

Want better sex? Savour the experience

By Jennifer Parks, Canwest News Service November 19, 2008

The culture of the "swift shag" is waking up to the fact that it's the journey, not the destination, that matters.

EDMONTON - For a culture enamoured by fast cars, drive-thrus, instant messaging and work productivity, it's no surprise that "wham-bam-thank-you- ma'am" is part of our pop-lexicon.

Typically, men shoulder the burden of blame for fast-tracking foreplay, treating sex like a race to the finish line and being champions of the three- minute orgasm.

However, there's a scene in the new Sex and the City movie in which an exhausted, overworked Miranda blurts out to her partner Steve, during their first sex in six months, "can't we get this over with?"

To destination-oriented lovers, in this age of speed, erotic deceleration may seem counterintuitive, but more and more people today are starting to wonder "what's the big rush anyway?"

Slowly, but surely, every facet of life - work, travel, communication, food and even sex - is being touched by the emerging desire to do less and enjoy more.

Slow, it seems, is the new fast.

In his book In Praise of Slow, Carl Honore examines how the slow movement is challenging how we do everything from raise kids, build cities and treat disease to eat, sleep and make love.

"Even lads' magazines have started urging readers to seduce their partners with long, laid-back erotic encounters, complete with candles, music, wine and massage," he writes.

In major North American cities, couples can now enrol in tantric sex workshops that teach a mix of meditation, yoga, breathing and unhurried foreplay to magnify the intimacy and pleasures of lovemaking.

The quickie, to be sure, will always have its place; in fact, Honore argues that doing it fast is an instinct that goes back to when our ancestors fornicated on the fly to make themselves less vulnerable to attack by rivals and predators.

Nonetheless, the culture of the "swift shag" is waking up to the fact that it's the journey, not the destination, that matters.

Sex should be savoured, like a 100-year-old bottle of Chateauneuf-du-Pape, not guzzled like the last watery pint before the bar closes.

Taking your time won't just score you points in the bedroom, says a Vancouver sex expert.

"The one thing all sexual dysfunctions have in common is that our head is cut off from our genitals," says David McKenzie, a marriage counsellor and sex therapist with a doctorate in human sexuality.

"Anorgasmia and premature ejaculation are often a result of people not giving themselves enough time to get into their sexual feelings and enjoy them," he says. "Many men aren't aware they are getting close to ejaculating, and 30 per cent of women are not able to orgasm."

Women naturally take longer, on average 20 minutes to reach full sexual arousal, compared with 10 minutes for men, McKenzie explains.

"Guys need to take more time to get their women on board," he says. "Slowing down means both people have the chance to enjoy sex more."

And isn't the biggest turn-on knowing your partner's as into it as you are?

Yet those in search of slow are swimming counter-current: we receive so many messages about how sex "ought to be" from former lovers, erotic media, and even our own masturbatory styles, says McKenzie.

"Some men masturbate too fast, and over the ultra-sensitive head of the penis, which creates too much stimulation and can lead to premature ejaculation; while others grip too hard, which no vagina can replicate, no matter how many Kegel exercises she does," McKenzie explains. "This guy can pump for hours and never come, so he needs to slow down, ease up, and start smelling the roses along the way."

Slow sex can not only be more pleasurable, it becomes necessary the older we get, says Joan Price, author of *Better Than I Ever Expected: Straight Talk about Sex After Sixty*.

"The depletion of hormones means we don't get as aroused, so rather than rush to the finish line like we did in our 20s, why not stay at each step and really enjoy it?" says Price.

Older people also have the benefit of being seasoned lovers, she adds. "For many seniors, this is the best sex of our lives; not the easiest - because we're not as quick with arousal and orgasm - but we know ourselves and our partners, in and out of bed, and we're much more ready to love, be loved, and express ourselves sexually."

As you begin to redefine yourself sexually, focusing on the journey rather than its conclusion, slowing down helps us live more in the moment, says an Ontario life coach, author and slow-living advocate.

Free of distractions, expectations and judgments of how sex should unfold, a true and deep conversation can take place between lovers, says Sue Kenney.

"If we go to bed thinking 'he always wants to do it too fast,' your partner will receive that pressure. Instead of opening to the possibility for it to change, it's reinforced," she says. "If you slow down and take a breath, you can open to creating new possibilities."

Slowing things down will not only help you connect more deeply with your lover. It will make orgasms longer, stronger and extend the journey to climax, says McKenzie.

Besides, sex is loads of fun, and since we all work so darn hard these days, don't we deserve a little extended play time between the sheets, too?

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