

The Dance of Intimacy

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

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Dr. Kathy Maupin: Welcome to the BioBalance Health podcast. I'm Dr. Kathy Maupin and Brett Newcomb is here with us again today to discuss intimacy, the dance of intimacy, and how flirting has a role in that.

Brett Newcomb: Yeah, we're going to talk about it, and it may actually lead into a second podcast when we focus more on intimacy. Today we want to talk about flirting as a subset of intimacy and in order to do that I'd kind of like to set the frame, if you would indulge me for a couple of minutes. You and I have been having conversations about bioidentical hormones and how they restore sexual awareness, sexual energy, overall good feeling within the body that people at a certain place in life have begun to lose. And that loss has resulted in a negative impact in many of their relationships. Part of our conversations have been around the idea that if you restore the physical balance with bioidentical hormones and those energies come back, my contention is that you still need to bring consciousness, understanding, and effort to the relationship. That, for most people, and you've said for some people it does, but for most people it doesn't just reestablish itself because the hormones are reestablished. The way I understand that is through what we call the "dance of intimacy" and I define intimacy when I work in classes when I teach and when I work with clients, I define intimacy as when you have a relationship with somebody where you decide to take off more of your masks that you wear and that you decide to take them off because you trust in this relationship that the other person won't hurt you with what you allow them to see or to know about what you're like behind the mask. That's a huge gamble for all of us. We are very invested in keeping ourselves safe and so we create these masks that are role identifiers in different contexts in our life. So we have different intimacies and we have different levels of intimacy and some of all of that, how we decide which intimacy we have, or which level of intimacy we're on, is identified by what we call flirting behaviors. So I thought today that we would discuss some of those.

KM: And in my world most patients have come back, or come in initially, and said 'my sex life, my relationship is really bad and my husband or my wife wants to have this fixed' and they do think that the magic pellet put in their hip will fix the relationship that has been damaged by the lack of having intimate conversations and lack of having sexual interest or sex at all.

BN: We find that in therapy all the time, people come in and say 'can't you just give me a pill for this? Why do I have to do this work? Why do I have to talk about this?' Especially men don't want to talk about those things, whatever those things might be. But what I have found in my experience, and anecdotally from the experience of my

clients, is that “the pill” is not enough. Whether we are talking about depression, whether we are talking about attention deficit disorder, whether we are talking about bipolar disorder, whatever it may be, the medicine can help regulate the system but you still have to drive. That means you have to learn the tools or the steps, if you will, of the dance.

KM: Or relearn them because most of the time you have forgotten the steps because you haven't even been interested in dancing.

BN: Well, they've atrophied. Use it or lose it. So if you have lost it, you have to get it back.

KM: Oftentimes we learn about flirting as children. We learn to flirt with our opposite sex parent, like bat our eyes to get whatever we want; that kind of stuff. It is still a matter of using flirting to determine who is a good candidate to be your partner for life especially, and then also within the relationship. I think most of us know a lot less about what flirting is like within a relationship than we do about considering flirting outside of a relationship when we are trying to find our mate.

BN: Because we have thought about it more. When you're young and you're dating and you are trying to figure out 'who am I and what group do I fit with, which people can I attract to me or attract myself to so they will accept me' you think about the moves that you make, the way that you look, the way that you wear your hair. I used to teach junior high school and kids would sit in junior high school, (that is about the time they start doing it), and they practice signing their name with flourishes and make a sort of symbolic scrawl that becomes their mark. They spend a lot of time writing that stuff down and coming up with a design. So we think about those things in a very conscious way when we are younger, and when we are first single and on the market. So when we go to the market to go shopping, we are very conscious of the way things look and the way things work and move and so on. Once we've made our purchase, once we've gotten the relationship, then we don't think about it so much anymore. We get busy living our lives. The energy that was once in those cueing behaviors may dissipate.

KM: That's all very natural. That is a natural progression of a relationship.

BN: Absolutely. So you may need to develop new behaviors that keep some energy in the relationship as you both grow or if you've lost all of that and now the energy's coming back because of the bioidenticals, then you may have to learn how to re-signal and recue. That is what we call the dance of intimacy and a subset of that are flirting behaviors and flirting behaviors happen within a context. I may signal to you if we are first starting and whether we are 50 and single and out there or whether we're 18 or 15 and single and out there, there are things that we do to try to get somebody's attention. I often make the analogy that it's like, I think that it is like a radio station; I am a radio station, I am broadcasting on a frequency, I have to go out in the community and find out if anybody is receiving on that channel.

KM: I think it is like radar. You are bouncing it off to see if it comes back. Basically that's what flirting behavior is prior to marriage. Within marriage it is a whole lot more complex. That relationship of 'here, I am going to flirt with this guy and see if he has any response.' I was talking to you about the movie In the Line of Fire where Clint Eastwood is sitting on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial with Renée Russo, another Secret Service agent, and she ends her conversation and starts to walk away. They had had a few little flirting discussions within the conversation but the most impressive thing to me is when she walks down the steps and Clint Eastwood is eating an ice cream cone going 'turn around, turn around', if she turns around she's interested and she walks down to the bottom of the steps, turns around looks at him, smiles. He's still staring at her so she gets the radar bounced back to him.

BN: It is like that song about looking back to see if you are looking back at me. So we are signaling each other.

KM: So that's really our best definition of what this is, but it is much more complex.

BN: It is a good example. It is much more complex because the signaling occurs on multiple levels. It can be a look, it can be a glance, it can be a body posture, it can be a laugh; it can be so many things and several of those things can be happening at the same time. One of the art forms for women is to make their men think that they are clever and funny and amusing and diverting and so on. You watch young girls practice looking at somebody and laughing and nodding attentively, yet their minds are a million miles away. They're thinking 'I wonder if I can get those new shoes up at Kohl's' but the guy doesn't know. He thinks 'she thinks I am impressive.' We do similar things when we talk to you or pay attention to you. Whether it is we are in the role of the gentlemen and we are trying to open the door for you, or pull out a chair, or give you a compliment. We try those things out at home and then we work on those things. It is not always a positive experience as a child. We were home yesterday, my wife has been ill for the last week, and my son came home from school yesterday and he took one look at her and said "Oh, you look terrible." Now, what he was trying to say was 'I care about you. I know that you have been sick. How are you doing?' All of those kind of things. And we all laughed and I said, you know, that's a pretty good stumbling start. Now reload and come back and say it a different way. Figure out how to communicate. Part of the dance of intimacy is to select those people with whom we're going to engage and then learn what cues or what markers they respond to, so we start to speak their language.

KM: Or a secret language that you develop between each other. That is one of those things that no one else would really read into it. I love looking at just little snippets in movies that no one else remembers but me. Like in The Untouchables where the guy played by Kevin Costner, Elliot Ness, comes home all upset and his wife is in a robe and she has long flowing red hair. She is listening to him while he is telling her the horrible stuff that happened that day and she realizes, it is apparent that she's concerned about how he feels and that he is all upset. So her discussion with him ends with 'Would you like to come up and brush my hair?' which is obviously their cue. In

front of the kids or whatever, 'do you want to come up and brush my hair?' means let's go to up to the bedroom and I will make you feel better.

BN: That's an excellent example. That's exactly the kind of thing we are talking about, and couples always develop those kinds of messages. Sometimes they are specific verbal statements but sometimes they are nonverbal statements. It's a wink or blow a kiss, or give an arch look or raise your eyebrows or a touch. Touch is incredibly powerful as a communicator of okayness, of affection, of reassurance, of desire and we can do those things in a crowd in the same way that we can do them privately because they are a private language. Part of the art form is to learn to do it in a way that doesn't call other people's attention to it.

KM: And not be speaking Russian while your partner is speaking Spanish. There are always enough conflicts that you can get through in the beginning of a relationship but that's the same thing that my patients tell me when they're trying to reconnect with their husbands, or that the gentlemen tell me that they're trying to reconnect with their wives, 'I can't remember what we used to do, she's not responding back' or 'he's not responding back because we haven't done this in so long.' So we're really trying to get it back.

BN: So then the challenge there, in therapy, would be to say what are you willing to talk about, are you willing to go in and sit down and say I feel as if I am signaling you in ways that used to work and you are not noticing or not responding so how do I understand that? Is that you're not noticing, are you preoccupied, are you busy? Have you moved beyond that? Is that not working for you anymore? [In other words] I used to think it was cute when you called me babe but now I'm 52 years old and babe doesn't apply, and I hate it when you do that. Well, I didn't know, you never told me, so what could I call you that you would think is cute?

KM: When they wince and stare at you with a terrible stare when you say "babe", that's probably the sign. That's the signal that it didn't work.

BN: Well it would be a good indicator if you were watching to see. That's the problem, that's the dance. Like you said, one is speaking Russian, one is speaking Spanish. The challenge then is to say 'can we find a common language to talk about this issue because this issue matters because you matter, You matter to me, so it matters to me that I know that when I need you I can get your attention, that when I want you I can get your attention and that most of the time because you love me you'll respond' and flip it around 'it matters that you know how to get my attention without it being a fight, without it being a crisis. How can you let me know to just stop being busy, to stop being caught up in a thousand things in my day and pay attention to you.' When I do marriage counseling I work on cognitively, deliberately, consciously trying to create moments where that invitation can occur. A quiet time, still time. Teach children when the bedroom door is closed you can't come in, its private time. Or even tell them mom and dad have from 7 to 7:15 as private time don't, unless the house is on fire or somebody is projectile vomiting,

KM: That's a man talking, 7 to 7:15. A woman would say from 7 to 10.

BN: From 7 to 10. But somebody's got to get the kids to bed and all that. We only need 15 minutes if it all works.

BN: But in those 15 minutes or 10 minutes you go in and you stop having distractor behaviors and conversations and you pay attention to one another. You try to just get into the same space and it doesn't have to be about sex, it has to be about intimacy. Can we match breathing rhythms, can we be still in the same place together and allow ourselves to start to see, and to experience one another? Then we find where the energy is, where the focus is. In that context is also flirting behaviors. How do I look at you in a way where there is whatever you are wanting to see, a gleam in my eye that says he thinks I'm attractive, or a warmth in my eye that says he loves me, I am safe with him, so that it's not 1000 yard stare, it's not that silent angry distance, is not that preoccupied myopia? You know, I am so focused on how to get the bills paid before the football game starts and you want to stop and have an intimate moment. Don't you understand that I am busy? And couples who've been together for many years get in those rhythms and often they've willingly chosen that. Maybe we've chosen to have three or four or five kids, and those kids make demands on our time. And those kids squeeze our private moments down to just nuggets sometimes because of their very existence but we have both chosen that and so we should both learn to walk around it, and do most of the time. But sometimes, we have to come first. It is just like the old airline thing, when the oxygen mask comes down. If we don't take care of the core relationship then our children are going to be damaged. So there are times when it is our turn and our children need to learn that. This is mom's turn or dad's turn or their turn, and you need to go and wait. This is not an immediate crisis. We have to teach them what constitutes a kick the door open, the house is on fire kind of crisis. Otherwise no matter how desperately you need to know if you can go over to Joey's and play, you have to wait.

KM: I had a girlfriend whose parents, she had six brothers and sisters and she was right in the middle. Her parents said on Sunday after church, after lunch between one and five, we are in our bedroom. We lock the door. You are not to come in unless someone's bleeding.

BN: And that's exactly what I am talking about. That's the kind of core nurturing strategy that successful couples have got to develop. And if you don't have six kids you still need some of that because you have careers, or you have interests, or you have commitments that have their own time flow. So sometimes it is a requirement that you pay attention to other things. But, you still need to track and work on the intimacy factor. One of the ways that you can maintain that, even while you're busy, is with flirting behaviors. If I'm busy on the phone with somebody else or I am busy trying to take care of some paperwork I can still flirt with you to let you know I know you are there, I know that we are connecting and we're going to connect more, but just not at this moment. And if you understand and are speaking the same language when you see those

cueings, you're reassured and you are okay and we've bought some time to finish whatever it is we're trying to finish.

KM: A lot of my patients have directed their sexual energy elsewhere and so have their spouses, because they been so long in a dry spell, that to cope, they have jumped into some other activity, whether it be work, or other activity.

BN: I am glad you said that. When you first say that people tend to think you mean they're having an affair.

KM: No. I didn't mean that.

BN: What they do is they take that creative energy, the old Freudian analysis or theory is that sexual energy is essentially fundamentally creative energy, and so if the sexual behavior is not acceptable or appropriate, I am not allowed that outlet for whatever reason then I have to channel that energy into some other creative outlet. So I may do tole painting or macrame. I may write a symphony or an aria or write a book or remodel the bathroom or start a business. We invest ourselves and pour energy into creating something, doing something, and that energy is sexual. So when you say sometimes couples redirect that energy, especially if their partner's not available to receive it or share it, then that is what I really think most of the time is happening. Sometimes they redirect it to another party for specific sexual release, but very, very often, more often I think, they redirect into a commitment in some kind of aspect of life.

KM: They become more productive while their partners are not interested in them and then the partner comes back and says 'here I am' and they are already committed [elsewhere]. Then it is hard to reenter, even if you have the desire, it is hard to reenter the relationship and give it the time it deserves.

BN: We are back to when you have done your magic with bioidentical hormones, then somebody has to help the couple work on the consciousness in their relationship and the deliberateness in their relationship. That gets back to communication skills and cueing. Flirting behaviors are one example and they can be positive or negative. They can be positively framing invitations, "come and play with me." Or they can be negative. I can be flirting with someone else, with the neighbor, so that I make you mad or that I make you jealous or that I wound you in some way because I am mad at you but without having to directly come to you and say I am mad at you. Now I want to hurt you. And, if you accuse me of it I'll deny it and say you are way out of line. How dare you say that! We're just friends. You're so self absorbed. Whatever it is. And, I may or may not know.

KM: It is a back door way of fighting. You can take this really positive thing and turn it around.

BN: It's like the old gun argument. A gun is just a tool and it depends on how it is used, for what purpose, and by whom. Flirting in a relationship is a tool of communication and

of intimacy and it depends on how we use it, the direction that we point the gun, the target of that, and the efficiency of our aim. The dance of intimacy involves acquiring and using these various tools one way or another. We are running out of time today but I would like to continue this conversation in another podcast. And in that conversation what I would like to talk about is role and gender perceptions of sex and how men and women define sex and intimacy experientially and what that means to them.

KM: That's very important because I'm not sure that we know the other side's story. That's one thing my patients won't do. They won't go talk to their spouse. They expect things to just be known or someone to read their mind or each others mind.

BN: Yes. If you loved me, you'd know.

KM: So we need to talk about that. If you have any questions or comments about today's podcasts, please e-mail us at podcast@biobalancehealth.com. If you would like to know more about BioBalance and bioidentical hormone pellet therapy, or the other services we offer at BioBalance Health, visit BioBalanceHealth.com.

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