

Relationship and Sexual Therapy

Center for Sexual Health

Relationship and sexual health is an important part of physical and mental well-being. Unfortunately, many individuals are dissatisfied or insecure when it comes to intimate relationships and sexuality. At the Center for Sexual Health, we work with individuals and couples to help improve sexual self-esteem, knowledge, and competence, resulting in more fulfilling and pleasurable relationships.

We believe sexual health reflects self-acceptance and respect. We believe sexual health also involves and demonstrates respect and appreciation for individual differences, sexual pluralism and diversity.

Relationship and Sexual Concerns

Our specialists provide comprehensive psychological, medical, and psychiatric treatment for a wide variety of sexual and relationship problems. Our therapists have extensive training in providing therapy for straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender diverse individuals. We offer psychological services for individuals as well as couples who are married, cohabitating, non-married, and polyamorous.

Relationship and Sexual Therapy Services

Difficulty maintaining healthy sexual and couple relationships is common. However, relationship skills can be learned and improved- leading to more fulfilling and intimate relationships. The Center for Sexual Health's Relationship and Sexual Therapy program allows individuals and couples to explore topics and issues of concern, and grow as sexual beings and partners.

Common sexual topics discussed in therapy include:

- Low sexual desire and little interest in sex
- Problems achieving orgasm
- Premature or early ejaculation
- Pain during or after sex
- Sexual avoidance or aversion
- Erectile dysfunction (impotence)
- Problems with experiencing pleasure or arousal during sex
- Conflicts about differences in sexual desire or preferences
- Relationship problems contributing to sexuality concerns
- Limited or inaccurate information about sex and sexuality
- Sexual abuse issues
- Anxiety or worries about sexual performance

— continued on other side



Common relationship topics discussed in therapy include:

- Communication and conflict resolution
- Fear of intimacy
- Divorce/previous relationships
- Children and parenting issues
- Different relationship expectations
- Extramarital relationships
- Gender roles
- Health problems and limitations
- Grief, death, and loss
- Forgiveness and acceptance
- Financial disagreements
- Differences in religious beliefs
- Division of household and other tasks
- Relationships with family, friends, and in-laws

Sexual Health Therapy Groups

Sexual health therapy groups consist of 6-9 individuals having sexual and/or relationship problems. Common problems that people discuss include low desire and interest in sex, problems with orgasm, sexual pain, sexual aversion, conflicts about differences in sexual desire or preferences, and relationship problems contributing to sexuality concerns. Group offerings may vary and your therapist will be able to direct you to current groups that may help to address your needs.

Sexual Health: Our Definition

Sexual health is an approach to sexuality founded in accurate knowledge, personal awareness, and self-acceptance, such that one's behavior, values, and emotions are congruent and integrated within a person's wider personality structure and self-definition. Sexual health involves an ability to be intimate with a partner, to communicate explicitly about sexual needs and desires, to be sexually functional (to have desire, become aroused, and obtain sexual fulfillment), to act intentionally and responsibly, and to set appropriate sexual boundaries.

Sexual health includes a sense of self-esteem, personal attractiveness, and competence, as well as freedom from sexual dysfunction, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual and family assault and coercion, and genital mutilation. Sexual health affirms sexuality as a positive force, enhancing other dimensions of one's life. (Robinson, Bockting, Rosser, Miner, & Coleman, 2002)

We believe in the importance of sexual knowledge, but also believe in facilitating the joy of sexual pleasure, relationship, and effective communication. We help individuals and couples achieve better mental health but go beyond that in helping them attain sexual integration — the congruence of a person's sexual values and behaviors. We recognize that sexual health may vary in different social and cultural contexts. Guided by this definition, we have developed an approach to sexual therapy into a treatment model for promoting and treating sexual health to meet our client's sexual health goals.

Getting Started

The first step is to schedule an evaluation. This is an opportunity to determine what type of therapy would be best for you. You may want to bring in this fact sheet with your concerns highlighted to help your therapist target the areas most important to you. The evaluation is also an important tool in identifying what conditions are contributing to your concerns.

Innovative and effective treatment approaches to sexual problems

The Center for Sexual Health promotes the sexual health of individuals, couples, and families of all backgrounds and ages. The Center for Sexual Health is the clinic affiliated with the Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota Medical School- one of the largest clinical, teaching, and research institutions in the world specializing in human sexuality. The Program in Human Sexuality is an international leader in crucial, often controversial, sexual issues. We work with local, national, and international health agencies to advance public health policies promoting sexual health.

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