

MOEN, from page 8s

men because they always want it and they'll do anything to get it.

And women are supposed to not want sex. They want relationship. They want emotion. In our culture we don't get that women have pleasure from sex.

S.Z.: The two couldn't be combined ... you couldn't have an emotional connection and have hot sex.

E.M.: Right? That couldn't work. And remember this is all very heterosexual based.

So that's our pop culture and then you go into the classroom where kids are having their sex ed and it's just the biology. It's just about reproduction.

If it's a comprehensive sex ed class, at least they will cover contraception: Use a condom when you put a penis in a vagina, use birth control if you've got a uterus. Or, it's abstinence only and sign your name on this card that says you won't engage in sexual activity.

It's just focused on penis and vagina. That's sex. They're not talking about oral, anal, manual or digital even, because you've got your digits.

S.Z.: That could easily be confused with Skype or Internet sex.

E.M.: That's cyber sex.

S.Z.: Oh. Right.

E.M.: So anyway, pleasure is not taught. It's not explicitly said. Another huge problem, is if you aren't teaching about pleasure, then you're not teaching about consent either.

They are not taught consent. They are not taught both parties need to be enjoying this.

This is non negotiable. This needs to be a pleasurable experience for both people.

Pleasure and consent go hand-in-hand and that needs to be taught. Our society is producing people who don't understand how sex works. Who don't understand that they need to ask permission. Who don't understand they need to give permission. Who don't understand that permission is not a one time thing and then it's a free pass forever. That permission can be rescinded. That when you agree to something, if it starts feeling bad you can rescind your agreement. And it stops. And both sides of this equation don't know that.

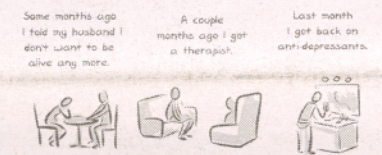
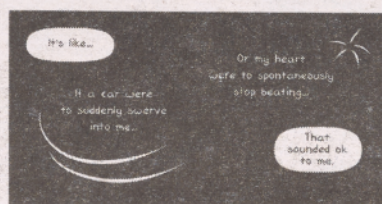
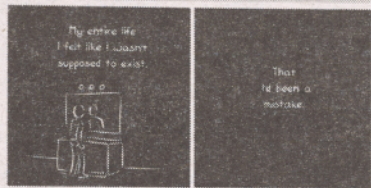
S.Z.: You have dealt with periods of depression in your life. In the last frames of your autobiographical comic, DAR!, you tell us that you suffered a couple of deep depressions and have been medicated and weaned yourself off meds. Most recently, I read the comic that you drew in response to Robin Williams' suicide. What is your own experience with mental health issues?

E.M.: I had a very negative view of people who get on antidepressants. I know that there are people who seriously need that. In my head it was like people who are suicidal or can't function. I am somebody who can function. My life is very de-railed and difficult and there are lots of roadblocks because of the depression, but I'm still functional. I can still go to work. I can still go to my pole dance class and ride my bike. I just need to suck it up and pull my shit together. I'm being self-indulgent. I'm being weak. I'm being a whiney baby. I'm not somebody who needs meds, I need to boot straps it up. And it was very hard for me to get on antidepressants for the first time years ago. It did help.

But then, I lost my job, and because of our medical system, I lost my medical insurance. I couldn't afford to stay on antidepressants. I was in a position where I can't afford medication. I can't afford to see a therapist. Let's just try this because we don't really have any other options. So I did have to wean myself off. And by wean off I mean I just stopped taking them.

The last few years have been OK. I've done pretty well and then this last year my shit was just shutting down. I was becoming

I want to live



The cartoon Erika Moen drew in reaction to Robin Williams' suicide as it reflected on her own depression.

non functional.

I do not think of myself as suicidal at all, but there is just this lack of desire to be alive. The thought of not being alive is such a comfort and a relief.

No matter how good it is.

S.Z.: You've got it pretty good.

E.M.: I've got a great life. I have a loving, wonderful, supporting husband who I'm crazy about. I am doing the career that I am passionate about and care a lot about. I'm getting recognition and praise and all the stuff I need to feel good.

And even in the midst of all of that. It's like, "No, this is great. I recognize that. Wonderful. If I could just stop being alive right now, I would totally go for it."

I didn't even count that as depression. I figured nobody wants to be alive, we just have to be.

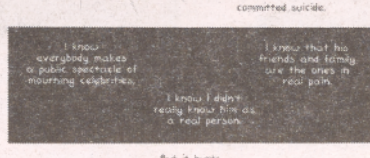
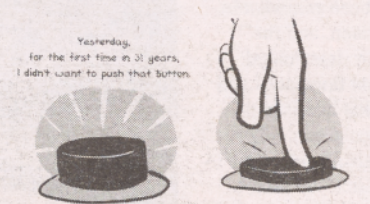
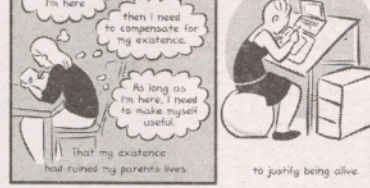
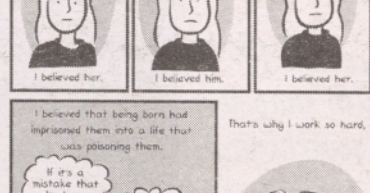
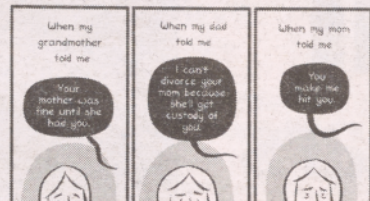
S.Z.: You recently got back on meds?

E.M.: I got back on meds and got a therapist. Just getting on meds by themselves wouldn't have done it. But I got a therapist. And she is kick ass. It's important to find the right therapist.

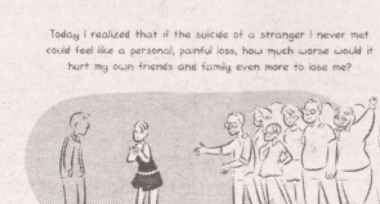
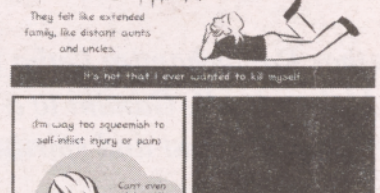
S.Z.: You are transparent and overt about your sexuality - genuine, enthusiastic and open.

E.M.: Here's the thing. I don't think I'm a nymphomaniac. I don't think that I think about sex more than other people. I think I'm just somebody who's okay talking about it more than other people. I think I have a very normal, regular sex drive.

People think I have no filter. That is not true. I am very specific in what I talk about. I only talk about the things I'm comfortable talking about. And for some broken reason in my head, sex falls into that category. I think sex is super funny. I love making jokes about it. I think it's super fascinating - our



BY ERIKA MOEN



whole culture around it. When is it OK to have sex, when is it not OK to have sex? The people who are allowed to have sex with each other. The ways people have sex with each other. Sex can damage someone for the rest of their life or it can be healthy and positive.

S.Z.: What does the term "Sex positive" mean to you?

E.M.: I want to say what sex positive is not. Sex positive is not, "Sex feels so good for me. Therefore, I'm sex positive. I like to have sex, therefore I'm sex positive. Everybody should be having sex." That's not sex positive.

Sex positive is looking at sex, at all the possible ways that sex can manifest itself.

In saying that for all of the participants involved, it should be a positive, good experience. Everybody should be willingly, happily, enthusiastically consenting.

Sex positive is saying consent is mandatory.

Sex positive is saying you need to be educated about all of your different options.

Sex positive is saying you have the right to pursue your life liberty and happiness, sexually.

Sex positivity is about sexual respect. You don't get to push it on others either.

And sex positivity is inclusive of asexuals. It's respecting that there are people who have no desire for sex or have a very reduced desire for sex. Sex positivity is respecting people's consensual, healthy, sex life styles and sexual orientations.

S.Z.: You have referred to your "Battle hardened cunt." Is sex a battle then? Have you any war stories?

E.M.: (Grunts and laughs). I say battle hardened cunt because I think it's real funny. Cunt is my favorite word. It always has been. I mean it both in the empowered,

beautiful word way and also the, "Man-that-person's-being-a-jerk-I'm-gonna-call-them-a-cunt" way.

I'm a really bad feminist.

S.Z.: Really?

E.M.: Mmmmm. Read tumblr ... So, "battle hardened cunt." It's not like a delicate flower. I don't have a delicate garden orchid growing down there.

I wanted to do a sex education comic before I started OJST and it was going to be geared toward youths - teens specifically. And it would be a giant book that would walk through stages of how to become sexually active safely.

In my research for it, I was looking up all kinds of sex ed resources. And there have been some other people who have made some sex-ed comics, and I was so offended by this one that I found. They had done one for the penis and one for the vulva to explain how they work. And the cover for the penis one, was made to look like a rocketship, it's a drawing, a cartoon - rocketing through space, like coming at you. Here's everything you need to know about the penis. So powerful and full of fuel and virility.

The cover for the vulva, which they called the vagina. Hey buddy, that's the inside bit.

So right off the bat, they're calling it the wrong thing. And the cover for that was a female body with her panties on with a flower on the panties.

I was so offended by that. Oh it's so passive, it just sits there. It's just waiting ... It's a flower. It didn't even show (her body). The penis was drawn. This was panties.

It goes back to battle-hardened cunt. I know "empowered" gets over used, but when I say it, (my pussy) becomes an active participant. It's getting what it wants. It's having adventures! I'm trying to show pussies as strong and active.