

## **SEXUAL ADJUSTMENTS IN MARRIAGE**

### **EXPECTATIONS**

What do you think marriage will be like?

Sex tends to take on a forbidden fruit excitement before marriage, which loses some of the appeal after it is legal and accepted.

Couples who have remained virgins until marriage sometimes find that the fireworks they have waited so long to experience do not measure up to what they had imagined.

The intimacy of marriage may also detract from the desire for sexual relations. Instead of flowers and dressing up specially for each other, you fall into everyday routines and familiarity.

### **IMPORTANCE OF SEX IN MARRIAGE**

Sexual intimacy gives couples a level of closeness and loving intimacy they may not reach any other way.

For the most part, the quality of a marriage is reflected in the quality of the sexual relationship. Although there is a strong relationship between the sexual side of a marriage and the overall happiness of the marriage, sex is not the most important thing in marriage. However, sexual frustration makes sympathetic understanding difficult.

### **VARIETY OF NEEDS**

One partner usually has a stronger sex drive than the other. Biological basis for the sex drive is hormonal. Hormones are secreted into the bloodstream and sexual tension builds up, then a release is sought. The hormonal release is more constant in males, more cyclical in females.

Desired frequency may be different for men than for women. On the average, men seek sexual relations in marriage 7 times as often as their wives. The average frequency is 2-3 times per week, however, there is great variation among couples.

Social conditioning affects the sex drive. Girls are usually taught to be more inhibited sexually, prior to marriage. However, once the wedding is over, the rules change. She is now supposed to be passionate and seductive. This adjustment takes time and patience.

Early in marriage, men may feel uncertainty, awkward, excessive sexual tension, and pressure to perform. Both men and women may feel uncertain about the inadequacies of their bodies (breasts or penis too small, overweight, etc.). However, remember perfection is impossible and a good sex life causes one to forgive many things.

One partner may feel that sex is appropriate anytime once they are married, while the other partner may have a list of inappropriate times (not during the day, not at a parents' home, not when the kids are awake, etc.).

## **SEX IS COMMUNICATION**

Unexpressed resentment in any part of a marriage often shows up in the sexual relationship. The best solution is to express feelings to each other as quickly as problems arise. Don't let problems build walls between you and your partner.

## **SUCCESSFUL ADJUSTMENT**

Men and women are not the same in what they find pleasurable. Since no one can read minds, if one wants to be understood, it is his/her responsibility to communicate with his/her partner. Compromise and negotiation are usually needed.

Sex is most rewarding when it is part of a caring, enduring relationship. Affection, respect, and trust are the most important parts of a good sexual relationship.

Some reasons newly married couples may find it difficult to enjoy sex after marriage are listed below:

1. The female is a virgin and finds intercourse to be uncomfortable for a short period of time.
2. The couple has different ideas of what romance is and the effect it has on their intimate relationships.
3. The couple is uncomfortable talking about sexuality and assume that the other person is equipped with mind-reading abilities and knows what the other one likes or wants.

Intimacy is only one aspect of a happy marriage. The transition from abstinence to activity may be eased by:

1. Seeing physicians and have complete physicals before marriage.
2. Discussing intimacy with your parents, religious leaders, or a counselor.
3. Know your religious beliefs concerning intimacy.
4. Talk openly to your spouse about feelings and expectations.

Your sexual relationship is just like other relationships—sometimes it will be good and sometimes it will be bad. The key to success is good communication and a desire to resolve problems. If you and your spouse are unable to resolve problems on your own, it may be appropriate to seek a good marriage counselor. Discussing private details of your marriage with parents, family, or friends can cause irreparable damage to your relationship with your spouse.

The key to a happy and healthy intimate relationship in marriage is open and honest communication that focuses on the good and assists the relationship to move forward into a more positive situation for both partners.