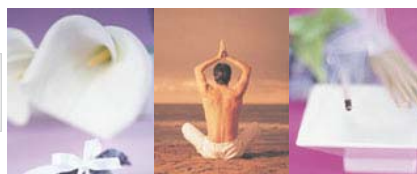




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by **Morgan Hayward**

IT 'S NOT UNUSUAL for men who experience sexual dysfunction to hold back on a affection and intimacy toward their partner. This can show itself as avoiding sex. To cope with his sexual dysfunction, a man may work longer hours, do more jobs around the house, spend more time with the extended family (brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews etc), hog the computer, watch TV, go to bed later after he expects his partner to be asleep or undertake other activities that give some reasonable excuse for not showing a affection, intimacy and closeness. This behaviour happens because he may believe that any a affection would lead to sex. The man's partner can perceive this change in behaviour in several ways. They may think his lack of affection towards them is due to something they may have said or done, or that their man is having an affair, that he just simply does not care or find them desirable any more and that the relationship is drawing to a close. This can generate fear and uncertainty in the relationship, leading to further relationship difficulties. A failure to resolve these issues can lead to a communication breakdown in the smallest of things such as what to have for dinner, when to see friends together, where to spend the next annual holidays and so on. Suspicion sets in, mistrust grows, anger flares and power struggles between the couple develop. Relationship counselling is not uncommon for men who have difficulty discussing personal issues with their partner, friends or even health professionals for fear of being judged a failure in living up to expectations and what it means to be a man. Even if the man's partner raises the issue, the man may change the conversation to protect himself from having to disclose what he thinks, incorrectly, is a failing on his part. Fortunately, this attitude and way of thinking is changing and talking about men's sexual health in a relationship is becoming more common. Plus, more men are now seeking help for sexual issues than did 20 years ago. There is help for men who experience some form of sexual dysfunction. It usually begins with a visit to their GP, who may prescribe medication, intervention, counselling or both. Research has shown that about 80 per cent of erectile dysfunction has some physical cause such as high blood pressure, kidney or liver disease, cardiovascular problems and diabetes, to name a few. The other 20 per cent may be due to psychological reasons such as anxiety, grief and loss issues, fear of intimacy, sexual identity, stress, depression and other reasons. It's possible to have a combination of physical and psychological factors. Positive outcomes from relationship counselling with a qualified and recognised counsellor and a sex therapist who can identify and work with men's sexual issues can lead to a life of well-being for the man and his partner.

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