

pre-marital counseling

helping couples navigate sexual intimacy for the first time

In our society today, committed long-term relationships seem to be a relic of a bygone era. A concept more aligned with your parents and grandparents generation. This is evident by the high divorce rate that exists today. There are many reasons for the decline in marital stability and sustainability. Issues related to personal finances, raising children, career goals all seem to be obstacles that place stress on any relationship. However, for some couples, the very act of expressing love, affection, and physical intimacy with their partner for the first time can be the most stressful of all. The transition from virgin to sexual being can be a

difficult and lengthy process. Consummation of the marriage may not occur on the wedding night but with partner support and an ever expanding sexual comfort zone, full sexual compatibility is inevitable. Enlightened couples seek out advice and pursue pre-marital counseling in order to minimize failure and maximize success with their chosen mate. This counseling may be available through one's spiritual advisor or with a trained, professional therapist.

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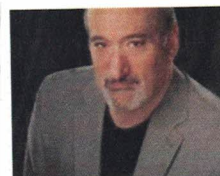
sion; women usually worry about pain and bleeding while men usually have a high degree of performance anxiety (fear of failure) and this anxiety commonly leads to erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation. They may have difficulty dealing with the transition from sexual guilt and shame to sexual freedom, pleasure, and the sharing of a deep emotional as well as physical bond. Pre-marital counseling seeks to prepare couples for the journey ahead. Some individuals may have been exposed to a sex education class in school but many have not. On the most basic level, couples need to be educated about their bodies, genital anatomy, erogenous zones, hormonal issues, menses in women, pregnancy concerns, etc. Once a woman understands her body and how it works, she can begin to relax and receive greater sexual fulfillment. Creating a sexual dialogue between partners is helpful in reducing tension, apprehension and anxiety. Couples need to discuss freely issues such as erotic fantasies, sexual fears, and their own sense of sexuality. Mindfulness is the key to a mutually rewarding and intimate relationship. Sexual pleasure should not be unilateral but rather partners should be aware of and considerate of each other's needs and desires. Sex should not be viewed as obligatory but rather consensual, an expression of deep affection and pleasure.

Medical conditions commonly seen in women attempting sexual relations for the first time are Dyspareunia (painful sex) and Vaginismus (involuntary spasms of vaginal muscles). Dyspareunia may be caused by a lack of arousal and an inability to adequately lubricate the vagina. Couples that focus on foreplay instead of pen-

etration will allow for greater lubrication. Sexual pain can be reduced when a man is able to control the erectile response and allow the woman the time necessary to relax and be comfortable with penetration. Vaginismus is very common in this population and can be effectively treated with pelvic floor physical therapy, vaginal dilators and medications. Sex Therapy can provide techniques and instruction in alleviating these problems.

The majority of men can usually achieve a satisfactory erection from the start. It is imperative that these men have an understanding of their partner's needs and fears and work in concert with them to achieve a painless and satisfying sexual experience. For the men who exhibit performance anxiety resulting in erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation, medications are helpful as well as Sex Therapy techniques.

Sexual intimacy for the first time can lead to emotional distress and physical pain. A couples honeymoon may be a source of great fear and apprehension when it should be a time of great romance and affection. With the proper pre-marital advice, marital consummation and sexual satisfaction can be achieved. At the Center for Sexual Medicine, Dr. Schwartz, a physician and certified sex therapist, can help couples achieve the sexual intimacy they deserve. Call today for an appointment and start the journey toward sexual fulfillment.



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