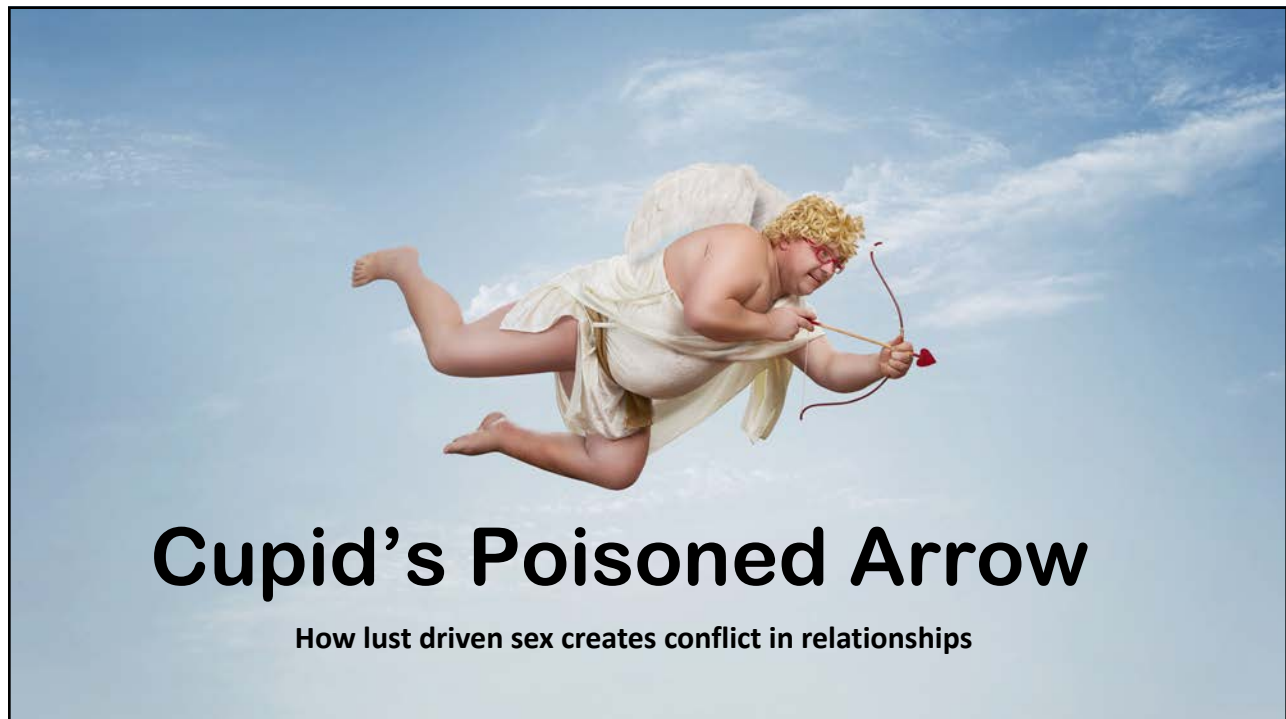




Seeking Light and Truth

With Steven Horne, DHS



Cupid's Poisoned Arrow

How lust driven sex creates conflict in relationships

Euripides (ca. 480-406 BCE)

Those people are happy who relish love's
pleasure

Enjoying Aphrodite's sensual embrace

As a ship riding easy on a calm sea,

Avoiding the obsession that leads to
disgrace,

For sex, like a horsefly, can madden with its
sting,

And Eros (Cupid) has to arrows in his string...

A mere scratch from the first brings lifelong
joy,

But the second wounds to death, and breeds
dispair.

Goddess born in Cyprus (Aphrodite), keep my
bedroom safe

From the mortal arrow, make love in my life

A steady, consuming delight,

Not obsessional or destructive. Let me serve

The great queen with ecstasy, as is her right,

But commit no crimes for her, nor become
her slave.

—From *Iphigenia at Aulis* as quoted in *Cupid's Poisoned
Arrow* by Marnia Robinson



Lust-Based Sex

- It's an interesting paradox that extremely passionate sex actually creates an emotional disconnect between people in romantic relationships
- This is why relationships with strong chemistry are often extremely dramatic

Drama

- Many times men and women get along just fine until they start to become sexually involved
- Then they start to experience the drama
- Why is this the case?
- Does sex change the way we perceive another person?



Primitive Circuitry

- The lowest portion of our brain, which has been dubbed the “reptilian” brain, has only two drives:
 - The instinct to survive
 - The instinct to reproduce
- These drives create what we call “passion,” intense emotional reactions that can “hijack” our higher brain functions



Brain Reward Circuits

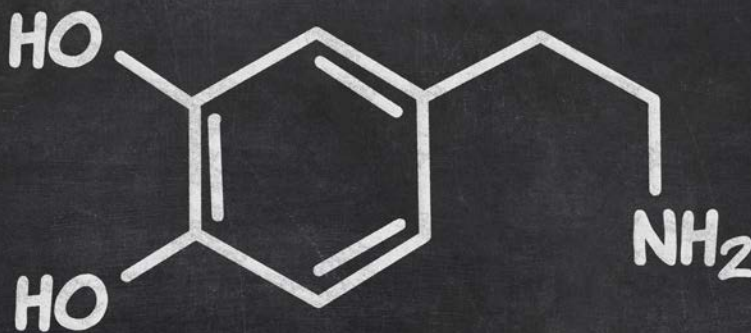
Dopamine

- Creates an addictive-like craving
- Becomes increasingly “numb” with frequent stimulation, requiring greater and greater stimulus to activate
- Tend to temporarily numb feelings of stress and anxiety but wears off faster and requires another “fix”

Oxytocin

- Create the warm-fuzzy feelings that can felt for children, animals and friends
- Does not habituate
- Reduces feelings of stress, anxiety, depression and defensiveness

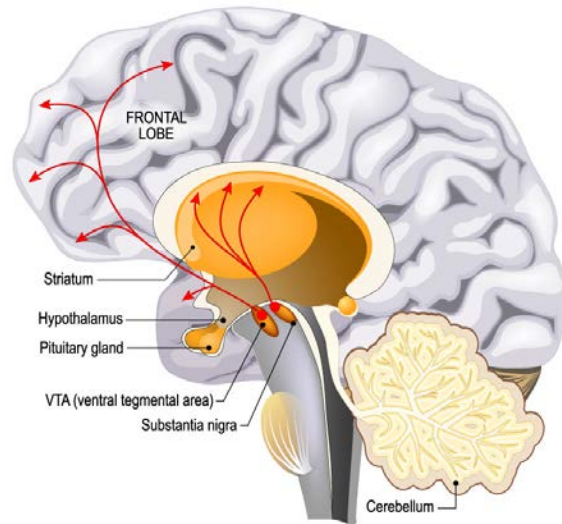
Dopamine



- One of the catecholamine class neurotransmitters
- Dopamine neurons influence our higher brain to pursue goals that ensure our personal survival and the survival of our genes
- It initiates arousal and motivation to seek rewards such as:
 - Food, shelter and other necessities
 - Sexual reproduction

Dopamine Producing Neurons

- Dopamine neurons originate in the hippocampus and substance nigra (dark substance)
- The substance nigra is high in the iron-bearing melanin, giving it a darker color (making this area highly prone to oxidative damage)
- Dopamine neurons project into the frontal cortex, influencing our decision making



Excitement and Arousal

- Excitement and arousal (desire) is largely due to catecholamine neurotransmitters like dopamine and epinephrine (adrenaline)
- Desire motivates us because we feel passionate about doing something
- Once something worthwhile has been achieved, other neurotransmitters and hormones provide the feeling of satisfaction and happiness



Dopamine and Sex

- The “chemistry” we feel for a potential sex partner is likely the result of dopamine neurons firing
- This chemistry or “passion” is nature’s way of getting us to mate and reproduce
- It does not produce fulfillment, only drives us to seek fulfillment



Addiction

- Addiction occurs when a behavior promises satisfaction but doesn't provide it
- One chases the feeling of excitement, but does not experience the sense of fulfillment
- It takes a bigger and bigger stimulus to feel excited again, and each stimulus is followed by a bigger let down



The Coolidge Effect

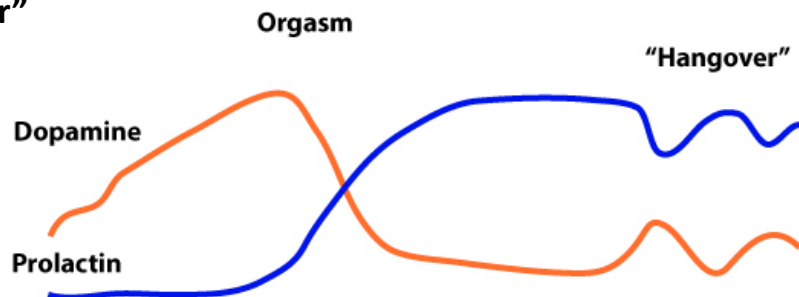
- ... an old joke about Calvin Coolidge when he was President ... The President and Mrs. Coolidge were being shown [separately] around an experimental government farm. When [Mrs. Coolidge] came to the chicken yard she noticed that a rooster was mating very frequently. She asked the attendant how often that happened and was told, "Dozens of times each day." Mrs. Coolidge said, "Tell that to the President when he comes by." Upon being told, the President asked, "Same hen every time?" The reply was, "Oh, no, Mr. President, a different hen every time." President: "Tell that to Mrs. Coolidge."
- From Wikipedia

Dopamine and Prolactin

- "Dopamine (DA) holds a predominant role in the regulation of prolactin (PRL) secretion."
(http://jop.sagepub.com/content/22/2_suppl/12.abstract)
- High dopamine suppresses prolactin production
- Lower dopamine increases prolactin production
- Dopamine and Prolactin are highly involved in sex: The largest discharge of dopamine occurs during the lead up to orgasm
- Prolactin is released after orgasm and puts an end to the "drive" for sex (unless a novel new partner is introduced)
- Prolactin levels can remain elevated for some time after orgasm, even surging repeatedly for days. Subjects have reported mood swings related to orgasm, for as long as two weeks afterward.

Dopamine and Orgasm

- Sex releases a flood of dopamine, which falls dramatically after orgasm and is followed by a surge of prolactin
- Dopamine is the “go for it” messenger for sex
- Prolactin is the “enough is enough” messenger for sex
- Fluctuating levels of dopamine and prolactin can cause emotional highs and lows for up to two weeks following orgasm, a type of sexual “hangover”



Understanding Porn Addiction

- Dopamine fires in the male brain when seeing a potential “mate”
- After mating, prolactin signals that mating is complete and disconnects desire
- Dopamine (and desire) can be retriggered when the male is exposed to a new potential “mate” (the Coolidge effect)
- Viewing numerous pictures of potential mates in rapid succession as happens on the internet causes depletion of dopamine and loss of sensitivity of dopamine receptors
- Masturbation releases only ¼ of the prolactin released in actual intercourse, not producing the same satiation of desire that intercourse does
- The result is depression, which causes the guy to feel like he needs more stimulus, thus creating a cycle of addiction



Dopamine and Relationships

High Levels

- This person looks “hot”
- They’re perfect for me



Low Levels

- I’ve lost attraction for this person
- They’re wrong for me



Effects of High Prolactin

Women

- Mood changes: depression, hostility, anxiety
- Headache
- Menopausal symptoms
- Increased testosterone levels
- Weight gain
- Painful intercourse
- Infertility
- Peripheral vision problems

Men

- Loss of libido
- Mood changes: depression
- Impotence
- Headache
- Decreased testosterone levels
- Weight gain
- Breast development
- Infertility
- Peripheral vision problems

Ancient Chinese Wisdom

- A person's approach to sexuality is a sign of his level of evolution. Unevolved persons practice ordinary sexual intercourse. Placing all emphasis upon the sexual organs, they neglect the body's other organs and systems. Whatever physical energy is summarily discharged, and the subtle energies are similarly discharged and disordered. It is a great backward leap.
- For those who aspire to the higher realms of living, there is angelic dual cultivation. Because every portion of the body, mind and spirit yearns for the integration of yin and yang, angelic intercourse is lead by the spirit rather than the sexual organs.
- Where ordinary intercourse is effortful, angelic cultivation is calm, relaxed, quiet and natural. Where ordinary intercourse unites sex organs with sex organs, angelic cultivation unites spirit with spirit, mind with mind, and every cell of one body with every cell of the other body. Culminating not in dissolution but in integration [i.e., merging rather than separation], it is an opportunity for a man and woman to mutually transform and uplift each other into the realm of bliss and wholeness.
 - —From the Hua Hu Ching as quoted in Cupids Poisoned Arrow

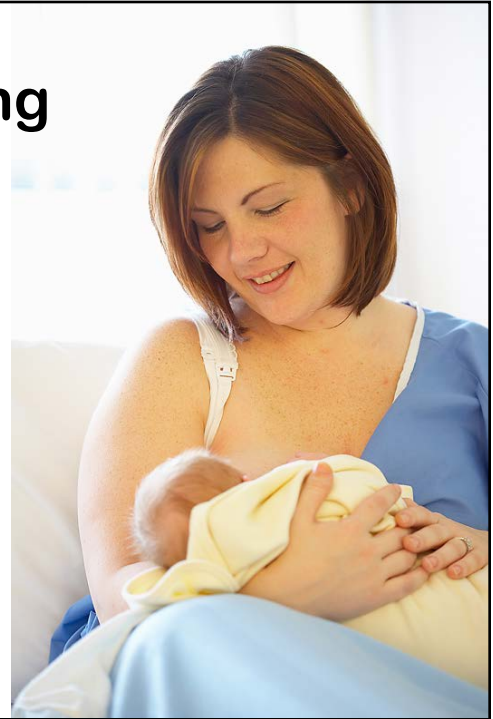


Oxytocin

- Oxytocin is a hormone released in the hypothalamus and transported to the pituitary
- It stimulates contractions in childbirth and aids in "let down" of breast milk
- Oxytocin is also involved in the experience of bonding
- It allows us to feel safe and comfortable with others

Oxytocin Creates Bonding

- People given oxytocin through a nasal spray trusted a person who had previously cheated them, while people who received a placebo did not
- Behaviors that create bonding between people do so because they release oxytocin in the presence of another person (or animal)
- Trusting relationships are built on behaviors that release oxytocin



Sacred Sexuality?

- Various Traditions
 - Ancient Chinese Taoists
 - Ayurvedic Tantra
 - Gnostic Christians
 - Medieval Chivalry
 - Modern Christian-Based Karezza
- These traditions suggest that there a difference in approaching sexuality from the heart, than there is in approaching it from the genitals

Universal Bonding Behaviors

- Making eye contact and gazing into each others eyes for several moments
- Smiling at someone (genuinely)
- Listening intently and restating what you heard
- Forgiving, overlooking a mistake or error
- Giving unsolicited approval, compliments
- Wordless sounds of pleasure or contentment
- Synchronized breathing
- Preparing food for someone and sharing a meal with pleasant conversation
- Taking a walk or doing an activity together with attention focused on each other



Bonding Touch

- Bonding touch must be caring, rather than needy and “wanting”
- Hugs or holding someone for 20-30 minutes
- Massaging someone in a caring way, especially feet, shoulders and head
- Holding someone with skin to skin contact without trying to arouse or stimulate them
- Putting your head on someone’s chest and listening to their heartbeat
- Stroking someone in a comforting way
- Affectionate kisses versus “hungry kisses”

Oxytocic Sexual Bonding

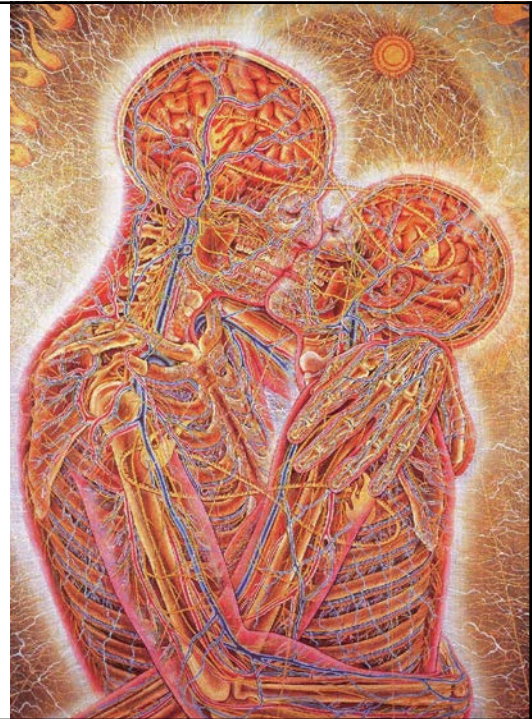
- Sexual bonding behaviors must not be goal-driven, i.e., trying to stimulate each other to an orgasm
- Kissing with lips or tongue
- Touching or kissing breasts in a gentle, loving way
- Touching your partner's body in a gentle, caring way
- Spooning or holding each other in stillness for 20-30 minutes (especially when naked)
- Gentle intercourse (prolonged contact with little movement, no orgasm)



Sex as Energy Exchange

- Sex can be best thought of as an exchange of masculine and feminine energy (polarity)
- When you discharge the polarity, the attraction is gone
- You can also circulate the energy, creating a feeling of mutual nourishment that balances, rather than discharges the energy, creating an even stronger bond

• Art by Alex Grey



Cupid's Two Arrows

Passion (Dopamine?)

- Chemistry and sexual desire ("lust")
- Drives us to mate and create offspring and causes us to feel disconnected after orgasm
- Lasts only 12-18 months at best, one time at worst
- Causes emotional ups and downs (attraction and aversion), often evokes jealous, suspicion and a "love-hate" relationship
- Creates an addictive bonding that makes the other person feel like some type of "drug" you have to have

Affection (Oxytocin?)

- Friendship, kindness and compassion
- Causes us to exhibit care and love for a partner, creating deep feelings of satisfaction
- Grows stronger and creates deeper levels of trust over time
- Calms emotional distress and produces a more even, calm emotional state
- Maintains a healthy interest in one's mate, causing a feeling of satisfaction and bliss in the relationship

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