

Ep #127: Conversations: Perfectionist Thinking Post-Valentine's Day and More...



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 127.

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 Dr. Sonia here. And I am lucky enough to have one of my BFFs here, coach Donna. I'm so excited that she's here. We haven't had a conversation in a while but I wanted to have a conversation about perfectionist thinking and specifically about Valentine's Day. Now, this episode is going to come out the day after Valentine's Day but I think that that is the perfect day. It's the day after, the day after it all, the intimacy hangover or lack of intimacy hangover.

Donna: Valentine's Day hangover.

Sonia: The Valentine's Day hangover, the post-Valentine's Day hangover, right?

Donna: Yeah, it sounds good. Yeah, perfect.

Sonia: Okay, Donna. So I wanted to talk to you a little bit about perfectionist thinking because this is something that you and I both see all the time. We do a lot of sex coaching and we see this with women and probably more so with men as well too, not more so but also with men but definitely with women. We have this concept, that we encounter this concept that our clients come to us and they've got to feel like if it's not perfect, if it's not done 'the right way' when it comes to sexual intimacy that there's something wrong with them. That they're broken.

That they shouldn't even try because it's not the sanctioned outcome with the sanctioned outcome either being that it has to end with an orgasm, any

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type of sexual interaction and there has to be simultaneous orgasms. If you're in a heterosexual relationship there has to be some penetrative sex that involves penis and vagina sex. And all these stipulations which I don't know about you but they stress me the hell out. Valentine, I get to the end of all the stipulations that people have to make it real and valid sex and stuff like that.

I wouldn't even know why anybody would want to be interested. There's so much pressure on the person to engage in sexual intimacy in a certain way with a certain outcome, a certain set of results that needs to be adhered to, who wants to do this? What are your thoughts about this perfectionist thinking around sexual intimacy?

Donna: I think I'm going to need a card as a checklist and you're going to need to have that laminated because it's going to get messy.

Sonia: I want to know where you're putting that card, Donna.

Donna: I'm going to have to have it with me so as I'm going through the day and the evening and all the activities, I can check all these boxes so I know I'm doing it right. And so I'll need one of those little wax pens. It's absolutely exhausting keeping track of how to do it right and then the wondering if I did do it right. All the anticipation, okay, do this and there's this and there's that and maybe what about this one and what about that one. And maybe I should do this or do that. And if you're guessing then that's exhausting and then you will continue to guess afterwards if it was right.

And if you're trapped in perfectionist thinking which is rooted in not enough then it won't be right because there is no perfect.

Sonia: Yeah. Who gets to decide that this has met the criteria? Who? It's arbitrary. It is so arbitrary. And then it's based on what society is saying is the norm for sex or what the media is saying or what TV or films or whatever. But those are not based on people actually having sexual intimacy. Those are based on, we've got two minutes to get a whole sex

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scene in here. We've got a budget and we've only got this much for the budget and so it's boom, boom, boom.

It has nothing to do with reality and we're deciding if our sexual intimacy meets the mark if it's good enough based on some arbitrary data and information and just people wanting to sell something to us. It's just ridiculous. But so many women come to me and they are stressed out of their minds because they're feeling like they're broken and they're not meeting the criteria. And so they don't even want to try, the perfectionism has us in such a state where we're just like, "I can't even do it right. It's not going to meet the expectation so let me not even try."

Donna: Exactly, because it can't be right. And I love what you said. I think that's a very good question, a very simple question, a two-word question to challenge your own perfectionistic thinking and that is says who. And as you describe, if we stop and think about it then our conditioning on what a successful or fulfilling sexual experience is like is driven by a screenwriter, a producer, a director, a publisher of a book, an author, all of those people who have their own gains.

And are creating something entirely different than our experience but they're simply conditioning, I think this really just ends up being the best word and we see that. And our brain fills in the blanks and says that's the way it probably is supposed to be. I think partly we're not having conversations about it early on. We are seeing these kinds of scenes earlier in our lives or we sneak a peek here. Again, I'm dating myself now but four decades or more we would sneak into movies or people don't recall but cable TV, it was brand. It was the bomb.

And so you'd go to a friend's house who had HBO or Showtime or Cinemax and they had R-rated movies and that was the stuff.

Sonia: I remember when cable TV was so new and they even had the porno station but they scrambled the image and so you'd sit there and you'd try to figure out if you can see something, when you were in your late

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teenage years going like, “Do you see something?” “I see.” “I don’t see a damn thing.”

Donna: [Crosstalk] What is that they’re doing? And you turn your own head and you’re trying to catch it and again, yes. And so we’re seeing some of those images and a lot of suggestive things of course. And the thing about that is simply it just creates an awareness of something. And one thing we see a lot is our clients telling us about not having, or having a certain type of approach as when they’re growing up, maybe a very conservative approach or their parents not being affectionate or just not being discussed.

And so then who’s going to train us on what those experiences are supposed to look like? And so we get our cues again from these other people who are certainly motivated for selling books, selling magazines and selling movies and we think that’s it.

Sonia: Yeah. We need to realize that this is a form of entertainment. It’s not reality. And so our sexual intimacy episodes do not need to look like this at all. But it does set, it stacks the deck of the cards against you where it’s like, okay, it has to involve penetrative sex. It has to involve everybody having orgasms. This is about the pleasure of my partner. I have to have the perfect body. There are so many things that go into it and let’s not even start to talk about libido.

Our libido shifts, different times in our lives our libido is going to shift to go between spontaneous and more responsive libido which feels like it’s more neutral. And with that shifting that can occur then we’re starting to think our libido has gone so therefore if our libido’s gone our sex drive has gone and we’re not interested. And yes, there are some women that definitely have issues and have to deal with dysfunction around sex drive. But we also need to recognize that most of the time it’s a different type of libido.

We go from a spontaneous libido to a responsive or receptive type of libido. And when that happens it’s still there but we just come at it at a different way. We’re not broken, we’re just shifting into a different way. And when

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70% of women are coming from this place of responsive libido, and I'm actually going to do another podcast on this because I think we need responsive libido 2.0 coming back again to talk about this because I just hear the same things again and again and again.

And for some reason, well, not for some reason, I was just going to say, for some reason women have a tendency to blame themselves. But it's not for some reason, it's because our society is set up to blame women around this area.

Donna: Exactly. And put the burden on them.

Sonia: Yeah, put the burden on us but maybe we're not getting a lot of pleasure out of this scenario. There are a lot of different things that are happening and different reasons. But if we could not judge ourselves, could we just not judge ourselves then we could actually get to a place where we could objectively look and see what's happening and then decide what we want to do about it. But when we're coming from a place that it has to be perfect, it has to be a certain way, there has to be simultaneous orgasms, there always has to be an orgasm. Our orgasm has to look a certain way.

It can't be a different type, we have to have an orgasm by penetrative sex which only 15% of women have an orgasm by penetrative sex alone without clitoral stimulation. There are so many levels. I just want to give it all up myself and I like sex.

Donna: We are all in trouble, yeah. And I think that brings up a really good point and I know men want to please women, want to please their partners. And partners want to please each other but there does seem to be this self-consciousness for women about wanting to make sure they please their partner, that they do it right, that they don't take too long. And they end up being in their head during the experience and overthinking things and putting so much pressure.

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As opposed to how about just show up and remember who you're with, enjoy the connection, your partner and have fun together and enjoy whatever that produces.

Sonia: Whatever that produces. I just try to shift the focus from this being an end game where orgasm is the goal over to – I'm not saying don't have an orgasm. I enjoy them. But I'd like to flip the focus over to satisfaction and affection and pleasure. And I can add in the fun there too because if we can do that, I think that takes a lot of stress. And also there's this concept that if I start this process I have to go all the way. And maybe you don't have the time for all the way. Or maybe you don't have the inclination for all the way.

And as I say all the way for my podcast listeners, I've got these air quotations going on because we have this thought that we can't just have a make-out session. And we can't just say to our partner, "Yeah, I'm kind of in the mood for touch and cuddling and a make-out session. I'm not in the mood for penetration or I'm not in the mood for an hour-long session." Or if you need to get off then let's come up with bring some toys to the bedroom for a 20-minute get-off session but not an hour and not starting at 11 o'clock at night.

I don't know. We put so much pressure on ourselves and interesting, we put the pressure to do things. We don't put the pressure to have a conversation about it.

Donna: Right. And something that you just said, when you said, you want to add the have fun or make it fun. I think that is a great way for us to broach the subject with our partners. We can say, "What would be fun?" So instead of saying, "Are you happy, is this fulfilling to you?" Am I a good lover?" What if you just simply, because we get so much feedback with our clients about even how to start those conversations and whatnot and sometimes it's just too intimidating or overwhelming to think about having those conversations.

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Yet on the other side of those conversations is the connection they want. And so simply saying, “Hey, babe, what would be fun for you? How can we make this even more fun?” Because that’s not a heavy tone.

Sonia: How can we make this even more fun? How could we just not specifically have expectations other than laughing or something? Yeah, not making this a big major thing but just focusing on what is the end goal that you want in this. Ultimately when we’re talking about sex we’re really talking about connection, physically, emotionally, depending on who you’re having sex with. I mean if it’s just a one-off one-night stand or whatever, a fuck Betty, hey that’s fine. I don’t think you necessarily need your connection there but maybe you do want a connection there.

But you get to decide, but ultimately when we’re talking about sexual intimacy there usually is some sort of connection in some way that we also would like in addition to the pleasure and the fun there. So decide ahead of time. What do you want that to look like? You can make your session, I’m thinking about, what was that movie that came out where Michelle Yeoh and I may be pronouncing her name incorrectly, just got the Golden Globe for it and everything. There is this part in the movie where they’ve got the hotdog fingers.

And what if we were just focused on sexual intimacy looks like hotdog fingers, just interactions of fingers or sucking toes or just make it something crazy and different. We have this definition of sexual intimacy and how it has to look but what if every day of the year you decided to redefine sexual intimacy in a different way? What if we decided that? It’s so arbitrary that it has a definition that it should be this or it should be that.

What if sexual intimacy on Monday was holding hands and on Tuesday was scratching somebody’s back and on Wednesday it was taking out the trash with kisses in between and on Thursday you get to decide? It could be anything that you want it to be. Thursday could be sour cream day. Don’t ask me what you’re going to do with it.

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Donna: Okay, hello.

Sonia: [Crosstalk].

Donna: I'm going with your vanilla yogurt, I'm not up for sour cream. But I'll take toppings, yes, thank you.

Sonia: Yeah. Well, I'm allergic to chocolate and so for me, whipped cream has been my go-to for the last 20-something years and it brings me a lot of joy. So you can have sour cream, you could have whipped cream. You can have whatever cream you want. There are all sorts of creams you could add into sex. But you get to define this and have as much fun as you want with this. So as we sit and think about this perfectionist thinking I'm challenging every one of my Diamonds to decide, what do they want sex to look like for them.

Right now they are maybe stressed out of their mind because they have a concept of what it has to look like. But what I'm telling to you is you get to give yourself permission to define the sexual intimacy for you, to give up your perfectionist thinking and even before you give it up I think it'll be kind of interesting to share your perfectionist thinking, whatever's coming up for you with your partner.

So if it's coming out for your partner that they're not even in your mind so they don't know that you think your libido should be up and running in less than two minutes or just whatever arbitrary number that somebody chooses. Or they should have an orgasm within this period of time and that they're taking too long. And if they're going to have an orgasm they have to have it this way. Or their stomach has to look a certain way so they're going to suck in their stomach the whole time and not enjoy themselves.

So we get to define what sexual intimacy is for us and give up this perfectionist thinking and have fun with this, really it doesn't have to be hard. That's what she said.

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Donna: [Crosstalk], okay, you always give me bad innuendos but you just laid that right out there, hold my beer. Okay, I'm laying out an innuendo.

Sonia: But I'm just saying that it really doesn't have to be anything, you don't have to listen to what anybody else has to say about this. You get to define it for yourself and you get to choose. If we're talking about erectile dysfunction, honestly, if you don't have an erection you can still have an orgasm. You can still have pleasure. You can still have pleasure with your partner. You can still have amazing, amazing sexual intimacy.

When we make decisions based on what society says, that there's only one way to have sex and that requires an erect penis we are limiting ourselves and we're limiting the experience that we can have with our partner. We're shutting things down and it's leading to a lot of sadness and which doesn't need to be there. But what does need to change is our concepts kind of need to shift around in order to be able to do this work and come from a different perspective.

So when we're on the other side of Valentine's Day and we have so much perfectionist thinking about how Valentine's Day has to go, it didn't count if there weren't flowers or chocolate or a dinner or some sex. You don't know how many women I coach where they're like, "Oh God, Valentine's Day is coming up and I have to have sex."

Donna: So here's our once-a-year, right?

Sonia: Yeah, there's the once-a-year I've got to get a negligee and have sex. That's kind of sad that that's what Valentine's Day has been reduced to. We also get to define Valentine's Day for ourselves. Maybe Valentine's Day is going to a movie, maybe it's sitting at home and doing Candy Crush. Maybe it's going out dancing. What else, what fun different things would you like to do? Maybe it's climbing a mountain, going for a hike, what would you like to do for your Valentine's Day, Donna?

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Donna: And before I answer that question, one of the other things I think that can add pressure is the conversation the next day as people – it starts early, it starts in high school. And as we're younger and single and talking to our girlfriends and boyfriends and stuff and there's the comparison and what did you do last night? What did you guys do? What did you guys do? What did he get you? What did you get him anyway? And what did you do?

Sonia: Yeah. It's a set-up for failure already. You're starting to, is it good enough, was the gift that you got good enough? Was what you gave good enough? Was the evening perfect? That's a lot of pressure for an evening.

Donna: So letting, in my opinion, just allowing the relationship you have to be your and their, the relationship between the two of you. As opposed to bringing into that relationship what you do and how you treat them, especially on Valentine's Day being based on the answers you have to give the next day. You don't owe anybody answers.

Sonia: You don't owe anybody anything really.

Donna: Right. And you guys get to define that for yourself. Why is that? Because it's your relationship.

Sonia: It's your relationship, it's your day, it's your year. I really don't particularly like the emphasis on a specific day as opposed to if I could have an arbitrary day for Valentine's Day I would. And just it's a way of being in a life, in a commitment to our relationship if you choose. If you're in a partnership with somebody else, there's a lot that goes down for people that are self-partnered as well around Valentine's Day, a lot of am I worthy enough? Am I good enough? Is it going to be Panentine's Day? What am I going to do on that day?

There's just too much pressure that's there whether you're in a relationship or not. And we get to just let go of all of that and definitely be like, "You know what, I just want to enjoy my life. I just want to enjoy my partnership. I just want to enjoy my time with myself." All those things.

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Donna: So what I do, I mean sorry, to come back around to answer your question.

Sonia: Yeah, yeah, tell me.

Donna: And that is it's not intended to be a rebellion but it's kind of a pushback on the pressure then I just go probably the opposite direction from that kind of pressure and keep it simple. And that can be as simple as yeah, deliberately deciding, I'm going to make dinner and I want us just to hang out here together. But I might make something a little bit different or do something a little different. I might even do just an ordinary simple picnic with sandwiches and those things on the floor in front of the fireplace. Not because I've got some big, massive plan for where this is going to go.

But I do, I want to celebrate us but I can't get all wrapped up in that because then I do, I spin-off and I want some peace about all this and I want to enjoy it. And I want to enjoy you. So how do we enjoy us? How do we do Valentine's Day our way? Well, number one actually, I'm out of town that day at a conference. And so we also might pick another day based on what fits us. It could be this weekend because hello, it's on a school night as well so to speak, or a work night, it's Tuesday.

Mom needs her rest so we do it our way. We will make a point to celebrate each other but we also do that all along the way in our life.

Sonia: Yeah, and I think I love that. Just celebrating you, celebrating each other and along the way, as you go through life. I don't particularly care what I do on Valentine's Day. I tend not to be as romantic as Kimmery is. And so I'll check and see what she'd like and I'll make sure she's happy because that's who I am as a partner. But really there's just too much that's put on one particular day for me. I just want to be in the arms of the person that I love and connect in that way.

So for all of my Diamonds listening to this call, I would just have to say that you get to decide what you want this to look like for you. Give yourself the

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freedom of making whatever decision you make the right one for you. Just not even focusing so much on what society says it needs to look like. But really spend some time asking yourself what it is that I want it to look like. And then after the fact, you get to interpret it because this is going to be playing on post-Valentine's Day. You get to interpret it and think about what you want the day to mean.

And if you want to bring something into the rest of the year, that's just one day. And I like to think of it as the start of the new love year, love myself year, love my partner year, love my partners year. It gets to be the beginning of that year, the renewal, the love renewal which goes all year long. So that's kind of how I like to focus on it. Yeah, so it's not all in one day I guess that's all I have to say, just not all in one day you get to enjoy yourself. You get to make it whatever you want to but yeah, we're going to start another new love year.

And we get to have fun with this and make the year, the relationship, relationship with ourself, relationship with our partner an even better year. And there's no perfect anything, you get to decide what's right for you but in a way that's non-judgmental and in a way that's very kind and loving towards yourself and your partner or partners.

Donna: Yes, love that.

Sonia: Anything else we want to talk about before we wrap up this session?

Donna: No, I'm wanting to make myself stop because I'm going on and on with you girl.

Sonia: Right. Well, we will be back again and we're going to be reinstating the flowside chat questions and answers once a month with me and Donna because we have so much fun doing that. And I think that I have announced on our prior podcasts that I am in the process of doing a certification, advanced certification in women's sexual intimacy coaching. So that's kind of on the horizon, that starts at the end of March. And there

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will be a link in the show notes so you can get on the waitlist and learn more about that.

And there's even more stuff coming this year with me and Donna and coach Lisa and my whole team and we are here for the Diamonds always. So on the day after Valentine's Day, I welcome you to a new love year, a love yourself year, a non-perfectionist year and a love your partner and partners and let's do this year. I'm looking forward to it. Thank you so much, Donna, for being on the call.

Donna: Thank you for having me.

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

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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.