
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO INTIMACY

JOANNE M. HAMILTON, PHD, ABPP
DIPLOMATE, CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

Scripps Clinic Division of Neurology
Advanced Neurobehavioral Health of Southern California



OBJECTIVES

- Define intimacy
- Recognize obstacles to intimacy in the age-rich couple without Parkinson's (PD)
- Identify challenges specific to couples living with PD
- Present solutions to improve intimacy across the lifespan



HOW WILL DR. HAMILTON
DEFINE INTIMACY WITHOUT
TURING RED?

INTIMACY IN ITS MANY FORMS



Emotional
close familiarity or friendship

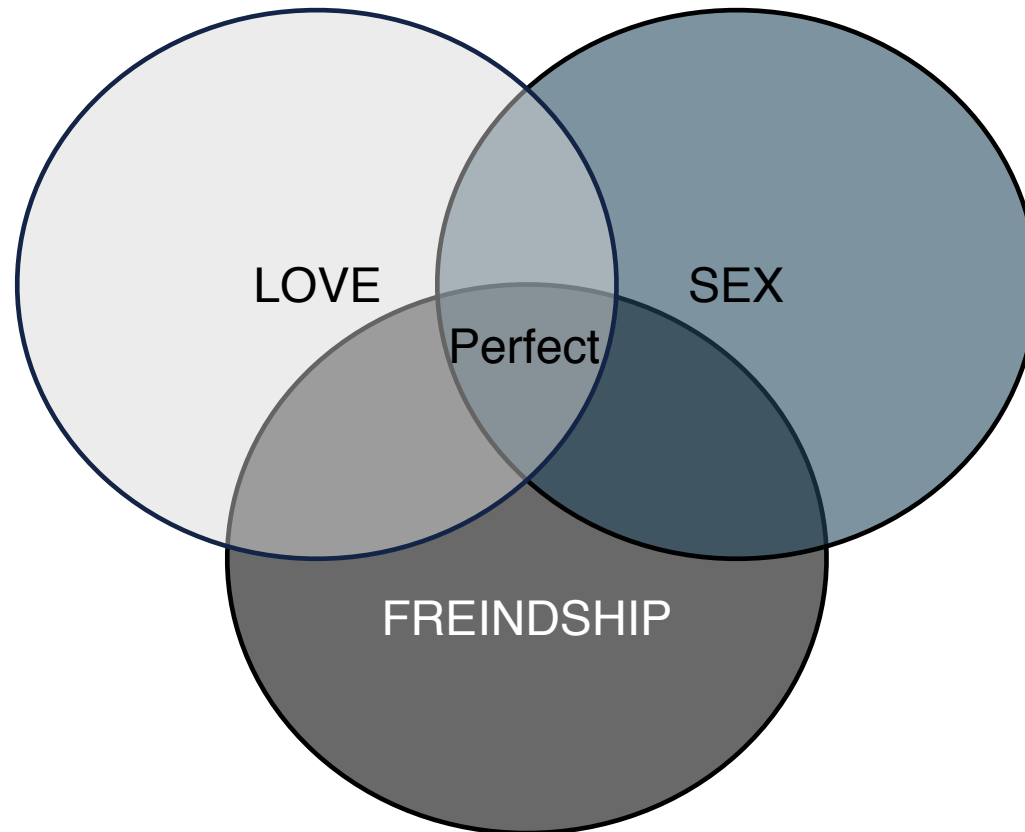


Physical
sexual and nonsexual



Spiritual
shared experiences of hope and faith

THE VENN DIAGRAM OF INTIMACY





BARRIERS TO INTIMACY IN
OLDER ADULTS.
NO, I DON'T MEAN CONDOMS

OBSTACLES TO INTIMACY IN OLDER COUPLES

- Couplepause—hormonal changes due to menopause/andropause that affect libido and function
- Physical health issues—heart disease, diabetes, dementia, prostate or gynecological disease, sleep disorder, stroke
- Use of drugs—antihypertensives, psychoactive drugs, antiseizure medicines, statins, reflux blockers

OBSTACLES TO INTIMACY IN OLDER COUPLES, CONT

- Mental health issues—depression, grief, anxiety, fatigue, substance abuse
- Personal factors—embarrassment to experiment, low self-esteem, expectations, marital discord



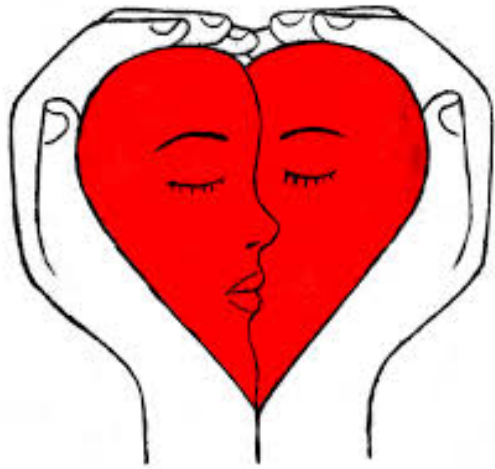
AND PARKINSON'S DISEASE
TOO? GEEZ!

SOME WAYS PD AFFECTS INTIMACY

- Motor problems—rigidity, weakness, bradykinesia, tremor, dyskinesia
- Mental health challenges—depression, delusions, grief
- Fatigue—for both due to sleeplessness, sleep disorder, or just life as you know it now
- Hypersexuality—impulse control issues often cause discord

SOME WAYS PD AFFECTS INTIMACY

- Erectile dysfunction
- Medication complications—Viagra may increase hypotension
- Role reversals—caregiver to head of household and back again
- Carepartner stress—grief, anger, resentment, fear



SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE INTIMACY

7 ELEMENTS THAT DEFINE A SATISFYING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

(BEN-ARI & LAVEE, 2007)

- Knowledge— Each partner shares his deepest thoughts and feelings in a **RECIPROCAL** manner
- Interdependence— Each partner frequently **INFLUENCES** the others decisions and opinions in meaningful ways
- Care— **EACH PARTNER** displays genuine, selfless care for the needs of the other
- Responsiveness— Each partner is **MUTUALLY** attentive to the other's pain and gain

7 ELEMENTS THAT DEFINE A SATISFYING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP (BEN-ARI & LAVEE, 2007)

- Mutuality—Each partner recognizes a sense of “we” rather than **“ME.”**
- Trust—Each partner is **CONFIDENT** that the other will act in honor and fairness to do no purposeful harm
- Commitment—Each partner desires that the relationship continues **FOREVER**

IMPROVING EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

- Reciprocal—Try to confide in each other
- Influences—allow for interdependence NOT dependence
- Each partner—care partners may feel abandoned and alone. Those with PD may feel smothered.
- Mutually—Each partner should work towards recognition of the other's needs

IMPROVING EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

- Me—The sense of partnership may be compromised with a sense that everything falls on one partner.
- Confident—Build trust that each partner has only the best intentions
- Forever—Forever may look different than planned and open discussion is vital

IMPROVING PHYSICAL INTIMACY (NOW I BLUSH)

- Holding hands, massage, hugs stimulates positive neurotransmitters
- Experiment. Sex does not have to be intercourse
- Use lubricants, toys, sex aids
- Talk to your doctor about safe treatments for erectile dysfunction or vaginal atrophy



THANKS!