

Gender Differences in How we Look at Sex and Love

BioBalance Podcast — Dr. Kathy Maupin and [Brett Newcomb](#)

Recorded on October 20, 2010

Podcast published to the internet on October 29, 2010

Published on drkathymaupin.com and biobalancehealth.com on November 5, 2010.

Dr. Kathy Maupin: Welcome to the BioBalance Podcast. I'm Dr. Kathy Maupin and Brett Newcomb is here today again to talk to us about gender differences and how we look sex and love.

Brett Newcomb: That's such a loaded topic. You know gender differences. One of the questions that sometimes comes up in therapy with families is someone will say "well, who made them god? Who decided that they were the ones that got to say what was right or what was wrong?" And how that ties into this conversation is that when you start talking about sex role identification and gender identification. What are the differences between men and women in the way they experience the sex drive and in the way they find outlets for that experiencing of the sex drive. And then compounding that or enhancing that, flavoring it is what about the culture in which we live? Are those options available or viable in our culture? I mean if you've been following the news, this tragedy of this poor kid at Rutgers. Who was videotaped by his roommate and then committed suicide. You know the shame factor or the embarrassment factor, the unacceptability factor for him drove him over the edge. Some of those things are culturally driven, some are defined by religious values, some are defined by familial values. And some are defined by biological inheritance. So how do we walk around those lines to have a healthy sex life in any culture? And so today what I would like to do is explore with you, from where you sit and the kind of patients that you have, the kind of conversations you have with your patients. What can you help us know about the way that men or women take that biological sex drive and interpret it into their lives.

KM: You know, it's still very complex. Even if we're just looking at the way women look at sex drive. And it's not just sex drive. Its sexual desire, it has to do with fantasies, and thinking about sex and planning on having sex. And whether that, the question is, is that really, in our society, something that is acceptable for women to do?

BN: So do women plan to have sex? Do they say "Tuesday afternoon about 2 would be a good time? Until then, I'm not available."

KM: They do actually. I mean I think they do. Talking to women all day I would say that's a yes.

BN: Can I fit that in with all the other things I have to do.

KM: Yes. I mean it depends on what they expect out of their relationship. What they've always done.

BN: So can they control the drive? Can you dial it down so that it doesn't intrude, it doesn't disturb your day, it doesn't affect your mood because it's not convenient until Tuesday and that's the room you put it in? Because, men aren't like that. Men are like "hello".

KM: Ok well. Yes, that's true. I think we can probably dial it back. Partially that has to do with how we were made. We were made to watch the kids and make more children by having sex and then we're doing 2 or 3 things at once and so we have to put it away.

BN: So it's cultural responsibilities again, those defining roles.

KM: Right and those are some things that aren't different across cultures. Women kind of have to be the recipient of the sex drive. In reality they have a sex drive. They think about it. They can fantasize about it while they're taking care of the kids.

BN: I talk to women who have a strong sex drive and when they attempt to assert themselves in a relationship in a marriage or outside of a marriage they find that men are very frequently put off or intimidated by what's perceived as a sexually aggressive female.

KM: That's true but that's because they haven't learned to do it so that the men think it's their idea. So that's really the true art of it.

BN: Ok, so where do girls learn that? Do their moms teach them?

KM: No, your moms don't teach you.

BN: Your moms don't teach you that stuff?

KM: Don't teach you that. And you know girls learn it. They inherently, if they have a good social sense, they understand, they have to understand that men still run the world. I mean I'm a physician, I do a man's job, I've always done a man's job. And there's never been one moment in my life where I didn't think I have to be just as good or better than the rest of the guys around me. So it's still a guy's world and you still have to allow them to have their ego so that you let them do that.

BN: So the way you do that, advance of that, goes back to our last podcast conversation about flirting behaviors and cueing behaviors. Because you have to do that within a context. So that's managing the external manifestation of the sex drive. Internally what are women aware of? What are women like?

KM: You know from all the conversations that I've had, I think there are just as many different types of women as there are men. But I mean if you're talking about just the central common areas. I think that women look to sex to have a bond and intimacy more than they look to sex to have a sexual release. However that's still there and they would rather please their partners than please themselves in general. Although, this

next generation coming up is a little more aware of pleasing themselves, and more comfortable.

BN: Is that because gender roles are changing in our culture and it's becoming more acceptable for women to own that or express that than it has been historically?

KM: I mean all you have to do is read Glamour Magazine and read the, I mean I usually tend to read all the magazines I can get to see what everyone's talking about, what they're thinking about. I mean "how to get the big 'O'" is one of the like big spreads in Glamour Magazines. Which I thought was, amazing.

BN: That a main stream publication can now talk about that.

KM: Yes and one that's directed towards late teenagers and early 20's.

BN: Now if I saw that as the title of a magazine article I would think they were trying to get on the Oprah show.

KM: Well, yea. I read this and I'm sure people who are my age who are in their 50's and older have no clue but these girls will know how to achieve different kinds of orgasms.

BN: I have women who come and tell me they've never had an orgasm. They may have been sexually active all their life and they fake it. Kind of like the Meg Ryan "I'll have what she's having".

KM: I love that scene.

BN: So in your experience, in your conversations with women, is that fairly common, is that rare, is that?

KM: We fake orgasms because we can. They can.

BN: Yea, enough said.

KM: I mean we would only do that if something, if the session goes too long, if we lose interest, if it doesn't feel right, or if we're just, our mind's somewhere else. And so.

BN: So your body chemistry shifts and suddenly you're finished but he may not be.

KM: Yea but you're not really finished.

BN: So if the orgasm isn't the primary experiential focus for the women, what is? What constitutes, why would a women say "I have a great sex life", if she's not talking about how many orgasms she has.

KM: That would be how a man would describe it.

BN: Well, yea.

KM: Women tend to talk about how much they love their husband or how generous he is to make sure she is pleased. Or, you know, she views it as a bonding thing.

BN: So things like foreplay or post-coital bliss you know that “wham-bam thank you ma’am” roll over and go to sleep isn’t a really good message for her.

KM: It is really important to women. Yea that’s not a female thing in general. No it’s a really bad message for her.

BN: Yea so.

KM: Because what she was participating in was an act, but not a relationship. And so that’s in general. I’m saying in general but there are outliers.

BN: So what do we need to know? How do men discover in their committed relationships what meets those needs for women? How do I recognize that if I want to make sure that’s happening for you.

KM: Well I mean, men generally don’t, I mean, I can’t speak for all men. But my feedback from patients is that they’re really unhappy if all their husbands want to do is 5 minutes of sex, see ya. They don’t pay attention to them, they don’t look at them, they don’t pay attention to them, they could be anybody. They feel like, they’re not important, they’re just a body.

BN: Okay so if it’s just a mechanical or functional release, then they feel diminished by that.

KM: Yea in general. Women in relationships. I’m not sure how that works outside of relationships. I think there are some women who have sex for the sake of having sex just like men do. But I think most women in relationships are there to have the relationship. And often, men view sex as a release and women view sex as a bonding. That’s pretty much hard wired into most women. And when men, their husbands, or partner aren’t responding to their flirting or come-ons, they feel like they’re not there, they feel like just, they feel like they just disappear.

BN: So part of what you are telling me is that your efforts to get your partner’s attention may include sexual performance, may include a signal of some kind but that they pay off for you is more than just a sexual pay off, it’s a larger piece of the pie, it’s a relationship enhancing experience.

KM: It is, it is. It’s about connecting, it’s not about sex.

BN: So it’s about nurturing.

KM: Both. Nurturing and

BN: Being nurtured

KM: Being nurtured.

BN: Yea, it's reciprocal. It's got to be reciprocal.

KM: So if a man doesn't attend to the beginning and the end of this, then women feel like they were "used" I guess is the best term.

BN: Yes. but you know I don't know how clearly men are taught what constitutes nurturing behaviors. I think there is some John Wayne imagery out there about if I stand in the door way and protect the home and bring home the bacon, and you know acquire the status symbols or the markers that matter in our culture, then I am nurturing my family's existence and survival and success. But I don't know that teaches me how to nurture my 5 year old when he skins his knee or how to nurture my wife when her mother dies. What can I learn, what can you tell me that will help me better be able to nurture a woman in my life who matters to me.

KM: You watch her. You see what she does. And you mirror her. Because what she's doing is nurturing someone else. Usually we do the things, I mean just in general, human beings do the things that they want.

BN: I appreciate the answers that you're giving me and I think I have some sense of what it means. But for the listeners, when you say you watch her can you be more specific. Do I look at her eyes? Do I look at her tone of voice? Do I look at her level of body tension? I mean what are the things that I can look at that tell me if I'm, God forbid I should just ask her. Does this work for you? Do you like this?

KM: God forbid because no one wants to talk about this. I mean we're talking first about how to be nurturing, right?

BN: Yes, yes

KM: So, the best thing is to look at how she nurtures others, how she holds the kids, how she hugs you, how she approaches you. That's most probably not a come-on but a nurturing kind of love. But when you're talking sexuality to figure out what's good for her, you have to listen to her, you have to see what gets her eye contact. Or what's she draws away from, that's a definite, you know she's not getting it, she's not liking it. So it's a dance you have to follow her lead and she follows yours.

BN: So then can I extrapolate? And I don't know that I can. It's an honest question, not a manipulative one. Can I extrapolate then that women watch men in those ways for opportunities to nurture, for opportunities to invite more intimacy. To make sure that the guy is okay. If I come home from work everyday; hard day at the salt mines, and 20 days out of 30 my wife is in sweats, she hasn't done her hair, she hasn't put on makeup, dinner may be started, she may be running out the door to take one kid to soccer, and another kid to the dentist and piano lesson before she comes home.

“Hello, good bye” you know. And there’s something in the microwave. How do I notice that she’s noticing me? Is there like a hi-five, like a catch ya later.

KM: No, but that’s a dysfunctional kind of reaction. There’s something that she’s burying in all that. She’s burying it in too much activity.

BN: So if I’m watching her and I see that, then that tells me there’s something missing.

KM: Yes. Then there’s something she’s not getting. And it could have been childhood abuse. I have a lot of patients that have had that, and they hide it by gaining tons of weight, not taking care of themselves. They cushion themselves against another approach from another male. They don’t tend to do that with their husbands, but it could roll over their husbands too.

BN: Or they do and they’ve signaled in such a way there on the channel that allows the husband to pick a wife who’s not going to be sexually available, just like a wife picks a husband that’s not going to make those sexual advances.

KM: True and we do pick people who fit our own dysfunctions. But what you described is not somebody, in general, [who comes to see me]. I mean I’m used to patients who are motivated to be better, to get better, to be better, to be better in their marriages and to please their husbands. And in general these are the patients that I’m discussing, people who are motivated to have a relationship. They often come in and say “my husband saw you on television and he wants me to come. Now tell me why I should be here.” By then I already have their lab, I already have their history.

BN: Okay because he’s found a way to say to her there is something that is not working in my relationship with you. There is a piece that is not there for me and I’m concerned about it, I’m disturbed about it. Will you help me find the answer? Will you go and see this doctor to see if that will solve our problem?

KM: Which is a warning sign. They’re giving her a warning sign that if you don’t fix this, something else is going to happen. Like I’m going to go out or I’m going to leave, that’s what women think.

BN: I’m thinking about a couple that I used to do therapy with and the man was in his 80’s and the woman was in her 70’s. And he still felt that he wanted some levels of sexual interaction but physiologically his body was really on the downhill side.

KM: I could fix that

BN: They should have found you, they’re both dead now. They fought tooth and nail. Because she would say to him, ‘you’re old, your body doesn’t work, get over it, leave me alone.’ And he would say to her ‘but I still want to cuddle or I still want to touch or I still want some semblance that acknowledges that sex is still a part of who I am as my definition of myself as a man’ and so on. And she was very berating and emasculating,

and eviscerating and they would have these horrible, horrible fights and she was not prepared.

KM: And they didn't have makeup sex I guess.

BN: No because for her definition of any kind of acceptable sex and her explanation was it had to do with her religious upbringing and her childhood. And now remember she was in her 70's and this was several years ago and she was in her 70's. When her childhood began these messages were more aggressive. But her explanation was the only acceptable sexual experience is full blown intercourse. And if we're not able to accomplish that then it's all a waste of time, and it's unacceptable, it's distasteful. His frame of reference was so much touching, cuddling, stroking, talking, fantasizing, remembering is in some way "sexual", and is in a very large way satisfying to me, or stimulating to me, or nurturing to me. She would just have none of it.

KM: Yes it is. He could relive their old life. And that's a nice coping mechanism. But he needed somebody to help him and she was unwilling to do that partially because of her upbringing. But that's kind of unusual. Men usually pull away if they're not able to function. They don't usually go for the nurturing part. Women can go for the nurturing part because we're taught to nurture.

BN: Which is what's so fascinating. When we talk about gender disparity what you seem to be focusing on as the primary sexual awareness for women is about emotional nurturing more than about mechanical release. And the implication seems to be that for many men, if not most men, the primary experience is a mechanical release. And if there is that positive emotional experience it's a secondary gain but it's not necessarily the goal.

KM: Right, that goes back to women are trying to foster a relationship for children, that's hard wired, and men are trying to spread their seed. I mean that is something that is hard wired. And that's just something that's not going to.

BN: O well now, and that's a perfect lead in to the next conversation I want to have with you. There's a man named Edward Wilson, he's a Harvard biologist. And he's written a book called Social Biology and in that book he talks about genetically imperative breeding strategies that are gender different. And, that the cultural manifestations of femininity and masculinity and the messages about male sex and female sex, and so on, all tie together with this conversation we're having here today. So maybe the next time we meet we can talk a little bit about the anthropology of sex both from a cultural anthropology and from a physical anthropology stand point.

KM: That would be excellent but I don't want to leave this because I think what we haven't said is that the way we bring our children up does a lot to tell them who they should be and how they should act with sexuality. And sexuality has been for girls who were taught, and we still teach our girls, don't have anything to do with sex, you have

to stay away from it, and because in the back of every parent's mind is thinking "I don't want to be a grandmother and I don't want you to ruin your life." But in the outcome of that is don't have sex until you get married and then once you get married you can have sex all you want. Well years of repression keeps women.

BN: And we give mixed messages. We tell our daughters don't be a slut but we tell our men it's okay to be a stud. The paradox of that is interesting. So maybe we should have a conversation about teaching children about sex.

KM: Well that's most probably true, you can go, there are extremists on both sides. But viewing sex as a part of a gift and somebody's sexuality is not being definitely related to their partner but to themselves. Most women of my age believe it has something to do with their partner, in general if they have one. They usually learn it's not something to do with their partner when they are single, aging, or when their spouse dies they then learn that their sexuality is theirs. But it's hard to get past the repression from society. And usually both men and women are looking for sexually satisfying relationships but they're also looking for other things.

BN: And some cultures are generally more sexually repressed. I know my European friends tell me that Americans are sexually repressed and sexually obsessed. You go to Europe and you see commercials that have nudity and in the United States they'd be burning down the TV stations.

KM: Yes, that seems to be true to me too, that's what I've noticed as well. And so society does that and then they have to live with the outcome. So then we have women who are frigid or women who don't respond to their husbands because they've shut it down. But most of the people that we're talking about are people who in my world have relationships. They've been sexual in the past, now how do we deal with getting it back. Do they go back to their old repression feelings? Or do they, have they learned something?

BN: Okay, so we'll continue this conversation next time with talking about the issue of repression and the sexual messages that women receive and that men receive in our culture and then we'll look at other cultures as well.

KM: That sounds great, thank you very much. If you have any questions about this podcast, email us at podcast@bioblancehealth.com or for more information visit BioBalanceHealth.com on the web. You can call us at 314.993.0963. Thanks for listening.