

Come Together

THE SCIENCE (AND ART!)
OF CREATING LASTING
SEXUAL CONNECTIONS

EMILY NAGOSKI, PhD

VISUALS & RESOURCES

Copyright © 2024 by Emily Nagoski

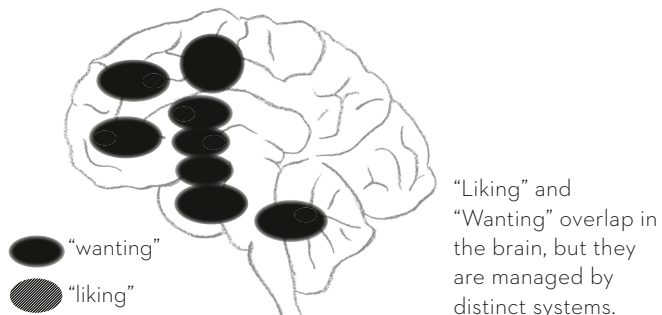
CAN ACTIVATE THE ACCELERATOR	CAN HIT THE BRAKES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-sexual touch • Intimacy of various kinds • Trust—both trusting a partner and feeling trusted by a partner • Stress—adrenaline, fight-or-flight, or loneliness • Flirtation and affectionate teasing • Intellectual or emotionally intimate conversation • Knowing we have all the time we need • Enjoying relaxed time with my partner • Talking about sex • Partner’s enthusiasm/ knowing my partner wants it • The excitement of potentially being “caught” • Wearing sexy clothes/ my partner wearing sexy clothes • Excitement of potentially being overheard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain • Anxiety or depression (or both) • Pressure/expectation/a sense of obligation or “duty” • Stress—overwhelm, depletion, frustration about anything, including about sex • Being tired/exhausted/fatigued • Lack of emotional connection • Feeling rushed/like my partner is impatient • Feeling manipulated or pressured to have sex • Talking about sex • Not feeling like my partner wants it • Distractions/when thoughts intrude • Worry about potentially being interrupted • Worry about body image • Worry about people overhearing



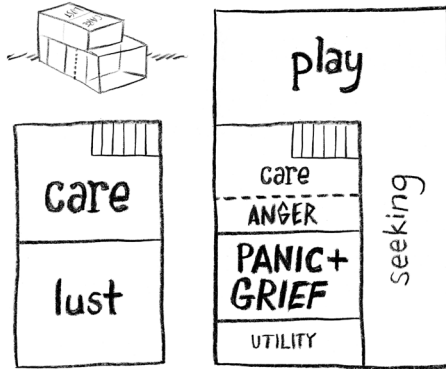
In some old houses in the Mediterranean, the beds are built into the wall.

PLEASURE	DESIRE
“Liking”	“Wanting”
Opioids, Endocannabinoids	Dopamine
Ahhhhh, that’s nice! Yum! Yay!	Oooh, what’s that? Where is it? How do I get it?
“That feels good”	“I want more”
Enjoying	Eagerness
Perception	Motivation
Hedonic impact	Incentive salience
Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction

And here’s a highly simplified illustration of the neuroanatomy of “wanting” and “liking”:



In this floorplan, CARE and PLAY are the spaces that open into LUST. Sometimes it's easy to get from CARE to LUST (when you're already up in the loft), and sometimes it takes a little intentional effort to get there (when you're on the ground floor and have to climb the stairs into the loft).

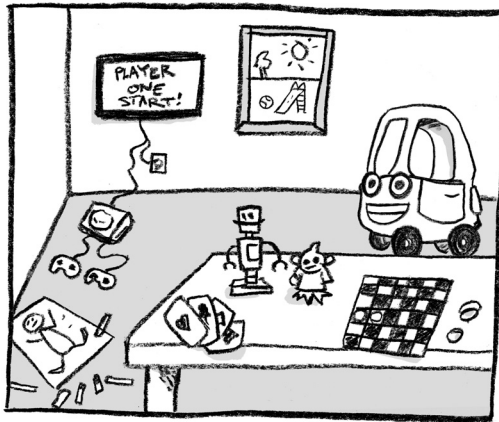


The Pleasure-Favorable Spaces

LUST

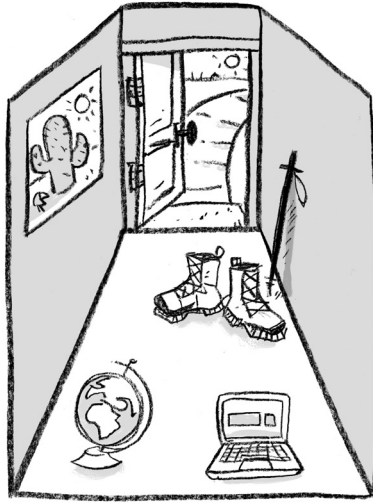


LUST is the space of courtship and sexuality. In humans, it's a highly social space and is most often surrounded by the other pleasure-favorable, highly social spaces of CARE and PLAY.



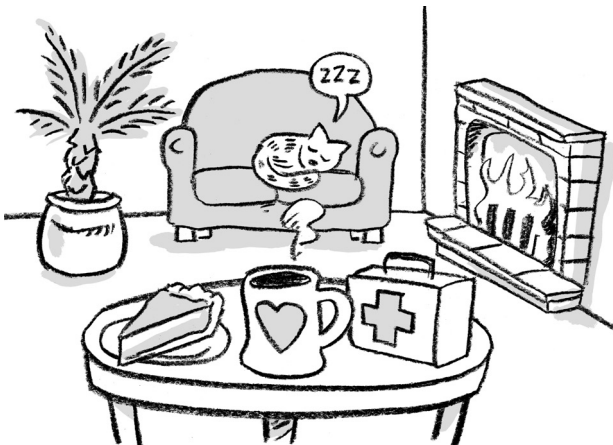
PLAY is the space of friendship and laughter, singing and dancing, games of all kinds, with zero stakes.

SEEKING



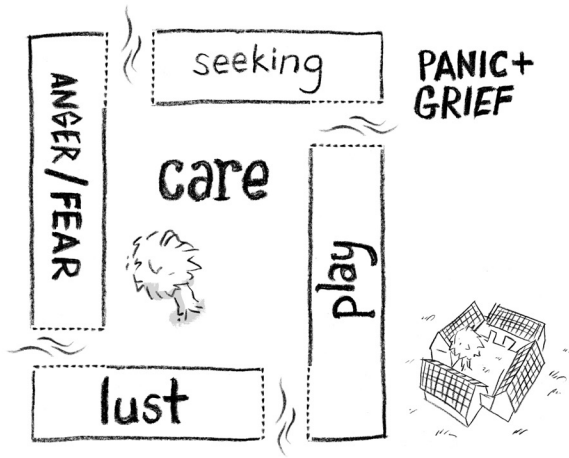
SEEKING is the space of exploration, curiosity, adventure, moving toward. What will you find, just beyond the door?

CARE



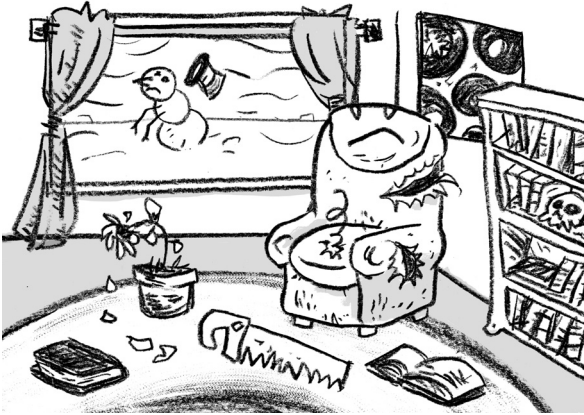
CARE is the space of love and tenderness, both "taking care of" and "caring for."

In a traditional Asante shrine, the central courtyard is the most sacred space. Here, the courtyard is CARE; you can get to it from any other space on the floorplan, and you can get to any other space from CARE.



The Pleasure-Adverse Spaces

PANIC/GRIEF



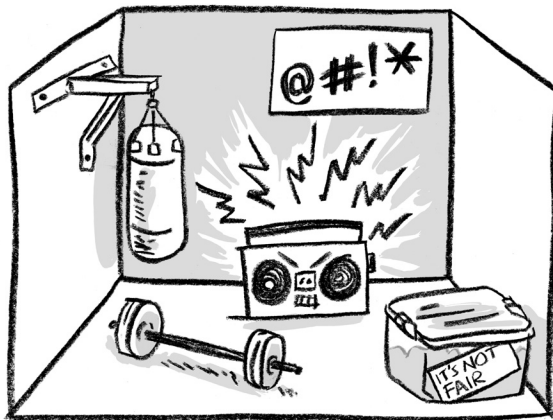
PANIC/GRIEF is the space of lost connection, loneliness, and abandonment. Because love is a biological drive—meaning we can die if we don't get enough—this space is an alert system to tell us when we're feeling too alone. PANIC is the warning of isolation; GRIEF is feeling helpless and hopeless.

FEAR

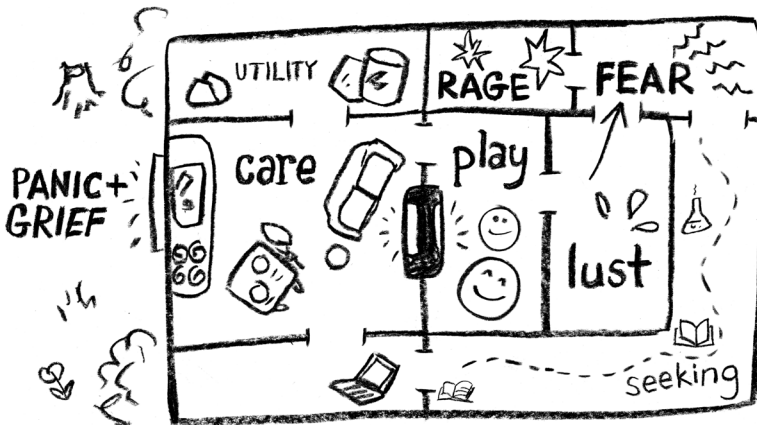
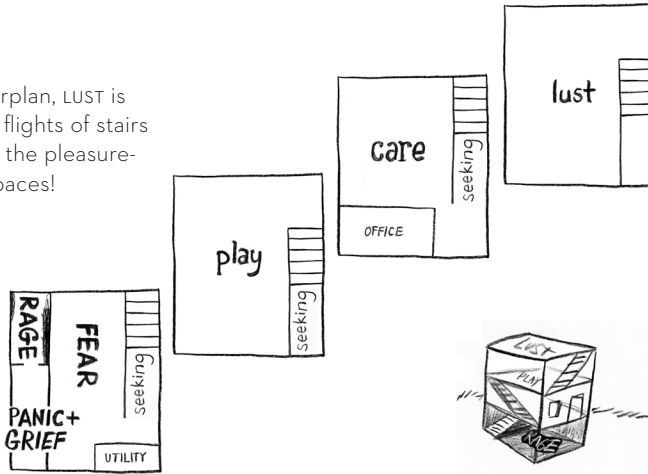


FEAR is the space of "Unsafe! Move away!" At its lowest intensity, it might be a slight niggling worry; at higher intensities it can be full terror. It can also show up as people-pleasing, doing whatever it takes to create a sense of safety.

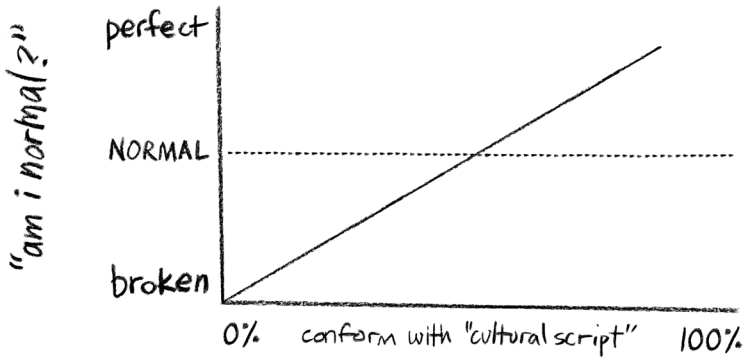
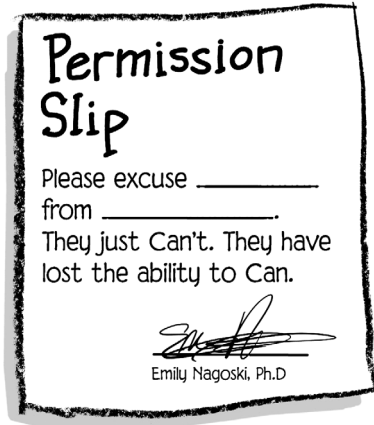
RAGE is the space of "Unsafe! Move to destroy!" It can be as small as annoyance or irritation and as large as a body-filling Hulk-like need to smash. No emotion is inherently dangerous, but because RAGE is the motivation to break things, we have to be sure we don't trust our hands or our words when RAGE is intensely activated.



In this floorplan, LUST is fully three flights of stairs away from the pleasure-adverse spaces!

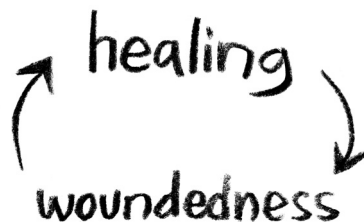


This is my floorplan. Notice that SEEKING and PLAY open directly into LUST, but I have to go through PLAY to get from CARE to LUST.



A lot of us get to adulthood believing that being "normal" is the gateway to becoming "perfect," as this graph depicts. The reality is that all of us are already normal.

All of us have been wounded by cultural messages telling us how our sexuality "should" be, and all of us are in an ongoing cycle of healing from those wounds, then being wounded again or having an old wound reappear. Anywhere you are in the cycle, you're still normal.



NOTES

Introduction: “How Do I Fix It?”

1. Except, perhaps, insofar as people have *expectations* about frequency, and if those expectations are met, people are more satisfied. But aren't we all more satisfied when any of our expectations are met than when they aren't? See Anthony Smith, et al., “Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction Among Heterosexual Men and Women: The Importance of Desired Frequency of Sex,” *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 37 (2), (2011): 104–15, and Elizabeth A. Schoenfeld, et al., “Does Sex Really Matter? Examining the Connections Between Spouses' Nonsexual Behaviors, Sexual Frequency, Sexual Satisfaction, and Marital Satisfaction,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 46 (2), (2017): 489–501.
2. Anik Debrot, et al., “More Than Just Sex: Affection Mediates the Association Between Sexual Activity and Well-being,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43 (3), (2017): 287–99; Amy Muise, Elaine Giang, and Emily A. Impett, “Post Sex Affectionate Exchanges Promote Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43 (7), (2014): 1391–1402.
3. Among these alternatives, mutual agreement or consent is the theme that unites them all. See Aleta Baldwin, et al., “Sexual Satisfaction in Monoga-

mous, Nonmonogamous, and Unpartnered Sexual Minority Women in the US,” *Journal of Bisexuality* 19 (1), (2019): 103–19; Rhonda N. Balzarini and Amy Muise, “Beyond the Dyad: A Review of the Novel Insights Gained from Studying Consensual Non-monogamy,” *Current Sexual Health Reports* 12 (4), (2020): 398–404; Terri D. Conley and Jennifer L. Piemonte, “Are There ‘Better’ and ‘Worse’ Ways to Be Consensually Non-monogamous (CNM)?: CNM Types and CNM-Specific Predictors of Dyadic Adjustment,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 50 (4), (2021): 1273–86; Jeffrey T. Parsons, et al., “Non-monogamy and Sexual Relationship Quality Among Same-Sex Male Couples,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 26 (5), (2012): 669; Jenna Marie Strizzi et al., “BDSM: Does It Hurt or Help Sexual Satisfaction, Relationship Satisfaction, and Relationship Closeness?” *The Journal of Sex Research*, 59 (2), (2022): 248–57.

4. Peggy Kleinplatz and A. Dana Ménard, *Magnificent Sex: Lessons from Extraordinary Lovers* (Routledge, 2020).
5. “The Fat Spectrum,” as illustrated on a widely shared internet graphic originating on *The Fat Lip* podcast, includes “small fats,” “mid-fats,” “large fats,” “superfats,” etc. The purpose of the spectrum is not to let us all figure out which kind of fat we are, but to help identify to what extent we might benefit from thin privilege, even when we live in larger bodies. These terms have nothing to do with how we feel—straight-size and midsize people may feel just as self-critical about their bodies as fat people might, and larger people may feel better about their bodies than small people if they’ve gone further in liberating their inner critic from the Bikini Industrial Complex.

The terms refer instead to *access*. Does your doctor comment on your weight or blame your weight for health issues, or even require you to lose weight before you can have access to a medical treatment? Do your friends or family express “concern” about your body? Can you find clothes that fit you in brick-and-mortar stores? Do seats on public transportation fit your body? These and more are cues about whether your body “belongs” in a culture, regardless of how you feel about that body. As a small fat, I retain some thin privilege (or, “closer proximity to thinness”) and have a responsibility not to speak over larger fats who experience more and different oppression (e.g., less access) than I do. For more, see Midnight and Airborne, 2020. “Community Origins of the Term ‘Superfat.’” Medium, December 2. Accessed on May 24, 2023. cherrymax.medium.com/community-origins-of-the-term-superfat-9e98e1b0f201; Fluffy Kitten Party, 2021. “Fategories—Understanding the Fat Spectrum.” Accessed May 24, 2023. fluffykittenparty.com/2021/06/01/fategories-understanding-smallfat-fragility-the-fat-spectrum/; and Michelle Scott. 2019. “Fat Privilege: Revelations of a Medium Fat Regarding the Fat Spectrum.” Medium, August 14. Accessed May 24, 2023. medium.com/@michellestvscott/fat-privilege-revelations-of-a-medium-fat-regarding-the-fat-spectrum-ec70dc908336.

Chapter 1: Is Sex Important?

1. Anders Ågmo and Ellen Laan, “The Sexual Incentive Motivation Model and Its Clinical Applications,” *The Journal of Sex Research*: 1–20 (2022); Frank A. Beach, “Characteristics of Masculine ‘Sex Drive,’” *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* 4 (1), (1956): 32; and Barry Singer and Frederick M. Toates, “Sexual Motivation,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 23 (4), (1987): 481–501. See also *Come as You Are*, chapter 7.
2. If you’ve never had an orgasm but would like to, there are several books specifically about that, which go far beyond Appendix I of *Come as You Are*. I’m also including more general books specifically for survivors of sexual trauma and for trans and nonbinary folks. Any book is a product of its time, and these will show the era in which they were written. See Lonnie Garfield Barbach, *For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality* (Signet, 1976); Vivienne Cass, *The Elusive Orgasm: A Woman’s Guide to Why She Can’t and How She Can Orgasm* (Brightfire Press, 2002); Betty Dodson, *Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving* (New York: Harmony Books, 1987); Lucie Fielding, *Trans Sex: Clinical Approaches to Trans Sexualities and Erotic Embodiments* (Routledge, 2021); J. R. Heiman and J. LoPiccolo, *Becoming Orgasmic: A Sexual and Personal Growth Program for Women* (Prentice Hall, 1988); August McLaughlin and Jamila Dawson, *With Pleasure: Managing Trauma Triggers for More Vibrant Sex and Relationships* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2021); Holly Richmond, *Reclaiming Pleasure: A Sex Positive Guide for Moving Past Sexual Trauma and Living a Passionate Life* (New Harbinger Publications, 2021).
3. Don’t mistake these answers for science, they’re just the responses of a bunch of strangers, mostly on the internet, who happen to follow my work. I didn’t keep track of anyone’s demographics, I don’t know the gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, or relationship status of any of the people I quote here, but none of that matters. If someone’s words resonate with you, it’s not important who the writer is. Same if something doesn’t resonate. I’m sharing what I heard from them to help get your brain started on answering this question.
4. Ace sex educator Aubri Lancaster teaches this in her workshops. Hat tip to her! www.AceSexEducation.com.

Chapter 2: Center Pleasure

1. I take this language of “imperatives” from Barker et al., *Mediated Intimacy: Sex Advice in Media Culture*. More on this in chapter 10.
2. Peggy Kleinplatz and A. Dana Ménard, *Magnificent Sex: Lessons from Extraordinary Lovers* (Routledge, 2020); Barry McCarthy and Emily McCarthy, *Contemporary Male Sexuality: Confronting Myths and Promoting Change*

(Routledge, 2020); Jane Fleishman, *The Stonewall Generation: LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging* (Skinner House Books, 2020).

3. Dear fellow nerds, yes indeed, there's a huge difference between the subjective experience of pleasure and the neurological process of hedonic impact, as there is between the subjective experience of desire and the neurological process of incentive salience. If you know what the difference is, rest assured that I know, too, but this distinction between pleasure and desire is already really difficult for people to wrap their heads around, without going into a discussion of interactions across levels of analysis, and I've found that teaching about levels of analysis doesn't help people have better sex lives, which is the purpose of this book. The science is functioning here as a metaphor. This is one of many, many shortcuts I take in the name of helping people have better sex lives. Feel free to be frustrated by it, if you like, and then remind yourself that you're reading this book to make your sex life better, and this metaphor helps with that. And hey, look up Kent Berridge if you want the science itself!
4. When researchers measure "repair" attempts that couples make to recover trust and positive emotion during a conflict, women's repair attempts are often the most effective. See John M. Gottman, *The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 274–9.
5. *Science of Trust*, chapter 7.
6. Donald Hall, "The Third Thing," *Poetry* 185 (2), (2004): 113–21. Hat tip to John Green, *The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet* (Penguin, 2023), for pointing readers to this essay.
7. Kleinplatz and Ménard, *Magnificent Sex*.

Chapter 3: Your Emotional Floorplan

1. I borrow the term "favorable" from the Ace community, where some people identify as "sex favorable," meaning there are some contexts where sex might be fun, even in the absence of sexual attraction that very broadly describes the Ace experience. They use it instead of "sex positive," which already has a variety of connotations in the world. I use favorable instead of "positive," in acknowledgment that many of us have been taught to have negative "secondary emotions" about these primary emotions; that is, we feel self-critical, shameful, fearful, or angry about these "positive" feelings. And I use "adverse" instead of "unfavorable" to underscore that PANIC/GRIEF, FEAR, and RAGE are hard-wired to make us motivated to avoid them.
2. Caveat: The book I refer to here is not a book for people looking for science about human sexuality itself; it's about mammals, and a lot of what science can say about mammals, it can't say about humans. See Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012).

3. Maybe you prefer to think of these primary process emotions as characters in our personalities; John Gottman offered that type of metaphor to understanding these core emotional systems in his 2001 book, *The Relationship Cure*. He gave each a name and a task: the Jester, the Nest-Builder, the Explorer, etc. You can do the same, thinking about which character moves to the forefront of your mental state as your context changes.

Or maybe each space is a color, and you can identify where you are by the color that feels right. Or maybe each space is a song that evokes a particular emotion.

Or maybe you feel most comfortable with the more literal language of primary process emotions being activated as neural networks. Super! Map out the activation and the processes of transitioning from one to another, and the process of activating more than one network at a time. Nan Wise went into detail in her 2020 book, *Why Good Sex Matters*. And if you want to know even more thoroughly what the science already has to say about it, *The Archaeology of Mind* by Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven is a detailed place to start.

4. John M. Gottman and Joan DeClaire, *The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships* (Harmony, 2001); Nan Wise, *Why Good Sex Matters: Understanding the Neuroscience of Pleasure for a Smarter, Happier, and More Purpose-Filled Life* (Houghton Mifflin, 2020).
5. Shame, in this framework, is a secondary process emotion, whereas LUST, etc. are primary process emotions. Shame is secondary insofar as it is a *learned response* to social conditioning. See Panksepp and Biven, *Archaeology of Mind*, 10.
6. Barry McCarthy and Emily McCarthy, *Couple Sexuality After 60: Intimate, Pleasurable, and Satisfying* (Routledge, 2021).
7. C. D. Lynch, “How Long Does It Take the Average Couple to Get Pregnant? A Systematic Review of What We Know,” *Fertility and Sterility* 96 (3), (2011): S115.
8. “Jealousy Is My Kink,” *Dear Jessamyn*, podcast episode 210, originally aired July 2021. Accessed May 24, 2023. dearjessamyn.com/episode-210.
9. Also, they ruin Charlotte. Worst adaptation ever.
10. Amit Bernstein, Yuval Hadash, and David M. Fresco, “Metacognitive Processes Model of Decentering: Emerging Methods and Insights,” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 28, (2019): 245–51; Steven C. Hayes, *A Liberated Mind: How to Pivot Toward What Matters* (Penguin, 2020); Richard C. Schwartz, *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model* (Sounds True, 2021).
11. Laura Schmalzl and Catherine E. Kerr, “Neural Mechanisms Underlying Movement-Based Embodied Contemplative Practices,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 10, (2016): 169.

Chapter 5: How We Give and Receive

1. When I ask sex-positive providers where to send people who are looking for help with painful sex, they tell me the Herman & Wallace Pelvic Rehabilitation Institute.

Chapter 6: What We Give and Receive

1. Sara Nasserzadeh, *Love by Design: 6 Ingredients to Build a Lifetime of Love* (Balance, 2024).
2. Terrence Real, *Us: Getting Past You and Me to Build a More Loving Relationship* (Rodale Books, 2022).
3. Michael H. Boyle et al., “Differential-Maternal Parenting Behavior: Estimating Within- and Between-Family Effects on Children,” *Child Development* 75 (5), (2004): 1457–76; Edward Tronick, et al., “The Infant’s Response to Entrapment Between Contradictory Messages in Face-to-Face Interaction,” *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 17 (1), (1978): 1–13.
4. Lynne Murray, “Emotional Regulations of Interactions Between Two-Month-Olds and Their Mothers,” *Social Perception in Infants* (1985): 177–97.
5. Gottman, *The Science of Trust*, 67.
6. *Ibid.*, 74.
7. I’ve been waiting for a great adult-focused book about the science of temperament, but so far the book I feel most comfortable recommending is a parenting book. But, as I said to the internship supervisor who recommended it to me, “*I’m the parent of a spirited child*,” meaning I have to teach myself to plan for success, given my temperament. See Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, *Raising Your Spirited Child: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, and Energetic* (HarperCollins, 2015).
8. Gottman, *The Science of Trust*; Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love* (Little, Brown Spark, 2008); David Richo, *How to Be an Adult: A Handbook on Psychological and Spiritual Integration* (Paulist Press, 1991); Richard C. Schwartz, *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model* (Sounds True, 2021); Mark Wolynn, *It Didn’t Start with You: How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle* (Penguin, 2017).

Chapter 7: Living in Bodies

1. Squirmy and Grubs, “Intimacy & Disability—How We Make It Work—Q&A Part 1.” YouTube, May 20, 2022. [youtube.com/watch?v=8iBROcOhmxk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iBROcOhmxk); Squirmy and Grubs, “Does Shane’s Disease Affect His Sex Drive?—Intimacy and Disability Q&A Part 3.” YouTube, June 22, 2020. [youtube.com/watch?v=3LJJnULUyFY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LJJnULUyFY).

2. StyleLikeU, “Laughing at Your Ableist BS: Shane & Hannah Burcaw Hold a Mirror Up to Your Limited Idea of Love.” YouTube, January 20, 2022. [youtube.com/watch?v=Y-T39djpGRo&ab_channel=StyleLikeU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-T39djpGRo&ab_channel=StyleLikeU).
3. Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, “My wife is not an angel// Part I [CC].” YouTube, May 2, 2020. [youtube.com/watch?v=-s9GaEha2Nw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-s9GaEha2Nw); Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, “Are there benefits to dating a disabled person?// Part 2: My wife is not an angel [CC].” YouTube, May 5, 2020. [youtube.com/watch?v=qUxdPIMTCB8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUxdPIMTCB8).
4. Staci Haines, *Healing Sex: A Mind-Body Approach to Healing Sexual Trauma* (Cleis Press Start, 2007); August McLaughlin and Jamila Dawson, *With Pleasure: Managing Trauma Triggers for More Vibrant Sex and Relationships* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2021); Holly Richmond, *Reclaiming Pleasure: A Sex Positive Guide for Moving Past Sexual Trauma and Living a Passionate Life* (New Harbinger Publications, 2021); Erika Shershun, *Healing Sexual Trauma Workbook: Somatic Skills to Help You Feel Safe in Your Body, Create Boundaries, and Live with Resilience* (New Harbinger Publications, 2021); David A. Treleaven, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018); Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (Penguin Books, 2015).

Chapter 8: Relationship Change

1. This is a brief description of the Transtheoretical Model or Stages of Change Theory, with Motivational Interviewing applied to the stages. Welcome to the first semester of a Masters in Public Health degree! See Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change* (Guilford Press, 2002); James O. Prochaska, “Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change,” *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, (2020): 2266–70; James O. Prochaska and W. F. Velicer, “The Transtheoretical Model of Health Behavior Change,” *American Journal of Health Promotion* 12 (1), (1997).
2. Any theoretical model that proposes “stages” isn’t actually suggesting that people literally shift from one distinct stage to the next, they’re simply offering a framework to help contextualize and operationalize the vague and contradictory mess that is real human behavior. There’s no need to get too hung up on what exact stage a person is in, we are all in process all the time.
3. Then there’s *Relapse*, which is built in to any addiction treatment, normalizing it so that people don’t panic if it happens. It applies to changing your shared sexual connection, too, since it’s common for people to learn about sex, apply what they’ve learned, and then, when the going gets tough, revert to old patterns. This isn’t a problem, it’s a normal part of the process. At this stage, as at all the stages, deploy admiration and trust liberally, practice confidence and joy, meet any self-criticism or frustration with the cycle of woundedness to healing, and approach any interest in further change with calm, warm curiosity. You’re doing it, you’re making it happen.

4. Amelia has graciously allowed me to share this photo of her with the world. From the author's collection.



5. Allegra Gordon et al., “Eating Disorders Among Transgender and Gender Non-binary People,” *Eating Disorders in Boys and Men*, (2021): 265–81.
6. Maria Fernández-Capo, et al., “Measuring Forgiveness: A Systematic Review,” *European Psychologist* 22 (4), (2017): 247.

Chapter 9: The Sex Imperatives

1. Carey Noland, “Communication and Sexual Self-Help: Erotica, Kink and the *Fifty Shades of Grey* Phenomenon,” *Sexuality & Culture* 24 (5), (2020): 1457–79.
2. Book-learning about kink is deeply enriched when you're a part of a community that actively practices and teaches safety skills, including consent/communication skills. But books are great, too! Here are just a few titles widely recommended in the BDSM community: Molly Devon and Philip Miller, *Screw the Roses, Send Me the Thorns: The Romance and Sexual Sorcery of Sadomasochism* (Fairfield, CT: Mystic Rose, 1995); Lee Harrington and Mollena Williams, *Playing Well with Others: Your Field Guide to Discovering, Navigating and Exploring the Kink, Leather and BDSM Communities* (SCB Distributors, 2012); Tristan Taormino, *50 Shades of Kink: An Introduction to BDSM* (Cleis Press, 2012); Jay Wiseman, *SM 101: A Realistic Introduction* (CA: Greenery Press, 1996).
3. Jacqueline N. Cohen and E. Sandra Byers, “Beyond Lesbian Bed Death: Enhancing Our Understanding of the Sexuality of Sexual-Minority Women in Relationships,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 51 (8), (2014): 893–903; Suzanne Iasenza, “Beyond ‘Lesbian Bed Death’ the Passion and Play in Lesbian Relationships,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 6 (1), (2002): 111–20.
4. Karen L. Blair and Caroline F. Pukall, “Can Less Be More? Comparing Duration vs. Frequency of Sexual Encounters in Same-Sex and Mixed-Sex Relation-

- ships,” *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 23 (2), (2014): 123–36; David A. Frederick et al., “Debunking Lesbian Bed Death: Using Coarsened Exact Matching to Compare Sexual Practices and Satisfaction of Lesbian and Heterosexual Women,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 50 (8), (2021): 3601–19.
5. Karen L. Blair, Jaclyn Cappell, and Caroline F. Pukall, “Not All Orgasms Were Created Equal: Differences in Frequency and Satisfaction of Orgasm Experiences by Sexual Activity in Same-Sex Versus Mixed-Sex Relationships,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 55 (6), (2018): 719–33; Jacqueline N. Cohen and E. Sandra Byers, “Beyond Lesbian Bed Death: Enhancing Our Understanding of the Sexuality of Sexual-Minority Women in Relationships,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 51 (8), (2014): 893–903; Justin R. Garcia et al., “Variation in Orgasm Occurrence by Sexual Orientation in a Sample of US Singles,” *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 11 (11): 2645–52.
 6. Malachi Willis, et al., “Are Women’s Orgasms Hindered by Phallogocentric Imperatives?” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 47 (6), (2018): 1565–76.
 7. In the time it took me to write this book, hundreds of anti-trans bills were introduced in state legislatures, 63 progressed in the legislature, 73 failed . . . and 98 passed, with more passing each year (20 in 2021; 29 in 2022; and 49 as of this writing in late May 2023). “2023 Anti-Trans Legislation,” tracktranslegislation.com/.

YEAR	FAILED	PROGRESSED	PASSED	INTRODUCED
2023 (THROUGH MAY)	29	39	49	413
2022	24	11	29	188
2021	19	13	20	213
TOTAL	73	63	98	814

8. Michele O’Mara, “Lesbian Bed Death Meaning and History,” *The Correlation of Sexual Frequency and Relationship Satisfaction Among Lesbians*, 2012. Accessed May 24, 2023. micheleomara.com/lesbian-bed-death-lesbian-sexual-frequency/.
9. American Civil Liberties Union. “Mapping Attacks,” Human Rights Watch “LGBT Rights.”
10. For details, see chapter 7 of *Come as You Are*; chapter 5 of *Burnout*; Lindo Bacon, *Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth about Your Weight* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc., 2010); and Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-love* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2021).
11. Sonalee Rashatwar, “How I Made Peace with My Fat Body and Disappointed My Parents,” *Health*, March 19, 2023. Accessed May 24, 2023. health.com

/mind-body/sonalee-rashatwar-how-i-made-peace-with-my-fat-body-health-at-every-size.

12. Diana-Abasi Ibanga, “The Concept of Beauty in African Philosophy,” *Africol-ogy: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10 (7): (2017). But also it’s complicated, when it comes to gender: see Molly Manyonganise, “Oppressive and Liberative: A Zimbabwean Woman’s Reflections on Ubuntu,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36 (2), (2015): 1–7.
13. Fitz, “The Pieces of the Puzzle,” in *Trans Sex: Clinical Approaches to Trans Sexualities and Erotic Embodiments*, ed. Lucie Fielding (Routledge, 2021), 171.
14. Rae McDaniel, *Gender Magic* (Balance, 2023), 113.

Chapter 10: The Gender Mirage

1. I’ve described a positive scenario, but of course worse situations happen still with alarming frequency, all around the world, as a matter of policy. For example, not until 2020 did Boston Children’s Hospital, a leading pediatric care facility, announce that it would not perform *some* intersex surgeries before a patient was old enough to consent. Patient-centered guidelines do exist, and it’s long past time that medical practice caught up. See interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth, Lambda Legal, and Proskauer Rose LLP, 2018, “Intersex-Affirming Hospital Policy Guide: Providing Ethical and Compassionate Health Care to Intersex Patients.” legacy.lambdalegal.org/publications/intersex-affirming.
2. Eustace Chesser, *Love Without Fear: A Plain Guide to Sex Technique for Every Married Adult* (Rich & Cowan, 1941); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963); Mike Grace and Joyce Grace, *A Joyful Meeting* (St. Paul, MN: International Marriage Encounter, 1980); Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Barry McCarthy and Emily McCarthy, *Contemporary Male Sexuality: Confronting Myths and Promoting Change* (Routledge, 2020); Jo Barraclough Paoletti, *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America* (Indiana University Press, 2012); Sari M. van Anders et al., “The Heteronormativity Theory of Low Sexual Desire in Women Partnered with Men,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 51 (1), (2022): 391–415.
3. Nagoski and Nagoski, *Burnout*, xiii and 62–65.
4. Ågmo and Laan, “The Sexual Incentive Motivation Model.” See also chapter 7 of *Come as You Are*.
5. McCarthy and McCarthy, *Contemporary Male Sexuality*.
6. Yoko Kanemasu and Asenati Liki, “‘Let *Fa’afafine* Shine Like Diamonds’: Balancing Accommodation, Negotiation and Resistance in Gender-Nonconforming Samoans’ Counter-hegemony,” *Journal of Sociology* 57 (4), (2021): 806–24.

7. Wesley Thomas, “Navajo Cultural Constructions of Gender and Sexuality,” *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, (1997): 156–73.
8. Sharyn Davies, *Challenging Gender Norms: Five Genders among Bugis in Indonesia* (Gale Cengage, 2007).
9. Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
10. Sandy O’Sullivan, “The Colonial Project of Gender (and Everything Else),” *Genealogy* 5 (3), (2021): 67.
11. Joseph M. Currin, et al., “Gender Normative Behavior as a Predictor of Acceptance of Transgender Individuals in the Workplace by Cisgender Coworkers,” *Journal of LGBTQ Issues in Counseling* 16 (2), (2022): 169–85.
12. McCarthy and McCarthy, *Couple Sexuality After 60*, 57.

Chapter 11: Heterosexual-Type Relationships

1. Beyond countless online articles about “Top 10 Complaints Wives Have about Their Husbands” and “5 Things Men Can’t Stand about Their Wives,” not to mention memoirs of marriage, these are also grounded in clinical practice and empirical research. See John M. Gottman, “How Marriages Change,” *Depression and Aggression in Family Interaction*, edited by G. R. Patterson (1990): 75–101. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.: 89; Heather Havrilesky, *Foreverland: On the Divine Tedium of Marriage* (Ecco, 2022); Harrison Scott Key, *How to Stay Married: The Most Insane Love Story Ever Told* (Avid Reader Press / Simon & Schuster, 2023); Kate Mangino, *Equal Partners: Improving Gender Equality at Home* (St. Martin’s Press, 2022); Terrence Real, *How Can I Get Through to You?: Closing the Intimacy Gap Between Men and Women* (Scribner, 2010).
2. In her famous (and eugenicist) sex advice manual, *Married Love*, Marie Stopes includes an entire chapter on “Woman’s Contrariness,” which she attributes to the menstrual cycle. A century later, we know the link between the menstrual cycle and sexual interest, feelings, and behavior is not remotely this straightforward. See Lisa M. Diamond, et al., “Menstrual Cycle Changes in Daily Sexual Motivation and Behavior Among Sexually Diverse Cisgender Women,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2022): 1–12; Urszula M. Marcinkowska, et al., “Hormonal Underpinnings of the Variation in Sexual Desire, Arousal and Activity Throughout the Menstrual Cycle—A Multifaceted Approach,” *The Journal of Sex Research* (2022): 1–7; Marie Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Differences* (London: G. Putnam’s Sons, 1918); Sari M. van Anders et al., “The Heteronormativity Theory of Low Sexual Desire in Women Partnered with Men,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 51 (1), (2022): 391–415.

3. Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1. The formative years and the great discoveries, 1856–1900* (1953).
4. *The American Magazine*, Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1911, 619.
5. Editor, “Training for Freedom: We Want Bread—and Roses Too.”
6. Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).
7. Sigmund Freud, “The Psychological Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction Between the Sexes.” *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: “The Ego and the Id” and Other Works* 19 (1925) 2014: 242–60.
8. Heidi Staufenberg, “8.6 Female Psychosexuality,” *Freud-Handbuch Leben Werk Wirkung Sonderausgabe*, edited by Hans-Martin Lohmann and Joachim Pfeiffer (Stuttgart, Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2006): 162–67.

Chapter 12: The Magic Trick

1. Fred B. Bryant and Joseph Veroff, *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience* (Psychology Press, 2017).
2. *Ibid.*, xx. The remaining savoring skills, still applicable to the erotic, but maybe a little less straightforward, include:
 - *Memory Building*. Actively choosing positive moments to highlight in your awareness, to store for future reminiscing.
 - *Self-congratulation*. Pausing to celebrate privately, to tell yourself how proud you are or how impressed others must be.
 - *Comparing*. Contrast your own feelings with what others seem to be feeling, or comparing the present situation with similar times in the past or other potential outcomes. This is the “coulda been so much worse!” strategy.
 - *Counting Blessings*. Remind yourself of all the good things you have or experience, even in the midst of other not-so-good things.
 - *Absorption*. This is a strategy many might describe with the concept of “flow.” Exist only in the present, not worrying about the future or ruminating on the past.
3. Shemeka Thorpe, et al., “The Peak of Pleasure: US Southern Black Women’s Definitions of and Feelings Toward Sexual Pleasure,” *Sexuality & Culture* 26 (3), (2022): 1115–31; Shemeka Thorpe, et al., “Black Queer Women’s Pleasure: A Review,” *Current Sexual Health Reports*, (2023): 1–7.

Pleasure Mountain, as Thorpe discovered from her research participants’ accounts of sexual pleasure, has three foundational dimensions and four Facilitators of Peak Pleasure.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS:

- The emotional dimension of sexual pleasure is about the experience of emotional closeness and connection to a partner, including euphoric experience of compassion, tenderness, care, and vulnerability. This is the dimension participants described with the word “love.”
- The mental dimension of sexual pleasure is about being present, undistracted, and able to “let go.” It’s like the experience I called Freedom in chapter 1, the feeling of being released from all the other noise happening in their lives, plus a sense that their expectations and desires were satisfied. For this dimension, participants used words like satisfaction, contentment, and delight.
- The physical dimension of sexual pleasure is related to body sensations, particularly—and this is a crucial feature of this dimension—the post-sex, “resolution” phase of the experience. The release of physical tension was as much a part of the experience of sexual pleasure as orgasm itself. This dimension isn’t about emotion but about bodily sensations per se, from a whole-body tingling to flushing and heat to genital sensations to the experience of physical release.

THE FOUR FACILITATORS:

- Partnered interactions are about feeling mutual satisfaction or the ability to give pleasure to their partner, for example hearing them moan.
- Liberation is particularly related to the mental dimension of sexual pleasure. About 19 percent of research participants described sexual pleasure as feeling completely uninhibited and unencumbered. This isn’t just the Freedom I described in chapter 1, which was really freedom from stress and worries and inhibitions. This experience of liberation was bigger, a kind of full liberation from the “shoulds” of how Black women are supposed to be sexual. That creates a context where they could fully enjoy sexual pleasure on their own terms. And liberation allowed for the experience of sexual agency, particularly the dual experience of both being fully in control and also being free to be out of control.
- Mind-body-soul awareness is similar to Kleinplatz and Ménard’s description of participants’ ability to be fully present and aware in their own bodies, while also being closely attuned to their partners’ bodies.
- Orgasm, whether individual or mutual. Crucially, many participants’ descriptions of this facilitator weren’t just “having an orgasm,” but rather the whole process of growing arousal and pleasure, increasing physical tension, and then the culmination of orgasm. As a facilitator of peak pleasure, orgasm isn’t “just” orgasm, it’s journeying across your sexual terrain to the land of orgasm.

4. Kleinplatz and Ménard, *Magnificent Sex*.
5. Jess Tarpey, et al., *The Bump'n Book of Love, Lust & Disability*.

Appendix 2: “Because: Biology”

1. Alfred Kinsey, *The Gall Wasp Genus Cynips: A Study in the Origin of Species*, in *Indiana University Studies vol. XVI* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1930), 18.

REFERENCES

- Ågmo, Anders, and Ellen Laan. 2022. "The Sexual Incentive Motivation Model and Its Clinical Applications." *The Journal of Sex Research*: 1–20.
- American Civil Liberties Union. "Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures." Accessed May 24, 2023. [aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights](https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights).
- Bacon, Lindo. 2010. *Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth about Your Weight*. Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc.
- Baldwin, Aleta, Debby Herbenick, Vanessa R. Schick, Brenda Light, Brian Dodge, Crystal A. Jackson, and J. Dennis Fortenberry. 2019. "Sexual Satisfaction in Monogamous, Nonmonogamous, and Unpartnered Sexual Minority Women in the US." *Journal of Bisexuality* 19 (1): 103–19.
- Balzarini, Rhonda N., and Amy Muise. 2020. "Beyond the Dyad: A Review of the Novel Insights Gained from Studying Consensual Non-monogamy." *Current Sexual Health Reports* 12 (4): 398–404.
- Barbach, Lonnie Garfield. 1976. *For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality*. Signet.

- Beach, Frank A. 1956. "Characteristics of Masculine 'Sex Drive.'" *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* 4 (1): 32.
- Bernstein, Amit, Yuval Hadash, and David M. Fresco. 2019. "Metacognitive Processes Model of Decentering: Emerging Methods and Insights." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 28: 245–51.
- Blair, Karen L., Jaclyn Cappell, and Caroline F. Pukall. 2018. "Not All Orgasms Were Created Equal: Differences in Frequency and Satisfaction of Orgasm Experiences by Sexual Activity in Same-Sex Versus Mixed-Sex Relationships." *The Journal of Sex Research* 55 (6): 719–33.
- Blair, Karen L., and Caroline F. Pukall. 2014. "Can Less Be More? Comparing Duration vs. Frequency of Sexual Encounters in Same-Sex and Mixed-Sex Relationships." *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 23 (2): 123–36.
- Boyle, Michael H., Jennifer M. Jenkins, Katholiki Georgiades, John Cairney, Eric Duku, and Yvonne Racine. 2004. "Differential-Maternal Parenting Behavior: Estimating Within- and Between-Family Effects on Children." *Child Development* 75 (5): 1457–76.
- Bryant, Fred B., and Joseph Veroff. 2017. *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*. Psychology Press.
- Cass, Vivienne. 2002. *The Elusive Orgasm: A Woman's Guide to Why She Can't and How She Can Orgasm*. Brightfire Press.
- Chesser, Eustace. 1941. *Love Without Fear: A Plain Guide to Sex Technique for Every Married Adult*. Rich & Cowan.
- Cohen, Jacqueline N., and E. Sandra Byers. 2014. "Beyond Lesbian Bed Death: Enhancing Our Understanding of the Sexuality of Sexual-Minority Women in Relationships." *The Journal of Sex Research* 51 (8): 893–903.
- Conley, Terri D., and Jennifer L. Piemonte. 2021. "Are There 'Better' and 'Worse' Ways to Be Consensually Non-monogamous (CNM)?: CNM Types and CNM-Specific Predictors of Dyadic Adjustment." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 50 (4): 1273–86.
- Currin, Joseph M., Lindsay Rice, Amelia E. Evans, Hannah R. Snidman, and Cameron D. Taylor. 2022. "Gender Normative Behavior as a Predictor of Acceptance of Transgender Individuals in the Workplace by Cisgender Co-workers." *Journal of LGBTQ Issues in Counseling* 16 (2): 169–85.
- Davies, Sharyn. 2007. *Challenging Gender Norms: Five Genders among Bugis in Indonesia*. Gale Cengage.
- Debrot, Anik, Nathalie Meuwly, Amy Muise, Emily A. Impett, and Dominik Schoebi. 2017. "More Than Just Sex: Affection Mediates the Association Between Sexual Activity and Well-being." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43 (3): 287–99.

- Devon, Molly, and Philip Miller. 1995. *Screw the Roses, Send Me the Thorns: The Romance and Sexual Sorcery of Sadomasochism*. Fairfield, CT: Mystic Rose.
- Diamond, Lisa M., Janna A. Dickenson, and Karen L. Blair. 2022. "Menstrual Cycle Changes in Daily Sexual Motivation and Behavior Among Sexually Diverse Cisgender Women." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*: 1–12.
- Dodson, Betty. 1987. *Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Editor. 1918. "Training for Freedom: We Want Bread—and Roses Too." *Life and Labor: A Monthly Magazine* 8: 189.
- Fernández-Capo, Maria, Silvia Recoder Fernández, María Gámiz Sanfeliu, Juana Gómez Benito, and Everett L. Worthington Jr. 2017. "Measuring Forgiveness: A Systematic Review." *European Psychologist* 22 (4): 247.
- Fielding, Lucie. 2021. *Trans Sex: Clinical Approaches to Trans Sexualities and Erotic Embodiments*. Routledge.
- Fleishman, Jane. 2020. "The Stonewall Generation: LGBTQ Elders on Sex, Activism, and Aging." Skinner House Books.
- Fluffy Kitten Party. 2021. "Fategories—Understanding the Fat Spectrum." Accessed May 24, 2023. fluffykittenparty.com/2021/06/01/fategories-understanding-smallfat-fragility-the-fat-spectrum/.
- Frederick, David A., Brian Joseph Gillespie, Janet Lever, Vincent Berardi, and Justin R. Garcia. 2021. "Debunking Lesbian Bed Death: Using Coarsened Exact Matching to Compare Sexual Practices and Satisfaction of Lesbian and Heterosexual Women." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 50 (8): 3601–19.
- Freud, Sigmund. (1925) 2014. "The Psychical Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction Between the Sexes." *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "The Ego and the Id" and Other Works* 19: 242–60.
- Friedan, Betty. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Garcia, Justin R., Elisabeth A. Lloyd, Kim Wallen, and Helen E. Fisher. "Variation in Orgasm Occurrence by Sexual Orientation in a Sample of US Singles." *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* 11 (11): 2645–52.
- Gignac, Gilles E., Joey Darbyshire, and Michelle Ooi. 2018. "Some People Are Attracted Sexually to Intelligence: A Psychometric Evaluation of Sapiosexual-ity." *Intelligence* 66: 98–111.
- Gordon, Allegra R., L. B. Moore, and Carly Guss. 2021. "Eating Disorders Among Transgender and Gender Non-binary People." In *Eating Disorders in Boys and Men*, edited by J. M. Nagata et al., 265–81. Springer International Publishing.

- Gottman, John M. 1990. "How Marriages Change." In *Depression and Aggression in Family Interaction*, edited by G. R. Patterson, 75–101. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.: 89.
- . 2011. *The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Gottman, John M., and Joan DeClaire. 2001. *The Relationship Cure: A 5 Step Guide to Strengthening Your Marriage, Family, and Friendships*. Harmony.
- Grace, Mike, and Joyce Grace. 1980. "A Joyful Meeting." St. Paul, MN: International Marriage Encounter.
- Green, John. 2023. *The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human-Centered Planet*. Penguin.
- Haines, Staci. 2007. *Healing Sex: A Mind-Body Approach to Healing Sexual Trauma*. Cleis Press Start.
- Hall, Donald. 2004. "The Third Thing." *Poetry* 185 (2): 113–21.
- Harrington, Lee, and Mollena Williams. 2012. *Playing Well with Others: Your Field Guide to Discovering, Navigating and Exploring the Kink, Leather and BDSM Communities*. SCB Distributors.
- Hartman, Saidiya. 2019. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Havrilesky, Heather. 2022. *Foreverland: On the Divine Tedium of Marriage*. Ecco.
- Hayes, Steven C. 2020. *A Liberated Mind: How to Pivot Toward What Matters*. Penguin.
- Heiman, J. R., and J. LoPiccolo. 1988. *Becoming Orgasmic: A Sexual and Personal Growth Program for Women*. Prentice Hall.
- Human Rights Watch. "LGBT Rights." Accessed May 24, 2023. [hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights](https://www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights).
- Iasenza, Suzanne. 2002. "Beyond 'Lesbian Bed Death' the Passion and Play in Lesbian Relationships." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 6 (1): 111–20.
- Ibanga, Diana-Abasi. 2017. "The Concept of Beauty in African Philosophy." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10 (7).
- interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth, Lambda Legal, and Proskauer Rose LLP. 2018. "Intersex-Affirming Hospital Policy Guide: Providing Ethical and Compassionate Health Care to Intersex Patients." legacy.lambdalegal.org/publications/intersex-affirming.
- Johnson, Sue. 2008. *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*. Little, Brown Spark.

- Kanemasu, Yoko, and Asenati Liki. 2021. "‘Let *Fa’afafine* Shine Like Diamonds’: Balancing Accommodation, Negotiation and Resistance in Gender-Nonconforming Samoans’ Counter-hegemony." *Journal of Sociology* 57 (4): 806–24.
- Key, Harrison Scott. 2023. *How to Stay Married: The Most Insane Love Story Ever Told*. Avid Reader Press / Simon & Schuster.
- Kleinplatz, Peggy, and A. Dana Ménard. 2020. *Magnificent Sex: Lessons from Extraordinary Lovers*. Routledge.
- Kurcinka, Mary Sheedy. 2015. *Raising Your Spirited Child: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, and Energetic*. HarperCollins.
- Lynch, C. D. 2011. "How Long Does It Take the Average Couple to Get Pregnant? A Systematic Review of What We Know." *Fertility and Sterility* 96 (3): S115.
- Mangino, Kate. 2022. *Equal Partners: Improving Gender Equality at Home*. St. Martin’s Press.
- Manne, Kate. 2017. *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*. Oxford University Press.
- Manyonganise, Molly. 2015. "Oppressive and Liberative: A Zimbabwean Woman’s Reflections on *Ubuntu*." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36 (2): 1–7.
- Marcinkowska, Urszula M., Talia Shirazi, Magdalena Mijas, and James R. Roney. 2022. "Hormonal Underpinnings of the Variation in Sexual Desire, Arousal and Activity Throughout the Menstrual Cycle—A Multifaceted Approach." *The Journal of Sex Research*: 1–7.
- McCarthy, Barry, and Emily McCarthy. 2020. *Contemporary Male Sexuality: Confronting Myths and Promoting Change*. Routledge.
- . 2021. *Couple Sexuality After 60: Intimate, Pleasurable, and Satisfying*. Routledge.
- McDaniel, Rae. 2023. *Gender Magic: Live Shamelessly, Reclaim Your Joy, & Step into Your Most Authentic Self*. Balance.
- McLaughlin, August, and Jamila Dawson. 2021. *With Pleasure: Managing Trauma Triggers for More Vibrant Sex and Relationships*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- Michael, Darcy, and Jeremy Baer. "Pop Quiz Throwback." YouTube. Accessed on May 24, 2023. [youtube.com/shorts/dye9J17UfFg](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/dye9J17UfFg).
- Midnight, Cherry, and Max Airborne. 2020. "Community Origins of the Term ‘Superfat.’" Medium, December 2. Accessed on May 24, 2023. cherrymax.medium.com/community-origins-of-the-term-superfat-9e98e1b0f201.
- Muise, Amy, Elaine Giang, and Emily A. Impett. 2014. "Post Sex Affectionate Exchanges Promote Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43 (7): 1391–1402.

- Murray, Lynne. 1985. "Emotional Regulations of Interactions Between Two-Month-Olds and Their Mothers." *Social Perception in Infants*: 177–97.
- Nasserzadeh, Sara. 2024. *Love by Design: 6 Ingredients to Build a Lifetime of Love*. Balance.
- Noland, Carey. 2020. "Communication and Sexual Self-Help: Erotica, Kink and the *Fifty Shades of Grey* Phenomenon." *Sexuality & Culture* 24 (5): 1457–79.
- O'Mara, Michele. 2012. "Lesbian Bed Death Meaning and History." *The Correlation of Sexual Frequency and Relationship Satisfaction Among Lesbians*. Accessed May 24, 2023. micheleomara.com/lesbian-bed-death-lesbian-sexual-frequency/.
- O'Sullivan, Sandy. 2021. "The Colonial Project of Gender (and Everything Else)." *Genealogy* 5 (3): 67.
- Oyèwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Panksepp, Jaak, and Lucy Biven. 2012. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotion*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Paoletti, Jo Barraclough. 2012. *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America*. Indiana University Press.
- Parsons, Jeffrey T., Tyrel J. Starks, Kristi E. Gamarel, and Christian Grov. 2012. "Non-monogamy and Sexual Relationship Quality Among Same-Sex Male Couples." *Journal of Family Psychology* 26 (5): 669.
- Prochaska, James O. 2020. "Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change." In *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine*, 2266–70.
- Prochaska, James O., and W. F. Velicer. 1997. "The Transtheoretical Model of Health Behavior Change." *American Journal of Health Promotion* 12 (1).
- Rashatwar, Sonalee. 2023. "How I Made Peace with My Fat Body and Disappointed My Parents." *Health*, March 19. Accessed May 24, 2023. [health.com/mind-body/sonalee-rashatwar-how-i-made-peace-with-my-fat-body-health-at-every-size](https://www.health.com/mind-body/sonalee-rashatwar-how-i-made-peace-with-my-fat-body-health-at-every-size).
- Real, Terrence. 2010. *How Can I Get Through to You?: Closing the Intimacy Gap Between Men and Women*. Scribner.
- . 2022. *Us: Getting Past You and Me to Build a More Loving Relationship*. Rodale Books.
- Richmond, Holly. 2021. *Reclaiming Pleasure: A Sex Positive Guide for Moving Past Sexual Trauma and Living a Passionate Life*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Richo, David. 1991. *How to Be an Adult: A Handbook on Psychological and Spiritual Integration*. Paulist Press.

- Rollnick, Stephen. 2002. *Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change*. Guilford Press.
- Rumi. (2004). *The Essential Rumi* (New Expanded Edition). Translated by Coleman Barks. San Francisco: HarperOne.
- Schmalzl, Laura, and Catherine E. Kerr. 2016. "Neural Mechanisms Underlying Movement-Based Embodied Contemplative Practices." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 10: 169.
- Schoenfeld, Elizabeth A., Timothy J. Loving, Mark T. Pope, Ted L. Huston, and Aleksandar Štulhofer. 2017. "Does Sex Really Matter? Examining the Connections Between Spouses' Nonsexual Behaviors, Sexual Frequency, Sexual Satisfaction, and Marital Satisfaction." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 46 (2): 489–501.
- Schwartz, Richard C. 2021. *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model*. Sounds True.
- Scott, Michelle V. 2019. "Fat Privilege: Revelations of a Medium Fat Regarding the Fat Spectrum." Medium, August 14. Accessed May 24, 2023. medium.com/@michellelevscott/fat-privilege-revelations-of-a-medium-fat-regarding-the-fat-spectrum-ec70dc908336.
- Shershun, Erika. 2021. *Healing Sexual Trauma Workbook: Somatic Skills to Help You Feel Safe in Your Body, Create Boundaries, and Live with Resilience*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Singer, Barry, and Frederick M. Toates. 1987. "Sexual Motivation." *The Journal of Sex Research* 23 (4): 481–501.
- Smith, Anthony, Anthony Lyons, Jason Ferris, Juliet Richters, Marian Pitts, Julia Shelley, and Judy M. Simpson. 2011. "Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction Among Heterosexual Men and Women: The Importance of Desired Frequency of Sex." *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 37 (2): 104–15.
- Staufenberg, Heidi. 2006. "8.6 Female Psychosexuality." In *Freud-Handbuch Leben Werk Wirkung Sonderausgabe*, edited by Hans-Martin Lohmann and Joachim Pfeiffer, 162–67. Stuttgart, Germany: Springer-Verlag.
- Stopes, Marie. 1918. "Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Differences." London: G. Putnam's Sons.
- Strizzi, Jenna Marie, Camilla Stine Øverup, Ana Ciprić, Gert Martin Hald, and Bente Træen. 2022. "BDSM: Does It Hurt or Help Sexual Satisfaction, Relationship Satisfaction, and Relationship Closeness?" *The Journal of Sex Research* 59 (2): 248–57.
- StyleLikeU. 2022. "Laughing at Your Ableist BS: Shane & Hannah Burcaw Hold a Mirror Up to Your Limited Idea of Love." YouTube, January 20. youtube.com/watch?v=Y-T39djpGRo&ab_channel=StyleLikeU.
- Taormino, Tristan. 2012. *50 Shades of Kink: An Introduction to BDSM*. Cleis Press.

- Tarpey, Jess, Andrew Gurza, and Katy Venables. *The Bump'n Book of Love, Lust & Disability*. Sydney: getbumpn.com/products/c-book-the-bumpn-book-of-love-lust-disability.
- Taylor, Sonya Renee. 2021. *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-love*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Thomas, Wesley. 1997. "Navajo Cultural Constructions of Gender and Sexuality." *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*: 156–73.
- Thorpe, Shemeka, Natalie Malone, Candice N. Hargons, Jardin N. Dogan, and Jasmine K. Jester. 2022. "The Peak of Pleasure: US Southern Black Women's Definitions of and Feelings Toward Sexual Pleasure." *Sexuality & Culture* 26 (3): 1115–31.
- Thorpe, Shemeka, Natalie Malone, Rayven L. Peterson, Praise Iyiewuare, Monyae Kerney, and Candice N. Hargons. 2023. "Black Queer Women's Pleasure: A Review." *Current Sexual Health Reports*: 1–7.
- Treleaven, David A. 2018. *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Tronick, Edward, Heidelise Als, Lauren Adamson, Susan Wise, and T. Berry Brazelton. 1978. "The Infant's Response to Entrapment Between Contradictory Messages in Face-to-Face Interaction." *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 17 (1): 1–13.
- van Anders, Sari M., Debby Herbenick, Lori A. Brotto, Emily A. Harris, and Sara B. Chadwick. 2022. "The Heteronormativity Theory of Low Sexual Desire in Women Partnered with Men." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 51 (1): 391–415.
- Van der Kolk, Bessel A. 2015. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books.
- Willis, Malachi, Kristen N. Jozkowski, Wen-Juo Lo, and Stephanie A. Sanders. 2018. "Are Women's Orgasms Hindered by Phallogocentric Imperatives?" *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 47 (6): 1565–76.
- Wise, Nan. 2020. *Why Good Sex Matters: Understanding the Neuroscience of Pleasure for a Smarter, Happier, and More Purpose-Filled Life*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Wiseman, Jay. 1996. *SM 101: A Realistic Introduction*. CA: Greenery Press.
- Wolynn, Mark. 2017. *It Didn't Start with You: How Inherited Family Trauma Shapes Who We Are and How to End the Cycle*. Penguin.