

Questions and Answers

What Does Sex Therapy Involve?



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Many years ago when I was a new staff member in clinical psychologist, Steve Wilson's office, I thought it would be a good idea to take the opportunity to help my readers understand my services as a relationship and sex counselor. Here is part of an interview that I gave for Steve so that you could get a peek "behind the closed therapy door."

Steve Wilson: Cindy, Why don't you start by explaining WHAT SEX THERAPY IS NOT!

Cindy Ruberg: I'm glad you asked me this question first because there is so much confusion and there are so many myths attached to sex therapy. First and foremost, I'd like to stress that sex therapy is NOT a touching therapy! Like many other non-medical therapies, sex therapy is a talking therapy rather than a touching therapy. At no time can a sex therapist, unless he or she is a physician, request that a person disrobe for a physical examination. Clients are never expected to have sex in front of the sex therapist or sex counselor or anywhere, while in the office.

Steve Wilson: You Mean, Sex Therapists are Not Sex Surrogates?

Cindy: Exactly Right! Sexual techniques are Never personally demonstrated nor are clients touched sexually in any way.

Steve: What ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR DIFFERENCES between sex therapy and "regular" therapy?

Cindy: An obvious major difference is that "the talk" in sex therapy focuses on client's sexual concerns or problems. Also, "it" goes into explicit sexual detail. Specific questions must be asked because it is impossible to help find a solution to a sexual concern without exploring in some detail what happened sexually in the past and what is occurring sexually at present. This often includes correcting faulty learning about sex or even just giving permission to be sexual. This brings to mind another major difference, which is that sex therapy, is an ACTIVE therapy that involves a lot of educating and talking by the counselor or therapist. It is not a passive therapy. Also, since most sexual problems are not the result of deep underlying conflicts, usually sex therapy is a here-and-now therapy that is solution oriented and generally short term.

Steve Wilson: What happens when people are "afraid" to talk about their sexual concerns?

Cindy Ruberg: Since sex therapists and sex counselors realize that is usually easier for many people to "do sex" then to talk about it, we go to great lengths to put people at ease and make them feel comfortable with this topic and their personal issues.

Steve Wilson: Do you mainly treat the person "at fault"?

Cindy Ruberg: There is no one person "at fault" because, "one person's dysfunction is the other person's distress." Therefore,

assuming the person is in a relationship, the RELATIONSHIP is treated. To put it another way, since most sexual problems "don't occur in a vacuum, sex therapy is primarily a couples therapy which treats sexual concerns within the context of the relationship.

Steve Wilson: What happens if a person is not in a relationship?

Cindy Ruberg: The person gets treated individually. Also, a person might get treated individually on certain occasions, even if he or she is in a relationship.

Steve Wilson: Will you be willing to share more about sex counselors and sex therapists, what they do, and the kinds of problems they treat at a later time?

Cindy Ruberg: I will be glad to answer any more questions you have.

Note: For any questions concerning sex counseling or therapy, email me at www.sexandrelationships.com

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