

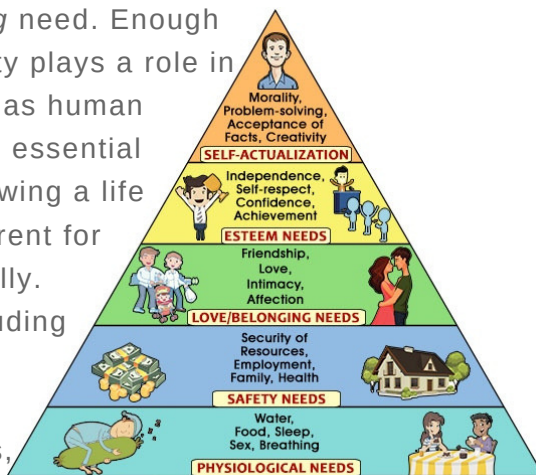
YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2019 VOLUME 2 ISSUE 6

Intimacy and Sexuality

A Warranted Discussion

Culture, upbringing, religious beliefs, and past experiences can have a direct impact on how we view sex and how we talk about it. Let's face it, we don't talk about the 3-letter word S-E-X enough. Both sex and intimacy fall under Maslow's 5 Basic Needs. Sex is a *physiological* need, while intimacy is a *love and belonging* need. Enough said, this applies to all of us. Sexuality plays a role in defining who we are and how we feel as human beings. Sexual health education is an essential component of the rehab process following a life changing event. Intimacy will be different for every person and is defined individually. This impacts every aspect of life including relationships, life roles, body image, personality, self esteem, pleasure, sense of value, and more. As humans, we identify ourselves as sexual beings. Therefore, it is vital to be able to talk about it, without feeling shame or embarrassment. It is important to surround yourself with the right team and group of people that can help support you following a life changing event. For professionals, it is important to educate ourselves and become comfortable with the subject matter, so that we can best advocate for the individuals we serve.



According to research, there is a positive relationship between sexual education and sexual activity, supporting quality of life with needs of intimacy and sexual expression. When an individual endures a traumatic life event, many questions pop up threatening self esteem and sense of value, which could lead to physical and emotional isolation. With many physical and emotional changes, the individual will enter a period of rediscovery, ultimately redefining their intimacy and sexuality.

COMMUNITY EVENTS NEAR ROCKFORD

Caregiver's 3-Part Series LBBRG

Saturday 9/14/19

9 am-12 pm, email Andrea agubbini@lbbrehab.com to RSVP or request more info

ALS Support Group LBBRG

9/18/19 5-6:30 pm

Wheeling Warriors Meetup LBBRG

9/19/19 12:00-1:00 PM

Disability Advocates of Kent County

Join a focus group

9/9/19, 9/10/19, or

9/11/19 to improve

Meijer shopping

experience for others.

Contact Najee Gray at

616-949-1100 ext 232

for more details

MI Auto Insurance

Promise Rally 9/25/19

Register:

[https://www.viethconsulting.com/members/evr/reg_event.php?](https://www.viethconsulting.com/members/evr/reg_event.php?orgcode=CPAN&evid=21577755)

orgcode=CPAN&evid=21577755

Intimacy & Sexuality (continued)

For example, in individuals who experience a spinal cord injury, the level of injury may affect the ability to experience a reflexive arousal (erection/vaginal lubrication secondary to genital stimulation) or psychogenic arousal (erection/vaginal lubrication secondary to arousal in the brain via hearing, seeing, feeling, fantasy), however it is still possible to achieve orgasm with either. It has been noted that different parts of the body may become pleasurable after an injury. Many clients have reported experiencing heightened sensations in different areas following their injury.

There are many interventions to be considered to help prevent interruption of a sexual experience when it comes to lack of bowel/bladder control, pressure sores/open wounds, spasticity, and autonomic dysreflexia. The interventions are tailored to meet the different needs of individuals. Interventions may include medications (spasticity management, libido/sex drive enhancement, erectile dysfunction), adaptive/assistive devices, pelvic floor re-education exercises, equipment modifications such as removable arm rests and other positioning paraphernalia. Positioning is crucial in deterring spasticity. Water-based lubrication is used to enhance lubrication and sensation, as well as help prevent tissue injury.

There is something to be said about the adjustment phase to a traumatic, life-changing event, it is different for everyone. There is never a set timeline for the process of grieving and adjusting to a life that is completely different. Sexuality may not take center stage during recovery, but will always be there.

It is important to keep communication open and flowing between the individual affected by the injury, the individual's partner, and supportive professionals.

For the affected individual, it is important to feel safe and have a positive environment, to be able to ask questions and feel comfortable trying new things. It is also important to continue to have a social life and opportunity for relationships. It is possible to continue a meaningful, fulfilling life; and to be desired by someone else.



Resources

There are many resources out there, but here are a few that you may find helpful and enjoyable.

1. <http://scisexualhealth.ca/sci-sexual-health-sexuality-101> This website helps clarify some of the misconceptions and myths of SCI and sexuality. It also grants a male and female perspective.
2. **Regain That Feeling** written by Mitchell Tepper, PhD, MPH: This book provides insight on sexual rediscovery and breaks down the myths that you may find yourself believing, ultimately holding you back.
3. **The Promise**, a memoir written by Rachelle Friedman. This story provides perspective on the challenges of intimacy and relationship, as well as the struggles with paralysis and rehab.

COMMUNITY EVENTS FOR TC

PWR! Class LBBRG

Weekly Thursdays
4:00-5:00 PM

Caregiver's Table LBBRG

9/17/19 4:00-5:00 PM

Fun and Games LBBRG

9/17/19 4:00-5:00 PM

ALS Support Group LBBRG

9/25/19 11:45 AM-1 PM

PNN Support Group

9/3/19 6:00 PM MCHC
9/25/19 10:00 AM TC
Senior Center

Brain Injury Support Group MCHC

9/10/19 5:00-6:00 PM

Susan Mast ALS

Bethlehem Lutheran
Church
9/11/19 2-3:30 PM

GT Stroke Club Picnic

Presbyterian Church
9/11/19 2:30-4:30 PM

Amputee Support Group Disability

Network of Northern MI
9/11/19 5:45-7:00 pm

Sources: <http://scisexualhealth.ca/sci-sexual-health-sexuality-101>;
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3425877/>;
<https://psychologenie.com/brief-explanation-about-self-actualization-theory>