

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. Sonia Wright

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You are listening to *The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ Podcast* episode 78.

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. It's so good to see you. I can't believe that we're at episode 78. This is pretty amazing and kind of blowing my mind. And I don't even know what I'm going to be able to believe and think when I get to episode 100. I'll start working on my mindset right now, that this is just the beginning.

Right now I'm actually in Dallas, Texas for a conference for the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health, also known as ISSWSH. And I know that I've talked to you about ISSWSH before, I-S-S-W-S-H. It is an incredible organization. And its sole purpose is to educate and train providers with up-to-date medical and psychological issues related to women and sexual health. It's just an amazing resource. And I'm so lucky to be here. I'm so looking forward to learning more, that I can relate to you, my Diamonds. And that I can put into practice in my coaching.

So, I'm so excited to be here. And actually, I have to say that I went to this conference two years ago in 2020 and it was the last conference I went to before the pandemic hit and everything shut down. So, I'm pretty excited to be back here in 2022 and kind of picking things up and continuing with that knowledge base. And if you don't know about ISSWSH go ahead and look it up, isswsh.org.

If you're looking for a provider that's been trained in issues around sexual health, women's sexual health, go to that website and you can definitely

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

find a provider near you. You can put in your zip code and find a provider near you.

Alright, so I'm happy to be back at this conference and I'm happy to be learning more information on women's sexual health. And while I'm at this conference I'm actually sitting here on my bed with my microphone in my hand and I am recording my podcast because I can't miss a podcast episode.

And we are continuing the series on conversation with visitors, those visitors that we don't necessarily want to talk to, the ones that we're avoiding, the ones that we kind of have tucked in the garage. We had them in the closet, they became too uncomfortable so then we stuck them out in the garage. And they've been trying to get our attention and come in. Or we've just been actively avoiding them. And as soon as they ring the doorbell we retreat into the depth of the house like nobody's home, we just stay really silent and maybe they won't notice that we're here.

But what if we did the opposite, what if we welcomed them in and talked to them, and found out what was going on, what was on their mind? Well, you're really going to be excited about this. Today's visitor is our partner's feelings. It's time to talk to these feelings and about these feelings. I actually spend a lot of my time as a coach coaching my Diamonds, my clients around their partner's feelings. It could be the case that they've had issues with sex for years. But my Diamonds don't want to hurt their partner's feelings.

Then the only feeling that they're comfortable with around their partner in sexuality is happiness, or contentment, or everything's fine and don't rock the boat. Everything else can work up a Diamond, everything else can make a woman worked up and concerned. So, we avoid the other feelings. We allow our partner's happiness to come in but we avoid other feelings. And we don't speak out if we're not enjoying sex because we don't want to upset those feelings. We don't want to deal with these feelings.

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

We want to keep the partner's feelings out in the garage if it's not happiness, and joy or fun. For example, maybe one of my Diamonds would prefer sex once a week but their partner prefers it seven times a week. And they defer to their partner because their partner might get mad, or stop talking to them for three days, or pout, or whine, or whatever. The Diamond wants to keep the peace in the relationship and in the house so they exchange their body for peace.

I really want you to look at this. They'd rather exchange their body instead of deal with their partner pouting, or yelling, or throwing a tantrum, or whatever. Sex becomes a commodity because they might be unwilling to deal with anything but happiness from their partner. But while the Diamond is avoiding their partner's emotions they're becoming more and more resentful. There is a price to be paid and I really want you to recognize this, it's not just like I'm keeping the peace. There is a price to be paid and women are paying this price a lot of the time.

And this resentment that is growing, it's growing and it's kind of eating away at the relationship. And while we're sitting here looking over there avoiding the partner's emotions and trying to make the partner feel good the resentment is on the other side of the relationship kind of eating away, kind of like termites. We don't exactly see the termites but it's destroying the fabric of the relationship. And that's something to recognize and to be aware of.

So, resentment and disconnection from their partner and from their own bodies is growing just because they would prefer not to deal with their partner's emotions. Think about that. Ding dong. Look, it's partner's emotions and we have a choice, Diamonds. Do we let them in? Do we let these emotions in or do we continue to actively avoid emotions? We kind of know what the result is if we continue to avoid the emotions. So, what happens if we confront the emotions and acknowledge them?

When I'm coaching women I find that the emotions that they're trying to avoid come in two packages, kind of like the partner's emotions that they're

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

trying to avoid. There's the toddler emotional bundle and then there is the nice partner emotional bundle.

So, let's talk a little bit about the toddler emotional bundle. Women avoid this emotional bundle because their partners basically are having a tantrum every time they want sex and they're denied. So, sex is like a package of Skittles that the toddler wants at the grocery stores. And if they don't get that package of Skittles they yell and scream, or they're silent, and they pout, or they complain, whatever they need to do to get that candy.

If we were actually treating our partners like the way we would treat a toddler that has a tantrum then we would acknowledge the toddler's feelings. We would allow the toddler to cry and say that they want the Skittles candy, and it's not fair. We would allow them to have a fit. And we'd wait for them to get calm again.

We're like, "Okay, you need a little time out, relax, get calm, stay over here. You're not getting the Skittles because how many Skittles can you eat in one day? It's okay, just if you need to have a little breakdown, go ahead and have that breakdown. I'm here for you. And then when you're done and you've had your time out let's talk about this." That's what we would say to a toddler around the Skittles issue. But when it's our partner we can't seem to tolerate their emotions. We can't seem to tolerate their tantrum.

We don't say, "You're allowed to feel whatever you want to feel", when they yell and scream and say they want more and more sex. Instead, we get into a panic and we feed them as much sex, as much candy as we can tolerate. And we shut down the emotions. We shut down the partner's emotions but we also shut down our own emotions in order to have peace. But look at this, is this really peace that you have? Yes, there is no yelling and screaming, there's no emotion roaming around or anything like that. But is there peace, is there really peace?

It's just more like it's deep, the emotions that are happening are now deeper under the surface, they're not on the surface. But that doesn't necessarily mean that these deep emotions cannot destroy a relationship

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

as well. So, what happens when we invite the tantrum of the toddler bundle in? Let's see. They're out the door. Normally we're retreating way into the depths of the house but instead we go and we open the door. And we see this bundle. We see this tantrum, this pain, this anger, this justification, this resentment, whatever is tied up in this bundle.

And we invite that bundle in and we allow it to sit on the couch. And it looks messy, and dirty, and loud. And we really don't want to deal with it. So, we're kind of tempted to like, maybe we can shove it into a closet somewhere. But no, we just let it sit on the couch. And we go sit in our chair. And we listen to what it has to say. And maybe what it has to say is something like, "If I don't have sex with you I'm feeling vulnerable, I'm feeling like you don't love me. I'm feeling rejected and so I'm going to yell and scream because I feel like this is a survival thing."

Or maybe it's saying, "Touch is my love language and if I don't have sex you don't love me." That's usually what is behind a lot of the yelling and screaming that's going on when you have the tantrum kind of partner around the issue of sex. And you get to say, "I hear what you're saying but at the same time I have boundaries and limits as well."

Because let me tell you, I have coached a number of women that have been in pain, having pain with sex for years and will continue to have that pain with sex because they don't want their partner to throw a tantrum, but what's that doing to them? What's that doing to the woman? What's that doing to the relationship?

Instead, if you could say, "I hear what you're saying, you're allowed to yell and scream and do whatever you want to but I am also allowed to have boundaries around this issue. And that's not exactly what I want. I want to have sex with you. I want to have pleasurable sex. I want to have connection and this is not the connection that I'm having with you. And maybe we can work together to make this a different type of connection. Maybe we can figure this out."

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

But the step is allowing them to have whatever feelings they want, inviting those feelings into the conversation, observing the partner, allowing the partner to have whatever feelings they want to have. And recognizing that the partner is not necessarily going to change. This is your partner. It would be great if they changed. And hopefully maybe they can get counseling or something like that, maybe they can spend some time. They're coming from a place of fear usually.

And if the conversation could be had and they can calm down and be introspective and look and see what are the emotions, and what are the thoughts that are leading them to act this way, maybe something can change but maybe it won't. And so, we always when we're dealing with partners, we always come from a perspective that we can't change our partner. But we can look at the situation and decide if this is the situation that we want to be in and if this is the situation, what are our boundaries going to be in this situation.

We get to decide how we want to respond to this situation. Right now you're responding possibly by having a lot of sex that you don't necessarily want. It's not pleasurable sex. It's not the sex that you would want. Maybe it's painful sex. Maybe it's just to-do list sex which you're like, okay, once a week I'm really enjoying myself and the rest of the week I'm just doing this to keep my partner quiet. Decide what is right for you, figure out what your boundaries are around this. Don't be afraid to talk to your partner. And don't be afraid to allow them to yell and scream.

But we usually don't even let our partners get beyond that place of them yelling, and screaming, and maybe not talking to us for three days. Let me say, this type of behavior is not necessarily the maturest behavior but it is the type of behavior that I hear again, and again, and again my Diamonds talking to me about. So, I'm just going to be real and I'm going to say this is the type of behavior that some people have to deal with in a partner.

But if they start yelling and screaming and we reward them by giving them sex to shut them up, just like giving the toddler more and more Skittles to shut them up what exactly happens in the relationship? And it's like a

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

positive feedback loop. The partner is learning that I just throw a tantrum every time I want to have sex and eventually I will get sex. So that's not necessarily how you want this to go. So, talk it out with your partner and be okay with the tantrum, be okay, they can throw a tantrum.

Usually, we don't allow them to throw a tantrum for very long but what happens if you allow them? At some point something happens. And maybe they settle down and they calm down. Maybe you can talk to them at that point. But usually, we don't allow to see when it plays out. Or maybe you can say, "Yeah, I know you're going to get mad, and angry, and upset, and I recognize your feelings. And when you're ready to talk I'm 100% here to listen so that we can figure this out together."

It's going to be important that you find out what you want in your relationship. And as I said before, accept that you can't change your partner. This is not necessarily about changing your partner. But you can set boundaries with this behavior. And the reason for this is to look at the long term benefit for the relationship. How is this ultimately going to help the relationship? And yeah, you're probably going to need to have those difficult conversations.

And we have a whole podcast on difficult conversations. We can put that link in the show notes about how to go about having a difficult conversation. And also recognize it's not going to be one difficult conversation. And it doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to have this conversation and then everything's going to clear up and change. You'll probably have to continue to have more and more conversations. And if you need to consider a couple's therapist. But look and see what you want your relationship to look like in the future.

If you're in your 40s right now, and you have a partner that you'd like to keep but they throw these tantrums, recognize that you'll probably have 40 more years of this. And how do you want that 40 years to go? Do you want it to be like I'm just going to keep dishing out this sex that's not pleasurable for me just to keep them quiet? So just take that into consideration.

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

And then I also want to talk to you about the other reason that I hear women telling me that they don't necessarily have a conversation with their partner about what's going on in their life. And I call this the nice guy or nice partner emotional bundle.

So, this second type of emotional bundle from the partner shows up as the nice partner. Women are very concerned about hurting their partner's feelings. They might be telling me that they're not enjoying sex and they'd like something else. They'd like to try new positions. They'd like to try different stimulation, they'd like to try new toys but instead they just kind of put up with this non-pleasurable sex sometimes for 10/20 years and tell themselves, my partner's such a nice person.

Or maybe they tell themselves, my partner gets really anxious and so they're not going to be able to handle this. Or my partner is depressed and so I can't add to their burden. A lot of this is basically about kind of codependent behavior where the woman is protecting the partner from some emotional thing. So, they might lie to their partner. And they might also be lying to themselves. They might be saying to themselves, it's not too bad, it could be worse. My partner's so nice, or they do everything else great.

So yeah, the sex sucks but it could be worse. The relationship overall is going well. But what if we actually had the conversation and allowed whatever emotion you're trying to protect your partner from. What if we stop protecting our partner from emotional pain and started dealing with the reality because when you're not dealing with the reality, stuff is still happening. Just like I said, the termites are still eating away at the relationship.

You are walking on eggshells because your partner's so nice that you don't want to hurt this feeling, or don't want to hurt that, or don't want to cause anxiety, or don't want to do whatever. But that is a short term type of thing and it does not necessarily protect the relationship in the long term. What if you could actually build a better future for yourself and your partner by

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

talking, by recognizing, by acknowledging these emotions, and allowing these emotions. What if you had a better relationship?

What if you invited that bundle in, what do you think it would say to us? It's at the door, you let it in, hi, I'm the nice partner bundle, you seem to think that I need to be protected from my own emotions. They're going to sit on the couch and they're going to have a conversation with you. Maybe they're going to say, "I'm actually an adult, I would prefer to know that you're not enjoying sex so we can do something about it." Or maybe they would say, "Oh my God, I'm so bad at this, I'm such a bad lover. Oh, my goodness, I can't believe that you haven't enjoyed sex and I've just been sitting."

Yeah, they might get nervous and anxious, and they might get sad, and what if you let them have those feelings. And what if they say, "Yeah, I'm anxious and worried, but I would really like to have my feelings. Just because I'm nice, or anxious, or depressed, or whatever does not mean that I can't handle reality." They need to handle reality.

If they need assistance handling reality then they get the emotional assistance they need from another coach or another therapist. But you don't have to be their coach, and therapist, and their protector. Because while you're 'protecting' their emotions, the relationship is shifting and dying. And like I always say, you can't change your partner but you can change your relationship.

So that's the important thing to recognize here, that you can allow your partner to be an adult and to have whatever emotion. And you can even have a conversation about this and say, "I'd really love to talk to you about sex. I'd really like to change some things about it." And you could acknowledge that they're sad, "I see that you're sad." Or you could ask them what they're feeling right now with this conversation. And that's okay.

And you get to say, "Can we figure this out as a team? Can we approach this as a team?" You get to acknowledge their emotions. I'm not saying don't acknowledge their emotions. But I'm also saying, allow them to handle their emotions. And if they need the help or if you both need the

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

help then get a couple's therapist, get a couple's coach, go work on this together. But by protecting your partner and not even having the conversation you two or more are missing out on so much. So, it is important to have these conversations.

Okay, Diamonds, that's it for this week. Go ahead and invite your partner's emotions in and realize you will not die and your partner will not die. And mostly importantly, your relationship will not die. It might have some rough patches where you have to sort things out, but if you're working as a team towards a common goal things will get better. And as I said before, couple's counseling is a fabulous thing and you can do this work. Alright, lots of love, Diamonds. I will see you again next week. Take care. 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 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

Ep #78: Inviting Your Partner's Emotions In

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.