

Interview with Meaghan Wray, writing for Humber Et Cetera Feb 5/17 to be published on-line Friday Feb 10/17

*How did you get involved in the field of sex therapy?*

I got involved because of my own personal experiences as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. I had sexual identity, orientation and trauma issues into my thirties which included mental dissociation and body numbing. I eventually found help through a combination of emotional release body work and psychotherapy and decided to pursue both those fields and combine the knowledge of both disciplines to help others.

*Why do you think this area of therapy is important? Do you normally see couples, or individuals?*

We are embodied, sexual beings and I think it's taken a long time for psychotherapy to catch up with that idea and be more inclusive in it's approach to working with people. I normally see individuals but once in a while I'll see a couple for a few sessions to work specifically with their sexual issues. Often I find that one of the two people in a couple is having more difficulty than the other and prefer to do that in depth work individually.

*What factors do you believe affect the sex lives and perspectives of sex for the millennial generation (ages 18-34 roughly)?*

I think that on-line dating/hook-up apps and internet porn are the most significant factors that challenge the millennials.

*There are a few studies that suggest the millennial generation is having less sex, and seeking fewer sexual partners, than previous generations. Can you speculate as to why that could be? (For example, some studies suggest it is because of the advent of dating applications).*

It's interesting that the studies suggest the millennials are having less sex and seeking fewer partners. I would have thought that the opposite was true. My guess is that the dating apps make it so much easier for some people to hook up and much harder for others. There is more emphasis on physical attributes than there used to be and ridiculous competition with thousands of people to choose from. The people who are successful on-line aren't even available to meet the people who aren't. The dating playing field is very un-level now.

*What do you think are the biggest anxieties for millennials in terms of intimacy, relationships, and sexual experience?*

I'm sorry to say that the baby boomers missed the boat in terms of figuring out proper safeguards on internet porn to prevent it from being seen by their kids, some of them being exposed as early as 10 years old. Based on my experience working with many clients, I've determined that porn has flooded the sexual field of many millennials and I believe that it's been eroding their capacity for intimacy. It seems to promote the 'fuck first, talk later' style of dating and stunts the slower 'getting to know you' phase that's necessary for intimacy to develop. Those that watch a lot of porn for many years, can also end up experiencing performance anxiety, unnecessary sexual pressure and unrealistic expectations of themselves and their partners. By substituting external porn fantasy for your own internal natural fantasy life, you take what used to be personal, private and useful for your sexual maturation, and replace it with something that can feel secret and shameful, and is not useful for your own sexual development. I've also seen many cases of confused orientation, guys mostly, worried that they are gay. I believe that watching a lot of sex on-line that includes your own gender unconsciously contributes to this issue. I'm not saying porn is all bad. I believe it's here to stay and we need to be more thoughtful about it's messages and it's use.

*What role does intimacy and sex play in the maintenance of healthy relationships?*

Intimacy and sex are crucial in the maintenance of healthy relationships. I'd say that intimacy is the hardest thing to achieve because it takes a lot of time, patience and attention. If you have the intimacy, and can really share your thoughts and feelings safely with each other, sex is easy.

*What advice would you give the twenty-somethings who feel anxiety towards relationships and intimacy?*

I think the most important sexual relationship to nurture is with yourself. Understand your own sexuality, your own pleasure, and your own unique sexual fantasy life, (separate from someone else's fantasies presented in porn) before you engage with another. I also tell people to take time, wait and get to know someone before having intercourse. Don't succumb to pressure to be anything but genuine.