

Ep #144: Relationship Q&A with Dr. Sonia and Dr. Kimmery



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 144.

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.

Alright, come on in, everybody. So good to see you here. I'm so excited, come on in. This is so fabulous. And we have so many people on the call, come on in. So good to see you all. Why don't you put in the chat if you're able to, where you're calling in from. I always love to know where people are calling in from. It's always so much fun. So first of all, welcome, this is May, the month of the lay some people might call it. And I am Dr. Sonia, I am The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™, so good to see you here.

Looks like we have some people coming in from Indianapolis. So good to have you on this call, yeah, people from Minnesota. I am actually here in Texas right now, in Austin, Texas. Because I do two things, I am a midlife sex coach and then I'm also a radiologist. And so I'm at a pediatric radiology meeting. So the month of May is all about you. At The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ we are celebrating you and all that you are, all that you can be.

And helping you to get the intimacy that you want. So what we do on this call is feel free, if you want to be coached or you have any questions or anything like that, you can put it in the chat. You can put it in the Q&A. If you want to stay anonymous and ask whatever question you want to ask, put it in the Q&A because there's an anonymous feature there. In either case we don't say names. So we try to respect your privacy. We're hoping you're in a safe place in terms of not driving down the road or something like that but in a nice, relaxed place in your home or wherever.

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Just sit back, relax and we are going to be having an amazing call tonight. It's all about relationships and intimacy and sex and whatever else you'd like it to be about. And I want to introduce my co-conspirator, my troublemaker, whoever, yes. So Dr. Kimmerly Newsom is our relationship coach. Full disclosure, she's also my wife and so we definitely have a lot of fun on this call. So let's go ahead, I'm going to start off by introducing her. So, Dr. Kimmerly Newsom holds a BS in psychology and then a master's in marriage and family therapy. And then a PhD in family studies.

She is also a life coach, she is a certified family life educator. She is a certified sexual addiction treatment provider and she is clinically licensed as a marriage and family therapist. Alright, I am going to introduce you to Dr. Kimmerly Newsom.

Kimmerly: Hello everyone. Very nice to be here. I'm excited for this call. It's always exciting when I get to have a call with Dr. Sonia, we have a great time together. So I hope that you enjoy just the conversation that we have and that you join in and you have your questions and we're ready to give you the answers, so, welcome everyone.

Sonia: Yeah. And so for those of you who may not know me, I am Dr. Sonia Wright. I am a medical doctor. I'm a sexual counselor. I am a master certified life coach. I am also a sex toy enthusiast. I love sex toys. And I am actually in Austin, Texas, for those of you that may have come on the call a little later. I'm not in my usual studio at home. So unfortunately I don't have my toys and my props with me. I'm so sorry about that. But don't worry, we will make sure that we have another call where you can ask all the questions about toys.

And of course, so as I have mentioned before, feel free to put any comments or questions that you have in the chat or in the Q&A. If you'd like to remain anonymous, please go right ahead and put it in the Q&A and they're anonymous. So we have a call coming in, a question coming in already for some coaching. So my partner quit drinking, yay, but is spending more time with me instead of old drinking buddies and it's kind of

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clingy. This really puts the brakes on for me wanting intimacy and I need my space. How do we talk about this?

So, Dr. Kimmery, what do we do when we have a clingy spouse? We're celebrating the fact that our partner's not drinking anymore, that's so fabulous. But then what happens when basically a person that may have an addictive type of personality stops doing something like this and then spending a lot of time, how does that affect intimacy, relationships and what can be done?

Kimmery: Well, congratulations again on your partner for stopping the drinking and committing to that. One thing that can be really interesting when that happens is that they can trade one thing for another. And so it's not a bad thing that they want to spend time with you but I also understand that you're used to having your space. And so in these cases you come to a mutual understanding that it's okay to say no. It's okay to say, "No, I don't want to do this thing with you."

And if that person is struggling to understand that or appreciate the boundary or if they become manipulative or anything like that then I think it may be time for you to seek out some therapy or some coaching but it's okay for you to have the boundary. It's okay for you to not be that person's everything now that they have turned away from the alcoholism as their way of coping with things. So I think there for you to be able to have what you need in order for your intimacy and connection to maintain itself, I think you need to establish this boundary and do it as quickly as you can.

Sonia: Yeah. It's basically like a whole new relationship because it's almost like the mistress, the alcohol is no longer there. And so now there's new dynamics that have to be established in a different way. So I love how you're saying boundaries are important to be established right now. And yeah, this person has had a pretty independent time because their partner's been off with their drinking buddies, now all of a sudden their partner's in the house all day long. And that kind of is like COVID time.

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People had their own lives and then suddenly COVID, we are stuck in the house and suddenly people are constantly contacting me like my partner and I can't leave the house. I can't get away from them. And so it's important to have the healthy boundaries now so that it doesn't actually cause issues and more stress in the relationship which could lead to other difficulties. So yeah, definitely, I like that.

That actually brings up something that I think is pretty important to talk about right from the outset of this call which would be relationship bill of rights, it's just one of these things that I hadn't really heard before. And so if we could talk a little bit about the relationship bill of rights. And then it looks like we have some more questions that are coming in. So this is great and keep the questions coming. Okay, so, Dr. Kimmery, tell me about this relationship bill of rights.

Kimemery: So it's something that I learned about as a therapist student and continuing my education through conferences and things like that. But the relationship bill of rights is a set of statements that apply to every person in a relationship. And it was done by Pacific Lutheran University. So I have to give credit to where credit was due. I did not create this myself. And there are several different rights on there. And so I'll just go through and say a few and some of them might resonate with you, some of them might be like, what, I really can do that in relationships? Wow, I didn't realize it.

So the first one is, I have the right to be treated with respect, there's where the boundaries come in that I was talking about earlier is that you have the opportunity to establish what you need in order for you to feel comfortable and safe in the relationship. Therefore you have a right to be respected. You have the right to say no and not feel guilty. That's what I told the one question asker, that they have the right to say and not feel guilty about that.

They have the right to say, "I don't want to do that", and not feel like they're going to be gaslit or made to feel guilty because they made a decision that that's not something that they want to do. The other one is, I have the right to express my feelings without feeling criticized. That's important. I have

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the right to take time for myself. I have the right to feel safe. And that's very significant. And it doesn't mean safe physically only. It can also mean, safe emotionally. And so that's something that we have to take into consideration as we're working through and talking about relationships and relational functioning.

I have the right to make my own decisions. Yes, full stop. No other explanation needed. You have the right to make your own decisions. I have the right to change my mind. This is one that people really struggle with when I'm working with couples, when I'm working with individuals. Just who in general have their own relationships with people and in life, people struggle with changing their mind because I made a commitment and now I've just got to go through with it.

But if you're feeling something's feeling off or you don't want to do it anymore, remember again, you have the right to change your mind. You have the right to say no and not feel guilty. And there can be a conversation had about why you're changing your mind, those sorts of things, but you have the right to do so. You have the right to ask for what you want. You have the right to spend as much time with family and friends as you want to. You have the right to make mistakes. You have the right to not be pressured into doing something that you don't want to do.

You also have the right to feel good about yourself and you have the right to be respected if you want to end the relationship. Those are huge and we could go on and on and on about that. But that's just an introduction and I'll let Dr. Sonia take back over here.

Sonia: Yeah, I always like to go through those relationship bill of rights. Actually I'm 56 years old and I just was introduced to that this year by you. So hopefully women are at this point in their life when they want to be in relationships where they feel respected and honored and when they feel safe physically, obviously, and emotionally. Now, that's a little bit harder for some people to understand about what is emotionally safe. But I always

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just say, “Mutual respect is a place where you can feel vulnerable without having to worry about being attacked in some way.”

So those are the kind of things that I think about. And then when we're talking about sex it becomes so important because sexual intimacy, you do have to have this level of trust there. If you don't have that level of trust there and there isn't this basic concept of consent within the relationship then we start to develop some issues and difficulties. And then the communication breaks down and then it kind of falls apart from there. So I wanted to establish at the beginning of this call, these relationship bill of rights just because it's not something that women hear too often.

And the way we're raised in this society, we may not have come across this concept that we get to make choices, that we get to be okay with autonomy and boundaries and things like that. Because our society has a tendency to teach women that they have to focus on everybody else's pleasure and make sure that they're pleasing everybody else and taking everybody else into consideration. Obviously, yeah, we take people into consideration but at the same time it's okay for us to take ourselves into consideration.

Okay, we have another question here so let's go in here on this one. I'm in the process of separating and eventually divorcing from my husband for a variety of reasons. It took a lot of courage to leave. Congratulations. I'm also exploring my sexuality and actually that I desire to be with a woman moving forward. I know I need to spend time being partnered with myself during this time but I'm wondering, how do I use this separation time wisely? Sex was also a big issue in that marriage. And so I feel I have a lot of work to do now that I'm single again but not always sure where to start.

This is a fabulous question so thank you so much. It has so many different parts to it and so we may break it down into different parts. But first of all, congratulations for having your own back, setting boundaries and getting out of a relationship that was not working for you. And then also congratulations on looking at your sexual orientation and exploring other interests with other partners with different genders so that's also a fun and

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exciting time in your life. Dr. Kimmerly, I'm going to have you start on this and then I'm going to chime in as time goes, alright, talk to us.

Kimmerly: So I think that is a brave decision for you to make first of all to leave a relationship that isn't working for you, whatever the reasons are, we don't know that and that's okay. I just think making a decision that's for you is a brave step. And then the next part of that is deciding that your sexuality is not expressed the way that you wanted it to be expressed is also very brave and it takes a lot of courage to do that too. And it shows that you do have a sense of self and an idea about what you want your identity to be.

And so when it comes to relationships we have to understand that creating that identity is one of the very first things that we have to do. And once we are able to create that identity, that new identity in your case then we can understand what boundaries we need. And we can take into consideration the things on the bill of rights as well because we know who we are and we start to establish what that looks like as we move forward in our connections with other people. Yeah. So I'm going to let you go ahead and move on with that question.

Sonia: I love it because we come from different perspectives on things. And so I just love listening to what you have to say and then chiming in as well. So in terms of relationships I always think that your first and best and more important relationship is with yourself. And so I love the fact that you're saying that you know that you need some downtime. That you're just getting out of a relationship. And so often women don't get the time to know who we are, to take the time to figure who we are, what we like, who we are as an individual, who we are sexually.

And so I do encourage you having some downtime for yourself to learn a new identity because you're separating from another person and you're becoming an individual again. Even though individuals, you get to be an individual and in a relationship at the same time. But very often when we're in a relationship it's almost like we lose our identity sometimes and especially if you've been in a relationship for a long time where you've been

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dealing with a lot of stress and things like that. It's important when you get out to focus on you.

And spend that time with yourself reestablishing your relationship with yourself on so many different levels. But I also have to say, because I'm a sex coach, I can't help myself, you are your first and best lover. Very often women are taught that our partners should know more about us and our body and our reactions and what we like and they should teach us or your pleasure is in the hands of somebody else. Your pleasure is in your own hands and this is something that's really important. You have this downtime, learn about yourself.

Learn about what you like, what stimulation you like, what parts of your vulva work for you. I wish I had my little clitoral model. I have a little model of the clitoris to show you, the clitoris is actually about this large, it's about three to four inches. We just see the tip, the tip of the iceberg. But you get to explore your whole vulva and you get to learn about yourself. You get to become your first and best lover. And you never want to be sitting there thinking about somebody from your past or even somebody in your future and labeling them your best lover. You should always be your best lover.

So this is your time to go out on dates with yourself, to relax, to spend time with yourself, to buy all the beautiful things. You want to make the bath and the candle lights and have the pleasure filled time, the toys. The toys, even now they don't even have batteries so they work all the time. You just plug it in and charge it and you go, but you get to really have this love affair with yourself. So that's the first thing that I would encourage you to do.

And then in terms of your sexual orientation, this is a beautiful time in a person's life when they really get to be a sexual being first and then they get to decide who they are attracted to. I have gone through many stages in my life in terms of my sexual orientation label. And so I just label myself queer but at one time I was married to a man and considered myself heterosexual until I saw this woman that's more on the masculine side. And

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I was like, damn, I think I like women too. And that was a realization. I was in my 40s when I came out.

And then I was a lesbian for 10 years. And then I ended that relationship. I was like, I still like dick too. So then I was kind of going back to the midline and realizing that I'm actually pansexual. And then getting to a place where I'm just like, you know what, I'm me and I'm queer. So we can have a thousand different labels for ourselves but we're still the same individual. We've always been the same individual. You get to express yourself sexually in whatever way works for you as long as there's consent involved and people are over 18. And have some fun and enjoy yourself and explore and learn.

Kimmery: For sure. And I like the idea that you talked about with the relationship with yourself, that is something that's so significant. And a part of what's necessary as you explore your sexuality, as you explore relationships with other people, even if it's friendships. Just really having an understanding of who you are, and learning those little nuances that make you the being that you are, the sexual being, the work being, the relationship being, anybody.

And then really figuring out what ways you can continue to accentuate those aspects of yourself that you really enjoy. And if there were ways that you were interacting in your relationship previously then you can also do some things to examine those and decide if those are the things you want to keep or if they're the things you want to alter or the things you just want to get rid of altogether. I mean maybe your way of interacting was that of people pleasing in that relationship.

If that's not a trait that you want to carry on, carry forward, I do not recommend that you carry that trait on or forward but it is up to you to decide that. But if that is a trait that you want to get rid of, I think that would be something to focus on and think about. If you are a kind and caring and giving and loving and considerate person, I think that's something that you can consider and think about whether or not you want to carry on. You

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have choice and that's the biggest thing in this, you get to make choices. And you made a choice to kind of break free from something that you felt was not for you, so good job.

Sonia: Yeah. And I know so you also said that sex was a big issue for you. Now, this is a perfect time to look at that and what that means. I don't know if it had negative connotations for you but if that's the case and in the future you may be in another relationship if you choose to be. And I always think we're self-partnered, but if you choose to be in a relationship with another person as well then you may want to spend this time now looking on what that means to you for sex being a big issue.

So just doing some journaling, just looking at things and just being like, "What exactly do I mean when sex is a big issue? When I think about sex, what comes up for me? What kind of feelings come up? Is there anxiety? Is there avoidance that's happening?" Because it could be tied to negative experiences that have happened previously. So now may be a good time to get some better experiences with yourself and to focus and redefine yourself as the sexual being and the way you want to express your sex and sexuality and sexual intimacy.

And then take your time, if you choose to get into another relationship, if it's the case that sex is a big problem, it's going to be important that you feel safe in that new relationship. It's going to be important that you have communication with that person and say, "Hey, sex might have been an issue in the past. I'm not exactly sure how it's going to sort itself out now but I want to be able to talk and communicate with you throughout this process. So those are things to think about and spend some time looking at now when you're talking about sex.

Alright, so let's see, I have a question here, I had some people that could not come to the call and so they asked if we could talk about certain things. And so this person was asking about, they want to talk to their partner about things that they're not necessarily enjoying in bed. Sex is okay, it's not that great. But they're afraid of hurting their partner's feelings so

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because of that they're not bringing up stuff. And it's been going on for a little while now.

And so now they've gotten to this point where they're kind of avoiding sex because it's not really enjoyable. I mean it's okay, she said it takes 10/15 minutes and then it's done but she's not particularly interested in. And I call this to-do list sex. When you're checking it off your list and you get more pleasure from checking it off your list than knowing you don't get to do it for another couple weeks, than you actually get from being in bed and having sex, having some fun with somebody. So if you're having to-do list sex then we need to talk about this. We need to talk about this, girl.

So what do you think, Dr. Kimmery, Dr. K when it's the case that we're afraid to say things because we're afraid of hurting our partner's feelings? Now, this is going on for a long time, so talk to me.

Kimemery: I mean we've got to go back to the relationship bill of rights. You have the right to ask for what you want. You have the right to say no. And so if it's something that you desire that you haven't made clear to your partner that you desire, it's okay to ask for it. Now, we've got to think about context and place. So when you're in the middle of sex is not the place to talk about this conversation, have this conversation. It's best had when you're outside of the bedroom, when you're sitting and having a coffee or whatnot.

And it's also a question, a conversation that you have with someone that where you don't blindsided them because often people get offended and they get frustrated and defensive if they're blindsided. So this is where the communication aspect comes in. You decide that you want to have a conversation and you ask the person if they have the capacity for having a serious conversation about their sex life. And giving them some context as well to prepare their minds for what could potentially be coming.

And so nobody likes to be blindsided, nobody likes to hear the dreaded, we need to talk. So I think that is important to be sure that you have that

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conversation in a safe and connected way with your partner. Be prepared for potential defensiveness and also have an understanding too that they may feel embarrassed and they may feel some shame because they haven't been doing what it is that has been pleasurable for you for so long. And so having an understanding of each person's emotional reactivity is going to be really important too.

So allow yourself the permission to say what it is you need, to be open and honest with your partner about what it is that you desire as you share sexual intimacy with them. And really being cognizant of their emotional capacity as well, yeah.

Sonia: Yeah. That sounds good. I love how you put your words together. Ooh damn, what are you doing? Oh wait, I'm on camera. Alright, so let's talk about this. I call this having the difficult conversations. So what normally happens is you can't stand it another minute. Your partner comes home from work, they're exhausted and you start right in there, you're like, "I have been faking orgasms for the last 20 years, we need to talk." That's not the best way to do it or the best time.

Kimmary: No, that is not it.

Sonia: That is not it. So as Dr. Kimmary says, it is about being respectful. They've had a long day. That's probably not the time to talk to them. Asking them, "Hey, I really want to have a conversation with you about our intimacy because I want this to really improve and continue to have a great fulfilling sexual relationship for the next 90 years or whatever. So ask them, "When is a good time? Hey, do you think the weekend might work? What's a good time? When would you like to talk about this?" So as Dr. Kimmary's saying, be respectful and ask them what time would work for them.

And yes, be prepared for defense, there being a little upset about this and that's okay. We are so concerned about hurting our partner's feelings that we don't even realize how we may be hurting them by avoiding this topic and avoiding it for years. And they know that something's going on. And

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then you start avoiding sex. So then they're like, ooh. Then they start making up all these things in their mind. They have no idea what's going on because you're not talking to them. So then they're like, "I suck at this", or blah, blah, blah. So they have stuff that's already happening in their mind.

They're already feeling feelings. So it's not necessarily that you're protecting them and it's okay if our partners, we try to be respectful. But it's okay if we talk to our partners and their feelings get hurt, recognize this is not just a one and done conversation. It is not just something that you get to have one conversation about and boom, everything's fixed. It's going to be a couple of conversations. They may have something to say about what you do.

Kimberly: [Crosstalk]. Why are they saying that to me? Yeah.

Sonia: So you've got to be prepared for that. So what I talk to people about is, how do you want to show up for this conversation? Do you want to focus on the long term goal which is keeping the intimacy in the relationship? And intimacy, sexual intimacy I would say is built on a foundation of overall intimacy in a relationship which is built on a foundation of communication. You need to keep that communication open. How can you keep that communication open? Make sure you're respectful. Make sure you take care of your ship beforehand so you're not showing up with an attitude.

And sometimes we're afraid of the conversation so we show up and we're like, "I have something to tell you, you just need to know." Now, that's not necessarily going to work. So I know, right, all the ways to get in trouble. And if you don't know me, I'm always in trouble. Let me just say, I am always in trouble, it's me. If anything's going on, it's me, it's me. I'm the one. I just get in the doghouse and I just stay there. I'm just going to grab my, you know.

But we really think about how we want to show up for the conversation, think about the long term goal, what you really want to establish, which is that intimacy that's going to extend through your relationship and continue

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for 10, 20, 30 years. Most people don't recognize and don't realize, you can be sexual up until your 90s and beyond, to the day you pop off. If you're in your 40s, 50s, 60s, you've still got plenty of time. If you're in your 60s, 70s, you've got 30, at least 30 more years.

So you need to recognize while you're not talking about something, you're giving yourself a 30/40 year sentence as to not having that intimacy that you want. So it may be difficult but still have the conversation, still do what you need to do but be respectful. Focus on it as a team, what can we do together to make sure that this improves and this gets better. I always say, people, well, first of all I always say, "Blame me. I was on this sex coaching call and there was this Dr. Sonia out there and she was saying some shit and I thought let me talk to my partner about it and she's the problem."

I'm always okay being the problem, let me just say. So if you're not sure what to say, blame her. But also say, "She brought up a good point which is we need that sexual intimacy to be there for the next 30/40 years."

Kimkery: Can I ask something really quickly to that?

Sonia: Yeah, please.

Kimkery: So one thing that I think too that we've got to consider is that often even when we think about emotional connectivity, you talked about that, the foundation is communication and sometimes the emotional connection. But I also think that both people may need to be willing to start over in their exploration of each other. What might have worked at the very beginning sexually may not be working anymore. And so people have to be willing to be open about what needs are and to teach their partner how to pleasure them.

I think it is Dr. Sonia who always says, "We're responsible for our own pleasure." Isn't that you, that's you that says that, right?

Sonia: Yeah.

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Kimmery: So you've heard her say they're responsible for their own pleasure, whatever that means and whatever that looks like. And a part of that is being an advocate for yourself, having those hard conversations, asking for what you want because if you do not do that then you may set yourself up for continued unsatisfying sex which can lead to continued unsatisfying life experiences.

Sonia: And we don't do that not around here, I am telling you, no. Alright, we have some more questions coming in. This is so good. Okay, alright, Dr. Kimmery, here we go. I am recovering from a sex addiction where I use masturbation compulsively to escape and it has been about three years since I have been sober from that. Congratulations. I'm in a 12 step recovery program for it and other issues. How do I hold space for this reality while also exploring self-pleasure in a healthy way?

Kimmery: So thank you so much for sharing that. And what people don't really understand about sex addiction is it is pretty much something that is an attachment disorder, that's what it's seen as an attachment and all of those styles of relating, those are times for a different conversation. But it's an attachment disorder. So if you've used sex addiction and pornography use and masturbation and those types of things as a way of coping with life and coping with things that are hard then that is a part of the addiction.

Now, how can you change that reality for yourself? It's an examination of what you're doing the masturbation for, is it self-pleasure? Is it self-exploration or is to avoid having connection or when connection goes awry you're using the masturbation as a way to cope with that instead of having a conversation with someone or figuring out emotionally within yourself what's happening? Is there an internal drive where you are desiring to learn about yourself, where you're wanting to say, "Hey, I want to explore this option here, let me see if I like it before I talk to my partner about it."

And so there's a different mindset here. The mindset has to be that focused on learning about yourself as opposed to avoiding relational intimacy and relational functioning. When we do avoid those things it makes it a lot

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easier to fall into the dopamine hit. And in this case for you the dopamine hit is the pornography and the masturbation or excessive sexual interactions in ways that are affecting your life which is what the addiction part of it is. And so I think that is important to consider the reasoning, what am I doing? Why am I doing it?

And what is the desired outcome? Is the desired outcome to avoid pain, emotionally, relationally? Or is the desired outcome to learn more about my body, explore myself in ways that I haven't before and learn that so that I can carry that on to a relationship with another person? So that's, yeah, motive, desire, outcome.

Sonia: Yeah, I love that. And I think that it's important as you say to take a moment to notice how you're feeling. If you're feeling rushed or stressed or anxious in some way before you're engaging in self-pleasure, it's probably not about exploration as much as it is about something external triggering you and needing to do that.

Having said that, now, how would a person know if there's an external trigger versus possibly being anxious because of past type of things and being concerned that, okay, I have a plan to self-pleasure now, I want to explore my body. I'm feeling a little nervous and agitated because I'm concerned that maybe it will trigger something where I'm no longer going to be sober and I'm going to head in this other direction, [crosstalk] difference?

Kimmy: Yeah, it's like that conversation about the person who is recovering from alcoholism and going into a liquor store or gone past the liquor store portion of a grocery store. And so I think what has to happen here is an understanding of your internal workings again, knowing yourself, knowing and trusting in the work that you've done. Trusting that your 12 step programs are working for you. Trusting that your way of re-interacting with the world is working for you.

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It may feel like you are falling off the wagon so to speak if you participate in some healthy self-pleasure. That is a normal feeling. And you must allow it to come and pass through and understand that it's going to be there and remember to continue to examine the reasoning behind why you're wanting to do it in the first place. And so if your desire, as I said before, is to avoid pain, then you examine that and you see, yeah, I'm going back and I'm falling into that habit.

If your desire, your initial desire is, I want to try this toy, I want to try this thing and then that thought comes into your mind, then first think about the initial desire which is, I want to try something. And then think about what the maladapted thought is, which is this is something I'm falling back into and examine why they exist together. What's the fear here? What's the fear associated with this thought that I might be going back into this thing? And then what is the fear associated with self-pleasuring and exploration?

So those are two things that you kind of have to put together. And in the middle you decide where you want to be and you make the decision that's best for you. You may decide that yes, I'm going to do this because this is my reasoning. My reasoning is I want to explore my body. You may say, "No, I'm not quite ready yet because this thought right here that I'm falling back into old habits is dominating right now and I think I need to wait a little bit." So you get to decide whatever works for you. It's not black and white. So there's lots of gray and different gradations as well. So it really is what works for you.

Sonia: Good. Thank you for that answer, appreciate it. Okay, so here's a fun question. I'm queer, solo poly and postmenopausal.

Kimmery: That's for you.

Sonia: Sounds like me.

Kimmery: Yeah, that is yours.

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Sonia: And you. I want to start dating again but my libido is much different than it was before when I was younger. Okay, let's talk about this. I would like to date but I've never really done online dating and I feel intimidated and insecure. Life is different now and what I want is different than the last time I was single and ready for dating 20 years ago. Help. Maybe I just need some reassurance that it's worth starting. Thank you for being there. Of course, 100%. So let's talk about a number of different things here that I'm seeing.

Okay, so queer, solo poly, for those people that don't know. Solo poly is you're non-monogamous. But you don't necessarily have a nesting partner is what they call it or you don't have a primary partner or one specific partner. Your partner is yourself, you're solo poly'd, you're self-partnered and then you may have relationships with other people, loving, sexual, some may be sexual, some may not be. But that's the concept of solo poly.

You're not necessarily into wanting to move in and go up what they call the relationship escalator where you move in and then you're focused on marriage and all that stuff. You're like, "Hey, I have my life, I'm an independent person and I also like to date people and enjoy being in relationship with people." Postmenopausal, it's been 12 months at least from your last period and now you're in this different phase in your life. Okay, so you want to start dating again and your libido is much different. Yeah, let's talk about being postmenopausal and your libido.

Your libido definitely can be affected. Your hormones have shifted. Your estrogen levels have dropped or are relatively low. And so you're in this place where you may feel like your libido is not as spontaneous as it was before. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's dead and gone and you'll never find it. Different things that can happen, there's two different types of libidos that are common. There is the spontaneous libido where your mind is turned on, where your body, your genitalia is turned on, they're synced and they're ready to go.

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That's what society talks about when they talk about libido. But what we don't know is the majority of women, 70% of women are in a responsive type of libido. Responsive type of libido is a libido where you feel like you're in neutral, you're in a neutral place, you're not really into it. You could engage in sexual intimacy or you could do the laundry. And if you did the laundry you'd have a really nice pile of clothes there. So you're like, that looks good. But you might have been in a spontaneous type of libido before when you were younger.

And so you feel like something's gone wrong. Nothing has gone wrong, 70% of women are in this responsive type of libido. What it really means is that you just need to tap into your libido and have a better understanding. And this is where solo play, self-pleasure, masturbation comes in handy because, comes in handy, no pun intended but yes.

Kimmary: Just keep going.

Sonia: Again, so this is the part that we need to recognize that we need to learn more about ourselves. We need to know what stimulates us and what touch we like. But we also need to know what stimulates our mind, what turns us on. Yes, a fun thing. I like the smell of Old Spice. I grew up in the 70s and the early 80s and there was the AXL body spray for men was Old Spice, that was what it is. So I smell the smell of Old Spice and I'm like a little horny, I'm like, how are you doing? I like the smell of Old Spice.

What is it that turns you on, what is it? Is it you like having, is it erotica you like listening to? Do you like reading it? Do you like to stimulate yourself and pleasure? What is it that turns you on? Is it clean sheets on the bed? Is it dressing up and looking pretty? Everybody has something that flips that switch for them. So you need to have an understanding of what does it for you, what flips the switch, what gets you excited. Because that's going to be an important part to get your libido back in the game.

So there's that aspect of things. So when we're talking about libido and we're talking about our libido shifting into this more of a responsive libido

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but recognize that it can shift back and forth. Once you're in responsive, doesn't necessarily mean you're always going to be there. And we have this concept of new relationship energy. So when you're in a new relationship a lot of times we think our libido is dead and gone and suddenly boom it is right back there. You're like damn, well, how are you doing? You've been missing in action for a long time.

So we may shift back into that spontaneous libido and that is okay as well. So just because you're in a responsive libido doesn't necessarily mean you may never shift back into the spontaneous one if you're in a responsive libido. But at the same time, recognize that the majority of women are in the responsive libido and all it means is that we have to maybe work a little bit more at it but our minds and society says we shouldn't have to work at this. Why the hell not? It is okay if you have to work at something. Anything that's worth doing and doing well is worth working for.

So we just look at it and we just recognize, okay, our libido's a little different than it was before, what is it that turns me on? What is it that gets me going? If you're in a relationship, maybe texting and sexting and maybe just flirting and things like that, maybe that will do it for you. That's why I'm like, "Hey, Dr. Kimmery. How are you doing? You're looking good." So you get to do that. You get to have fun, that's what I'm saying. Okay, so we've talked about that. I'm going to talk about postmenopausal now.

Postmenopausal, your estrogens and androgens, testosterone, women need testosterone too, it's not a lot but we still need it. That also may be affected. And when those androgens drop, we are feeling it in terms of our vulva area and I used to have my little vulva puppet. But the vulva area is the area between your legs. It's the outside. We're often, women are taught about the vagina, that we have a vagina. But our pleasure zone is actually not necessarily our vagina, it's the outside, it's our vulva area where our lips are, where our clitoris is. That is the main zone for our pleasure.

When we don't have estrogen and testosterone on board, things start to thin out and we get atrophy. So I hate to tell you this but when our estrogen

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drops it can affect the type of orgasms we have, the strength of the orgasm, we may need more stimulation in order to have a similar experience. So coming from two different sides, one, you may need different stimulation that you needed in the past. So you may need, if you never did toys in the past you might want to try some toys now. That might add to your fun.

Let me just say, toys, everybody should be having toys. Toys are the best thing in the world, okay, so I talked about that side of the thing. The other side is go talk to your gynecologist because you're probably, if you're postmenopausal you should be getting some estrogen on board, either topical estrogen where there's estrogen creams and pills and things like that. So depending on if you're planning on having penetration or not but having estrogen preserves your vulva area. It keeps it nice and healthy and plump.

And even if you're not having sex, you may want to look into talking to your provider about estrogen because there's things that they don't tell women. GSM, genitourinary syndrome of menopause is real. Even if you're not having sex, if you're having atrophy in your vulva area, that predisposes you for increased urinary tract infections, so all this stuff that they don't talk to you about. So now I've put the context of all of this, so now you want to date, well, hey, congratulations. Yes, it does look a little bit different.

I've dated in my 20s. I have come back out, dated in my 40s and then dated again in my 50s. So it looks different every time. Just because it's different than the way it was before doesn't mean then it's not worth doing. So yes, now it looks like apps. Now we need to make sure that we stay safe. Some people might get a burner phone or some things like that. Don't give out your information. Make sure that you stay safe but you get to also have fun with this. Make sure that you tell people where you're going and things like that.

But at the same time, it does get to be fun, yes, you might go on a date. I usually will go to a Starbucks or something where if you don't like that

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person you don't have to spend two or three hours at dinner with them. So you get to decide how long you want to spend with this person initially just to get to know them. Usually it's a lot of texting and a lot of messaging and things like that if you're doing it online. And yeah, there's time and effort that's involved in it but you can also look at it as a fun activity too. Are you willing to go on 100 dates to find that one person?

If you're willing to go on 100 dates and just look at it as something fun to do, making sure you stay safe and making sure people know where you are and things like that. You can just have fun with it. It doesn't have to be a horrible experience. It can actually be a lot of fun and you get to meet people, you get to have conversations with people and you get to choose if you'd like to share your body with somebody or not. To be clear, just because you're going on a date does not mean that you are a tease or any of that stuff.

You get to decide to what extent you want to share your body with another person and you get to choose no, there we go back to that bill of rights, you get to choose no. You get to have boundaries and decide what it is that you want to do. And if you're dating, we do have to talk about STIs. You need to stay safe. If you decide that you would like to engage in sexual intimacy with a person, then make sure that you're getting checked, make sure that they're getting checked. Make sure that you look and see that they actually have the test and the dates that they've had it.

And still use barrier protection to protect yourself. Go to Planned Parenthood or a place like that and talk to somebody about STIs and get more information on that. Also this Sunday we're going to be having Evelyn Resh who has worked for 30 years at Planned Parenthood. She's having a sexual health Q&A with me on Sunday at one o'clock Central Time. Come to that and we'll talk some more about it. Okay, I hope that was helpful.

Kimmerly: I think we have one more in there.

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Sonia: Yeah, okay. So I have chosen to stay in a marriage after some rocky times. Okay, good. My partner is satisfied with just snuggling but I want more. Okay, I hear you. You deserve more. Honestly, you deserve pleasure and now it's a matter of figuring out how to get that pleasure. What exactly are your parameters, what it is that you're interested in? So he has tried everything for ED, which is erectile dysfunction and is trying to accept that penetration is not going to happen. He politely rejects my suggestions. Okay, let's get real here.

I'm going to talk and then I'm turning it over to Dr. Kimmerly because we may have different concepts here. Now, if you've chosen to stay in this relationship then you can't change another person. So you have responsibility for yourself and making sure you get the pleasure that you need. Having conversations with your partner is something that's important and hopefully that's something that they are open to, to suggestions and talking about going to see the urologist which is a medical doctor for people with penises that are having difficulties with it basically.

So there's a number of different options that are out there and things that can be done about erectile dysfunction. I will tell you, if we're talking about erectile dysfunction that is usually an indication of cardiovascular issues just in general. So whether they go see the urologist or not, they should be going to their regular medical doctor to get checked out because the penis vessels are the smallest vessels, or some of the smaller vessels in your body. So if you're having atherosclerosis problems and things like that, it's going to affect there first.

So if the penis is not working then he needs to get or the penis owner needs to get checked out just to make sure cardiovascular wise they're doing okay. Now, if they politely reject suggestions you would hope that they would want to have a conversation with you but at this point in time, especially if they're male gendered, our society has equated an erect penis with a man's identity. And so, so much goes into that, in terms of having a conversation.

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You just want to have a conversation so that you two can figure out together how to have an intimate relationship and still get that pleasure. But they may be seeing it as an attack on their manhood and who they are as a man and they can't talk about it because it's their whole identity. So what do you do at this point in time? If you're staying in the relationship, hopefully it's something that you two can work together with and talk about and kind of figure out.

If it's the case that they don't want to work at all on this then they also have to take responsibility for what choices are decided within the relationship as well. If it's not going to work, is it something that they would consider strapping on? There's different alternatives out there, so going to check out the urologist, possibly strapping on, I know there's quite a few couples that do things like that. The important thing is the communication and the discussion and being willing to have a discussion.

Now, if your partner's not willing to have a discussion then you also have to look at the relationship you're in and if this is going to work for you. And if it is, what is it that you can do to make sure that you can still get your pleasure? There's tons of toys that you can add in to the bedroom. There's a number of different ways that this can happen. But at the same time, if you're not happy and it's just a matter of cuddling that's going on and you want more then you get to stand up for yourself and have discussions and make decisions based on what's actually going on. Okay, Dr. Kimmery, turning it over to you.

Kimkery: Back to that bill of rights again. You have the right to ask for what you want. And if someone is not willing to have a conversation, as Dr. Sonia was talking about, then that poses several questions. One of the first questions that I would ask myself in that situation is, okay, what am I going to do to make sure that I can get the pleasure that I desire? Because that's not something that seems to be as important to this person or they're not expressing that it's important to them. So what is it that I need to do in order to get my needs met?

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The second question that I would ask myself is, what part of this relationship is worth salvaging? And I'm not telling you, I'm putting this on record, I'm not saying that you need to end this relationship. I am not saying that. I am merely saying you need to question what your desire is for this relationship long term. And so if you suggest to your partner to go to the urologist and to go to their general practitioner and get a referral to a cardiologist and they refuse to do that then there are a lot of questions that need to be answered and only they can really answer those types of questions.

But you have to understand that you are responsible for your own pleasure and if cuddling is not enough for you right now then you have to seek out and figure out what alternatives are. Sometimes people open up their relationships and allow for there to be different partners, it's called ethical non-monogamy. There's also polyamory where people have multiple relationships with other people, don't necessarily have to be sexual. And Dr. Sonia touched on that a bit earlier. And they can have their nesting partner who is the person that you have that you're married to.

So there are different ways to do this but relationally there needs to be some things established and one of those is you have the right to ask for what you want. And even if it means you ask your partner to strap on and they refuse to do that, they get to choose what they do too but you still get to ask for what you want and for what you need and you get to change your mind as well about what needs to happen for you. So those are things to consider.

It's really brave of you to actually have stayed in the relationship because I know that there are people who, no, absolutely not, I'm not doing this. I am done especially since there seems to be no suggestion that this person is willing to adhere to. So those are things to think about.

Sonia: Yeah. And I mean I have been in relationships where I've stayed in sexless marriages for a really long time. It does something to your soul. So just be aware of what's happening to you and you get to take responsibility

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for yourself. And sometimes we want to please the other partner but we also need to think about what is it that you need as well. So you're responsible for your sexual pleasure.

In the construct of what the situation is right now, hopefully it can change but if it does not change, what exactly do you need to make sure that your needs are being met and that you're not frustrated or resent because resentment, it's underneath the surface and it's building if your needs are not being met. You are responsible for yourself. So if you choose to be in this relationship, that's great, it's an and. I choose to be in this relationship and how do I take care of myself to make sure I get my needs met?

How do I continue to talk with my partner to come up with different plans but also if I have a partner that only wants to snuggle and does not want to engage in anything else, what are my options and what do I need? And what am I willing to put up with and what am I not necessarily willing to? So these are some of the questions to ask yourself if that makes sense.

Alright, we are just about on the hour. It's been so good this month of May. I love this month of May and talking to all of you. Thank you so much for being here and I'm putting out on the emails about The Lit Clit Club. This is what we have. We're going to be having coaching on relationships, sex coaching in general, dream coaching about how to create the dream life that you deserve, body image coaching, sexual health coaching, all that information is going to be within The Lit Clit Club which goes live for founding members that sign up in the month of May. It goes live in June.

And we're going to have this type of coaching all the time in there, and so you can get all your needs met and you can ask all the questions that you want. And I am Dr. Sonia Wright, The Midlife Sex Coach for Women™ and thank you so much, Dr. Kimmerly for joining this call. And Dr. Kimmerly is with us in The Lit Clit Club as the resident relationship coach as well. Thank you so much for coming, everyone.

Kimmerly: Bye.

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Hello, hello, hello, Diamonds, have you heard the amazing news? Dr. Sonia, that would be me and my amazing team has started a sex coaching and life coaching monthly membership program called The Lit Clit Club. The Lit Clit Club was made just for you. It's a safe place where women can come to create the lives that they want, the lives that you want. It's a place where you get to talk openly about your sexual concerns and be heard. There's no judgment, no reprimand, no labels, just acceptance, knowledge and freedom.

It's a place where you get to ask all the questions that you ever wanted to ask about sex and about life too. You get to dream big and create your life your way inside and outside the bedroom. You know I love the concept of creating the life that you want inside and outside the bedroom, that soul bursting life that you deserve. So come to the club for the sexual intimacy coaching and stay for the empowerment and the freedom.

Do you have questions about libido, menopause? Lord help us, menopause is no joke. Sexual health, relationships, sexual orientation, pleasure equality and orgasms, religion and intimacy? I am not finished with this list yet. Maybe you have questions about toys, maybe about non-monogamy. Perhaps you're interested in BDSM, maybe self-love, self-pleasure. Maybe you have questions about self-orientation. Maybe you need to work on healing from trauma.

Maybe body image is something that you want to focus more on and definitely embodiment. Perhaps creating the life of your dreams or journeying to your authentic self. Maybe you just want to stop people pleasing. Whatever questions you have and concerns you have, we have the answers and the coaching that you need. In all actuality, you have the answers inside of you. And the coaching will help bring that out. And you know what? You get to choose how you want to be coached.

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You can be coached by video, by audio only or you can use the questions and answers session, it's whatever works for you. You get to sit back and relax and get the help that you need and your cameras are off. And every month we have a new workshop in addition to our regular coaching sessions. So click on the link below in the show notes and find out more about The Lit Clit Club. We can't wait to see you there in the club, come join us. Things are just starting to heat up. Alright, Dr. Sonia out. Love you all, Diamonds.