



## ***“Navigating Sexuality After Religious Control”***

*Highlights from a Special Group Session with Dr. Spring Cooper*

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### **Opening Icebreaker: Reframing Chores and Sexuality**

Participants were asked to share their *least favorite household chore*—but instead of naming the task, they described how it made them feel using words like:

- “Dirty”
- “Stinky”
- “Repetitive”
- “Messy”
- “Overwhelming”
- “Disgusting”

Dr. Cooper then led a reflection on how these same words often mirror the negative messages and emotions people are taught to associate with **sex and sexuality**, especially when shaped by shame-based or fear-driven religious teachings. This playful yet powerful activity set the tone for the session—highlighting how shame and discomfort can be internalized, and opening the door to challenge and reframe those negative narratives.

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### **Key Concepts and Takeaways**

#### **Sex is Human:**

Dr. Cooper explained the six fundamental aspects of human sexuality, highlighting that sexuality is multi-dimensional and deeply human:

- **Sensuality**  
The ability to experience pleasure through the senses—touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound. It includes body awareness, comfort with physical closeness, and enjoyment of one's own body and that of others.



- **Sexualization**

The use of sexuality to influence, manipulate, or gain power over others. This can include flirting, seduction, or harmful actions like harassment and exploitation. It highlights the social ways sexuality is expressed and sometimes misused.

- **Intimacy**

The capacity to form close, connected, and caring relationships. Intimacy includes emotional closeness, trust, vulnerability, and a sense of safety with others—sexual or non-sexual.

- **Sexual Identity**

How individuals perceive themselves in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation. It includes how people label themselves (e.g., gay, bisexual, asexual, cisgender) and how they feel internally about their identity.

- **Sexual Health**

The integration of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It involves access to accurate information, healthcare, consent, and safe, respectful sexual experiences.

- **Reproduction**

The biological aspects of sexuality, including fertility, contraception, pregnancy, and reproductive health. It also includes decision-making around parenting, family planning, and bodily autonomy.

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## Sexuality as a Lifelong Experience

Sexuality is natural and healthy. Everyone is a sexual being—from *womb to tomb*. It includes physical, emotional, psychological, and relational dimensions that evolve throughout one's life.

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## Factors That Influence Sexual Difficulties:

1. **Organic** – Biological or physiological conditions (e.g., hormonal imbalances, illness, medications)
2. **Cultural** – Societal norms, religious teachings, and media messaging
3. **Individual** – Personal experiences, internalized beliefs, trauma, or self-image
4. **Relational** – Communication issues, emotional disconnection, or unresolved conflict in relationships



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## **Our Brain Is Our Biggest Sex Organ**

Sexuality is influenced more by the mind than any other part of the body. Thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and past experiences play a critical role in shaping our sexual experiences and sense of desire.

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## **Reflective Journaling Prompts**

- Write 1–2 messages you received about sexuality, your body, or relationships during your time as a Jehovah’s Witness. How did those messages contribute to feelings of shame, confusion, or limitation?
  - What feels more authentic, healthy, and true for you now regarding your sexuality—especially after breaking free from religious fear and control?
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## **Continued Learning**

Explore episodes from Dr. Spring Cooper’s podcast, “**The Sex Wrap**,” for engaging discussions on sexuality, relationships, consent, health, and more: <https://www.instagram.com/thesexwrap/>