

# **INTIMACY AFTER A MULTIPLE MYELOMA DIAGNOSIS**

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# TODAY'S AGENDA

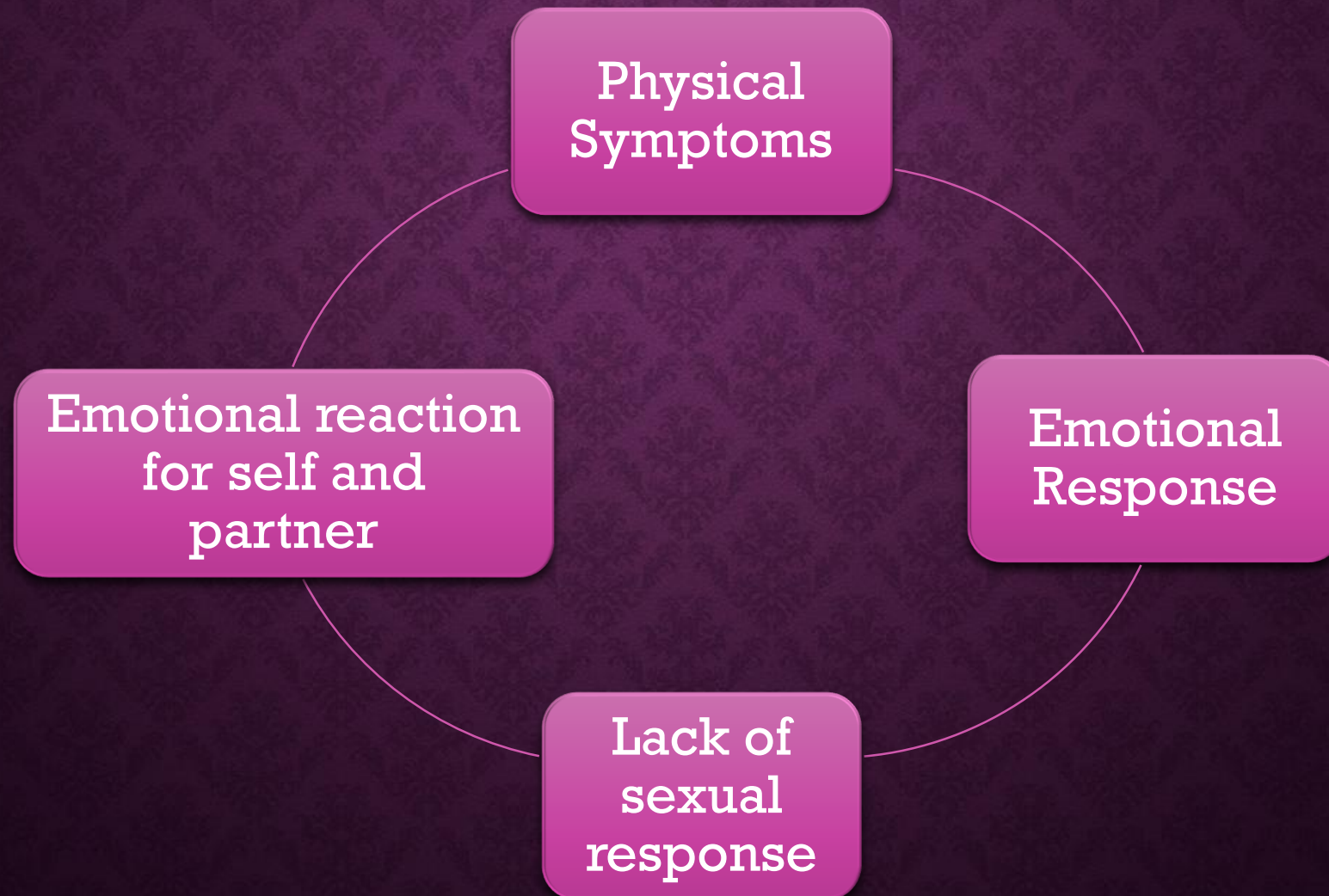
- How cancer, specifically MM effects sexuality
  - Body Image
  - Physical and sexual side effects
  - Relational dynamics
    - Including family
- Sexuality Resources
- Q&A



# The Low Down

- A vast majority of people with a history of cancer report issues related to sexuality
- Most common complaint is lack of sex drive, libido, arousal, etc.
  - Also, erectile dysfunction in Men & Dyspareunia (Painful Intercourse) in Women.
- Studies have shown that more than half of the time, information regarding sexuality isn't provided by oncologists
  - Sex is challenging for patients and doctors
- Grant yourself PERMISSION to discuss sex

- Brain is the largest sexual organ; emotions and mental health impact sexual response.
  - Positive sexual experiences can improve mental and emotional health.





# Body Image

- Desexualization of societally selected groups: Children, Elderly and Sick.
- “Involves perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviors related to the entire body and its functioning” (Fingeret, Teo & Epner, 2014).
- Body Image concerns are **COMMON**.
- Impacts people across all disease sites and sexes.
  - 1/3 of men and 1/2 of women in 1995 were estimated to have poor body image (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002)
- Scars, burns, decreased ability and mobility – Regardless if others are able to notice, can all hinder positive body image

# BLOOD CANCER SPECIFIC

Total Body Irradiation

Vaginal dryness

Painful intercourse

Erectile dysfunction

Infertility

Stem Cell Transplant/Graft Versus Host  
Disease\*

Hormonal changes

Gonadal failure

Erectile and ejaculatory dysfunction

Dyspareunia

Loss of vaginal flexibility, pain or shortening of vagina

Sensitivity to skin around penis\*

Body image (rash\*, scar tissue\*)



# Concerns Specific To MM

- In a 2014 study regarding holistic needs assessment, 30% of participants reported concern regarding their sexual health after MM treatment (Boland, et. al).

\*Heart Conditions and/or Pulmonary Hypertension (Feyereisn, et al., 2015).

- Urinary Incontinence
- Depression
- Compression fractures
- Fatigue : ↑fatigue ↑mood disturbance (Coleman, et. al, 2011).
- Weight gain (prolonged high dose steroid use)
- Weakened orgasmic sensation: particularly if there is a prostatic issue (Richards, et. al, 2011).

# MEDICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

- Blood work and full physical will tease out underlying issues (i.e. cardiac, diabetes)
- Hormonal treatments for arousal/desire
- Standard erectile dysfunction medications
  - Viagra/Cialis (arousal)
  - Flibanserin (desire, not the same as Viagra) – has some side effects you need to know about
- Anti-depressants (desire)
- Penile implants
- Physical therapy (pelvic floor specialists)
- Cancer diagnosis can create considerable emotional distress or trauma
  - EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
  - CBT (Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy) has significant evidence for body image
- Couples or Sex Therapy
  - Sensate Focus
  - Emotionally Focused Therapy



# RELATIONAL DYNAMICS

- A cancer diagnosis can intensify intimacy or relational discord for those already in a committed relationship (Sheppard & Ely, 2008)
  - Returning to a state of “unselfconscious sex” (Wittmann, et al., 2015)
- Relationships with others are generally impacted with a diagnosis.
  - Roles within relationships, romantic or not, can change significantly.
- Coping skills of the patient affect the caregiver and vice versa.
- Empathy Versus Sympathy – [Video](#)
  - Active Engagement Versus Disengagement



# GOTTMAN'S FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

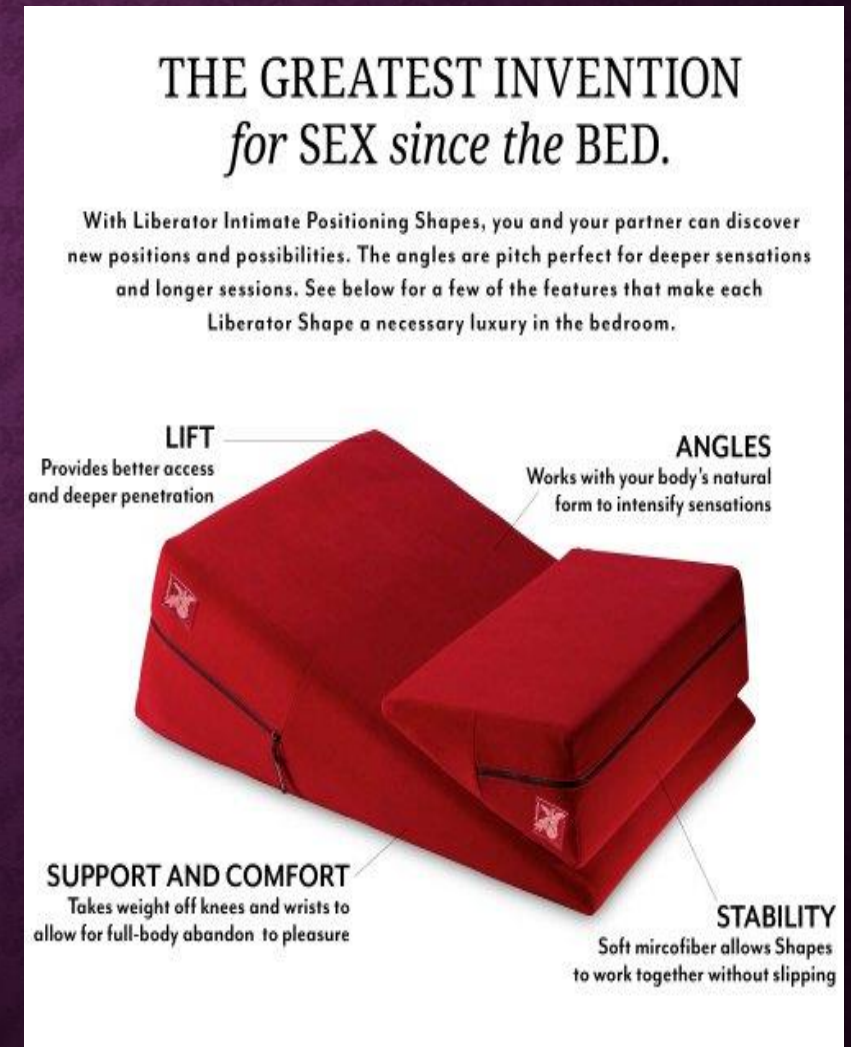


- Criticism
- Defensiveness
- Stonewalling
- Contempt



# ASSISTIVE DEVICES

- BPA & Phthalate free lubricants and condoms
  - If it smells, tingles, or tastes – it's not for you!
  - **USE CONDOMS FOR SEXUAL HEALTH'S SAKE.\*\***
- Personal assistive devices
  - Medical grade silicone or glass
  - Wash them before and after with hot, soapy water.  
**DO NOT USE ANTIBACTERIAL WIPES**
- Props or Pillows (i.e. The Liberator)
- Thinking outside the genitalia box



# RESOURCES FOR ASSISTIVE DEVICES

- **Lubricants**

- Good Clean Love Lubricant: [www.goodcleanlove.com](http://www.goodcleanlove.com). Endorsed by many doctors and sexologists. 95% organic ingredients.
- Yes Natural Lubricant: [www.yesyesyes.org](http://www.yesyesyes.org). Certified Organic. Be aware that the oil lubricant does contain tree nut oil. Not manufactured in the US – can be shipped and may be more expensive.
- Sliquid Lubricants: [www.sliquid.com](http://www.sliquid.com). DEA, gluten, glycerine, glycerol, parabens, PEG, propylene glycol, sorbitol & sulphates; Also 100% vegan friendly. Can purchase online or at local adult retail locations.

- **Vibrators**

- Jimmy Jane: [www.jimmyjane.com](http://www.jimmyjane.com). Phthalate-free, medical grade silicone and/or stainless steel.
- We-Vibe: [www.we-vibe.com](http://www.we-vibe.com). BPA & Phthalate-free, medical grade silicone. See article that discusses doctor's endorsement [here](#).

- **Condoms**

- Sir Richard's: [www.sirrichards.com](http://www.sirrichards.com). Made with natural rubber and silicone lubricant. Free of glycerins, parabens, spermicides and petrochemicals; Also vegan friendly.