

Hooked on Sex?

So what's sex and how do we get "hooked" on it? There's some science behind it all...

First off, "sex" is any activity that causes sexual arousal by one or both partners: showering together, heavy kissing and touching, oral or anal sex. It's all "sex."

Briefly, here's the science-when we have sex with someone neurons from both the right brain and the left brain are wiring together, or "hooking up." This literally changes our brains, influencing thought processes and affecting our future decisions. How so...

The **right brain** sends **pleasure** neurons and the **left brain** sends **bonding** neurons, leaving an imprint, like an etching on the brain. The neuropathways that are created are actually visible on MRI studies.

In addition, our bodies produce hormones that make us feel good. Women produce oxytocin, often called "the cuddle hormone." Guys also produce oxytocin and another hormone called vasopressin which bonds them to, and makes them protective of their mates. Both men and women produce dopamine, which plays a major role in "reward-motivated" behavior. Dopamine is as strong a drug as cocaine. **Any sexual activity that results in arousal is producing these pathways and those hormones. Together a bonding is taking place, like "glue" that keeps two pieces of paper stuck together.**

We were made to create long-term, committed relationships that are not easily broken, relationships that are protective and satisfying and someday may include children. Children thrive with parents who are in that kind of stable relationship. Truth of the matter is, most of us *haven't* been raised in that kind of environment, we haven't seen it modeled, and not much about the messages we get from culture, movies, and music tells us "till death do us part" relationships are important, **but our hearts do.**

Because of the imprinting or "hooking" that has occurred, when we end a relationship that's been sexual, and we begin another that involves sex, the left brain, the bonding side, actually searches for the information about the person you were previously with, trying to match those bonding pathways. When it can't find that information, a break is formed. For our brains, it's as if those two pieces of paper were torn apart. If this happens repeatedly with multiple sexual relationships, our brain has trouble forming good bonding connections at all. Simply stated, **our left brain becomes "unsticky," which affects our ability to develop strong, committed relationships. On top of this, the right brain, the area that sends out the neurons of pleasure becomes dominant. The desire to stimulate the surge of those hormones that make us feel good again is sought after and sexual addiction, or seeking sex for the pleasure of it, and not for the relationship of it, becomes our driving force.**

Can you see how sex practiced in the wrong way puts you *at risk* in so many ways: greater risk for STI's and diseases-some that are curable, some you may have for a lifetime, some which have no cure at all. There's infertility and potential for having to face the complicated decisions that come with unintended pregnancy to think about. When bonding is injured, the rate of divorce or separation of parents increases. Maybe you personally know what that is like.

Sex is serious science and serious business. Taking it seriously can bring satisfaction, joy and yes ecstasy, but also peace of heart and mind. **That's a message our health and our hearts want to hear!**

**"Hooked" and science education taken from:
Hooked: New Science on How Casual Sex is Affecting Our Children; 2008, Northfield Publishing.**