

# The Rucker Model of Intimate Sex

## Understanding the Process of Sexual Desire

### What is Sexual Desire?

*Sexual desire* consists of more than just the urge to have sex. In fact, for women in particular and for some men, there is no noticeable urge. So, some people start from *neutral* whereas others start already feeling *horny*. The three elements of sexual desire are *biological urge*, *intimacy and chemistry with one's partner*, and *erotic mood (or frame of mind)*. If a person's *biological urge* is minimal, the other two elements of sexual desire become especially important!

The *biological urge* refers to one's libido. Both men and women need to have the appropriate hormonal balance and in particular, enough testosterone, to feel at least open to sex. The range of normal urge level can vary from person to person – from feeling *neutral* to feeling *horny*. Even if a person feels only neutral toward sex, sufficient sexual desire can be achieved by cultivating *intimacy* and an *erotic mood*.

If there is a significant degree of *intimacy and chemistry with one's partner*, then the feeling of wanting to connect physically with the other person can lead one into being sexual. In other words, *intimacy* can fuel sexual desire!

*Erotic mood (or frame of mind)* includes how one feels about sex and whether or not one looks forward to sex. One can nurture one's *erotic mood* by fantasies or by projecting the idea that an anticipated sexual experience will be positive. Each person has their own “erotic bridges” that help them get into an erotic mood. These can range from something kinesthetic (such as a massage or a bath) to things that get the mind focused in a erotic direction (such as reading an erotic story).

In summary, for a person whose *biological urge* is *neutral*, sexual desire can be increased by improving intimacy with one's partner and/or by cultivating a more significant erotic mood. See *Cultivating Sexual Desire* below.

### Factors Influencing Sexual Desire

There are a host of factors that can influence sexual desire. Many of these factors block or dampen sexual desire. The better one can sort out the factors which are affecting one's desire, the better one can address them and thereby enhance sexual desire.

#### General Factors:

- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Lack of Time (priorities)
- ◆ Stress or Preoccupation with Other Aspects of Life (e.g., Work or Children)

**Factors affecting Biological Urge:**

- ◆ Gender (a higher percentage of males than females have a high biological urge)
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Hormonal Factors
- ◆ Effects of Illness
- ◆ Medication Side Effects
- ◆ Effects of Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

**Factors affecting Intimacy and Chemistry with Partner:**

- ◆ Lack of Attraction to Partner
- ◆ Marital Conflict
- ◆ Lack of Capacity for Intimacy
- ◆ Anxiety About Intimacy (resulting in emotional distance)
- ◆ Anxiety About Sex (embarrassed, performance or response anxiety)
- ◆ Gender Orientation

**Factors affecting Erotic Mood or Frame of Mind:**

- ◆ Lack of Self Esteem
- ◆ Poor Body Image
- ◆ Worry
- ◆ Internal Negative Messages About Sex
- ◆ Religious Orthodoxy
- ◆ Fear of Pregnancy
- ◆ Aging Concerns
- ◆ Anticipation of Physical Pain Accompanying Sex
- ◆ Past Sexual Abuse or Trauma
- ◆ Sexual Aversions
- ◆ Sexual Paraphilias (e.g., fetishes)

**Cultivating Sexual Desire**

To cultivate sexual desire one can:

- ◆ Carve out time for self and especially time to be together
- ◆ Connect and become intimate (talking, touching, eye contact)
- ◆ Get in the mood – discover and use “erotic bridges”
- ◆ Project and look forward positively to sex
- ◆ Have more physical contact (touching, caressing, massaging)
- ◆ Focus on what each likes best sexually
- ◆ Communicate and give each other feedback
- ◆ Develop sensuousness
- ◆ Enhance emotional contact before and during sex
- ◆ Be more active during sex to help maintain interest
- ◆ Address partnership sexual desire discrepancies as a couple or through therapy

- ◆ Recall peak erotic experiences and bring that energy to current experiences

## The Sexual Experience

Sexual desire is the *gateway* into a sexual experience. The sexual experience may include kissing, caressing, sexual stimulation of varying sorts, and intercourse. Rather than the traditional term *foreplay*, followed by intercourse as the main event, it is more flexible to consider all sexual experiences as *loveplay* or *sex*. Certainly everyone is entitled to their favourite activities, but becoming too narrow in focus can increase the risk of sex becoming boring.

## Personal Value & Meaning of the Sexual Experience

It is important that each participant is able to derive value and meaning during each sexual experience. Here are some examples of what people value about sex:

- ◆ Enjoying the feeling of being touched
- ◆ Enjoying the feeling of touching
- ◆ Feeling emotionally close
- ◆ Feeling spiritually connected
- ◆ Feeling sexually aroused
- ◆ Having an orgasm
- ◆ Feeling a sense of comfort together

## How You Feel About the Sexual Experience

How you feel about the experience *later* (i.e., in *retrospect*) influences your feelings about yourself and your feelings about your partner, and can contribute to what feeling you project toward your subsequent sexual experiences.

## Summary

Intimate sex is multidimensional and different for each person. There are many variations of normal and many opportunities to change, vary, and/or enhance the process. Having a model in mind can help one make sense of a very personal and complex process and can serve as a guide to finding strategies that make sex more intimate and rewarding.

To view a diagram of the [Rucker Model of Intimate Sex](#), click here.

**If either you or your partner would like to increase your sexual desire or improve the intimacy in your sex life, please contact Dr. Rucker, at her Vancouver, BC therapy office. She can be reached by phone at (604) 731-4466 or by email at: [bianca@biancarucker.com](mailto:bianca@biancarucker.com).**