

# Talk about safer sex, monogamy more than trying to scare people

**Q.** Admit it — your talk about safer sex and monogamy is meant to scare people out of adventurous sex lives.



**Ruth Westheimer**

**A.** No. When I say that sex with one trustworthy partner is safer than going around sharing sex with many partners, that is only factual information. I hope somebody considers that this column is trustworthy information. That Dr. Ruth gives trustworthy information. That accredited sex educators and sex therapists can be relied on for sound information.

We don't try to scare, because to prevent sexually transmissible diseases or unwanted pregnancies, scare tactics don't work. But information does. When I read in *The New York Times* that unwanted teen-age pregnancies are down, and that new cases of AIDS among gay males are down, then I feel that my colleagues and I are justified and that we should be proud of our efforts.

If you try to scare young people out of doing dangerous things, the ones most likely to take risks will only say, "Hah! They're just trying to scare us because they don't want us to drink, to do drugs, to have fun in cars or to have sex. They want to save all that for themselves." But if you give youngsters reasonable information about behaving sensibly and responsibly, a lot of them will listen and then act on what they have heard or read.

**Q.** Say what you like, nothing replaces real sex — meaning intercourse between man and wo-

man. Oral sex and other kinds of fooling around are good for only so long. Maybe the man will be satisfied forever that way, the woman not for so long.

I know whereof I speak. My husband is a totally impotent diabetic senior citizen and I am a somewhat younger nurse. After a while I asked him to get an implant and he refused. I think a lot of people find this procedure too expensive, then they phone their travel agent and spend the same amount on a vacation. My husband refused the implant and I found a boyfriend.

**A.** Now I could be wrong just about you, but when someone asks me, "Should I look for sexual satisfaction outside?" I do think that this questioner, male or female, has going outside very much in mind. And when you say you found a boyfriend, was that what you wanted, and you found an excuse? The person who finds excuses for adultery is like the one who says, "I'll drink to that!" no matter what it is. Or the one who says his girlfriend reminds him of a martini — because what doesn't?

My guess is that a lot of other things besides your husband's sex problems put the idea of adul-

tery into your mind. You say that men are satisfied with oral sex and other diversions but no woman ever will be. However, I get letters from men who want intercourse but their wives will agree only to the other forms of shared sex. So when you say women like this or that, you mean yourself. You don't speak for all women.

It is true that people will avoid costly procedures that might very well improve their year-round lives and spend the same money on other things. But if a man does not want an implant, it should not be forced on him. Many women with husbands in the same condition as yours have found ways to find sexual satisfaction within the bounds of marriage. Naturally, I know of the cases where the couple have sought help from sex therapists.

**Q.** You have said that when one partner's sexual appetite is lower than the other's, the less interested partner should accommodate the other without taking full part in the encounter — that is, should pleasure the other without trying for orgasm herself or himself, probably by means other than intercourse. But in this man's experience, women are usually unwilling to be helpful in this way.

**A.** This is your experience, not the universal experience of men with women. By the way, I never said the less libidinous partner should pleasure the more libidinous. I probably said that he or she could do so, if willing, of course.

Of course many women are willing to cooperate in this matter, and many who are not willing today will be willing in the near future, especially with more understanding of human sexuality gained by reading, consulting a sex therapist or, not unlikely, by seeing some sexy and romantic movie.

**Q.** You have at different times advised women to do nothing sexually that repels them but to consider that their attitude may change at some time. Then they will feel all different about granting some sexual favor that has always made them want to barf and want a divorce and that they are sure is wrong in the sight of all that is holy.

Does this variability apply to things like theft and murder? I mean, have we no rules we must stick by, or are we just quivering jellies with nerves and feelings?

**A.** Whether you are one or the other I leave to you. At no time have I, in my recollection, told anyone that obeying the Ten Commandments is just a passing thing, to be dumped when feelings change. And I have asserted as well an Eleventh, "Don't do anything sexually that you really don't like."

Some actions in life are established for us as really harmful and wrong and others are matters of mood. You have to know for yourself that such a distinction exists, and to know which things you

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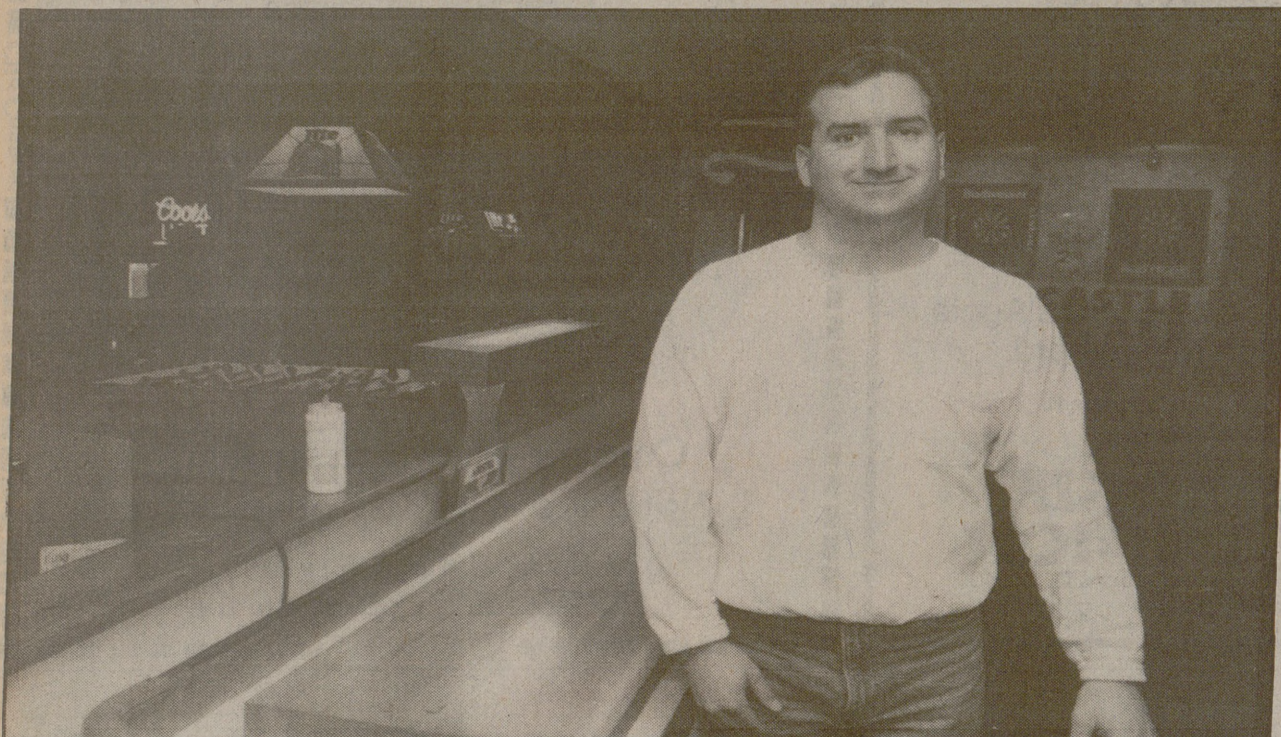
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