

Sexual or Love Phobias

Maxime Coles

I am sure that we are all afraid of something but it become strange to think that one can experience fear of something they should normally enjoy. It is not a topic of frequent discussions among physicians or patients but it seems that every medical student should be familiar with some terms and recognize such problems when performing a history and physical.

I was surprised to see that although one may have enjoyed an extensive sexual experience in spite of such problem being dominant in their relationships. I want to expose "Sex Phobia" or "Love Phobia" in the best of my abilities. Perhaps my friends practicing in Psychiatry may join in the discussion and express their professional views whenever a clarification may be needed. Indeed, we have all a fear of something, but it become well hidden when a fear for "Sex" is even imaginable.

How can you be afraid of something for which you should experience joy and pleasure? How can someone imagine that pleasure can bring fear. Is sex pleasurable more than anything in the world? Why should one experience pain with sex. The term used by expert is Phobia. A phobia defies any logic and may not even make sense.

A phobia can be explained as an inexplicable and exaggerated fear of an object or a situation that is often illogical. It may bring out some of the most intense panic attacks. Phobias can be related to ideas or wet dreams (oneirogmophobia) or the fact that someone can be scared of being kissed (philemaphobia) or may develop a fear of contracting germs (mysophobia) or simply a fear of being touched by somebody else (chiraptophobia).

It becomes difficult to get close to such person when one can't stand the thought of being touched. Such individual may not even feel comfortable in being hugged or sitting close to someone in a theater room or in private. In a romantic relation, the cuddles may also be rejected rendering the relation more difficult. Some may not even tolerate viewing a romantic scene in a movie theater nor they will enjoy the closeness of a partner with its caresses and his kisses. Yes, be sure to know that people can experience fear of sex or fear of the sexual organs itself. I am sorry to inform you, that these fears can be seen more often than one can believe.

Religious societies may influence these phobias especially when sexual abuses can induce anxiety or other kind of trauma. One has to realize that these phobias may be simply in-born and the people suffering from these conditions often cannot overcome the situation easily. They may require extensive help without any insurance that a full recovery can be assured.

There are different Sex Phobias which may appear to be related to the fear of sex (genophobia) or to the fear of an erect penis (phallophobia) or the fear in performing the sexual act. It is a little different perhaps to the one experiencing a fear for the spiders (Arachnophobia) or a fear of the enclosed space (Claustrophobia) or like a fear of an elevator (Elevatophobia or Emetophobia) causing an intense anxiety to a point that such individual may vomit when just thinking about such possibilities.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) would not advise to use the term "phobia" lightly for any occasion especially when one is refusing to eat some kind of food just by fearing of becoming sick by example. Aversions are not Phobias. In phobia, an individual thinks that he/she will die if he/she enters an elevator by example. This becomes a way to develop an irrational fear, so extreme that it can interfere with work or any life activities. In the case of sex phobia, irrational fear may even stop such individual to enjoy a romantic moment by example. It may become certainly a mystery to find the specific cause of fear.

In sex, a traumatic sexual experience may often explain the cause of such phobia reaction. An article reports a girl walking in the room where her parents were performing their sexual act while her mother was then performing in oral sex for her father. She was still in High school and the scene was shocking for her. She overheard also their surprising conversation and concluded that it was the way a woman may become pregnant. She was so traumatized and that the scene follows her all her

life. She reacted to oral sex by the fear of becoming pregnant and refused any sexual approach under the pretext that oral sex was dirty.

Sex knows well how to conceal its mysteries. This scene imposed to the young girl an indelible episode, imposing her to a form of “neurosis” which can be difficult to treat. Such individual is marked forever.

Often the parents may have never been aware that the child witnessed such scene, too busy in their romance like it may have been in the above-mentioned case. The young girl experienced a shock that will perturbate unconditionally her future sexual relations. This may change her sex life forever and it may represent the cause of her inability to be satisfied in any relationship. Unfortunately, I am not a psychiatrist but I wanted to raise the subject and clear the path for our medical students and residents on certain terms used in the sexual and medical language for which they should become familiar.

I tried to elucidate such sexual fears to enhance their knowledge in the field and bring more understanding. I encourage them to take a moment to consult an experienced Psychiatrist or a Psychologist in the field if needed.

Let us review different kinds of sexual or love phobias listed in our medical literature and I will try to demonstrate to you, that clearly, Sex is not always pleasurable to everyone:

- 1- “Phallophobia” or “Ithyphallophobia” or “Medorthophobia” describe the fear of an erect penis which may be manifested by dizziness, confusion, light-headedness, blurred vision, tachycardia, hyperventilation, breathlessness. Both men and women can suffer from such fear. For the men, the fear is in getting an erection and for the women, the fear is in touching an erect penis. There may be also a major alteration in the brain activity among such individual especially in case where a phobia is imminent or apparent. MRI studies can even display an increased activity in the amygdala, a small almond-shaped structure inside your brain which is part of the limbic system able to detect danger and play a role in behavior, emotional and learning.
- 2- Researches have also demonstrated that the amygdala contributes to more than just anxiety and fear. It plays also a role in the aggression, the social communication and even the emotions controlling our memories.

- 3- "Sexophobia" is the fear of the opposite sex.
- 4- "Genophobia" or "Coitophobia" is the physical and/or the psychological fear of having sex (intercourse). They may be afraid of getting intimate and may never go beyond kissing and cuddling.
- 5- Haphephobia (Chiraptophobia) is the fear of being touched not just in a sexual manner, but also even with a casual brushing of the shoulders while in public especially in a crowded area.
- 6- "Erotophobia" or "Kolpophobia" is the fear of sexual love, fear of any object, act or person related to sex where such individual may develop fear or even talking about anything of sexual nature. Even the fear of the vagina.
- 7- "Oneirogmophobia" is the fear of wet dreams.
- 8- "Medumalacuphobia" is often linked to performance anxiety in men fearing of losing an erection. Often, they will refuse to engage in sex by fear of disappointing their partner and embarrass themselves.
- 9- Androphobia is the fear of men, a sort of opposite of Venustraphobia.
- 10- "Agrophobia" is seen often in people who have suffered some kind of sexual abuse in the past or been witness to one. This is the fear of being a victim of sexual abuse. It is also a fear that can surface with one who was victim of sexual molestation.
- 11- Caligynephobia or "Venustraphobia" is the fear of beautiful women. Men or women fear that they do not deserve such beauty and become worried that the beauty can harm them in a certain manner.
- 12- "Gymnophobia" is the fear of nudity, fear of being seen naked.
- 13- Philemaphobia is the fear of kissing. They are afraid of passing germs.
- 14- "Menophobia" is the fear of menstruation. Women are panicking anytime they are menstruating but men with this fear become scared at the sight of the blood of the menstruation.
- 15- "Caligynephobia" is the fear of beautiful women.
- 16- "Gynephobia" or "Gynophobia" is the fear of women.
- 17- Paraphobia: is a fear of perversion. Sex is strictly according to their standards or the moral codes.
- 18- Heterophobia: is the fear of the opposite sex in men or in women.
- 19- "Parthenophobia" is the irrational fear of virgins or young females. More often seen in men than women find it almost

impossible to be sexually attracted to a woman who hasn't ever had sex.

20- "Tocophobia" is the fear of pregnancy or childbirth, the fear of getting pregnant as well as giving birth. This phobia is a block to the women enjoying sex as well as a block to conception.

21- "Eurotophobia" or "Kolpophobia" is the fear of female genitalia.

22- Anuptaphobia is the fear of staying single forever especially if one has dealt with dysfunctional relationship in their love life. It is also the fear of remaining unmarried or being married to the wrong person. For some, the idea of dying alone magnifies all the worries associated with Anuptaphobia.

In conclusion, I wish one can become familiar with the different phobias related to Love and Sex.

Maxime Coles MD

Boca Raton FL

1-26-2024