

What Now? How to reignite the fire

Talk: "Don't wait another minute," says Cody. "Most couples wait far too long to address this issue, waiting until years of built-up resentments and resignation has seriously undermined things."

If couples want to get somewhere, it's paramount that they really show up and bring everything to the table. Set aside a specific time to talk about sex—and don't do it in the bedroom.

"You can't talk about sex in the bedroom," says Blenning. Think of your bedroom as a sacred space that should be reserved for fluid intimacy, not the stuff that muddies the water.

• **Be honest:** "You've got to start getting brutally honest with yourself," says Blenning. Not only does each person need to understand where she stands, how she feels about sex and what her issues are, "we've got to learn to accept ourselves on all these levels."

Likewise, it's crucial that we look at ourselves as scrupulously as we look at our lover. "Examine your patterns of relating, how you de-eroticize the relation-



"When you think about what makes a spark, it's not two of the same things"

—Wendy Blenning

ship, how you expect your partner to figure you out, how your past wounds or expectations about sex, love, intimacy, etc. are influencing you now," advises Cody.

• **Don't focus on orgasm:** Lesbians often are so fixated on having an orgasm that they miss the sex. "We focus on orgasm rather than being sensual with each other," says Blenning.

Redefine what sex means to you. "If your sexual relationship has previously been focused on orgasms, or lack of them, move out of seeing orgasm as the goal of sexual connection," encourages Cody. This means not only exploring your partner's body but your orgasmic plateaus with breathing techniques and such.

"Our task is to learn a new message about sex: We do not need to feel shame about who we are and how we choose to get our sexual fulfillment," pens Loulan.

• **Reach out:** Go see a therapist—they'll not only help facilitate discussion but offer you a safe space to ask the right questions, dig up the root of the problem and explore constructive ways to fix them.

"Most importantly," says Richman, "do whatever you can to have hope that there will be resolution, even if it is not what you think it will be. If this is too hard, ask for help in gaining the ability to have hope."

Seek out resources and open yourself up (literally) to stories



Portland therapist Gwenn Cody is offering a workshop called "Sexual Radiance" in October

and suggestions. "Unless queer women—and all women—seek out images, erotica, stories of other women's sexual experience, personal relationships and other resources that nourish and support and expand our sense of ourselves, there will be shame, self-hatred and various types of psycho-emotional self-mutilation," says Cody.

• **Explore:** Watch videos, take a sex class at It's My Pleasure, poke around online at Good Vibrations. "The more you can make a safe

space to explore fantasies, wishes and turn-ons, the better," says Richman.

Get to know your own body as well as your lover's. "In this society we are not encouraged to look at our genitals," writes Loulan. Take some time alone to touch and explore yourself. Put that hand mirror to new use and check out what's going on "down there."

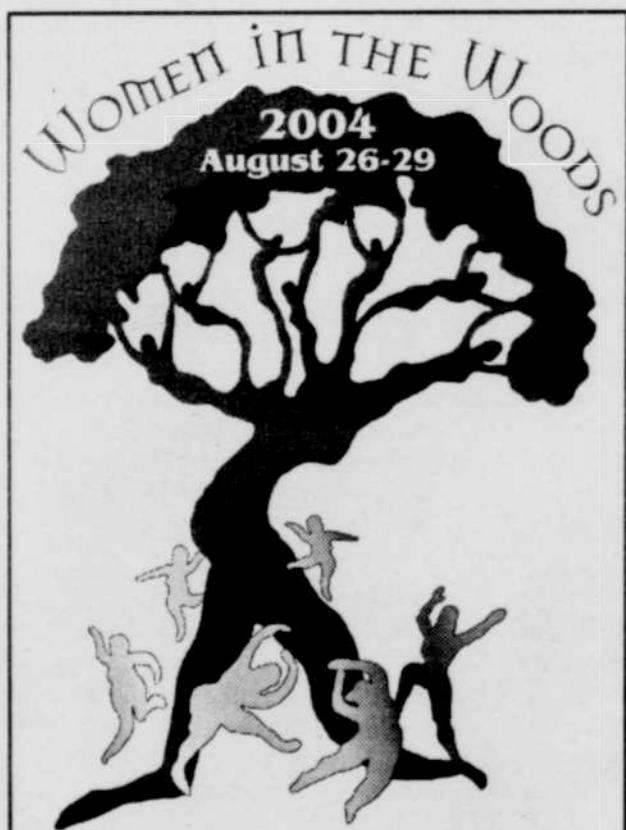
In the end, Cody believes lesbian couples have an advantage. "I find that, percentage-wise, heterosexual couples are generally more reluctant to talk about sexual dissatisfaction with each other than are lesbians, who have already been forced to deal to some degree with their sexual psychology just to claim their basic sexual identity."

So whether you decide to buy your first strap-on, dust off your vibrator, rent some porn, go see a therapist or get to know your vagina, you must first set aside time to talk about sex with your partner. The choice is yours. But the time is now. ☐

GINA DAGGETT is a Portland free-lance writer. Drop her a line at www.ginadaggett.com.

Resources

- **Wendy Blenning:** www.wendyblenning.com or 503-329-3225
- **Gwenn Cody:** gwenntiana@earthlink.net or 503-230-0518
- **Beth Richman:** bethrichmanlcsw@yahoo.com or 503-754-6145
- **It's My Pleasure:** 3106 N.E. 64th Ave. or 503-280-8080
- **Good Vibrations:** www.goodvibes.com



4 days/3 nights - \$265-365 per person (sliding scale)

3 days/2 nights - \$200-300 per person (sliding scale)

Join with 100+ lesbians for a magical women-only weekend at Breitenbush Hot Springs resort in Central Oregon. 2 hours drive from Portland

- Cozy heated cabins and 3 delicious vegetarian meals daily
- Hot springs pools and lithium sauna
- Hiking trails through Oregon's old growth forest
- Swimming hole with crystal clear cold water available
- craftswomen space
- amazing talent show
- drumming circle
- dancing

Registration deadline is August 15, 2004. Fees must be paid in full at that time.

For registration form call 503-284-0722, email womeninthewoods@hotmail.com or visit www.womeninthewoods.com

When decisions will affect a lifetime...



(503) 620-8900 Three Centerpointe Dr.
www.buckley-law.com I-5 at Kruse Way in Lake Oswego

Business & Employment • Real Estate • Estate Planning • Litigation • Family Law

- Adoptions
- Divorce
- Paternity
- Custody
- Domestic Partnerships
- Estate Planning
- Prenuptial Agreements



Jaye Taylor



Chris Costantino

TO GET INTO MUTUAL FUNDS, GET IN TO SEE A MUTUAL FRIEND.

When it comes to investing, turn to someone who's been there for you all along. Ask me how to get started today with State Farm Mutual Funds®.

WE LIVE WHERE YOU LIVE.™



Shawn Vorrath, Agent
6713 NE 63rd St Suite 102
Vancouver, WA 98661
360-733-1432
shawn@shawnvorrath.com



LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR, STATE FARM IS THERE

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company • Home Office: Bloomington, Illinois
*Source: Lewin Group estimates based on the Brookings-R.F. Long Term Care Financing Model, 1992. As cited in "Long Term Care: Knowing the Risk, Paying the Price," Health Insurance Association of America, 1997, pg. 12.
See your local State Farm Agent for details on coverage, costs, restrictions and renewability.

LTCI2002-07 statefarm.com PO2423 04/02



When an ordinary Realtor simply won't do...



3144 SE Belmont
Portland, OR 97214
office: 503-238-7617

