



Intimacy Following Gynecologic Cancer

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About Me

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
- AASECT Certified Sex Therapist
- Rochester Center for Sexual Wellness
- Working with: couples and individuals of all backgrounds and relationship configurations
- Special focus: infertility experience, cancer experience

Contact me:

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The background features a light grey base with large, overlapping organic shapes in muted green and brown. On the left, there are stylized, layered patterns of foliage in shades of grey and brown. A thin white line curves across the bottom right of the image.

Impact of Cancer & Treatments

Impact of Cancer & Treatments

SEXUAL FUNCTION

- The ability of an individual to give and receive sexual pleasure.

SEXUAL SELF-CONCEPT

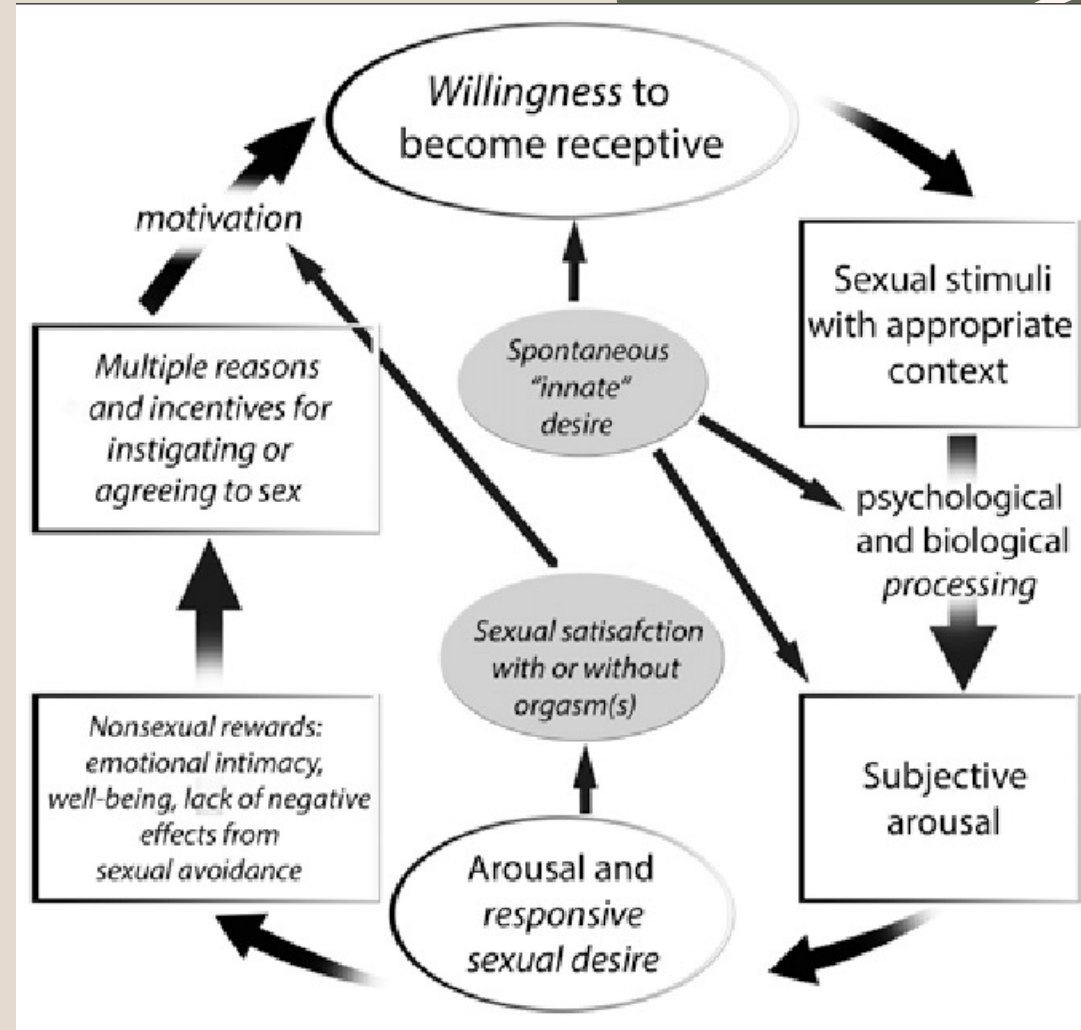
- The image one has of oneself and the evaluation of one's adequacy.

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Interpersonal relationships in which one's sexuality is shared with another.

Woods, 1987

Sexual Response Cycle



Sexual Function

Approximately **50%*** of women with gynecologic cancer report some kind of sexual dysfunction.

- Decreased vaginal sensation
- Vaginal dryness
- Decrease in desire
- Difficulties with orgasm
- Dyspareunia (painful intercourse)
- Loss of satisfaction

*this number is much higher according to some studies

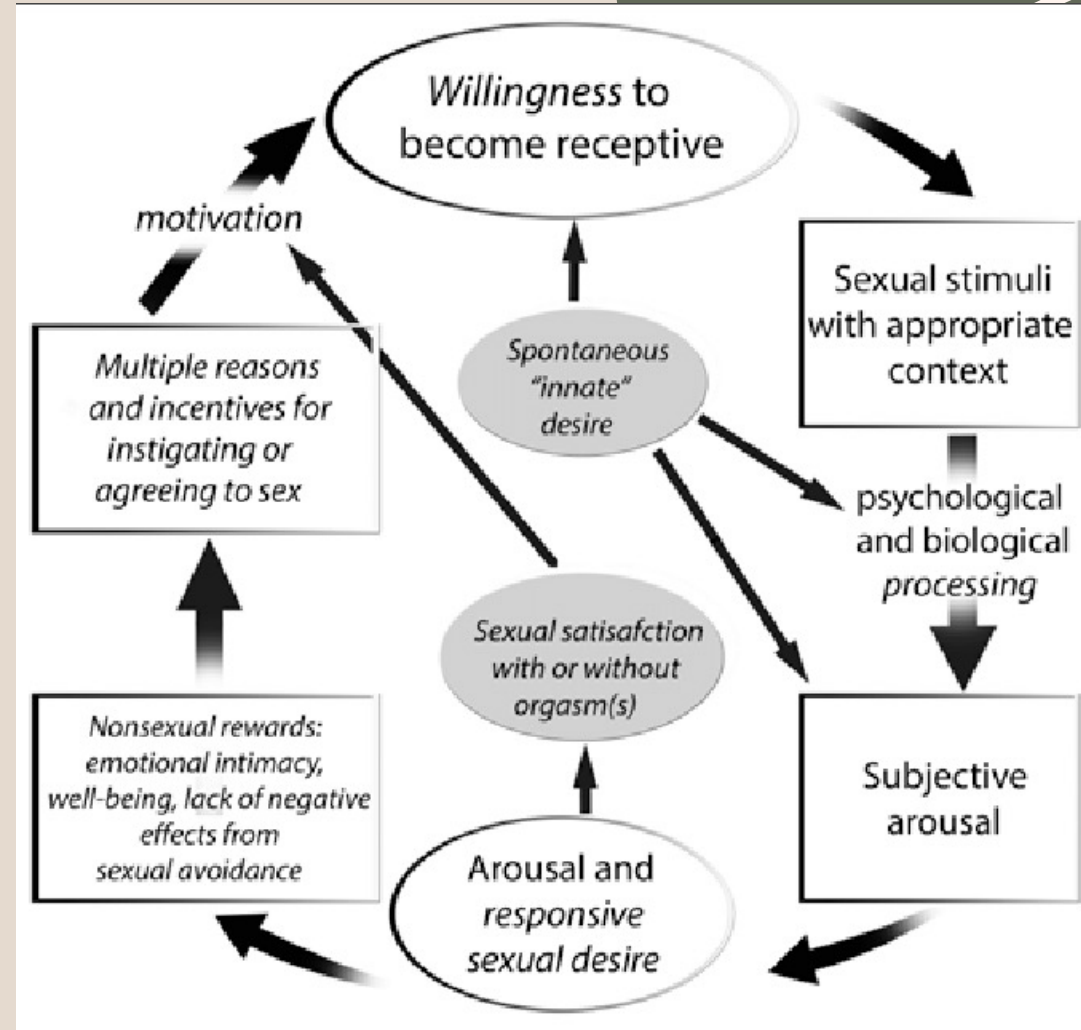
Sexual Self-Concept


- Changes in appearance
- Loss and grief
- Negative self-schema
- Infertility
- Guilt and shame

Sexual Relationships

- Change in roles
- Decreased frequency of sex
- Feelings of rejection, guilt, frustration, anxiety
- Communication challenges
- Discrepant desire
- Partner expectations

Sexual Response Cycle



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Returning to Intimacy

Starting the Conversation

87% of patients reported that cancer treatment impacted sexual function or desire, but only 27.9% reported ever formally being asked about sexual health*

- Providers can & should start the conversation, but patients are their own best advocate
 - Ask questions
 - Share concerns
 - Seek out knowledgeable providers
- PLISSIT
 - Permission
 - Limited Information
 - Specific Suggestions
 - Intensive Therapy

*Katz, Agrawal, & Sirohi, 2022

Medical Approach

SEXUAL FUNCTION

PROVIDERS

- Oncologist
- Primary care provider
- Sex medicine provider
- Pelvic floor physical therapist

TOOLS

- Vaginal moisturizers
 - Good Clean Love
 - Ah! Yes
- Lubricant
 - Good Clean Love
 - Ah! Yes
 - Überlube
- Dilators
 - Intimate Rose
 - Soul Source

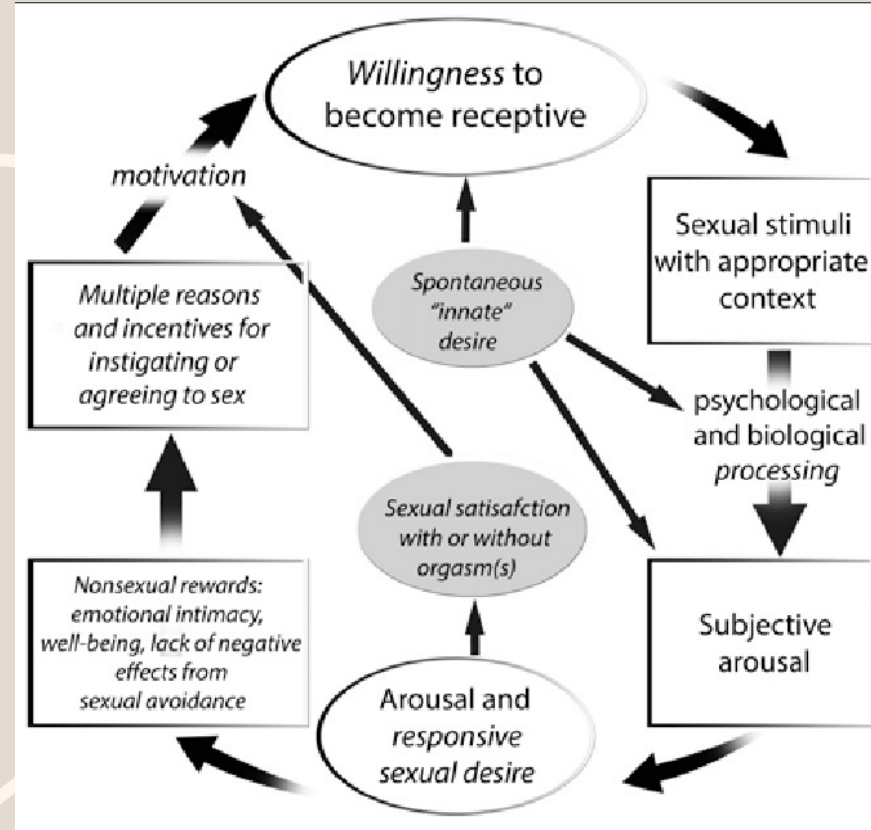
Therapeutic Approach

SEXUAL FUNCTION + SELF-CONCEPT + RELATIONSHIPS

- Mindfulness and acceptance
- Make space for grief and loss
- Accept *this body now*
- Rediscover mind-body connection
- Your sexual response cycle
- Explore all kinds of pleasure
- Renegotiate sexual roles
- Develop communication about sex

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!

- Conditions under which pleasure can occur
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Environmental
 - Relational



PLEASURE IS THE MEASURE

- Finding pleasure everywhere
- Incorporate the senses
- Mind-body connection
 - Focus on pleasure, reduce anxiety

CREATING A SHARED VISION

- Renegotiate sexual roles
- Understand each others' contexts
- Develop a shared language for communicating about sex

Sexual Wellness During & After Cancer

“I think participation in this group should be required for any patient/person diagnosed/or survivor of gynecological cancer.”
– Participant Testimonial

Virtual 5-session psychoeducational group sponsored by Cancer Wellness Connections facilitated by Jessica McDermott LMFT, CST and Pebble Kranz MD, FECSM

Currently enrolling!

- [RCSW website](#) > Sexual Concerns > Group Therapy & Psychoeducational Groups
- [Cancer Wellness Connections website](#) > Programs > Sexual Wellness





Thank You!

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