

Why Sharing Your Sexual Preferences May Improve Your Marriage

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Your new neighbors invite you over for a weekend meal and you are delighted to share their homemade pizza and salad. Though you love pizza and salad, you are caught a bit by surprise that they have only Ranch dressing (a dressing you mildly dislike) and no Thousand Island (your favorite) and that they have put loads of shredded fresh basil all over the delicious pepperoni pizza. You'd strongly prefer to remove the basil, but are not sure how to reduce the awkward moment it could create.

You would never expect them to know such a random and personal preference like the fact that you hate basil.



A similar situation can happen in the relationship between couples, especially in sex. Many couples may find it just as difficult to share their thoughts, feelings, and preferences with each other, as it would be to tell the new neighbor you don't like basil or wish they might pull out several choices of salad dressing for the weekend meal.

In fact, disclosure does become a key part of healthy sexual relationships. A well respected marriage therapist, David Schnarch defines [intimacy](#) as an "interpersonal process" which involves "confronting yourself and disclosing yourself" in front of your partner. Even thinking about sharing deeply personal thoughts and feelings about sex may create discomfort or anxiety. However, research assures us that doing so is definitely [worth it](#).

Each person's willingness to reveal their sexual likes and dislikes, can make a [positive impact](#) on how close and emotionally connected they feel to their partner. If one person feels comfortable to share with their partner that a particular sexual experience was especially enjoyable or another was somewhat uncomfortable to them, they create an opportunity for greater closeness. Disclosure means that you choose to let your partner see what is going on in your mind and body, instead of shying away from it.

Interestingly, while research assures us that we will experience better sex and more intimate relationships when we share, these findings may differ depending on gender.



Women who are more open about their sexual preferences report that they have happier relationships. This is probably because sharing their likes and dislikes helps them to feel deeply connected to their partner, and to have better sex.

By contrast, men's happiness in sex was only slightly enhanced by sharing his own likes and dislikes. Instead, men's enjoyment had a lot to do with his partner's ability to share her [preferences](#). This may be because men can become aroused relatively easily without needing to share specific sexual preferences/instructions with their partner. Yet when their partner is able to share their preferences, men probably feel better equipped to facilitate good sex.

These findings suggest that self-disclosure is a signal of happy relationships both generally, and sexually. The bottom line is, men report having better sex when their partner is more open and self-disclosing than when they are not.

Ultimately, men and women both want to feel understood and able to talk about their preferences in comfortable ways. It makes sense that we are happier when we feel heard and valued by a loving partner. Being willing to share these details expresses complete trust. In fact, revealing more about ourselves is a gift we can give our partner because it allows them to understand us more completely. In a similar way, we must also be willing to listen and respond to the feelings our partners express. All of this helps fulfill the need we each have to be heard and seen within our marriage.

Having a shared understanding of one another's preferences opens the door to a more satisfying relationship, and better sex—both of which are worth the courage it takes to honestly and kindly share what we feel.