

SEXUAL NEEDS SORT

Understanding our sexual needs and desires as well as those of our partner's is important in building intimacy and closeness in a relationship. Below is a list of various sexual needs. You may print this page out, cut them out, and sort them into categories of very important/essential, important, and least important/not important. You can also write down a list on a piece of paper of your top five needs and rank them in order of how important they are for you in sexual intimacy. Each partner can also come up with some of their own if not seen on the list below. After sorting or making a list, share with your partner. Take turns explaining the importance and lack of importance of the sexual needs, then switch. Actively listen and be attuned to your partner during this activity. Discuss where the importance of these needs comes from and what it would mean to you if these needs were met or not met.

Open Communication before/after	Kissing on other body parts/ all over the body	Your partner initiates
Foreplay	Quality time	Sexy Talk/ Pillow Talk
Conception/Purpose of sexual intimacy	Experimentation with different positions	Kissing on the mouth
Safe/Protected Sex	Sharing sexual Fantasies	Discussing boundaries
To feel desired by your partner	Planned	Use of toys
You initiate	Spontaneous	Role Play
Eye Contact	Unprotected Sex	You decide the location of sexual activity

(adapted from psychological needs sort, HOPE Focused Approach Intervention)

Sexual Needs Sort Follow Up: Getting Through Tough Conversations about Sex

What if this conversation goes wrong? This happens to many couples. Conversations about sex can be tough and sometimes awkward, especially if you and your partner haven't talked about it before or rarely talk about it. One of you may be really into the conversation while the other is hesitant. Or, one or both of you may experience some negative feelings and thoughts surrounding sex. This is okay. It can be difficult to feel exposed or to voice desires in the bedroom. Below are some ways to help navigate the conversation if there seems to be a roadblock.

7 issues in having the sex talk

1. If the conversation takes a negative turn and you start arguing, take a pause. You could have a five or ten minute timeout apart to calm down then return and continue the conversation with a quiet assurance.
2. You or your partner may become uncomfortable or even overwhelmed by the conversation. You may feel exposed, defensive, or flooded with negative emotion. If this happens, stop and think about what it is pertaining to the conversation that is causing these emotions.
3. Give each other space to talk through what is being experienced.
4. Have there been instances in the past between the two of you or between a past partner that have given a negative meaning to sex? In the past did you experience social peer pressure related to sex? Have there been negative situations or conversations surrounding sex involving family members? Or your religious community? How has this affected how you perceive, think, and talk about sex now? Explore these questions in a gentle way. If the conversation is too tough on you or your partner, you can take a break and set a time to return to the conversation later.
5. Be patient and kind to yourself and your partner.
6. If you don't understand something your partner has said, ask for clarification in a calm and nonjudgmental way.
7. If you or your partner is experiencing negative emotions in this moment, it is a good reminder that you both love each other and that you are having this conversation out of love.

CLINICIAN TIP SHEET

This intervention could be used in as a homework to have meaningful discussion about sexual intimacy

It is best for psychological needs sort to be used with the couple prior to this intervention to have a basis for understanding their own needs and needs of their partner.

Discuss with the couple: Just as everyone has basic emotional and mental needs that may be met by significant others and friendships, many people have sexual intimacy needs in their relationships.

Being intimate involves understanding these parts of each other. Your partner's needs are important. It's important that you respect your partner's needs.

Sort cards into 3 categories: (each partner will do silently at first)

1. Absolutely essential- this is a defining need that I have
2. Very important to me
3. Somewhat important to not important

Share/discuss needs with each other (each partner takes turns telling their needs)

Discuss this disclaimer with your couple:

This exercise is meant for education and as conversation starters between partners who are in a committed relationship. This is not sex therapy. Couples need to self-assess whether this exercise is likely to enhance and enrich their relationship with more education, self-awareness and a chance to focus on their sexual intimacy. If there is a concern from either partner that the discussion or exercise might bring up negative issues without the ability to resolve them independently, this can make things worse in your relationship. That is the opposite of our goals for you. Sexual topics can surprise us sometimes. So assess your ability to engage in this exercise and monitor the conversation. If things are not going well, take a break. If you find that you can't seem to have a good positive and productive conversation about sex, it might be time to seek some professional help from a trained sex therapist.