

Please provide the following information:

1. Name as you would like to be referenced.

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Doctorate in Human Sexuality
Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (July 2008)
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Questions:

1. Please provide your professional understanding/experience about how you feel our idea of romance has evolved over the past decade

I like to think of romance as foreplay for the cerebral cortex. It is not essential in order for sexual activity to take place but it definitely adds a dimension to human sexual interactions. In other words, you can have sex without romance. Bestial sex would be a great example here. The beauty of having sex as a human is that there is a wide range of sexual behavior one can adopt. The healthiest sexual people I have met are able to try different styles of sexuality and get pleasure from most of them, if not all of them.

When looking at how romance has evolved, one has to look at the environment this evolution has taken place in. Technology has been growing exponentially in the 20th century, particularly in the fields of communication and transportation. The fast pace of growth in communication technology means, for most workers, that they become more connected to their work and hence work longer hours. Fewer people have “normal” working hours anymore. The 9 to 5 jobs are becoming a thing of the past. Bringing work home with emails and faxes, Blackberries, webcams, texting, voice mail and conference calls are all ways that your work can reach you 24/7/365. Even when romance finds a way to use these technologies to communicate between individuals, the work place still wins in terms of how much more we are devoted to them when it is for the sake of your career. At the end of the day, one has to pay the bills before one can indulge!

We struggle to meet people even though we have access to dating services and thousand and thousand of profiles we can pick from on the web. Once you start dating, you are faced with balancing insane schedules with work, family, friends, sports and partners. And you still have to make space for romance. Not an easy task but one I am afraid is still very much needed if a long term relationship is important to you.

In my conversations with friends, colleagues and clients, I find romance is still a need on the list of singles and couples. The way we romance one another has changed. It has

become heavy, complex. We try to outdo one another so much that we forget the simple ways to be romantic. Sometimes we have to come back to the basics to get the meaning of romance. Romance is slow and sensual. It is a teaser that starts in the brain and works its way down to your groin. People have to slow down from their hectic lifestyle in order to experience it.

2. How has this evolution affected our perception of sex and sexual relationships as a culture?

There are so many variables at play here, it is impossible to pin sex solely on the evolution of romance. Because we live in a world where information is so easily accessible, people question more religious beliefs. So you end up living in big cities where religion is not as dominant as it used to be and therefore people fear less that they will burn in Hell if they have sex before they are married. Women don't stay home as much as they used to. They have to work and pay their share of the bills. They also have more freedom to enjoy their bodies and take charge of their orgasms. So the sexual gap between the sexes is getting smaller. As compared to previous generations, you get to meet more people owing to cheaper transportation and faster communication technologies. This "shrinking of the world" helps you discover the world and all its cultures. Now sex and sexual relationships are suddenly more available and less judged. There are still groups of people that try to make sex a shameful, dirty and sinful activity, but more and more people understand the pros and cons of sexual intercourse. The information is there to help understand pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and that they are not happening because you offended the gods. Science has normalized sex. Society understands sex better therefore it is not afraid of it anymore. That's why sexual health education is so important.

People are no longer stuck in life long marriages when they are dysfunctional. They can choose their partner. Sexual compatibility is now important when you choose a long term partner. So people explore and select their significant other based on multiple factors including sexual attraction and compatibility. Fewer people get married. Divorces are a part of life. Laws have had to adapt and include common law relationships. Children have to deal with step siblings and step parents. Evolution means adaptation. That's the beauty of human beings: we adapt to the environment we live in, even though sometimes we are thrown into it and we didn't create it.

3. How has this evolution affected each gender's perception of sex and sexual relationships?

I believe that the gap between the sexes is shrinking. Women have power jobs and have to be strong in the work place. There are female police officers, firefighters, lawyers and doctors. Jobs that used to be entirely composed of a male workforce now also encompass females. Both genders had to adapt to these changes and I believe that society has grown more mature because it had to adapt to this gender equalization. In big cities, where these changes are more apparent, each gender is bringing the personality adaptation to the

bedroom. Women are more assertive. They “hunt down” their mate more. Instead of waiting to be asked out on a date they choose who they would like to court. They also are more satisfied sexually because they know their own bodies better and make sure they reach their orgasms more often instead of hoping the guy will be a good lover and attend to both their needs.

Men have learned to be less aggressive in their pursuit of women. They have shifted their behavior in order to be pursued more by the opposite sex. The ones that have not adapted are still getting turned down when approaching women. At work, laws have been put in place to diminish sexual harassment and they have to be more reserved when talking to their female colleagues. In the bedroom, men have also adapted to the wants of the female partner. They are learning that if they want to keep a sexually happy woman, her satisfaction is important as well. So they have to give her a turn first and then they can have theirs too. Women want men to take better care of their body so that they are more attracted by their partner. Hygiene has increased dramatically for males. Not just washing and smelling good but hair grooming all over the body as well as manicures and pedicures for the more metro sexual males are making them more appealing to the ladies!

Both men and women are getting closer to meeting half way. Even with our differences we are seeing the equalization of the sexes.

4. Is romance necessary?

Is romance necessary for sex; no. It all depends on what you want out of the relationship. Is romance necessary in most people’s lives at some stage in their life; yes. Romance is the emotional aspect of the desire to connect with another person. Romance usually implies an expression of one's love. To not believe in romance is to not believe in love. I believe it is part of our genetic makeup.

A person can get into a certain part of their life where they don’t want to be attached to anyone in particular and they want to be sexually active. They can go through a lot of one night stands during a certain period but eventually, people get tired of the superficial aspect of that lifestyle and they look for something more profound. They want to connect with a partner at a deeper level. And then romance gets into play. Human beings like to belong. And when they find the right partner and develop affection for that person, you do things to make the other person love you too. You become romantic.

5. Is marriage necessary for a relationship to thrive or be productive?

It all depends on what is important to each person in the couple. If one of them really needs to go through this rite of passage in order to feel like a legitimate couple then it is necessary. But in more and more cases, couples have fulfilling relationships with their partner without the need for this ceremony. Commitment to your partner and to your life together is what makes a couple work. It has nothing to do with the signature on the marriage certificate. Divorce is a great proof of that. One great example of this can be

found in Montreal (Quebec, Canada). The power of the Church in the 1960 became so strong that French Canadians went through what is now known as the “Quiet Revolution”. The French Canadian, who was highly subservient to the Catholic religion and the priests, was pushed to the point of retaliation where the church and the priests lost most of their power over the people. Religious ceremonies such as marriages also lost a great deal of meaning and now, the rate of marriage in Montreal is still decreasing. In fact there are more unmarried adults than married one. Common-law (34.5%) and same-sex (18.4%) couples are on the rise [1]. Let’s not forget that about one-third of marriages are composed of at least one of the two partners born outside of Canada. Culture and tradition will often impose the “security” of marriage on the relationship. In 2003, Quebec had a crude marriage rate of 2.8 per 1 000 population!

Again, you need to be committed to your relationship, not to marriage, for it to work.

[1] Taken from Statistics Canada in 2003

6. Do you think we are moving away from traditional ideas regarding sexual relationships or is it just a fad to be more open minded regarding sexuality?

If traditional means that men enjoy sex and women have to be married before they give their virginity to their husband and they must not enjoy the act and so on and so forth ... YES! And thank goodness for that! Those traditional ideas were putting women in shackles and ultimately the couple was suffering due to the lack of sexual pleasure in the relationship. Being open minded about sexuality does not mean you will become an animal and just have sex without feelings and disrespect the world. Being open minded about sexuality means that you have to make educated decisions on things like:

- How to self explore in order to find out what feels good to you
- Who do I choose to share my sexual pleasure with?
- How to protect myself from STIs and pregnancy?
- What types of sexual activities do I feel comfortable doing?
- Keep questioning aspects of your sexuality and adapt it to your ever evolving sexual self!

Hopefully the traditional ideas regarding sexual relationships will get rid of the stigma that women face when they enjoy being sexual. I hope that one day no one will feel dirty, shameful or sinful because of sexual pleasure. Sexuality is a part of our identity; we must accept it, protect it and nurture it. If we are ashamed of it, we are missing the boat!