



Intimacy issues in Parkinson's disease

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Disclosures

▶ None

Overview

- ▶ Defining Sexual Function and Intimacy
- ▶ Things to be aware of in Parkinson's Disease
- ▶ Communication Strategies
- ▶ Recommendations

The Taboos of Sex

- ▶ Human intimacy is a symbol of total union. - Jeffrey R. Holland
- ▶ Key points of the Sigalovada Sutta: Buddha's Discourse to Sigala : "If a man really develops love as an expression of human concern for another being, he will not lay emphasis only on the external beauty and physical attractiveness of his partner. The beauty and attractiveness of his partner should be in his heart and mind, not in what he sees. Likewise, the wife who follows Buddhist teachings will never neglect her husband even though he has become old, poor or sick."
- ▶ A primary tenet of all schools of Hinduism is that sex is divine
- ▶ Sexuality, sex, is a gift of God. Not taboo...it leads you to give your life forever...And to give it with your body and soul. - Pope Francis

Sexual Health

- ▶ “...a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships...” (WHO, 2006a)
- ▶ *Is it important to you as an individual? As a couple?*
- ▶ *How do you communicate about sexuality and intimacy?*
- ▶ *Do our desires match each other?*
- ▶ *Is sexual function impeding intimacy?*

Let's talk about...

Sexual Function: the bodies reactions
to the sexual response cycle

Vs

Intimacy: Closeness



Parkinson's Disease Considerations

- ▶ Motor symptoms may pose a practical barrier: Bradykinesia (slowness), rigidity (stiffness), dyskinesia (tremor)
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Self Esteem concerns
- ▶ Depression and/or anxiety
- ▶ Changing relationship roles
- ▶ Sleep disturbances
- ▶ Bowel dysfunction
- ▶ Dysautonomia and arousal difficulties
 - ▶ Men: erectile dysfunction, inability to orgasm, rapid ejaculation
 - ▶ Women: lack of sex drive, decreased lubrication, pain with intercourse

Parkinson's Disease Considerations



- ▶ Dopamine agonists may cause impulse control disorders
 - ▶ Pathological gambling
 - ▶ Compulsive shopping
 - ▶ Hypersexuality and Sex Addiction

Communication Strategies

With your partner

- ▶ Using “I” Statements
- ▶ Asking clarifying questions
- ▶ Paying attention to non verbal communication
- ▶ Taking time outs
- ▶ Setting a time to check in

With your provider

- ▶ Be honest, it matters!
- ▶ Approaching sexual function like any other physical symptom
- ▶ Tracking symptoms and writing them down
- ▶ Notifying them immediately of impulse control issues

Recommendations – Sexual Function

- ▶ Talk with your doctor about possible medication side effects (e.g. lowering dopamine agonists, lowering or starting SSRIs, evaluating blood pressure medications, etc)
- ▶ Consult a Urologist about possible medications and tools
- ▶ See a pelvic floor Physical Therapist
- ▶ Use satin sheets, silky nightclothes or abandon the bed
- ▶ Timing medications and intimacy
- ▶ Seek individual or couples therapy

Recommendations - Intimacy

- ▶ Spend time apart
- ▶ Scheduled date night
- ▶ Seek counseling
- ▶ Extra long cuddle
- ▶ Giver-Receiver exercise
- ▶ Soul Gaze exercise
- ▶ Breathing connection exercise
- ▶ Three things exercise