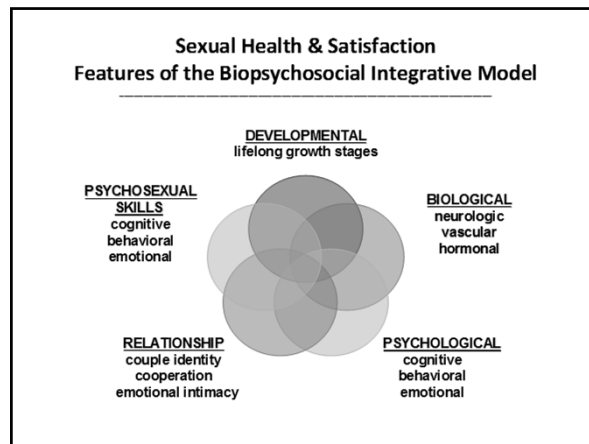


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**FEATURES OF ENDURING DESIRE AND
 SATISFYING COUPLE SEX**

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- Principles of Relationship Satisfaction**
Michael E. Metz, Ph.D.
1. The Relationship is the Overall Priority.
 2. Healthy Relationships are Founded in Personal Equity.
 3. There is a Priority on Cooperation.
 4. Each Puts the Other's Satisfaction First.
 5. There is a Priority on Mutual Emotional & Sexual Empathy.
 6. Partners Distinguish Feelings & Behaviors.
 7. All Conflict Resolution has as its Goal Mutual Emotional Satisfaction.
 8. Relationship satisfaction is directly influenced by the quality of relationship conflict resolution.

- Merits of the "Good Enough Sex" Model**
- The GES model (Metz & McCarthy, 2010a, 2010b; 2008, 2007a; 2007b; 2004; 2003; McCarthy & Metz, 2008a, 2008b)
1. describes a positive set of principles for satisfaction.
 2. to facilitate couple reflection on the meaning and value of their general and sexual relationship
 3. which can guide clinicians endeavoring to promote healthy female, male, and couple sexuality as well as resolve SD.
 4. The model is relevant to all couples who want to enhance intimacy and sexuality → heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender couples.

- Emotional Intimacy and Eroticism**
- A common false assumption in our society is that a solid relationship guarantees sexual desire, eroticism and satisfaction.
 - Both factors – emotional intimacy and eroticism – are necessary; one without the other is not sufficient (e.g., Perel, 2006).
 - Over time, deficits in either emotional intimacy or eroticism will undermine quality couple sexuality and satisfaction.
 - Ensure lifelong desire and satisfaction with dedication to strong intimacy and robust eroticism.

Michael E. Metz Ph.D.
 &
 Barry McCarthy Ph.D.

**Enduring
 Desire:
 Your Guide
 to Lifelong
 Intimacy.**

Given the 2011 "Best Book" award by AASECT (American Association for Sex Education, Counseling & Therapy)

Your Guide to Lifelong Intimacy
 Michael E. Metz
 Barry W. McCarthy

Dimensions of the “Good-Enough Sex” Model For Couple Satisfaction.

(Metz & McCarthy, 2011; Metz & McCarthy, 2011; Metz & McCarthy, 2010;
Metz & McCarthy, 2008; McCarthy & Metz, 2008; McCarthy & Metz 2008; Metz & McCarthy, 2007.

The role of the therapist is to guide the couple to embrace the GES model, help them commit to GES growth-goals for their unique relationship, and motivate them to implement these promoting healthy couple sexuality and satisfaction. These guidelines are routinely given to clients early in treatment and referred to throughout the therapy as a way to reinforce core GES components.

1. **Sex is a good element in life, an invaluable part of an individual’s and couple’s long-term comfort, confidence, pleasure, eroticism, and intimacy. Eroticism is an intentional feature and the responsibility of each partner.**
 2. **Relationship and sexual satisfaction are the ultimate developmental focus and are essentially intertwined. The couple is an “intimate team.”**
 3. **Accurate, realistic, age-appropriate physiological, psychological, relationship and sexual expectations are essential for sexual satisfaction.**
 4. **Good physical health and healthy behavioral habits are vital for sexual health. Each individual values, respects, and affirms their and their partner’s sexual body.**
 5. **Relaxation is embraced as the foundation for pleasure and function.**
 6. **Pleasure is as important as function. Physical, emotional, and sexual pleasure provide the energy for eroticism.**
 7. **Valuing variable, flexible sexual experiences (the “85 percent approach”) and abandoning the “need” for perfect performance inoculates the couple against sexual dysfunction by overcoming performance pressure, fears of failure, and rejection.**
 8. **The five purposes for sex (pleasure, intimacy, stress reduction, self-esteem, reproduction) are integrated into the couple’s sexual relationship.**
 9. **Integrate and flexibly use the three sexual arousal styles (sensual self-entrancement, partner interaction, and role enactment).**
 10. **Gender differences are respectfully valued and similarities mutually accepted. Emotional intimacy (“cohesion”) is blended with raw physical eroticism.**
 11. **Sex is integrated into real life and real life is integrated into sex. Regular sex is essential to GES because when frequency of sex is steady, it serves as an ‘intimacy blender” that integrates feelings and moods, valuing pleasures and meanings amidst the variety and challenges of the couple’s real life. Having “regular sex” promotes flexible, genuine sexuality that develops, grows and evolves throughout one’s life.**
 12. **Sexuality is personalized: Sex is occasionally playful, spiritual, “special.”**
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Relationship Conflict Research Findings
Metz & Epstein, 2002. The role of relationship conflict in sexual dysfunction.

1. Relationship conflict is normal. The important factor is how constructively couples resolve their differences.
2. Mutual conflict resolution is essential for satisfaction: the emotional core.
3. Cognitions are crucial as they strongly influence satisfaction and communication.
4. Conflict resolution styles are fundamental. Couples who address their conflicts with constructive styles (e.g., assertion, cooperation), avoid destructive styles (e.g., aggression, withdrawal), and resolve their conflicts with mutual satisfaction and equity, are more likely to be satisfied.

Relationship Conflict Research Findings
Metz & Epstein, 2002. The role of relationship conflict in sexual dysfunction.

5. Distressed couples display gender differences in resolution styles.
6. Satisfied couples blend / merge gender differences in conflict resolution styles.
7. Healthy couples are non-aggressive. There is no empirical evidence that expression of verbal or physical aggression is ever helpful in an intimate relationship.

RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT

THE ORDINARY OPPORTUNITY

TO DEEPEN

RELATIONSHIP INTIMACY

(Issue of cooperation)

Conflict as an Opportunity for Intimacy
 – and “energy for the bedroom”.

Constructive Conflict Resolution and Intimacy

Conflict presents the ordinary, day-to-day *opportunity* for couples to deepen their emotional and sexual intimacy.

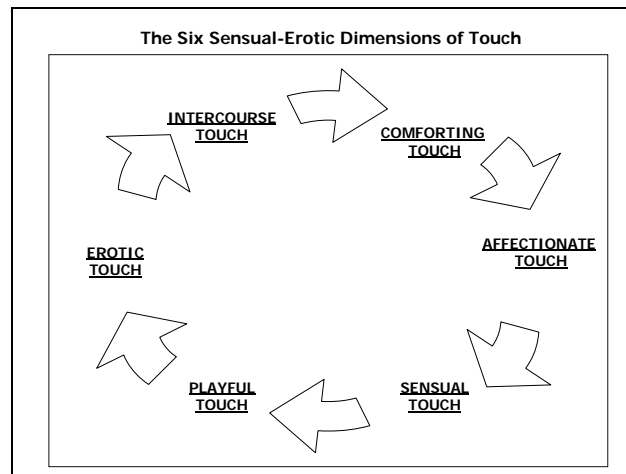
- Learn about your partner’s complexity and uniqueness.
- Reinforce respect and admiration for each other.
- Develop more confidence that future conflict can be positively resolved.
- Create positive feelings and comfort with each other that facilitate their sexual desire for each other.
- Develop a greater sense of pride in their relationship.

Making Some Sense of Couple Conflict and Identifying targets for Growth / Change.

The 5 Features of Relationship Conflict

1. Context:
 (a) Geology & (b) Geography
2. Content
3. Severity
4. Styles of Interaction
5. Meaning

The Six Sensual-Erotic Dimensions of Touch



Couples promote "erotic flow" with the multiple dimensions of touch:

1. **Comforting touch** refers to non-sexual touch that occurs during exceptional times of stress or challenge such as a work crisis, hospitalization or illness, major disappointments, a parenting emergency, or death in the family. Comfort touch is an important physical connection that usually takes place outside the bedroom and "tenderizes", soothes and enhances your relationship. Comforting touch provides the safe-harbor in life. Comforting touch is not sexual nor is it frequent, but it is essential to a cohesive, bonding climate that can facilitate sexual interest and receptivity. When this touch is secure, the couple is free to balance intimacy with eroticism and sexual experimentation. On a 10-point erotic flow scale, comforting touch anchors partners at about 1.
2. **Affectionate touch** refers to non-sexual touch that occurs in day-to-day closeness and indicates caring and fondness. It includes warm embraces, holding hands to reinforce feelings of intimacy, clothes-on kissing, and hugging to congratulate and celebrate. Affectionate touch forms part of the couple's relationship environment in which sensual and erotic feelings thrive, at about 2.
3. **Sensual touch** includes non-genital holding, stroking, cuddling, and massage. Sensual touch involves receptivity and responsiveness and is the start of the sexual process. On the 10-point scale, sensuality is 2-4.
4. **Playful touch** intermixes non-genital and genital touch and can include whole body massage, romantic or erotic dancing, showering or bathing together, fun or seductive touch, and sexual playfulness like strip poker or Twister. On our pleasure scale playful touch is 4-6.
5. **Erotic, non-intercourse touch** involves manual, oral, rubbing, or vibrator stimulation and sometimes taking emotional and sexual risks ("stretching"). Levels of pleasure can be from 7-10 (orgasm). Some people really enjoy the erotic flow to orgasm, while others strongly prefer being orgasmic during intercourse.
6. **Intercourse** is the fifth dimension of pleasure. Both conceptually and in terms of technique, intercourse is best understood as a natural continuation of the pleasure/erotic flow process. However, you risk problems when you set up intercourse as a pass-fail test apart from the pleasuring process. Young couples learn to switch to intercourse as soon as they can (at levels 4 or 5 of pleasure), based on whether the male has an erection and the woman is beginning lubrication. A very important psychosexual skill is to learn to transition to intercourse at high levels of arousal: 7 or 8 on the 10-point scale.

Each dimension of touch has value as a way to experience pleasure. Many couples fall into the trap of intercourse or nothing. In other words, if touching is more than comfort/affection, the demand is to continue to intercourse. So if you are not interested in intercourse, you don't engage in sensual, playful, and certainly not erotic touch. This approach sets you up for the traditional sex power struggle, with the man resenting lack of intercourse frequency and the woman feeling that her need for intimacy and touch is subverted by his intercourse focus. Like most power struggles, this is both unnecessary and unwise. Valuing each type of touch for itself, stemming from an awareness of choices for pleasurable connection, is a solid base for quality couple eroticism and intimacy.

THE THREE GENERAL STYLES OF SEXUAL AROUSAL

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There are three general styles or “ways” of sexual arousal -- that is, individuals get "turned on" in a combination of different ways or patterns (source: Mosher, 1980). They are fundamentally distinguished by the focus of attention:

(1) Partner Involvement Arousal:

- becoming aroused by focusing upon the partner, his/her body, his/her responses, and the “romantic” interaction with the partner;

(2) Sensual Entrancement Arousal:

- becoming aroused by focusing upon one’s own body, the calming physical sensations, the sensual pleasure;

(3) Role Enactment Arousal:

- becoming aroused by one's private imagination or fantasy, role playing with one’s sexual partner, or acting out one’s feelings or fantasies.

These styles behaviorally look different. The individual pursuing arousal primarily by "*Sensual Entrancement*," for example, typically closes one's eyes, goes within, becomes quiet, and looks detached and passive. Routine, sameness, and stylized touch help this person to become aroused. On the other hand, the person who pursues arousal by "*Partner Involvement*" is very active, eyes open, looking at the partner, talkative (romantic or "sweet" talk), and energetic. This is the sexual style portrayed on television and in movies -- passionate and impulsive sex. The partner involvement person gets pleasure and excitement by focusing attention outside one's body -- such as seeing the partner respond -- and getting carried away in sexual tension. The person aroused by "*Role Enactment*" finds fantasy, variety, and experimentation arousing, such as dressing in sexy lingerie, role playing being "tough" or "hard to get", acting out a scene from a movie or fantasy, having sex in new places (e.g., vacation), using "toys" such as massage oil, vibrator, dildo, etc. By imagination and trying new things, this person finds excitement and arousal through sexual playfulness, feeling a trust, freedom, and uniqueness with the lover.

Each style is common and one is not better than another. It is thought that men regularly employ partner involvement and women often use sensual entrancement. While individuals appear to have a preference for one style, every person has the capacity for arousal by each style and may use them interchangeably. For example, an individual may begin love-making with role enactment, change to partner involvement, and then switch to entrancement. An individual's use of the three styles seems to vary over time. It is likely that there are stages which individuals and couples go through. For example, early in a couple's sexual life, partner involvement seems common, giving way to entrancement and a more sedate sexuality for a while, then enlivened with role enactment, or a resurgence of partner involvement arousal. Many individuals report that the fluctuations are frequent and that they may pursue a different type of arousal even from one sexual meeting to the next -- Tuesday, entrancement, "because I was very tired" and Saturday, partner involvement because "I was really appreciating my partner;" or even using different styles at different moments during love-making.

Sexual partners who may not realize that there are different kinds of arousal may misinterpret their partner's behavior in a hurtful, personalized way. For example, the primarily entrancement focused individual having sex with a partner involvement person would likely find the partner involvement individual's love-making activities distracting (the looking, talking, heavy breathing, interacting, being expressive and passionate), and wonder why the lover is "interrupting" or seeming to work against their arousal. The partner involvement person, on the other hand, might interpret the entrancement partner as "disinterested", "rejecting", or bored. The potential for misunderstanding and hurt is apparent.

Learning that people have different purposes and ways of getting aroused helps couples appreciate their differences and accept them. It also helps couples to cooperate so that both partners may feel respect and caring from the other as they mutually pursue satisfying sex for each other, and the preferred ways of getting aroused. Sharing and discussing one's sexual feelings, cooperating, and collaborating in pleasure, are perhaps the most crucial sexual skills.

Regular Sex is Your Intimacy Blender

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The regular frequency of sex ensures that the moods and events of life are brought to your lovemaking. Regular sex provides an “intimacy blender.”

When sex is good-enough, sexuality is integrated into the couple’s daily life and their daily life with its various moods is integrated into their sex life to create the couple’s unique emotional and sexual experience. Sex fits into daily life and the moods of daily life are brought to sex: sex during times of loneliness, after the wedding of your best friend, sex on vacation, during pregnancy, after conflict, after a grandparent’s death, during times of career stress, after a class reunion, during periods of success and achievement, amidst childrearing, unemployment, disappointments, times of illness, healing from disagreements, after business travel or a long absence such as military service, as part of a romantic evening, during adjustment to the “empty nest”, adapting to changes with aging, and enjoying increased time flexibility after retirement.

Integrating sex into real life emphasizes two qualities:

- ➔ **Ensuring regular sex.** “Regular” connotes a frequency that does not swing dramatically but is flexibly predictable. The frequency number is not an absolute (e.g., 3 times a week, 3 times a month) but together the couple ensures that neither partner feels “neglected” or “pressured” for sex.
- ➔ **Regular sex benefits the relationship.** One of the benefits is that sex will occur in a variety of emotional moods – times of closeness, tension, elation, sadness, anxiety, irritation. Although some couples believe they cannot be sexual unless in the “right mood”, satisfied couples do not let moods prevent physical intimacy. Regular sex becomes an emotional “intimacy blender”.

Sexual Environment	Example of Mood Climate and Sexual Function
● “Spirited Sex”	when you feel full of life and vigorous.
● “Standard Sex”	when life is uneventful, sex is a shared pleasure.
● “Passionate Sex”	wild, lustful, animalistic, abandoned, shameless, taking your partner and being taken, rough, undisciplined, rowdy, raucous, unruly, noisy, boisterous sex.
● “Make-up Sex”	after an argument.
● “Compassionate Sex”	intercourse for soothing comfort after a major disappointment; after the funeral of your close friend.
● “Bad Mood Sex”	during despondent or glum moments.
● “Angst Sex”	sex for tension or stress release.
● “Vacation Sex”	on a holiday or escape trip.
● “Role Play Sex”	when you’re “stretching” and experimental.
● “Transcendent Sex”	sharing sex “under the stars”, appreciation of the ultimate meaning of life, love, spirituality.