

Handicaps don't eliminate sexuality



Photo by Patrick Sullivan
Therapist Darrell Ackerman says handicapped people have to redefine what normal sexuality means. He works with his wife Lynn at Sacred Heart Hospital's rehabilitation center.

By SALLY HODGKINSON
Of the Emerald

Some of the first questions asked after a spinal injury concern sexuality, therapist Lynn Ackerman told a handicapped sexuality workshop Thursday as Handicapped Awareness Week continued.

"They're more concerned with their sexuality than whether or not they can walk," said Ackerman, who works with her husband Darrell in Sacred Heart Hospital's rehabilitation center.

"It's almost always the first question after 'Am I going to live?' Sometimes it's even asked before that one."

A handicapped person is fully capable of sexual feelings and satisfaction even if they have no

sensation in their genitals, Darrell Ackerman said.

"For someone who still has memories of sexual pleasure they just need to trigger that memory," he said. "The genitals are only one erogenous area. The head is where the majority of sexual feelings take place."

The person with a spinal injury has to break down certain mind sets about what normal and abnormal sexual behavior is, he added.

"The feeling may not be anything close to what 'normal' society defines as an orgasm, but we all experience things differently. It just becomes a little more mandatory for handicapped people."

The chance of fathering a

child is almost non-existent for males with spinal injuries, he said.

Women, on the other hand, are capable of having children with any kind of spinal injury, unless there are other medical complications, said Lynn Ackerman.

"When I began my training, I was told that if a pregnant woman who was paralyzed came to me for advice, I was supposed to counsel her as hard as I could to have an abortion," she said.

"They (doctors) say that if a woman can't take care of herself, she can't take care of a child. After working with people, I think that's nonsense. We found that generally the women have done beautifully."



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After watching Erica in action, it's easy to understand why she once required a six-month vacation at the loony bin. The mind can't rationally handle that much sleaze; flipping out is sometimes the only answer.

Course, Erica has become the villain of Pine Valley. Her manipulation of and disregard

for other people have enhanced her reputation as 'bad news.' Even her mother has given up.

Erica is now on her own, trying to salvage her marriage and what little relationship she has left with her half-brother as well as her dubious niche in this small New England hamlet.

As Mona exited abruptly Thursday (exchanges between her and Erica are poorly handled from a thesbian point of view), fragments of Erica's mind were exposed. The most frightening thing is that she's convinced her treachery was the correct course, that her lying and emotional machinations were in others' best interests.

Bet Dan, Mark and Brooke would disagree.

For Danny boy, it's been a tough day (Pine Valley time, week by hours). After surprising Mark and Brooke in bed, he drove around all night confused and dejected. The woman he had derived so much pleasure from (with?) had kicked his psyche hard, hard enough that

friends and relatives feared he might bite the big one.

Back at the Martin's, Danny could do nothing but sit in his room staring at the walls. Even assurances from Dr. Joe that time would heal all (and it really does) didn't help. The only thing that could cheer the lovesick dope was a visit from Brooke.

Face scrubbed (to hide the evidence of tears), Danny ventured from his bedroom sanctuary, hopeful that Brooke had come to try and patch things up.

(Won't work, Danny. You're only setting yourself up for additional tears if she comes back. Forget those enjoyable evenings spent in loving arms, being invited to taste and fondle forbidden areas).

Lucky for Dan, that wasn't her intent. Seems Mark won't talk to Brooke, and she was hoping Dan would let him know that there's no hard feelings.

Selfish, Brooke. Very selfish.



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