Arousal & Response

Dr. Alberto Pimentel Jr
What Turns You On?
The Sight of Your Lover Undressing?
A Photo Of Your “Celebrity Crush”? 
A Scent of Cologne or Perfume?
Perhaps, A Sip of Fine Wine?
Maybe, Sexual Fantasies?
Making Sense of Sex

All the senses can be responsive to stimuli that enhance or diminish one’s sexual arousal.

- Vision
- Smell
- Skin Senses (Touch)
- Taste
- Hearing
Making Sense of Sex: Vision

- **Visual stimuli are very important to human sexual arousal and response.**
- **Men appear to be more responsive to visual stimuli.**
- **Both men and women can be sexually aroused by mediated erotica...**
- **According to research, men are more interested in mediated erotica.**
Making Sense of Sex: Vision

- Lingerie enhances a woman’s sexual appeal by strategically concealing and revealing body parts.

- Science endorses what lingerie companies have known for years, women seeking male interest might do well clothing themselves in red.

- Research shows that men are more likely to consider a woman dressed in red as more sexually desirable and attractive.
Some couples find it sexually arousing to observe themselves making love in an overhead mirror or on videotape.
Making Sense of Sex: Smell

- Odors can be sexually attractive or off-putting.
- Odors play a role in the selection of sex partners.
- Pheromones are odorless chemicals detected by the nose.
- Pheromones may contribute to menstrual synchrony in women.
Making Sense of Sex: Touch

**The Skin Senses:**

- Sense of touch has the most direct effect on arousal.

- *Erogenous Zones* are areas of the body that are especially sensitive to stimulation, such as strokes and caresses.

- *Primary Erogenous Zones* are particularly sensitive because they are richly endowed with nerve endings.

- *Secondary Erogenous Zones* are areas of the body that become especially sensitive through experience.
Making Sense of Sex: Touch

- **Primary Erogenous Zones:**
  - Genitals
  - Inner Thighs
  - Buttocks
  - Anus
  - Breasts, especially the nipples (Males and Females)
  - Ears (Earlobes)
  - Mouth
  - Lips
  - Neck
  - Navel
The brain is often referred to as the primary sexual organ or erogenous zone.

Men regularly experience erection and nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) without direct stimulation of the genitals.

Men and women have reported achieving an orgasm through fantasy alone.
Secondary Erogenous Zones:

- A woman might become sexually aroused when her lover gently caresses her lower back or shoulders because she may associate such caresses with having sex.

- Some women have reported orgasming when the lower parts of their back are rubbed.
Making Sense of Sex: Taste

- Taste seem to play a minimal role in sexual arousal and response.
- Some people are aroused by the taste of genital secretions.
Auditory stimuli can have a strong influence on sexual arousal and behavior.

A person’s voice, certain music, certain “dirty” words, etc. can be a turn-on or turn-off.
Aphrodisiacs

- Drugs or other agents that are sexually arousing or that increase sexual desire.
- Foods resembling male genitals.
- Drugs that affect the brain’s receptors for dopamine.
- Testosterone
- Good nutrition and exercise
- Novelty
Substances that inhibit or destroy sexual arousal and response.

- Tranquilizers and barbiturates, which depress the central nervous system.

- Drugs for hypertension.

- Some antidepressants.

- Nicotine.

- Antiandrogen drugs, substances that decrease the level of androgens in the bloodstream.
Psychoactive Drugs

- **Alcohol:**
  - A small amount can be stimulating, but large amounts often curb sexual arousal and response.
  - Reduces sexual inhibitions.
  - Binge drinking is associated with high-risk sexual behavior.
  - Can create feelings of euphoria (intense excitement and happiness).
Psychoactive Drugs
Psychoactive Drugs: Stimulants

- Active the central nervous system, but may not have specific sexual effects.

- Can elevate mood, which could increase sexual pleasure.

- Regular users may need the drug to become sexual aroused or may lost the ability to enjoy sex.
Sexual Response & the Brain

Parts of the brain play a central role in sexual arousal and response.

- Cerebral cortex
- Corpus callosum
- Septal nuclei
- Hypothalamus
- Cingulate gyrus of cerebral cortex
- Fornix
- Hippocampus
- Amygdala
Sexual Response & the Brain: Cerebral Cortex

- The part of the brain that is active when people engage in sexual thoughts, images, wishes, and fantasies.
- Transmits messages through the spinal cord.
- Provides a sense of consciousness...a sense of self.
- Makes judgments about sexual behavior.
Sexual Response & the Brain: Limbic System

- Structures active in memory, motivation, and emotion.
- Hypothalamus: regulates body temperature, drives, hormones, and emotion.
Sexual Response & the Brain

- Research suggests “pleasure centers” may exist.
- Electrical stimulation of certain part of the limbic system has led to reports of sensations similar to sexual gratification.