

## Final Thoughts

We human beings crave interaction. We have the natural desire to be touched, hugged, caressed and loved. Whether this is fulfilled in a partnership or by close friendships, most people desire close relationships that involve intimacy at some level. Sexuality and intimacy are not life or death issues but are very real quality of life issues.



Oftentimes I hear people say, "This (sex) should be the last thing on my mind in the midst of all the other things in my life" or a partner says, "It's selfish of me to be concerned about it". It is important to recognize and dispel your own myths and misconceptions about sexuality and intimacy and be clear about your expectations. Your spiritual leader can be of great assistance as you examine your thoughts or beliefs on your sexual and intimate relationships.

Written by Sage Bolte, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C, Inova Life with Cancer

Edited by The Rev. Sandi John, RN-CS, MS, MDiv, Senior Manager, Congregational Health Partnership

Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health, blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community we serve through excellence in patient care, education and research.



Congregational Health Partnership  
Inova HealthSource  
2832 Juniper Street Suite 201  
Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 703-208-3628  
Fax: 703-208-5601

[www.inovahealthsource.com](http://www.inovahealthsource.com)  
[www.inova.com](http://www.inova.com)

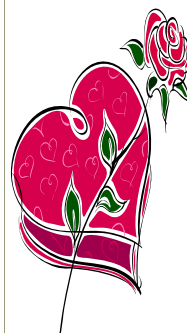


## For Your Health

### Sexuality and Intimacy

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[www.inovahealthsource.com](http://www.inovahealthsource.com)



Sexuality is often overlooked within the healthcare setting, but it is an important part of every person no matter what your age. Sexuality does not just mean the act of sex; it refers to all the beautiful and wonderful traits that make up who you are -- how you perceive yourself as a man or woman, husband, wife, partner, lover or friend, employee, etc. Your sexuality and the ways in which it is expressed are influenced by your cultural, ethnic, religious and spiritual background and beliefs, your family teachings and the environment in which you live. Often when an individual is not taking care of his/her physical, emotional and spiritual health, intimate and sexual relationships are negatively interrupted.

Intimacy is a human need. It is the connection between two people that involves trust, honesty and communication. Intimate relationships are not necessarily sexual relationships; however, some might argue that a sexual relationship could not be a fully satisfying relationship without an intimate connection. As couples age, sex may become less important and maintaining intimate connections and activities even more important. No matter your age or partner status, sensuality and sexuality are quality of life issues.

The following information is meant to be a general guide to help enhance your intimacy and sexuality. If you have questions or concerns as it relates to your sexual health, sexuality or intimate relationships, please talk to your spiritual leader.

*Congregational  
Health  
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Inova  
HealthSource,  
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## For Couples

- ♥ Talk about your sexual expectations—timing, what speaks/shows love to you.
- ♥ Recall the thoughts and feelings when you first fell in love.
- ♥ Write love notes. Email is fine!
- ♥ Set the mood: light candles, play music, offer a massage.
- ♥ Take your time.
- ♥ Especially when there are children, be intentional with your time. Schedule a time at home together, plan dates, schedule a regular night out with your friends.
- ♥ If sex becomes difficult or is no longer an important part of your relationship, find other ways to be intimate - cuddle, kiss, touch, hold hands, massage, talk, play a game, watch a movie, dance.
- ♥ If sex is important but one or both partners is experiencing sexual dysfunction or difficulties with desire or performance, consult with both your physician to rule out any physiological problems as well as a sex therapist to assist in solving the difficulty.

### Websites!

The American Association for Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists

[www.AASECT.org](http://www.AASECT.org)



The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) Web site includes a lengthy bibliography of religious writing about sexuality, from a range of perspectives and traditions.

[www.siecus.org](http://www.siecus.org)

Teens, consult with your parents before you go on any websites!

## For Adult Single Persons

- ♥ Maintaining intimate relationships is likely an important part of your overall well-being.
- ♥ Have a few relationships that encourage you, challenge you and where you can be open and honest.
- ♥ Reevaluate if a relationship may be toxic: taking more energy from you than you receive in return or harmful to your overall physical, spiritual and emotional well being.
- ♥ Set clear boundaries and guidelines on what you are comfortable with in intimate or sexual relationships.
- ♥ If you are struggling with setting clear boundaries, speak to your spiritual leader or a counselor to help you.



## For Teens

- ♥ Be sure your friends are uplifting, supportive and encourage you to enhance all of your strengths.
- ♥ Include good nutrition and exercise to help how you feel about yourself.
- ♥ Remember that the way you dress and how you tend to your grooming will also help your self-confidence.
- ♥ The better you feel on the inside, the better you will feel and look on the outside.
- ♥ All your sexual choices will have long term consequences— positive and negative.
- ♥ If you have questions about your sexual health, safe sex, masturbation, etc. find an adult you trust in your faith community, family or school.

