

# *The Relationship Center of Colorado*

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## **Sexual Dysfunction – The Healing Journey**

**by Pam Babbitt, S.I.**

Although *dysfunction* is not my term of choice in reference to sexual performance or libido issues, it does carry a universal understanding. Concerns regarding performance or libido are more common than not, and that line between *normal* and *dysfunctional* is a curvy one.

Sexual dysfunction creates an opportunity to have better sex, not worse sex. It also brings an opportunity for sexual healing, for creating greater relationship intimacy and possibly for correcting an unhealthy lifestyle. The journey may bring occasional frustrations and it will likely bring lasting rewards. The Healing Journey encourages you to love your body and celebrate your sexuality. Lovers who embrace this path do not revert to having routine sex. They become better lovers who have more confidence and appreciate variability in lovemaking. The Healing Journey incorporates a greater awareness of our arousal process, utilizing sensuality as a foundation and moderator, new sexual techniques and routines, and being present to the experience with no agenda or expectations. The Healing Journey combines teachings from tantra and sacred sexuality along with current sexology and mind-body therapy and is a path for individuals as well as couples. This journey is not just for fixing the dysfunction; it is also for pursuing your sexual and intimacy potential.

Sexual dysfunction may have psychological roots or a physical basis. The first step is to get an exam by your gynecologist or urologist. Advise your doctor that you would like a comprehensive assessment, not just a drug prescription. Dysfunction often shows up as low desire, sexual pain, erectile/arousal problems, pre-mature ejaculation and inhibited orgasm. If you are a male over 40 and experiencing a gradual increase in impotence, this could be indicative of cardiovascular disease. Studies are now showing that impotence may be a greater predictor than the traditional stress test. Arteries in the penis start to gum up before those in the rest of the body, so don't procrastinate.

Psychological and relational causes may be anticipatory anxiety, performance anxiety, distraction, self-consciousness, reluctance to ask for the desired stimulation and relationship anger. Regardless of the initial cause(s), if the dysfunction persists for several months, a self-perpetuating anxiety cycle can maintain the condition.

A history of sexual abuse, incest or rape can create genital armoring which causes dissociation with our sexuality and our genitals. Dr. Wilhelm Reich developed the concept of body armoring in the 1930s. He discovered that there was a relationship between tension and rigidity (meaning limitations, not erections) in the body, and rigidity, or psychological limitations in the mind. Reich also believed that we can't be fully sexual unless we can be fully sensual, deriving pleasure from sensations felt in many parts of our body. Genital armoring often starts when children are shamed or discouraged from touching their genitals and successive layers of armoring may result from invasive medical procedures (circumcision, abortion), insensitive love partners, unfulfilling lovemaking, or sexual abuse. Genital armoring may show up as genital insensitivity or over-sensitivity,

sexual greed or impotence/lack of arousal. De-armorng will clear chakra blockages and increase receptivity to sensuality and sexuality. A mind-body therapist can help identify the roots, bring awareness, and safely guide you in releasing the emotions from your body.

If you are currently in a relationship, engaging in the healing process together will bring the gift of greater intimacy. When a partner is not supportive, it is often because they lack knowledge, are inhibited or fear that the dysfunction is their fault. Share your feelings, anxieties and your desire to alter your lovemaking routines and techniques. Ask your partner for their participation in the journey and know that this may be a critical point in your relationship. You are asking your partner to show up with an open heart, fully present, unconditionally loving and possibly in a role that is unfamiliar or uncomfortable. If they are not yet able to do that, honor their path and their timing. You have now opened the door in your relationship for a much greater level of intimacy and your partner may or may not be ready to walk through it with you.

Whether The Healing Journey is a solo or joint exploration, support, education and coaching are available from various resources. If you are experiencing doubt or hesitation, I encourage you to challenge yourself and re-claim your sexuality. Also re-read paragraph two and ponder the rewards.