomena of being a talking head and you get a sense of a disembodied intellect that speaks to you and that works, but men often are not in touch with their bodies and its that whole Cartesian thing, that mind-body split in Descartes. We have a whole channel of information that we don't regularly access, or don't know how to access, that women do have, and come with and so they look at us - you know that whole Mars/Venus thing.

KM: In general women have a good sense of their body even if they have a distorted view of their body where they think they are fatter than they are thinner than they are. Sometimes that comes into play with their sensuality. We also have learned we have to follow our body because of cyclic periods and ovulatory cycles. So that's much more normal for us but what I find with women is men find masturbation to be fine, not a problem, that's what they're supposed to be doing, and women find that that's abhorrent in general and that they shouldn't be doing that; that makes them not a nice girl. That is one of the things when I ask someone if they have ever found how they please themselves, they [respond] 'no, I am not doing it', 'I am not going there', 'I have to depend on my husband for that'. Well, it makes it pretty hard when you try to direct your sensuality to someone else - bounce it off them. They don't know what we want, our spouses don't know.

BN: And if you don't know, how am I going to know. Especially if I'm not sensitive enough to try to pay attention, to try to figure out what you respond, to what pleases you, what's uncomfortable for you. If I don't have that awareness of you, if I am just self absorbed then it's a unilateral experience for me.

KM: That's key. Paying attention and then wanting to please the other person. Those two things are two things that both what men and women don't do.

BN: And then talking about what works and what doesn't because I make assumptions. I look at my partner and say 'oh I think they like this' and that may not be what their experience is. Part of the challenge, then, is to learn to talk about, in safety and with honesty, what you do like, what does feel good to you, and where the limits of that are. Sometimes you can have overstimulation that then becomes painful. It was delightful to a point and then it's painful and so you need to say 'it isn't that you're doing that, it is that you're doing that too hard, too soft, too fast, too slow'. Not like a movie director or a commander but in a way that communicates 'okay that's the balance that works for me'.

KM: A lot of women tell me that they have a problem saying 'yeah that's great, you did that great', 'that's awesome', that they won't say 'oh man, that just didn't do it for me'. I'm sure you don't read *Cosmo*, or *Glamour* every month.

BN: Actually, I don't. I don't read *Popular Mechanics*, either.

KM: But, they have very interesting medical articles that are about sex. I read them because I want to know what my patients are reading or what their children are reading I guess. One of the things they say is what you're saying. You have to tell your partner, you have to either make noises or tell your partner what's good and what isn't, because that is not just like an act, it is feedback. That is in those magazines and supposedly written by Doctors, I'm not sure.

BN: I am thinking about my sister in law and she uses a phrase sometimes, (she uses it sarcastically), she says "Oh, baby, wow" with no inflection whatsoever. The point that she is making is that there is no connected communication, and sometimes those things

appear to happen in a vacuum. You were talking a moment earlier about masturbation. I am convinced that people sometimes have intercourse that is essentially individually masturbatory. I'm not paying attention to you and it's not about intimacy with you and it's not about arousing and pleasing you, it is just about getting off for me.

KM: Or for a woman, getting it off her list. If you don't have testosterone you are not looking at having sex as 'hey this is like dessert tonight', you're looking at it like 'oh my gosh, I'm so tired, I just can't add one thing to my list.'

BN: Or, 'can you hurry up because the dryer's going to buzz in five minutes and I don't want the clothes to get wrinkled'.

KM: How can we, besides getting past our inhibitions and taking the risk to discuss our likes and dislikes with our partner, what else can women and men do to be sensual to let their partner know that they care about them and that they like what they're doing and they view them as a sexual being?

BN: That is absolutely the central question. You put your finger on it. That is the question we need to be asking and that we need to help couples find a way to talk about, because there's not a right answer. There's an answer that works with the rhythms of the couple. One of the things that I would say is remember lead time. Not only do you have to build towards something just for the lubrication, arousal points sort of thing, but for the psychological arousal as well. Women will say 'I'm not in the mood' and men often don't get it. You know, 'I don't know why you have to be in the mood'. I don't feel like having sex with you when I don't like you very much. That matters? That's part of the factor? One of the things that can really intensify your sexual experience is to lead towards it over the course of a day or week; and to know our normal schedule is Wednesday night, but Sunday, Monday, Tuesday we can start to make hints. We can start to make references, we can do some caressing or some kissing that's arousing but not in pursuit of the immediate moment so that we begin to build the dance so that it comes to fruition. Another thing that we probably need to remind ourselves, especially in our culture, is that sensuality and eroticism are not just hedonistic or self-absorbed behaviors. They are enhancing behaviors. They enhance the nature of the relationship, the quality of the relationship, and the quality and nature of the experience, the outcomes of the experience. Your body comes with all five senses. Let's use all five senses. Laura Corn makes reference in her books "1001 Great Dates", "1001 Nights of Great Sex", (I'm not sure I have the titles right, she has half a dozen of those out and they are all like that), but they are exercises essentially for people to do who've fallen into a rut but want to try to still do something sexually, and they're so habituated or they are so preoccupied or distracted or what have you that they get away from these skill sets. So her books are chapters for men and chapters for women that come in little sealed packages [with instruction to] what should you do as the female if it's your initiation or your turn, to focus on how to make this be a sensual and erotic experience for me. Then when it's my turn what can I do? She just offers a lot of different suggestions, a lot of specific sort of outside the box things that people often don't think about or might initially reject and she normalizes that and says 'you know what, in a loving relationship you can experiment with this as long as you are communicating, as

long as you are able to, say loop the circle - I don't like that, that's not comfortable for me, I feel awkward about this'.

KM: You were talking about the senses, so give me an example of the how the sense play into this.

BN: Yes. Well aromatherapy, massages, touch, smell, taste. I saw the other day that KY Jelly had come out with flavored lubricants. Maybe they are not your thing, maybe they are not my thing, but it might be somebody's thing. It might be a thing that [a couple] could say 'let's try that.' Or the use of assorted toys.

KM: Susan Berman has several books on using toys in relationships and she is kind of the expert in that area. You can through her books. She has a chapter about that in almost any book that she writes and she also has on her website -- you can order from her. It is one of those things that I don't think I would have a man order something for his wife if he didn't know if that would be approved of. That would be probably be a bad thing to do because then that will just make his wife miserable.

BN: I have two examples of that. I had a couple where the man, on his own, decided he was too small and bought a length enhancer and didn't tell his wife and she found it to be very painful and was very angry with him that he unilaterally made that decision. Another positive example, I had a couple that the woman was not able have a vaginal orgasm so she couldn't have an orgasm during intercourse but they learned that she could do that during intercourse if she also could use a vibrator and so she was safe enough and open enough to say to her husband 'I'd like to experiment with this to see if that would help' and he was safe enough in his love for her and his masculinity to say whatever works, works and so it didn't become an issue between them. It became an enhanced sex experience.

KM: There is a big age break on this. I find that people who right now are my age and above,

BN: 27, 28?

KM: Right. 55 and above, born in 54 and earlier, the guys and girls just don't get that. They don't want to have anything to do with that, they don't understand it and they don't seem to use that as part of their choices. People younger than that seem to have been initiated into that and more open to it. Even if it sounds unfair, when people are asking me about this or how do they get more in touch with themselves since they been out of commission for a while, I generally send them to drugstore.com and have them order a personal item because it comes in a brown box, no one knows what you are getting, it looks like a prescription to the outside world. They don't feel so self [exposed].

BN: They don't feel exposed. Nobody else is going to know. The sales clerk is not going to know. The postman is not going to know.

KM: They don't have to have the nerve to go in to some store to get them or go to a party to get it. It is a very personal quiet thing and in general, I guess it's not fair, but I usually don't mention it to people who are over my age because they don't tend to embrace it.

BN: Let's go back to the five senses, though, because movement, dance, music, sound, smell, taste, touch, feel, all those things; the sheets - do you use silk sheets or flannel sheets or cotton sheets, lubricants and not just sexual lubricants but maybe getting a lavender lotion and doing a body rub as preparatory. Not even immediately preparatory, maybe the day before, you know 'I'll give you a massage today' and so we start to focus on communicating and interacting through the mutuality of our senses and not just through sexual activity. Or what classically has been called sexual activity. I have a lot of clients that get pretty ecstatic over the idea of a foot rub. Or a scalp massage.

KM: You have to know what your partner wants, though. You have to have communication because one thing to one person that would just totally make them feel awesome would make somebody else cringe or feel creepy.

BN: I have had clients that have talked about lighting a bunch of candles, putting some scents in a room, soaking in the bathtub in a bubble bath, and just holding each other and listening to music. That is a sensual and erotic experience that may or may not lead in the immediate moment to a sexual experience but it is part of a relationship dance which if it occurs increases the likelihood of sexual outcomes and increases the likelihood of satisfying pleasurable sexual outcomes.

KM: That's something I rarely talk to my patients about. You would have to get pretty far into counseling to suggest that because you have to get past the anger and unhappiness, the forgiveness, and the hurt for that to work.

BN: Right, the name calling, the blaming, the hurt. So we are back to forgiveness.

KM: You can't jump into that. That is not something that, you might for a male, but a female would be like 'I don't think so, we have to settle these other issues first, but I'm not feeling safe or I don't feel like you really care, you're just trying to schmooze me.' That is kind of what I have heard from my patients - 'he's just doing that, he'll quit doing that soon because he is just trying to get me back in the sack and I am not interested.' We perceive the motive generally, even if you are trying to hide it.

BN: It is interesting because as you're talking, I'm thinking totally off the subject about adolescents that I have sometimes worked with and the messages that they learn from their parents about how to relate to men or women. One of the questions that I often ask when I do family therapy is who touches whom, when and how, and under what circumstances. Because it gives me a lot of information about the family dynamics who is safe, who is not safe, how do you communicate love and affection, how do you communicate "okay-ness", is touch a power-based thing or is it connective

communicative thing. I will frequently ask teenagers, boys or girls, do you hug your mom and do you hug her because you are manipulating her - give her a big hug and say 'can I have the car keys?' or do you ever just spontaneously hug her and say by hugging her, I feel close to you, I care about you, thank you, I love you. And then what I remind the adults is we need to do that with our partners as well as with our children. Sometimes it's a lot safer to do those things with our child because they have to love us. But our partner - we are all so busy that we don't often do that.

KM: That is a good idea. That is a very good idea. From your experience you have had lots of that experience talking to people about their families and their lives. We have pretty much exhausted the sensuality of relationships unless you have some other things.

BN: At least for today and again, we would like to remind people that if they do have specific questions or comments that can certainly e-mail them to you and you will give that address in a minute, and then at some point future we will do a conversation in response to the e-mails we receive.

KM: That's right and next week we will talk about intimacy, emotional intimacy, and flirting. If you have any questions or comments, just like Brett said about today's podcast please e-mail them to podcast@biobalancehealth.com. If you'd like to more about BioBalance, Bio identical hormones, pellet therapy or other services we offer at BioBalance Health, visit biobalancehealth.com.

Thanks for listening, I'm Dr. Kathy Maupin