

MODULE 39 SEXUAL MOTIVATION

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SEX

- William Masters and Virginia Johnson founded the **SEXUAL RESPONSE CYCLE** that identified four stages. During the initial *excitement phase*, men's and women's genital areas become engorged with blood, a woman's vagina expands and secretes lubricant, and her breasts and nipples may enlarge. In the *plateau phase*, excitement peaks as breathing, pulse, and blood pressure rates continue to increase. The penis becomes fully engorged and some fluid may appear at its tip. Vaginal secretion continues to increase. *Orgasm* is muscle contractions, breathing, pulse, and blood pressure rates. During the *resolution phase*, the male enters a **REFRACTORY PERIOD**, lasting from a few minutes to a day or more, during which he is incapable of another orgasm.
- **SEXUAL DYSFUNCTIONS** are problems that consistently impair sexual arousal or functioning.
- American Psychiatric Association only classifies sexual behaviors as a disorder if 1. A person experiences distress from their unusual sexual interest or 2. The sexual desire or behavior entails harm or risk of harm to others.
- Sex hormones have two effects: they direct the physical development of male and female sex characteristic, and they activate sexual behavior. **ESTROGEN** is sex hormones, such as estradiol, secreted in greater amounts by females than by males and contributing to female sex characteristics. In nonhuman female mammals, estrogen levels peak during ovulation, promoting sexual receptivity. **TESTOSTERONE** is the most important of the male sex hormones. Both males and females have it, but the additional testosterone in males stimulates the growth of the male sex organs in the fetus and the development of the male sex characteristics during puberty.
- Testosterone-replacement patch restored sexual activity, arousal, and desire more than did a placebo.

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- Sex is not in this sense a need when talking about motivation. There are few differences between genders when talking about sexual arousal. The brain does respond differently to stimuli that is arousing. For instance, men have a more active amygdala (primitive emotion).
- Sexually arousing stimuli is based on perspective of society. For instance, in the 1920's, a women's leg was deemed an erotic stimulus. In mid-evil times, obesity was seen as beautiful.
- When individuals desensitize themselves to X-Rated films/Sexual content, studies show that these individuals have a harder time being aroused by their partners. The expectations are too high.
- The brain is most significant sex organ. Our imagination travels.

BE ABLE TO ANSWER: How might the evolutionary perspective, drive-reduction theory, and arousal theory explain our sexual motivation?

PRACTICE FRQ: Describe one influence on sexual motivation from each of the following categories: Biological, Psychological, and Social-cultural.

Levels of Analysis for Sexual Motivation

