

The Amazing Health Benefits of Pleasure

By Heather W. Locklear

In honor of Valentine's Day this upcoming month, I thought I would share some fun facts regarding pleasure and why it is essential for your health. It is common knowledge that chronic stress is detrimental to our bodies, causing us to produce excess cortisol. This excess cortisol can have a myriad of negative effects on the heart, brain, adrenals and many bodily functions leading to severe health issues over time. There are many ways to alleviate the stress in our lives, whereby some of the most effective and easily accessible (for most of us) are pleasurable activities.

It is fascinating to scientifically explore how pleasure benefits not only our mind, but our body. Nitric oxide (and not nitrous oxide- the laughing gas:-) is a gas produced in every blood vessel in our body and acts as a neurotransmitter (a substance in the body which carries a signal from one nerve cell to another) which actually regulates all other neurotransmitters. "When you are doing anything that feels good, or taking a good antioxidant supplement, or exercising or praying or having an orgasm, your nitric oxide levels rise and your blood circulation is increased" (Northrup, 2011).

Have you ever noticed how after a strenuous workout, a wonderful massage, or sex your face is flushed? Did you know that when an egg is fertilized by sperm there is a burst of nitric oxide, which is partly why some scientists believe this gas to be the way life energy is made into a physical substrate. Nitric oxide is associated with the life force, sometimes referred to as *chi* or *prana*. It balances our neurotransmitters as well as increases circulation in the entire body, which cascades into reducing inflammation and changing our biochemistry (Northrup, 2011).

It is therefore in our best interest, and optimal health, to increase our pleasure. Types of pleasurable activities vary from person to person and include experiencing art, being in nature, having sex, listening to music, dancing, or practicing a ritual, for just a few examples. And it is not necessary to have a partner to experience pleasure, as much as advertisers would like for us to believe this, especially this time of year. If you are single try a date night with yourself, treating you to your most favorite restaurant, wine and live music.

The upcoming holiday is Valentine's Day, which has us all focusing on love. With or without a partner, it is important to enjoy the pleasures love brings. Consider how we all, at any age, have unlimited free access to the pleasurable experience of sex. Of course we must know ourselves, know what excites us, and accept and embrace this part of ourselves whether alone or with a partner. It is interesting that our culture uses the term masturbation, whereas this word seems

heavy, and can have a shameful connotation. I prefer the term the Taoists use, which seems much more positive and exciting: self-cultivation!

How do you feel about the aging process and the body's capability for functionality? Recent studies show that our elders are having much more sex than anyone previously thought! Often during and after menopause, women believe (or are taught) that their sex life is or should be slowing down or virtually non-existent. According to Dr. Christiane Northrup, a best-selling author and an expert on women's bodies, menopause can be the best time to further explore and get in touch with our sexuality. Consider how much fun the retirement years could be!

Food for thought...and a few hints for scents! The aroma of grapefruit can cause a woman to appear younger to a man! Just remember, consuming grapefruit juice and medications together can increase the primary and side effects of the medicine. I would suggest an essential oil of grapefruit diffused into the air. The aroma of lavender can cause people to linger. Simply place 1-3 drops on a tissue or cotton ball and place in an inconspicuous spot. This can create a relaxing mood where choice persons want to linger!

All this talk of intimacy may have you concerned about your libido. There are many foods which can naturally boost it, I will name just a few. Try eating black raspberries an hour or so before playtime; or how about figs, which can stimulate fertility and enhance your desirability. One food that nourishes your sexuality, which many are surprised to learn, is iceberg lettuce. It contains a substance which aids in activation of sex hormones (Clement, 2012). Aside from foods there are many herbs, supplements and exercises which can also assist with this issue.

For more information on this topic, contact me at www.heathersholistichealing.com, or (941)924-4700.

References:

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