

Ep #77: Inviting Shame In



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sonia Wright

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Welcome to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast*, the only show that combines a fun personality, medical knowledge, sexual counseling, and life coaching together. To create unique sex coaching that helps busy women awaken their libidos, address intimacy issues, and learn how to express their sexuality for the rest of their days. Here is your host, certified life coach and sexual counselor, Dr. Sonia Wright.

Hello, hello, hello, Diamonds. How are you doing today? It is so good to talk to you. I am coming to you from Pennsylvania where I'm doing some pediatric radiology work to keep up my radiology skillset. Yeah, this year I'm creating the best year of my life and I'm infusing it with a lot of joy. I decided I wanted to create my life just the way I want it. Basically, become intentional about the life that I lead. So, I've been asking myself, what do I want my life to look like? What kind of experiences do I want to have?

How do I want to wake up every morning? How do I want to feel? And when I do wake up will I thank myself for the life that I've created for me or not? So, part of my life is continuing to do my radiology work. And part of my life is of course doing my coaching which I love to do. Part of my life is spending time with my kids. Part of my life is having great experiences with my loving partner. You get to pick and choose what you want your life to look like.

But as you're intentionally inviting in the things you want in life, creating the life you want is also about letting go of things you no longer want or need, letting go of the crap. It's about opening up the deep dark closet where you've been hiding all this crap. All the stuff you know you need to get rid of, but you just keep just in case you gain the weight back and you need to go back up into a size 14. So, you just kind of put it in the closet. Sometimes you're keeping old feelings and old thoughts in the back closet because you don't want to deal with them.

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And the problem is that they're going to be there whether you open the closet or not. They're always knocking to get out. And when the closet becomes too full then you start packing things in the garage. So now you have stuff in the closet and in the garage. And the stuff in the closet are things that you can live with, that are not so bad to deal with, kind of your quirky habits. It's the emotions and the thoughts that may not be great, but you can handle them.

The things that you stick in the garage becomes all the shit that you don't want anything to do with at all, that you don't want to acknowledge, you don't want to deal with, that you're actively avoiding. But when you're actively avoiding that stuff is getting louder and louder and it's just trying to get your attention. So, over the next few episodes in March, we're going to be looking at some of the things that are in the garage that you might consider letting go of or letting into your house in order to deal with.

These are the thoughts, the feelings, the situations that are leading to very, very strong reactions. So, what if we invite them in instead of being in denial or actively avoiding them? You can imagine as a sex coach I coach a lot on shame. And I find that a lot of my clients don't want to explore the feeling of shame. They don't want to look at what thoughts are causing this feeling. It's kind of like that hot stove feeling, the feeling that nobody wants to touch for fear that they're going to get burnt or even destroyed. It's almost like they're going to self-combust or something.

It's like let's look at shame, well, there goes another client. No, not really, honestly. Nobody has self-combusted when they've been coaching with me. No disclaimer is necessary, coaching with Dr. Sonia will lead to self-combustion, possibly. No. No, I have not seen anybody explode. But I have started asking, what would happen if we let shame in for a visit, if we acknowledged it? I'm quite sure shame is one of those feelings stuck in the back corner of the garage, kind of tucked right behind the trash bins.

So, whenever a situation around sex arises you might start to get that feeling, shame is coming for a visit, it knocks on the door, but you won't let it in. It just wants to talk to you but you're like, no, no, nobody, no, go away,

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no one here. But shame is persistent, so it tries the back door. No. Then it tries to get in through a window. No. Then it just kind of starts getting a little berserk and it's pulling at every window and every door in the house, trying to get in and then it goes back to the front door, and it pounds on the door louder, and louder, and louder.

And all the while you're shrinking and getting so panicked and you don't know what to do. The banging is so loud and you're in a state of anxiety and you just want to escape. So finally, you rush out the side door. You attack shame from behind, you wrestle it to the ground. And you push it back into the garage and then you kind of go eat a donut because that was a lot of work. You've conquered shame again but have you? Have you really conquered shame? It's still there.

It's just in the garage and it's yelling for you to listen. It may be a little quieter, but it doesn't go away, it's still there. And you're getting more and more panicked each time. Maybe you're just shutting down and not allowing any intimacy into your life because you don't want to feel that feeling of shame. So now in addition to avoiding shame, now you're avoiding the situation that's causing the shame in the hopes that the shame will stop. So, if I shut down all intimacy then I won't have to deal with the shame.

But what do you think would happen if you let shame in? If you just acknowledged the feeling, first off I bet if you allowed shame in the door it would stop pounding so hard on the front door. You could get a little peace from that constant vigilance against shame. And then you might be amazed when you open the door to find that shame at the door is actually a version of you from the past, maybe from a year ago, or maybe when you were 10, or maybe when you were three years old.

So maybe when you were 10 somebody body shamed you and said you were getting a little chunky or something like that. Or maybe when you were three years old you were innocently self-pleasuring yourself and a parent passed by and screamed, and ran over, and pulled your hand away. Whatever age you were, your past self just wants to come in.

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Why don't you let it in and offer it a cup of tea? Yes, a cup of thoughts, and emotions, and actions, tea. And then you'll discover what your younger self wants to tell you. Just have a conversation with them. You might be shocked to find out that they just want to tell you that they love you and they want to keep you safe. They just want to relay a message to you, what they learned and experienced in the past so that you can be safe now in the present.

Remember, this is really a representation of your primitive brain that is focused on survival and not being kicked out of the tribe. Shame is such a strong emotion because our primitive brain links shame with survival. Shame is meant to be a warning signal that we utilize for self-correction to make sure that we don't get alienated and kicked out of the tribe. It's basically a heads up, hey, watch out for this. But when we actively avoid shame and ignore it, it turns into a destructive menacing force. It's like a relentless stalker and you start to feel scared, overwhelmed, anxious.

And then you might start to think that there's something specifically and intrinsically wrong with you instead of thinking that the situation is something you need to be aware of, that needs correcting, you start thinking that something is wrong with you.

For example, asking for what you want in the bedroom. That is often associated with feelings of shame for my Diamonds. When I probe a little deeper and ask them why they say things like, "I was taught that good girls don't ask for sex." "I was taught that sex is for my partner's pleasure and not for my pleasure." "I should be satisfied for what I get from my partner." Or maybe they tell me that their partner is going to get mad if they actually ask for what they need.

All these thoughts are usually quickly followed by another thought about how they are bad, or a slut, or not a good wife etc., you get the point. So, it shifts from the situation and the thought to then internalizing it as something is wrong with them. So, do you see how that initial thought, the initial situation, and the initial thought has then led to self-deprecation and a

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belief that something is intrinsically wrong with them? And this leads to the shame and then we go back full circle.

So, the underlying belief that something is wrong with them is what leads to this panic and fear, and this need to shut down and get the hell out of there. But the thought doesn't leave, it plays in your mind again, and again, and again, there's something wrong with me. There's something wrong with me. There must be something wrong with me. I won't be accepted by society. I'm going to have to hide this. It's like the self-perpetuating nonstop loop that's constantly beating you up with thoughts of not being good enough or thoughts of being wrong.

And I call it the shame bundle. There's the initial situation which leads to a thought, which leads to an underlying belief that there's something wrong with you, which leads to shame. And then from a place of shame you're taking actions that really don't help the situation but actually make things worse. And when it makes things worse then you're avoiding the situation, you're still feeling that shame and you're emotionally beating yourself up. Yeah, it's the shame bundle and you've got to love it.

And if it's left unchecked it actually can lead to isolation and depression. You know what? The way to break down the shame bundle is actually to open it up and invite shame in. And to listen to what shame has to say, to listen to the warnings, and to evaluate it in the context of today, not in the context of the past. Write down all the thoughts that shame tells you.

Think of how old you were at the time these thoughts started and then think of the environment that you were dealing with at the time. Ask yourself, is that a truth for today? Is that something that you want to keep or is it time to let it go? For example, we were talking about being three years old and self-pleasuring. So, let's imagine you invited that three year old in and she's sitting on the couch, and she has her shame bundle and she's really scared, and upset, and feeling the shame. And she has this bundle, and she wants to give it to you.

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Ask her to open it up, get curious, breathe, don't judge, don't rush into any actions, just look at the bundle that she's opening. Here's the bundle, she says, "Mommy is yelling at me. It's bad to touch myself. I'm a bad girl." So, the three year old has made a decision to never touch herself again. She doesn't want to be a bad girl. All she can think is I'm bad, I'm bad, I'm bad. But what does the 47 year old think now? Is this a decision that you want to keep? Are these thoughts that are true, is it bad to touch yourself? Is it bad to self-pleasure? Are you bad?

Once that three year old says all that she wanted to say, she'll probably want to take a nap, she's kind of exhausted. She'll probably flop over right on the couch. And now it's time for your tea. It's time for you to look. Her tea was a thought that masturbation is bad, which means I'm bad. Her emotion was shame, and her action was never touch herself again. She's never going to touch herself again. But what is in your cup of tea? That was her cup of tea, what is in your cup of tea now at 47?

Maybe your new thought is self-pleasure helps me understand my body and improve intimacy in my relationship. Maybe your emotion is acceptance, contentment, maybe excitement, maybe happiness. And then your action is exploring your body and masturbating. So, your cup of tea is very different from the three year old's cup of tea. And the end result is better intimacy with yourself and your partner. Really this cup of tea is so much better than the three year old's cup of tea.

It's time to tuck that three year old in and put her thoughts to bed with her and to choose new thoughts. Have a different cup of tea. That three year old cup of tea, it's pretty cold, it's curdled, it's not tasty at all. It's really time to get rid of it, time to clean up that teacup. Take your time and enjoy your tea now. The three year old said what she needed to say, she warned you, she's feeling better. She opened her shame bundle, she is asleep on the couch, you can just leave her there, you can tuck her in somewhere. She'll be okay.

Take the time to enjoy your new cup of tea, your thought that sexual pleasure and self-pleasure is good for you, and it leads to better intimacy

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with yourself, your partner, your body. Take time and enjoy that cup of tea. Maybe you want to share that cup of tea with your partner, and tell them what you discovered when you invited shame in. If that cup of tea feels too hot for you and a little difficult to manage, that's okay. Take that cup of tea to a coach, a sex coach, take that cup of tea to a counselor if you need it.

Unpack that shame bundle with them, your three year old has handed the shame bundle over to you, you get to decide what you want to do with it. If it's hard to handle that shame by yourself and come up with your new cup of tea, that's okay. Take the shame bundle to a coach, a therapist, whatever you need in order to help you with this but don't leave it in the garage because it's just going to get louder, and louder, and louder and you're going to live your life avoiding and denying, and not living that amazing life that you want.

It's time to unpack that shame bundle and to clear out that bundle and other bundles from your garage. This is your year, Diamond, and it's your garage and you get to clean it out. Okay, Diamonds, that's all for this week. I wonder who we'll invite in next time. Alright, talk to you later, Dr. Sonia out.

Hey Diamonds, do you want to reignite the passion that's gone missing from your life? Do you want to want to want it again? You know I'm on a mission to end the emotional pain and isolation that women experience associated with sexual difficulties. And many of you also know that I was once in that place where I was experiencing little to no sexual intimacy in my life. And I kept thinking that there was something that was wrong with me, that I wasn't enough, I wasn't attractive enough, I wasn't good enough, I wasn't smart enough to fix this problem.

And I was worried all the time that my relationship was too far gone because of this lack of intimacy. Well, you know what? I was right about one thing, the relationship didn't last. But even though the relationship didn't last I committed to doing the work that I needed to do to own my sexuality. And now I have this amazing sex life and it's everything that I wanted it to be. And I'm also committed to helping my Diamonds by

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teaching them the same strategies that I figured out in order to revitalize the intimacy in their life.

So, if you want to stop feeling broken, if you want to stop feeling shame and guilt about sexuality, if you want to feel more comfortable with your sexuality and tap into that pleasure then I'm here for you, Diamonds. First of all, know that there's nothing that's gone wrong with you. You're not broken. And you know what? You can solve your intimacy issues. You can let go of that shame and guilt, and you can tap into that passionate person that's just waiting to come out. Let's get on a strategy call together and let's discuss how we can work together and how I can help you.

And know that a strategy call, it's 100% a safe place, there is no judgment. We'll talk about your intimacy situation, which is what's going on right now. We're also going to talk about your intimacy goals, what you would like your intimacy to look like in the future. And then we'll talk about how we could possibly work together to come up with a personalized strategy plan for you so you can get the results that you need. So, Diamonds, I'm here for you, don't wait another minute. Book that consultation call with me today and I can't wait to talk to you.

You can get that consultation call by going to soniawrightmd.as.me. And the link is also in the show notes. Okay, have a great day. I can't wait to talk to you. Take care.