



Addressing a Neglected Need

Evelyn Resh Seeks to Improve the State of Sensual Health

To **Evelyn Resh**, sensuality is not a frivolous indulgence. Like exercise and nutrition, sensuality is as much a vital component of good health as anything else we address here at Canyon Ranch.

Yet, it is an aspect of life that many feel most unable to contact.

For Evelyn, who was recently named director of Sexual Health Services, sexual issues are very often caused by a lack of healthy sensuality. From the warmth of cozy bed linens to the wonder of nature's beauty, from the affectionate nuzzle of a dog's wet nose to the undivided attention of your lover, being sensually alive is at the heart of good sexual health and overall health, as well.

"But many people I see are just living without it," Evelyn says, "and they are terribly sad. They don't feel cared for or emotionally regarded, and they don't know how to bring sensuality

into their lives."

Evelyn attributes this sensual lack to a prevalent culture that prizes productivity over pleasure, in which sexuality, if addressed at all, is treated with excessive seriousness, with an overemphasis on reproduction.

"As a culture, we don't teach people how to be sexually competent," she says. "We don't talk about enjoying sex."

And because of this cultural denial of pleasure for pleasure's sake, people are given very little permission to explore their sensuality and/or sexuality and very few examples to guide them.

"Many people are raised in sensually empty environments," she says. "They grow up in families that are not affectionate, and they don't learn it."

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In her lectures, Evelyn reminds guests how important it is to express affection every day to the ones they love and to simply enjoy their loving relationships.

"There isn't a day that goes by when I don't tell my partner, my daughter and my mother that I love them," she says. "This is so important. Everyone, men and women, wants affection and love, and they often don't get very much."

During her sexual health consults, which are the bulk of the work she does, Evelyn lets guests know that they deserve to feel pleasure, that they don't have to live without beauty or sensuality.

"It is everywhere," she says, "and we have access to it every day, and if you include it, it will improve your overall health and well-being."

She recommends that guests carve out time to be physical, whether that means taking a bike ride, a walk or going for a swim. The most important thing is that this time is sheltered from the myriad other demands of the day.

"These days, the distinction between work and home is blurred," she says. "People continue their workday when they get home, and homes become sex-evaporating machines."

Evelyn suggests leaving the work at the workplace, turning off the radio, the cell phone and disconnecting the internet.

"We need to cultivate the ability to make space for it, to prioritize intimacy," she says.

One recommendation that Evelyn makes is to have a pet. The reason for this, she says, is that interacting with an animal causes you to access your limbic brain, which is the area responsible for emotion and pure physicality.

"The limbic system is what allows you to love and is engaged during sexual activity," she explains. "If you have a pet, it becomes a daily practice to use this part of your brain."

Evelyn tells people to "pet your pet, because it is tactile, it stimulates emotion, kindness and caring, all without one word being spoken, not unlike when we express our loving feelings toward family and loved ones. It's all through vibrations and non-verbal cues."

To provide guests a way to begin to access their sensual selves, Evelyn has

put together a Sensuality and Sexuality Theme Week, which will take place here in Lenox from November 27 until December 3. The event will feature a broad range of classes, lectures and workshops all aimed at helping guests awaken the sensuality within and begin to develop an awareness of their own sensual likes and dislikes.

"The Theme Week is a way to help people learn more about sensuality in their lives," she says. "I'm hoping that it will help people discover, through experience, what their personal preferences are."

Evelyn's own sensual self was awakened at a very early age. She recalls a home life filled with open displays of affection, music, pets, gardening and big, animated family meals.

"My world was filled with sensual pleasures," she recalls. "There was an emphasis on fun and on living."

Raised in a Greek-speaking household, Evelyn's personality was greatly influenced by Greek culture. Her early experiences going to a Greek Orthodox church left lasting impressions.

"These were magical places for a child," she remembers.

Evelyn was later trained as a nurse and obtained a degree in medical anthropology and psychology. She later became a midwife before getting her Master's degree in public health.

Evelyn says she often applies her medical background in her work at Canyon Ranch. In addition to the pregnancy and women's health sessions that she gives, she often brings her medical knowledge to bear on her sexual health consults.

"Just about everyone I meet with deals with an illness either in themselves or in someone they love," she says. "I'm able to translate for them information about drugs, treatments and conditions and how these might play a role in their sexual concerns."

Evelyn says her hope is that sexuality will become an integral part of the health program at Canyon Ranch and says she has already seen tremendous healing through sensual recovery.

"People feel really changed by what they experience here," she says. "I think it's empowering for them. They don't have to buy it or go to school for it. It's just about paying attention to being human."

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