



Ask Sr. Ruth “Sexy Smarts” February 2009

Sister Ruth is a nursing sister with over 10 years of experience working in the field of sexual health education. She teaches in schools, facilitates workshops for adults and writes about sexual health issues. Visit her website: www.sisterruth.co.za

Sr. Ruth’s Wordz “Closer – Relationships near & far”

We are created for relationships and investing in our friendships and special partnerships is a critical and on-going life task. Healthy relationships have a good balance of working together (mutually rewarding project), nurturing (‘tend and befriend’), having fun, being creative and physical closeness / affection.

Our manner of communication and responses sends messages that can draw us closer together, push away or stay neutral. Relationships suffer when we are not responsive to ‘cues of connection’, those little hints that invite intimacy and closeness. Relationships that hover in ‘neutral’ tend to become stale and empty. Push away responses include ignoring, passivity and disregarding or changing the subject. More hostile actions like blaming, picking fights and quarrels may reflect ways that we coped with problems as small children.

Growing in all relationships means taking time to communicate well:

- Saying what we feel – good feelings and the bad ones
- Asking for what we need – our friends and partners are not ‘mind readers’
- Take risks in communicating – we won’t be fully understood all the time, but practice makes perfect.

Getting to know you.... go to www.fun-questions.com

Distance Relationships:

My daughter leaves for another city soon and she and her boyfriend have been discussing how to foster their relationship when apart. This is a good test of a relationship and with email, Skype and other tools, while admitting that it is hard, it is not impossible. Creative ideas for ‘distance’ relationships include:

- Read the same book and share insights via email – chapter by chapter
- Find an online game that you can play together
- Pick an interesting topic to research and share findings
- Volunteer time with a charity organisation – share your experiences. You learn a lot when giving of yourselves to others with a generous spirit.
- Try to see each other fairly regularly, even if it means scrimping and saving for cheap flights etc. Internet communication can only sustain a relationship for a limited period.
- Journal your experiences, learnings and feelings as you go along. What are you learning about yourself? Others?

Q&A – “Horny hunks”

Why are guys horny in the morning? What is a ‘morning glory’?

Men often awake in the morning with the penis erect (hard). This is sometimes referred to as a ‘morning glory’. Erections in men do not always indicate that he is sexually aroused. In fact, all males have the capacity for erections from babyhood into old age. Night-time erections occur during the REM (dreaming) stage of sleep. People often wake up just after this phase in the sleep cycle which explains why the penis is erect. This also doesn’t mean that the dreams were ‘sexy’ although erotic dreams are experienced by both men and women.

Cyber-clinic: “He gave me Chlamydia!”

I was on duty at the clinic I was running when a senior high girl called me. She told me her boyfriend had broken up with her and then called her the next week to say that he had given her Chlamydia. Now, Chlamydia sounds like it should be a flower in someone’s spring garden.....NOT!!! Chlamydia is a highly infectious but treatable sexually transmitted infection. The centre for diseases and control (CDC) in the US refers to it as the ‘silent’ disease because 75% of women and 50% of men with it do not experience symptoms. Therefore it can go untreated, and spreads to other partners. Those who do experience symptoms may only start with burning of urine or a discharge 1 – 3 weeks after exposure. For more information <http://www.cdc.gov/std/Chlamydia/>

At least two issues need to be addressed here.

1. Hurtful retaliation – when a relationship breaks up we need to deal with the break up without having a break down! Emotions often run high and people vent anger and feelings of rejection in different ways. In this situation we do not know if the partner is being truthful or just wanting to cause pain and fear. The bottom line is, if there was unprotected penetrative sex, the risk exists of the infection being real.
2. Examination and treatment: Urine samples and vaginal swabs can be used to test for Chlamydia. Treatment is with an antibiotic. The course of antibiotics should be completed and a sexual partner should be checked and treated as well. Sex should be avoided during the period of treatment. It is good practice for sexually active people to have regular check-ups in addition to practicing ‘safer sex’. Sexually active young people statistically tend to have more partners; the cervix of young women is also more vulnerable to infection.

Sr. Ruth’s Advice: *Enjoy sexy outer touch and test the relationship over time before considering sex. Link this to your ethical values about sex. (see August 08 column – ‘So, Can U Have My Pleasure?’)*

Why? Rationale....

They say ‘love is blind’! Well it is...when you ‘fall in love’ your body is responding to a surge of hormones and other ‘chemicals’ that give those powerful, euphoric feelings of ‘this is the perfect person’! I want you... and only you.... now! When infatuated, we do not see the others faults, we think this will last forever. However, the reality is that this is all illusion! Your body cannot sustain that emotional and chemical ‘high’ for longer than about 6 months. Gradually we begin to notice faults, get angry, irritated or disinterested. When someone else comes along, the infatuation starts with someone else, the ‘old’ relationship breaks up...and we’re in the ‘soup’ again.

My experience is that teens may start having sex during this really 'hot' stage of the relationship. Then when reality strikes, and break ups happen, there are more complicated issues to deal with. This is hard.

Watch out next month for some 'Sexy Tips' on sensuality from Sr. Ruth.

"Hot Debates" – Have your say!

TOPIC OF THE MONTH: "Sensuality and 'Sexy' – strokes for folks"

Our senses – hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling and touching, work together with our minds to create 'meaning' and 'memory'. What we find pleasurable and / or sexy differs widely – 'different strokes for different folks!' The meanings we attach to words are also changing.

- What sensuous experiences do you find pleasurable and relaxing?
- What do you find off-putting or 'dis'-pleasurable?
- "Sexy" is used widely in media and general conversation to describe different things. What does this word mean to you? What do you think it means when used in advertising?

"Sexuality meets Spirituality" – Inspirational Quote

The Challenge to Love

"We probably have wondered in our many lonesome moments if there is one corner in this competitive, demanding world where it is safe to be relaxed, to expose ourselves to someone else, and to give unconditionally. It might be very small and hidden. But if this corner exists, it calls for a search through the complexities of our human relationships in order to find it.

With an irresistible strength The Voice breaks through the vicious circle of our existence saying:

Let us love one another since love comes from God. In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love: because to fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love. But God is greater than our heart. We have to love, because he loved us first.

What does this mean besides the redeeming revelation that love is a possibility. Perhaps the best definition of revelation is the uncovering of the truth that it is safe to love."

(extract from 'Intimacy' by Henri Nouwen)

Sr. Ruth's Website: www.sisterruth.co.za

Send ideas for upgrading Sr. Ruth's website!

Web Resources: For ALL of those 'hard to ask' questions!

SA Sexual Health Association: www.sexualhealth.co.za

Teen Sexuality: www.sxetc.com

LGBT Support: www.out.org.za

Sexual Information: www.siecus.org

Dr. Eve: www.dreve.co.za

Sexual and Reproductive Health Services:

DISA Health Centre: 011-7871222 or visit www.safersex.co.za