

WELCOME!



THE POWER OF PLEASURE

Stephanie Taylor, Ph.D. and
Heather Hill, MS, OTR/L



UTAH CENTER
FOR EVIDENCE BASED
TREATMENT



ACCURACY, UTILITY, AND RISKS' STATEMENT

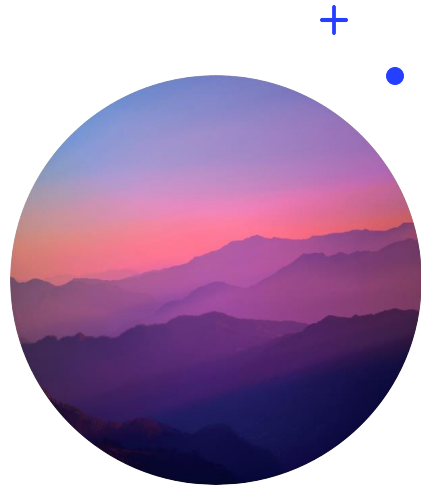


Accuracy: The information presented in this presentation on the focus on pleasure in sex, couples, and trauma therapy is based on current research, clinical experience, and professional guidelines in the field of psychology and occupational/pelvic floor therapy. Efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided. However, it is important to note that research in this area is continually evolving, and new findings may emerge that could impact the understanding and recommendations related to pleasure-focused therapy.

Utility: This presentation aims to provide therapists with important insights and practical strategies for incorporating a focus on pleasure into their work with clients who have sexual concerns, couples seeking to enhance their intimate relationships, and individuals who have experienced sexual trauma. The information shared is intended to enhance therapeutic effectiveness and support clients in their journey towards improved well-being and sexual satisfaction. The presentation offers practical tools, evidence-based approaches, and considerations for creating a safe and inclusive therapeutic environment.

Risks: It is important to acknowledge that discussing pleasure in therapy may be challenging or uncomfortable for some individuals due to personal, cultural, or religious beliefs or past traumatic experiences. Additionally, therapists must exercise caution and sensitivity when discussing sexual topics, especially when working with clients who have experienced trauma. The presentation emphasizes the importance of informed consent, creating a safe and non-judgmental space, and respecting clients' boundaries and comfort levels throughout the therapeutic process. Therapists should be mindful of potential risks and seek appropriate supervision or consultation when working with sensitive or triggering content.

It is recommended that therapists exercise their professional judgment and adapt the information presented to the unique needs of their clients. The content of this presentation should not replace individualized assessment, clinical judgment, or adherence to ethical guidelines. Therapists are encouraged to regularly update their knowledge and skills in this area through ongoing professional development and consultation with colleagues or experts in the field.



DISCLAIMERS



Conflict of Interest: None

Commercial Support: None

Audience: Not suitable for children

You do not need to have any specialized sex education or therapy training to attend today's presentation, nor is any specialized training needed to apply what we cover today in your own practice. This is not a replacement for specialized training, nor are we attempting to dissuade anyone from seeking training.

WHO IS THIS PRESENTATION FOR?

If you consider yourself a holistic practitioner,
this presentation is for you.





GOALS FOR TODAY

To know how important it is to address the sexual health of our clients

To know what pelvic floor therapy is and when to refer

To feel confident on how to best address sexual health by focusing on pleasure

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

+ •

Heather Hill, MS, OTR/L

Heather@upliftphw.com

<https://upliftphw.com/>

435-465-0657

○



ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



<https://www.integrativesextherapyinstitute.com/>

+

<https://www.ciis.edu/public-programs/sex-therapy-certificate>



<https://www.gottman.com/professionals/training/>

<https://www.emdria.org/learning-class/deeper-connections-emdr-with-couples-and-families/>



AGENDA

1. Importance of sexuality in mental health
2. How to address sexuality
3. Overview of the desire versus pleasure models of sex therapy
4. Healing power of pleasure
5. Psychological barriers to pleasure
6. What is pelvic floor therapy
7. When to refer to a pelvic floor therapist
8. Physical barriers to pleasure
9. Pelvic floor treatment
10. Treatment tools and practices





POLL

Who is here today?

What is your specialty?

How comfortable are you talking about sex
with clients?





WHY TALK ABOUT SEX

Significant aspect of mental health

Sexuality is not just about sex – it's about identity, connection, and well-being.

A study in the Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy found that sexual satisfaction was a significant predictor of general life satisfaction, even more so than relationship satisfaction.

By neglecting sexuality, we're overlooking a powerful tool for healing and growth.

Consider how many clients come to us with issues that have roots in sexual dissatisfaction or trauma. We have an ethical responsibility to address the whole person, including their sexual self.



WHY TALK ABOUT SEX

Significant aspect of mental health

Sexual health can significantly impact mental well-being. Ignoring this aspect can lead to:

- Unresolved underlying issues
- Lingering symptoms
- Missed opportunities for growth
- Negative impact on relationships
- Perpetuate shame



BARRIERS TO TALKING ABOUT SEX

- Personal Discomfort
- Lack of formal training
- Fear of inadequacy
- Cultural taboos and societal stigma
- Addressing cultural diversity in sexuality discussions
- Symptomatic focus
- Client preference



IDEAL APPROACH

- Open communication
- Collaboration and respect
- Comprehensive assessment



WHEN AND HOW TO ADDRESS?

As early as possible

Simple questions



WHY DO OUR CLIENTS SEEK SEX THERAPY?

The most prevalent reason individuals seek sex therapy are communication breakdowns surrounding sexual issues. Many people find that difficulties in discussing their sexual needs, desires, and concerns with their partners lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. This lack of effective communication can result in mismatched libidos and intimacy problems, prompting individuals or couples to seek professional help.



THE DESIRE MODEL

Key components of the desire model:

- **Spontaneous Desire:** The model emphasizes the importance of spontaneous desire, meaning a sexual urge or interest that arises seemingly out of the blue, without any specific stimulation. This desire is seen as the initial trigger for sexual activity.
- **Linear Progression:** The model proposes a sequential process where desire precedes and initiates arousal. Arousal then leads to increased physical sensations and excitement, culminating in orgasm and eventual resolution.
- **Focus on Individual Experience:** The desire model primarily focuses on the individual's internal experience of desire and arousal.



LIMITATIONS OF THE DESIRE MODEL

- Overemphasizes spontaneous desire
- Reinforces certain stereotypes
- Neglects of non-sexual intimacy
- Focuses on performance
- Ignores relational solutions
- Maintains cultural bias
- Medicalizes desire issues
- Overlooks broader aspects of intimacy and sexuality
- Limits treatment options



THE PLEASURE MODEL

Identify and cultivate sources of pleasure: Begin by helping clients identify activities, sensations, and experiences that bring them joy and a sense of aliveness. This could include anything from spending time in nature and listening to music to engaging in creative pursuits or physical activities.

Identify barriers: Explore any internal or external factors that may be hindering the client's ability to experience pleasure. This could include negative thoughts, beliefs, past experiences, or current life circumstances.

Mindfulness: Encourage clients to be present and fully engage in pleasurable activities, savoring the experience and noticing the positive sensations and emotions it evokes.

Scheduling: Help clients intentionally incorporate pleasurable activities into their daily or weekly routines, making them a priority rather than an afterthought.



PIZZA?

https://www.ted.com/talks/al_vernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one



THE PLEASURE MODEL

This model is more inclusive, especially for those who experience responsive rather than spontaneous desire.

Research by Basson et al. shows that the Pleasure Model is more reflective of real-life sexual experiences, especially in long-term relationships.

By focusing on pleasure, we reduce performance anxiety and increase overall satisfaction.

This approach is particularly effective in treating low desire and arousal issues.

This model is more inclusive and empowering for clients, promoting self-exploration and body positivity.

It addresses a wider range of sexual concerns and fosters a more positive therapeutic experience.

HEALING POWER OF PLEASURE

Pleasure is not frivolous nor is it a luxury, privilege – it's a powerful healing tool



PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO PLEASURE

1. Societal norms and expectations
2. Religious or cultural beliefs
3. Past trauma or negative experiences (negative beliefs)
4. Body image issues
5. Changing bodies
6. Performance anxiety
7. Shame



WHAT ABOUT PHYSICAL BARRIERS TO PLEASURE?

Physical ability, performance, pain, dysfunction



+

•

○

PELVIC FLOOR THERAPY

PELVIC FLOOR ANATOMY



FUNCTIONS OF THE PELVIC FLOOR

- **Sexual Pleasure**
- **Bowel/Bladder**
- **Supporting Organs**
- **Stabilizing Hips**
- **Birthing Babies**
- **Lymphatic Drainage**

CONDITIONS WE TREAT

- Pelvic Pain
- Pain with Intercourse
- Pregnancy/Postpartum
- Diastasis Recti
- Pelvic Organ Prolapse
- Back/Tailbone Pain, Hip Pain
- Urinary Leakage/Incontinence
- Bowel Incontinence/Constipation
- And more



PAIN NEUROSCIENCE

- **Study of pain is complex**
- **Iceberg effect**
- **Tissues contain nociceptive receptors (not pain receptors)**
- **Injury and pain are not the same thing**
- **Nervous system and ion channels**
- **Neuroplasticity- use it or lose it!**
- **Pain neuromatrix**
- **Pain as a stressor- stress biology**



TREATMENT MODALITIES

- Breathwork
- Nervous system regulation
- Visceral mobilization
- Manual therapy
- Myofascial release
- Joint mobilization
- Cupping
- Dry needling
- Treatment of trapped/pinched nerves, ligaments
- Muscle activation
- Mobility, strength, balance, weight training



LET'S PRACTICE!



PLAN OF CARE

- Evaluation
 - Subjective
 - Internal or external assessments
- 3 Treatment phases:
 - Restore
 - Retrain
 - Reclaim
- Length of care depends on person
- 1 hour sessions
- Individualized



Uplift Pelvic
Health & Wellness

PAIN WITH INTERCOURSE EDUCATION AND REFERRALS

- Mental health therapy
- Breathwork
 - [Releasebreathwork.com](https://releasebreathwork.com)
- Nutrition
- Behavior, routines, and habits
- Erogenous zones
- Types of female orgasms
- Emotional foreplay
- Physical foreplay

PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pelvic People

- OhNut Depth Limiting Rings
- <https://thepelvicpeople.com/>



Intimate Rose

- Pelvic Wand
- <https://www.intimaterose.com/>



THERAPEUTIC TREATMENTS

What is good sex? • +
○

WHAT IS GOOD SEX?

What is it clients are actually wanting when they want sex?

What is it clients are actually wanting when they don't want sex?



WHAT IS IT PEOPLE WANT WHEN THEY WANT SEX?

Connection
Validation
Exploration
Pleasure



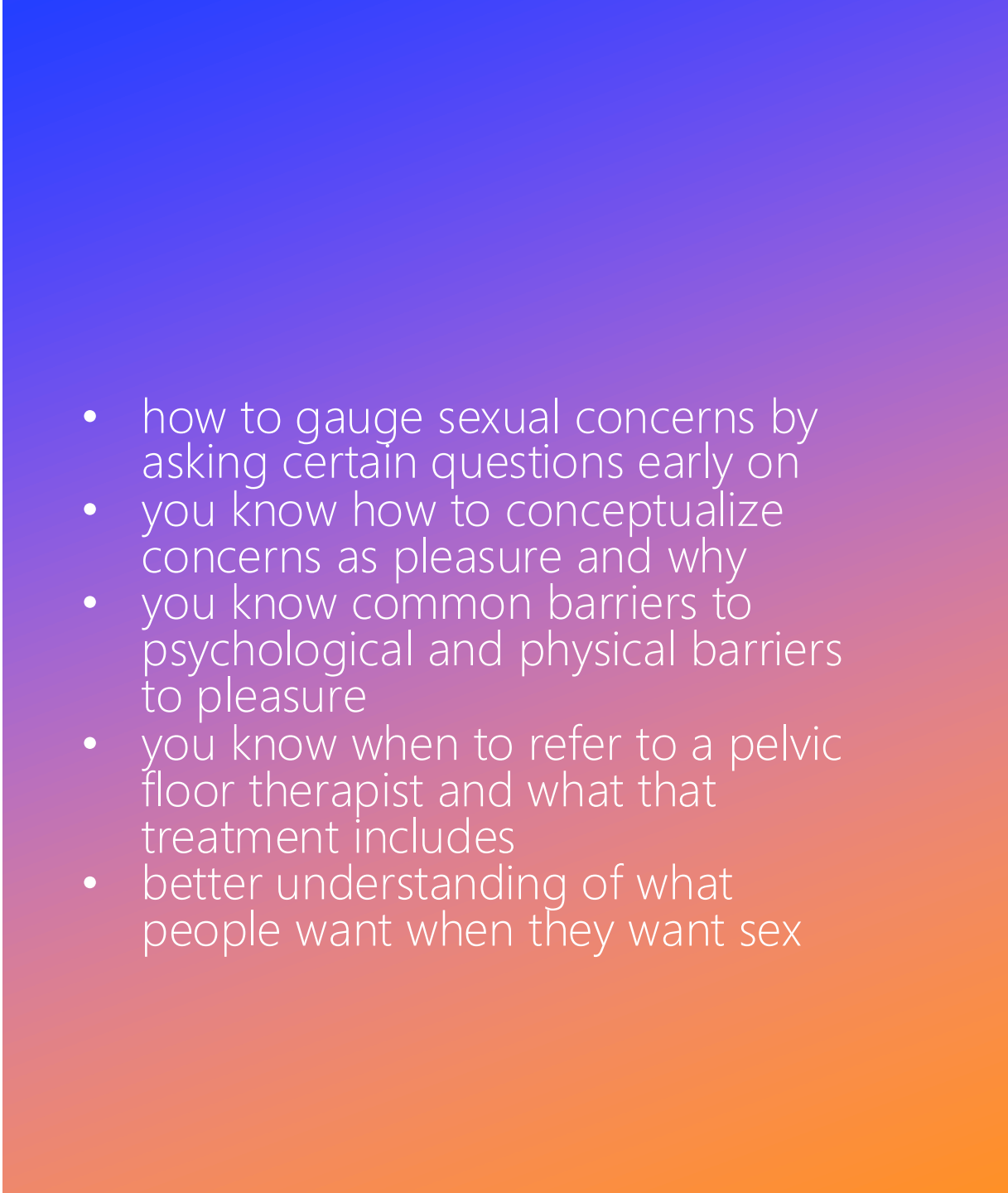
THERAPEUTIC TREATMENTS

Connection
Validation
Exploration
Pleasure





YOU KNOW NOW...

- how to gauge sexual concerns by asking certain questions early on
 - you know how to conceptualize concerns as pleasure and why
 - you know common barriers to psychological and physical barriers to pleasure
 - you know when to refer to a pelvic floor therapist and what that treatment includes
 - better understanding of what people want when they want sex
- 



EXPLORE AND ENHANCE PLEASURE

- Pleasure inventory
- Gratitude journaling
- Pleasure mapping
- The 'Yes, No, Maybe' List

- Intimacy Rituals

- Shared experiences
- 3-Minute Game
- Playfulness
- Mindfulness and body awareness

PLEASURE INVENTORY

What brings you pleasure?



PLEASURE MAPPING

X marks the spot!
Not just sexual pleasure

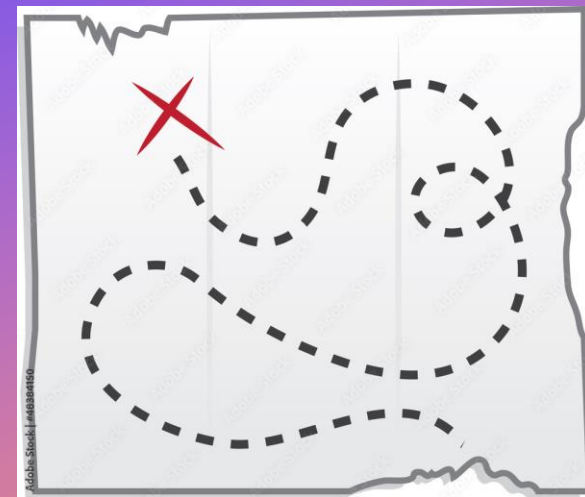


Image generated by AI

YES, NO, MAYBE

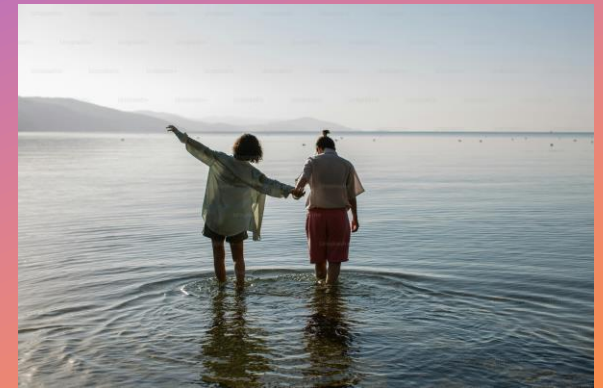
Three column list



INTIMACY RITUALS

Pleasure Dates

- Shared experiences
- 3-Minute Game
- Playfulness
- Mindfulness and body awareness



LET'S PRACTICE!

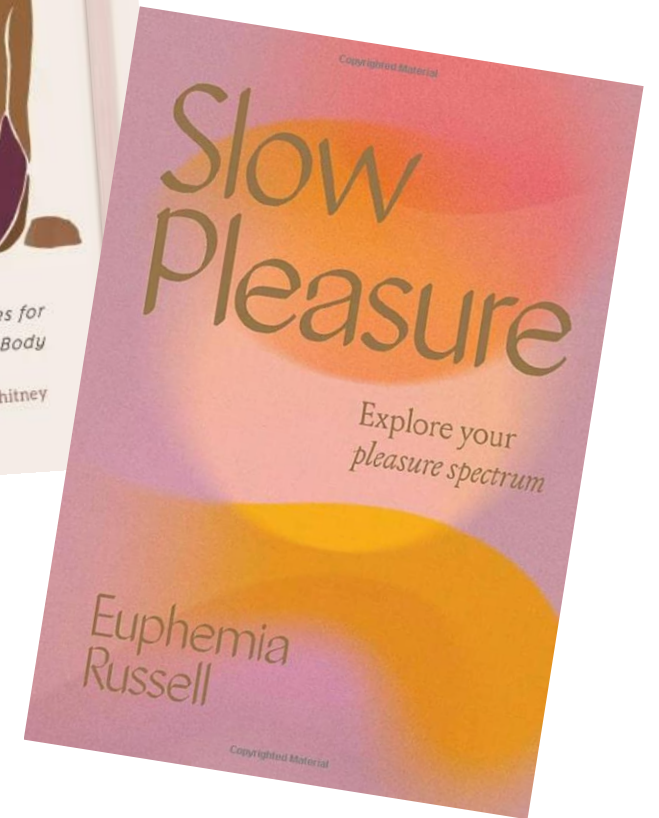
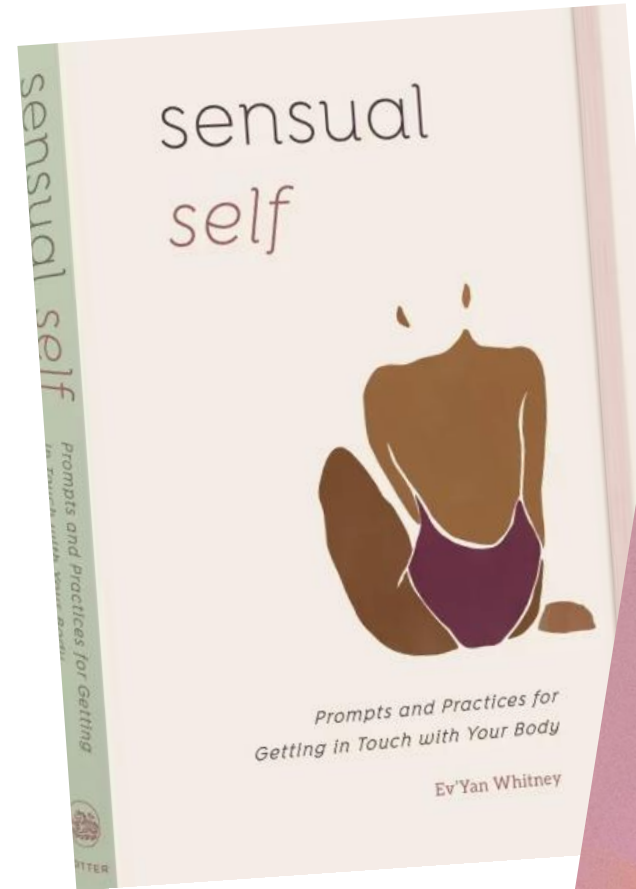
BODY AWARENES

Focus on one part of the body at a time

Try in a non-sexual context first

1. Explain the purpose clearly
2. Set appropriate boundaries
3. Follow up in subsequent sessions

Focus on what feels good, rather than what you think should feel good!



IN SUMMARY

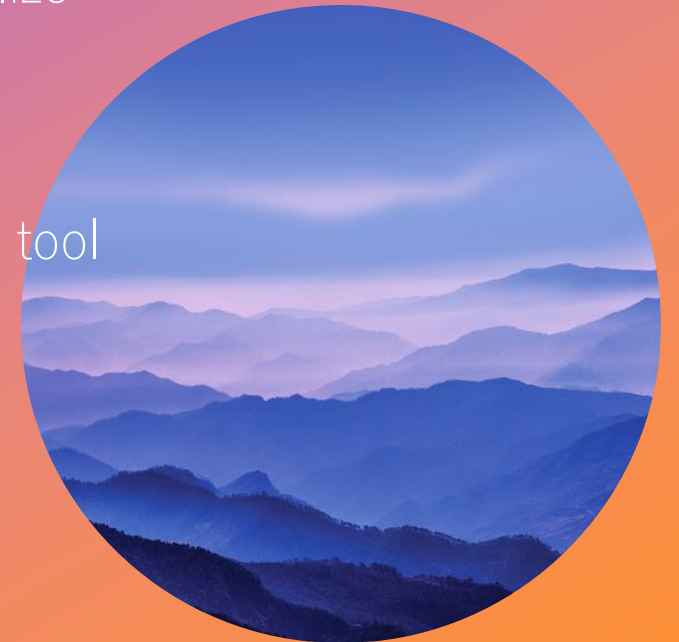
Addressing sexuality is crucial for comprehensive mental health care

It is important to normalize sexuality in therapy, just as we normalize other aspects of mental health

You already have the tools and knowledge to start these conversations, framing pleasure as an accessible and therapeutic tool

Small, intentional steps can make a significant difference in your clients' lives

By embracing sexuality in your practice, you're opening doors to holistic healing for your clients



WHAT WE DID NOT COVER





GOALS FOR TODAY

To know how important it is to address the sexual health of our clients

To know what pelvic floor therapy is and when to refer

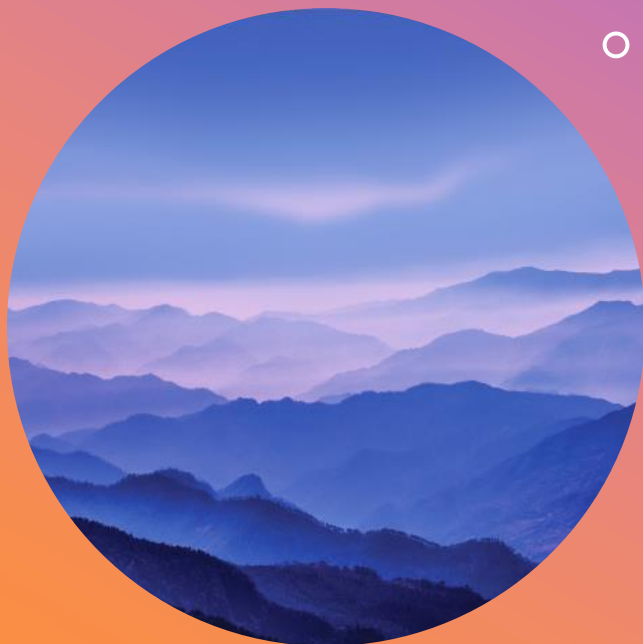
To feel confident on how to best address sexual health by focusing on pleasure



THANK YOU!

stephanie.taylor@ucebt.com

heather@upliftphw.com



QUESTIONS?



REFERENCES

- Herman & Wallace Pelvic Rehabilitation Institute. (2024). *Pelvic Function Level 1* [In-person course] Retrieved from <https://hermanwallace.com/continuing-education-courses/pelvic-function-level-1>
- Cozean, N. (Instructor). (2024). *Essential Pelvic Strengthening: Not Your Mama's Kegels* [Online course]. Retrieved from <https://www.pelvicptrising.com/clinicalcourses>
- Cozean, N. (Instructor). (2024). *Rectal Evaluation and Treatment* [Online course]. Retrieved from <https://www.pelvicptrising.com/clinicalcourses>
- Louw, A. (Instructor). (2020). *The Neuroscience of Pain* [Online course]. MedBridge. Retrieved from <https://www.medbridge.com/courses/details/the-neuroscience-of-pain-adriaan-louw>
- Younis, Ihab; Fattah, Menhaabdel; Maamoun, Marwa. Female hot spots: extragenital erogenous zones. *Human Andrology* 6(1):p 20-26, March 2016. | DOI: 10.1097/01.XHA.0000481142.54302.08
- Buehler, S., Cozean, N., Drummond, J., Krampf, J., Milspaw, A., Prendergast, S., Reale, J., Vandyken, C., & Winter, A. (2024). *The First Online, Multi-Disciplinary Vulvodynia Symposium*. Pelvicon. <https://www.pelvicon.com/symposium>

ARTICLES AND BOOKS

Basson, R. (2000). The Female Sexual Response: A Different Model. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 26(1), 51-65.

Brotto, L. A., & Yule, M. A. (2017). Integrating Mindfulness Approaches in Sex Therapy. *Journal of Sex Research*, 54(4-5), 591-604.

Ho, J. (1998). *The Pleasure Principle: Sex, Backlash, and the Struggle for Sexual Rights*. GenderPress.

Levine, S. B. (2003). The Nature of Sexual Desire: A Clinician's Perspective. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 32(3), 279-285.

Nagoski, E. (2015). *Come as You Are: The Surprising New Science That Will Transform Your Sex Life*. Simon & Schuster.

Nagoski, E. (2024). *Come Together: The Science and Art of Creating Lasting Sexual Connections*. Random House Publishing.

Ogden, P. & Minton, K. (2000). Sensorimotor Psychotherapy: One Method for Processing Traumatic Memory. *Traumatology*, 6(3), 149-173.

Porges, S. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*. Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology.

Russell, E. (2023). *Slow Pleasure: Explore Your Pleasure Spectrum*. Leaping Hare Press.

Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books.

Whitney, E. (2022). *The Sensual Self: A Guided Journal*. Penguin Random House.

WEBSITES

- Sexual Health Alliance: Offers resources for clinicians about addressing sexual health and intimacy in therapy.
- Pleasure Mechanics: Provides free resources and podcasts for individuals and therapists on the role of pleasure in health.
- The Gottman Institute: Renowned for its research-based approaches to relationship health, including intimacy and sexuality.

ONLINE COURSES AND WEBINARS

- ISTI (Integrated Sex Therapy Institute)
- Modern Sex Therapy Institutes
- AASECT (American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists)
- Gottman Institute – Sexuality & Relationship Workshops

VIDEOS AND DOCUMENTARIES

- Sex, Explained (Netflix Series): A well-researched series on various aspects of human sexuality.
- The Power of Pleasure (YouTube Channel): A platform that educates therapists and the public on pleasure-based models for healing.