

Coping

Impotency can be caused by stress

By DR. CHARLES FAULKNER
Syndicated Columnist

One of the increasing problems that people want to resolve is the problem of sexual dysfunction on the part of themselves or a spouse. Sexual dysfunction, also known as impotence, increases with the increase of stress in society and leads inevitably to marriage failure.

What is sexual dysfunction? S.D. refers to the inability to reach orgasm or even experience the responses normally associated with forplay. S.D. may have physical or psychological origins. At first awareness of a problem, the victim should consult a competent physician to determine if any organs are injured, diseased or inadequately developed. If such a discovery is made, the doctor will use his expertise to help resolve the problem.

But suppose the problem is not due to a physical deficiency. In such a case it is probably psychological, and most psychologically initiated dysfunctions can be traced to personal feelings of inadequacy that induce stress. Stress, in turn, causes the malfunction. This is the usual scenario: Two people marry (even though one need not be married in order to have a sexual dysfunction) and things seem to work fine initially. Then, one of the mates becomes angered, argumentative or critical of the other. The troubled mate begins to question himself or herself as a person. Am I good enough to succeed in life? Am I good enough to fulfill the needs of my spouse? These questions become nagging reminders of one's inadequacy. The questioner usually has predetermined answer, which is "no."

Because of the intense desire to provide satisfactory sexual companionship, the victim becomes self-conscious and begins to try hard to do something that should be natural and occur without abnormal effort. After repeated failures, the victimized mate starts to anticipate failure: "I know that things will be the same tonight as they always are. I really want to make my spouse happy but maybe I never will be able to."

Unfortunately, in many instances, the spouse begins to indicate displeasure at a lack of fulfillment through argument or some other subtle action. Thus, sexual involvement becomes a stressful contest for both mates. The victimized mate feels the stress of inadequacy. The other mate feels the stress of being unfulfilled. They both find the sexual encounter unfulfilling and engage in it less and less. The resolution of this unpleasant situation is expressed in both individuals seeking satisfaction outside of the marriage. Then, separation and divorce becomes the result.

Space does not allow me to provide detailed methods of resolving the problem but here briefly are some helpful aids.

1. Remain calm and affectionate regardless of the extent of the problem.
2. Encourage the spouse with confidence-building statements. Try to avoid having the mate become self-conscious. Let the mate know that sexual fulfillment involves more than the sexual organs. You find a loving satisfaction in the closeness that comes with sexual involvement.
3. Find out if there are problems on the job, in social activities or other aspects of their life that are causing undue stress. Help the mate to resolve them.
4. Determine if your own behavior, subtle or apparent, is creating inadequacy, stress and self-criticism within your mate.
5. Experiment with different approaches to sexual engagement and extended foreplay. Ask if there is anything that you can do to make the interaction more suitable.
6. If all else fails, consider seeking professional consultation with a counselor or a trained, competent, licensed sex therapist.

All questions directed to Dr. Faulkner should be sent directly to P.O. Box 50016, Washington, D.C. 20004.

Broadway

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white girl." "We didn't come out wailing and gospel screaming," she says. "We were singing all these proper songs, right on the beat. They thought we were trying to imitate white groups."

The Pointers started with close-harmony jazz nostalgia. That got tiresome and they tried rock'n'roll -- the "Energy" and "Priority" LPs.

"We had no problem with that, clothes-wise," Ruth says, noting that the Pointers put on leather jeans after setting a style with '30s and '40s dresses.

But rock wasn't working for them, Anita says. "We backed up off that," she says. "I loved doing it but you've got to pay the house payments. My daughter is growing up now. She needs money for school. We got a little more pop."

Films

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As I said before, this is an amazingly boring film. The "Star Trek" ensemble of characters is so good and the film's premise so juicy that it would take a supreme botch-up to make them fail -- and that's exactly what happens.

The biggest irony in all of this, of course, is that Leonard Nimoy, who usually plays Mr. Spock in the series, directed "The Search For Spock."

Why they let him do that is even a greater mystery than Spock's fate.

Still, I hope there'll be a "Star Trek IV," and that they'll let somebody who can capture the true essence of good, old-fashioned movie fun handle it -- like maybe Spielberg or Lucas.

Otherwise, beaming up may become downright painful.

"Star Trek III: The Search For Spock" is playing at the Thruway Cinema. It is rated PG.

Next Week: "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom."

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