



Health Education Program

Sex and Your Body, Mind, and Spirit

Building an emotionally healthy sexual relationship

Emotional as well as physical, the decision to have sex is a big one.

By Elizabeth Vollmer-Buhl

Sex is not just a physical experience; it is an emotional one as well. Practicing safer sex is vital, but the topic of safer sex tends to overshadow the emotional impacts of sex. The components of an emotionally healthy intimate relationship are key to safer sex as well as an individual's mental health.

Making the decision whether or not to have sex is a big step. For some, the choice is to remain a virgin, or not to be sexually active. This can be an emotionally healthy option. Both men and women choose not to be sexually active for a variety of reasons, including faith based values, to not feeling ready, to not wanting to be at any risk for STI's.

Movies, music, magazines and other media sources imply that everyone is having sex. Actually, according to the 2000 University of Oregon Health Center Survey 24.5% of surveyed students said they had never engaged in sexual intercourse (<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~orl/hc98/frmc98.htm>).

In the decision whether or not to become sexually active, according to Ron Miyaguchi, Senior Staff Psychologist at the University of Oregon Counseling Center, an individual needs to know what they are doing and why. This helps strengthen the decision and helps people to be attentive to their own feelings and react the way they honestly want to. Talking about these feelings and decisions, and listening to each other throughout the relationship helps to build trust and respect.

Each member of the couple needs to be self-aware when the mutual decision to be sexually active is made. This allows the couple to feel comfortable and safe. Couples starting early in a relationship, and continuing throughout need to be processing and communicating their thoughts and actions. Talking about the value each person places on sex or what they like and dislike strengthens a relationship. Dr. Miyaguchi believes people need to be making sure they can respect each other's choices, that they can hear the other person and understand them. Self-awareness, communication, and trust are needed for safely exploring sex in a relationship.

For survivors of molestation, sexual assault, and rape, having a healthy sexual relationship may take more work. For some people it may be

necessary to start the healing process through therapy before they enter into a relationship. Other survivors are able to enter into a healthy sexual relationship without therapy. Counseling often makes building a relationship easier for survivors. The University Counseling Center offers individual and group therapy free to all enrolled UO students call 346-3227 for an appointment. In relationships where one or both are survivors of sexual trauma, communication can be even more important. Making sure that each person is comfortable with each touch and act, being able to separate the survivor's healing from personal rejection is often difficult.

A healthy sexual relationship can help to maintain a healthy relationship overall. A person needs to keep their "core" self, while growing and evolving in a relationship. Respect, honesty, and communication are essential components of any relationship. "It is nice to find a groove (for a relationship)," says Dr. Miyaguchi. He also believes that finding new experiences that both people are comfortable with can keep a relationship fresh and exciting. It is great to know about all of these components, but living them is what makes a relationship work. "The effort is worth it!" says Dr. Miyaguchi.

Veggie Style

Moving to a plant-based diet

Thinking of becoming a vegetarian? Chose the diet that best fits your health needs and lifestyle.

By Haseena Vaswani

Vegetarian diets are becoming increasingly popular, especially among college students. More traditional people say there's nothing better than a "meat and potato" diet, but most doctors and nutritionists will agree that a vegetarian diet can be just as healthy, if not healthier, than a non-vegetarian diet. According to Brian Murphy of the Student Now website (www.studentnow.com), "a vegetarian diet can reduce the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer, and, on average, people who adhere to a vegetarian diet live longer than those who do not."

While it is hard to dispute that a vegetarian diet has many benefits, choosing which type of vegetarian diet that is right for you may be difficult. One must choose a diet that is rich in protein, iron, zinc, calcium and many other nutrients, paying special attention to the fact that it is often necessary for vegans to take dietary supplements to meet nutritional guidelines. There are three popular types of vegetarians: (1) ovo-vegetarians, (2) lacto/ovo vegetarians, and (3) vegans. Ovo-vegetarians eat eggs but no other animal-derived food. A typical meal may consist of whole grain bread, egg sal-

ad, and soy milk. Lacto/ovo vegetarians eat both eggs and dairy products but no animal flesh. These people may have a meal of stir-fried tofu, vegetables and a glass of milk. Vegans do not eat any food derived from animals. A vegan meal may include a spinach salad, bean curd, and soy milk.

If you are thinking about becoming a vegetarian, it is a good idea to start off slow. I personally have not been a vegetarian my entire life. Up until about 3 years ago I regularly ate chicken. I used the method of weaning to become a vegetarian.

According to Lisa Hark of the Heart Information Network website www.heartinfo.org you should try "to have one meat-free meal everyday." Substitute the meat you would have eaten with protein derived from plant sources such as tofu,

legumes, nuts and seeds, and vegetables. Once you are at a point where you want to give up meat altogether, be sure to include a variety of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy or dairy alternatives such as calcium

fortified soy milk as well as legumes and tofu.

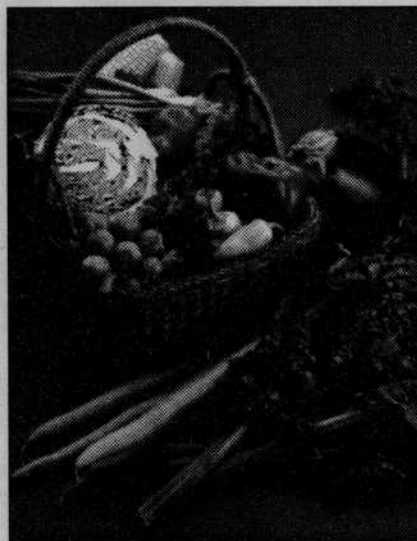
Eugene is a vegetarian friendly town so it is not difficult to find vegetarian meals everywhere. However, vegans may find more products at health food stores such as The Kiva as well as delis like Humble Bagel, which has many yummy vegan treats. Stores

such as the Sundance Market on Hilyard and 24th and PC Market of Choice also have a wide variety of vegetarian food selections. Although the cafeterias on campus are required to serve vegetarian meals, students living in the dorms may not always find the options appetizing. In this case, The Glenwood Café on 13th and Alder is a great place for

vegetarian dishes.

For those who have access to a kitchen, meatless meals are relatively simple to prepare. My favorite quick recipe is vegetarian fajitas, which require very little effort but taste absolutely delicious. Just sauté red and green peppers in a little bit of oil and fajita seasoning (available at any grocery store) until they are tender and wrap in ready-made tortillas along with canned refried beans. More recipes can be found at <http://www.vegetarianrecipes.com> <http://www.vrg.org>, and at the University's Health Education web page <http://health.ed.uoregon.edu> as well as in the lending library of the Health Center on campus. In addition, the Health Center will be offering a Vegetarian Cooking workshop this term. Visit the Health Ed web site for more details.

Being a vegetarian doesn't necessarily mean you are healthier unless you are getting all the protein, zinc, iron, calcium, and other nutrients in your diet. Also, when choosing a vegetarian diet, there are no strict rules to go by. Speaking as a vegetarian, every once in a while I enjoy my mom's special recipe of trout. If you have grown up with meat it is often very difficult to completely give it up. Vegetarians should not feel guilty for eating meat now and then. Every individual is unique and should do what feels good for them. The key is to be healthy, whether vegetarian or not!



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Sure it rains a lot in Eugene; but don't let it be an excuse not to get outside, keep active and keep yourself sane and happy.

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