



EPISODE #14

Understanding Healthy Sexual Beliefs Systems and Passion Styles with Dr. Dean Busby

[Breaking the Silence Podcast by Reach 10](#) with hosts Creed Orme and Crishelle Simons

Creed and Crishelle continue talking with Dr. Dean Busby, a professor at Brigham Young University in part 2 of this interview. He helps young adults understand some healthy approaches to sexuality, and what can get in their way. Research has shown there are 3 passion styles – either inhibited, harmonious, or obsessive. A harmonious style is balanced and in line with a person’s values. Also, some people adopt a sexual destiny mindset about their relationships – that if people are meant to be together, they will always have a strong passionate experience. Then if the energy changes, they think they are falling out of love. A growth mindset serves relationships better, when couples decide they will make sexuality something that they want to put effort into and keep growing

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Creed:

Dean is one of the authors for the book Sexual Wholeness in Marriage.

Crishelle:

Which I think we talk about nearly every episode, so you if haven't checked it out yet, check it out.

Creed:

Which discusses these kind of this type of communication that you need to have with your partner about sexuality, sex, everything in general. You've given a presentation recently at the Utah Coalition Against Pornography St George Conference. You talked about sexual passion styles. Can you delve into that a little bit and discuss with us... It's particularly our culture of you know, trying to, we're afraid to talk about the do's about sexuality, so–

Dean:

Love to, so sexual passion is a new line of research that we've been doing. And essentially there's three approaches to... We all have a passion for sex, short of, there's a very small percentage of people that are considered asexual. It's not even, it's very small, but so most people have a passion for sex. It's a physical passion and it's an emotional passion. It's a desire, an interest in being sexual. And the passion literature suggests that for something to become a passion, you have to focus on it and you have to work at it, which is really a different take on how we think about passion in general. We think about it as a feeling that descends upon, I feel passionate about something and it's just an emotion. The new research on passion suggests that for something to really become a passion rather than just a whim or an emotion, you have to have an interest in it, which again, is pretty common for people around sexuality. Everybody has one. And then you have to put time and effort into developing that interest. And so as we've studied this, we've found there's three distinct styles of passion. So all of them have a passion, but they express it in different ways and they're inhibited, which means they tend to feel the interest in being sexual. They want to be sexual, but then they're anxious and and they're worried and sort of what we were talking about earlier, this shame and stuff can sometimes be attached. So then they tend to fight themselves a lot about expressing themselves. And this is in a context where they should express themselves. Usually in a, we study typically married couples or committed couples at least. And so even in that setting of marriage, they tend to feel the interest they want to, but then they fight themselves, it's sort of an internal inhibited kind of approach. Then the middle group is harmonious. That's the ideal. And actually thankfully most couples, most married couples are if of the three styles, more of them are in that harmonious. So there's, so a lot of people are figuring it out, which is fantastic. A harmonious means that you're able to express your sexuality in such a way that it's congruent, are in harmony and balance with the other parts of your life. So it feels respectful of your partner, of your own needs of your partner's needs, it honors you, it feels respectful of and in harmony with your values and your beliefs and the other things in your life. It doesn't overwhelm you to the point where you can't stop or you're just fixated on it. And so when you need to do other things, you're just thinking about sex. It's not like that. That's the obsessive one. The obsessive style is where it takes over your life. It's difficult to control. There's a fixation on it, sometimes almost an inability to keep it in balance. And so it interferes with the quality of life in other areas. And so those are the three styles. The harmonious style is... it's important to say for one that we're all struggling in this, that we can all move. We want to, even if we're in harmony, that sometimes life can throw some wrenches into our experiences, in our relationships and we can get out of harmony. We might have a bad experience about sexuality. We might've had a bad experience in the past and then we can get pushed more into the inhibited direction. We might sort of get to a place where we feel disconnected and unloved, and then we make poor choices and start to fixate on sexuality as a solution for things that it can't solve, like my self esteem and that sort of thing. And so then it might move over to the obsessive side. So while harmony is the goal, I don't want to present it as something that you get it and then it's done. It's something you're always struggling. You think of the word balance is it in balance? And then the other thing about harmony that's hard to keep a hold of is our bodies are changing our whole lives. It's a real moving target. As I said before, you might have as a 20 year old a male has 400 is the measure of the typical male has 400, I think it's nanograms. I can't remember the measure for testosterone at 20. By the time he's 50, he has 200, that's half. It doesn't mean he necessarily wants sex half, but it's changed a lot and a woman's changes as well. Her, she's got a lot of different hormones in the estrogen progesterone cycle. And of course that all changes to menopause. So bodies are moving it through—

Crishelle:

And then you throw in pregnancy, and children, and life.

Dean:

Exactly. Stress is a huge thing. So you're throwing in all these other variables so you might've been harmonious for awhile and then what's going on? It's out of kilter. It doesn't feel right.

Crishelle:

I'm picturing this math equation with more variables than I ever even learned what to do with.

Dean:

It's complicated and we're fortunate that our bodies seem to try to find an equilibrium and if we can talk it through and be open about it, I'm just feeling really stressed out right now and that does this to my sex drive. You know, whatever. You need to talk to it as a couple, that can make a lot of difference in helping you adjust to those changes. And you said pregnancy. The fascinating thing about pregnancy as a woman in those nine months of pregnancy, will go through as much surges in hormones as she would typically experience in nine years. And so it's tremendous the changes that she's going through. And then you have the postpartum thing where the surges are just amazing as well. So that's this unknown issue. How is pregnancy gonna affect sexuality? What's gonna happen when we don't get enough sleep with a kid? And et cetera, et cetera. And so staying in harmony is a lifetime goal and challenge. And what seems to be one of the more interesting challenges as we age is that the, because the hormonal tensity reduces, you have to change your passion from something that was more driven biologically to something that you make a choice about. So I'm going to decide that I want to continue to have a nice sexual relationship, a consistent sexual relationship. I don't necessarily feel the same things the same ways as I age, but I know it's important and it's crucial. And so you make, it's a choice.

Creed:

Is that for an example you like plan with your spouse, Kay, let's have sex this night. Right?

Dean:

Right. It might be less spontaneous, more deliberate and and then and so that's what comes with aging I think is a need to do that. The other thing is this. There's a central belief system around sexuality, besides the anxiety and guilt, we'll just take that one out. The other central belief system that influences the way we approach sexuality is called a sexual destiny or sexual growth mindset. This is life or life wide belief system. It's the same with us in our careers and our families. If we think things come to us because of chance and destiny, we approach them one way. If we think they come to us because of work, and growth, and diligence, then we approach them a different way and it makes all the difference in the world for mostly everything. And the thing that's so powerful about sexuality is because there's a chemistry element early in the relationship that's very strong for most couples. That chemistry is a destiny thing. It's just like the sexual spark or energy, et cetera. And so couples tend to have, if there's one area in their life where they're going to have this sexual, this destiny belief rather than this growth belief, it's going to be in the sexuality area because it started with that, "Oh, I just left, You know, there was just this energy there that I felt" and so then they believe that when that energy changes, it's not the right relationship. It's no longer a compatible or it wasn't ever a compatible relationship. So they start talking about falling out of love or I don't, I just don't feel the same way. Well, they shouldn't because they're not 20 anymore. And life changes and hormones change. It's real. It's relatively hormonally driven. This spark issue. And there's other issues too, but it has a lot to do with hormones. So those, if again, I understand from the beginning that a lot of sexuality, the most important elements of sexuality are having this growth belief that it doesn't really matter what the hormonal situation is. I've

made a commitment that this is an important part of marriage. We're going to work at it, we're going to go through these vicissitudes of our bodies and we're going to figure out a way to stay in harmony with one another and with the way we believe. And so helping couples get that idea early on, this is going to be, yes, it started out pretty chemical and pretty heavy duty. We call it the a love of eros, the erotic love. It started out there but it's going to need to merge into something that's a lot more purposeful and about growth. Just like, and if you start connecting it to this general passion stuff, they can resonate with this. Cause we've all done this. Like if you had passion for music for example, and you might start playing the piano and it gets kind of old after awhile, but if you push through that and it's a good match for you, you're playing the instrument that's good for you and you're doing reasonably well. You push through this phase where the initial excitement has died down, then you begin to develop skills and identity around it and you begin to think of yourself, I'm a piano player and I'm a musician. And then it's a different level of passion and much more beautiful level. Instead just the early kind of excitement about the new thing and that's what has to happen with sexuality. You have to start identifying yourself as a sexual being who has decided that this is central to your life and your marriage, your happiness, and then you work at it. And, just like playing the piano. You sometimes work at it and you want to and sometimes you do 'cause you know you need to and over the course of time if you stabilize your activities and your efforts, it becomes a consistent source of joy.