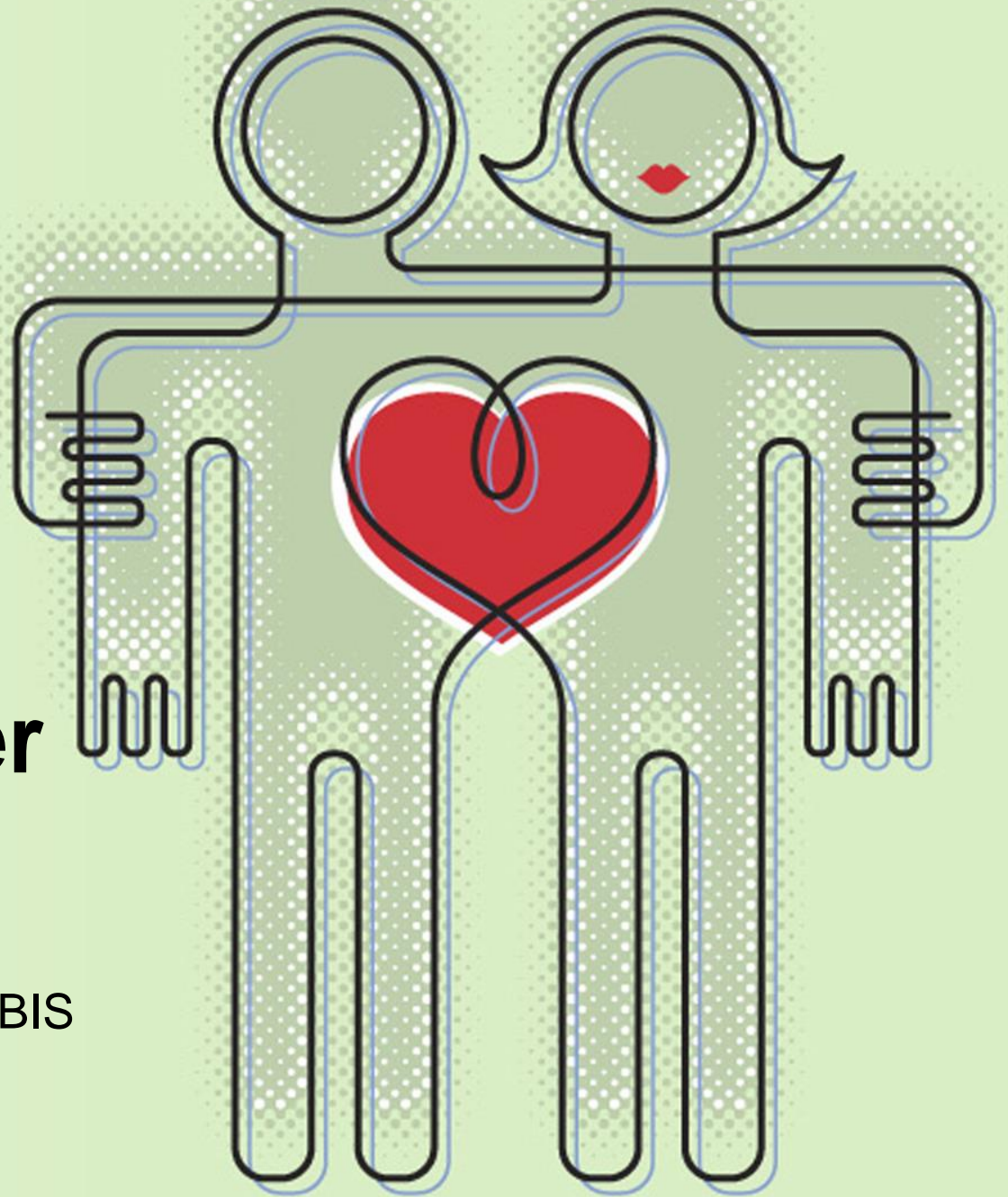


Intimacy After a TBI

Presented by:

Julia Mecklenburg, MSW, CBIS



Guidelines for the Class

- We will be talking about S-E-X
- Please respect your fellow classmates
- We are not here to judge one another's lifestyle, preferences, or relationships
- This is a safe space, nothing that is said in this room will leave this room.
- Please feel comfortable to share and ask questions

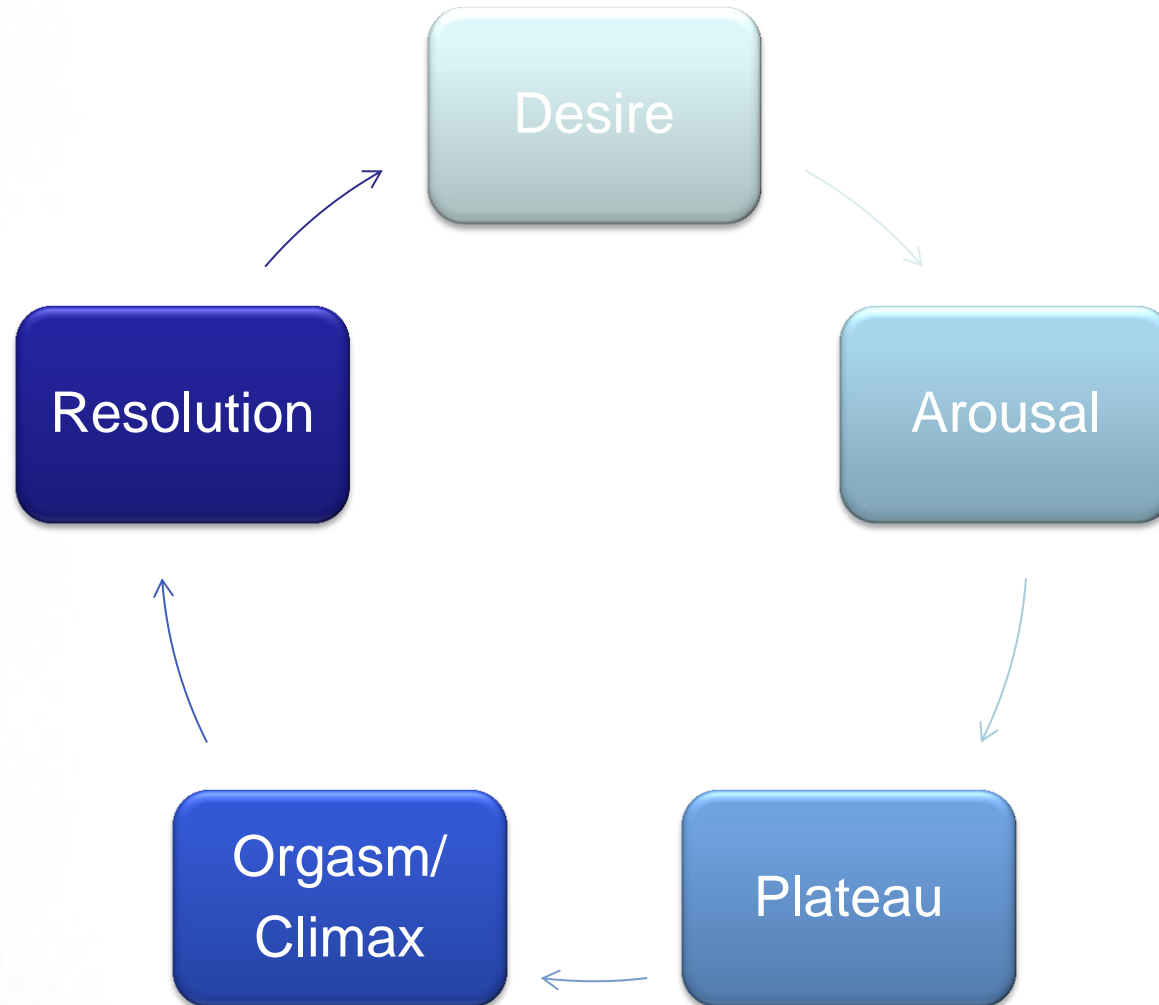
Diversity Bingo

1. You have 5 minutes to fill in as many boxes as possible
2. Find people around the room who fit into the squares on the bingo sheet
3. Get them to sign the square if it applies to them. Get as many different people to sign as possible!
4. The ones with the pictures are Free squares
5. Whoever has the most boxes filled in at the end wins!

Why is Intimacy After a TBI Important

- Divorce rates after a TBI are higher
- Finding a partner after a TBI can be difficult
- Helps with Self-Esteem and Confidence
- Feeling respected, wanted and loved
- Recognizing mutual wants and needs
- Helps to further develop communication

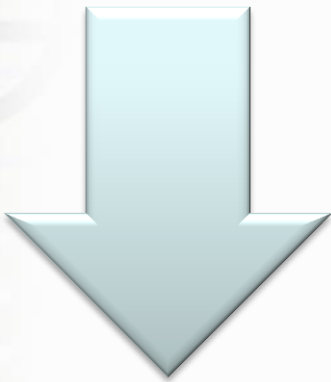
Human Sexual Response Cycle



Effects of TBI on the Human Sexual Response Cycle



Increased Desire



Decreased Desire

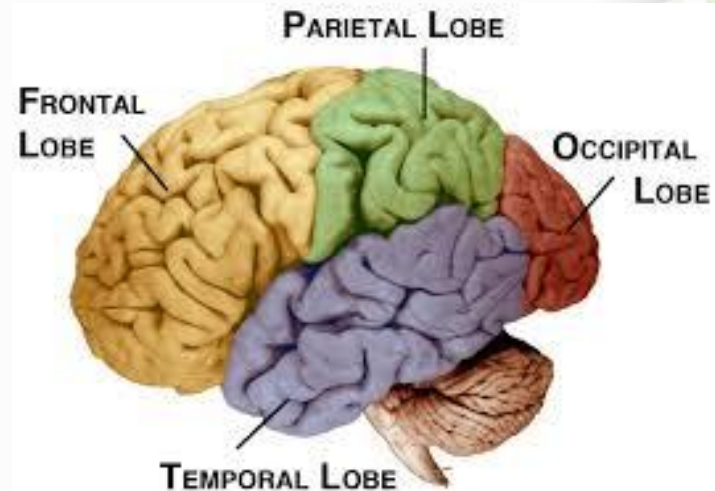
Decreased
arousal/excitement

Difficulty or inability
to reach orgasm/climax



Why changes occur in Sexuality and Sexual Functioning after a TBI

- Damage to the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain
- Changes in brain chemicals



Why changes occur in Sexuality and Sexual Functioning after a TBI



Medication Side Effects



Hormonal Changes



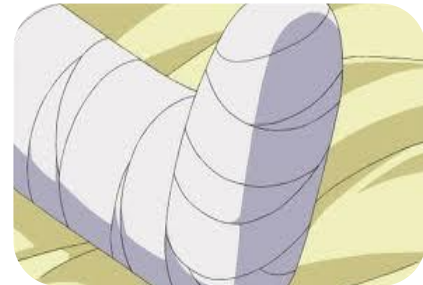
Fatigue/
Tiredness



Dizziness



Self-Esteem



Associated Injuries

Couples Issues

- Loss of interest
- Decrease in frequency
- Reduced expression of affection
- Perception of “sex appeal”
- Worsened communication between partners
- Sexual avoidance
- Sexual dysfunction, either party



Couples Issues

- Individual requires a high level of care from partner
- Role changes: independent to dependent
- Caregiver stressors
- Time
- Not knowing what would happen/fear
- Negative feelings/thoughts
- Psychological reaction of partner to TBI of loved one
- Withdrawal from relationship
- Response to physical, cognitive, behavioral and psychological changes



Single and Ready to Mingle

Increasing your social group can help with finding people you are interested in dating.

Smile and
Greet

Focus on
the Other
Person

Don't wait
for others to
call

Invite
Others Over

Stay
Positive

Say Yes!

Be Patient

Single and Ready to Mingle

Other Ideas for how to meet people

- Online
 - Social Networking
 - Online Dating
 - Meetup.com
 - Be safe!
- Activities in the Community
 - Sporting Leagues, Chess Teams, Workshops
- Leisure Activities
 - Going for a walk
 - Dog park
- Work
 - Be sure to maintain appropriate boundaries
- Volunteering
- Classes

Disclosing TBI

It's your choice and your right. There's no perfect roadmap for how or when to disclose.

- Depends on the kind of relationship you're looking for
- Depends on your physical and cognitive abilities
- Focus on your capabilities and accomplishments
- Talking openly and comfortably about it can help to put the person at ease.
- Giving the person the facts involved, avoid leaving them with mistaken or false impressions or ideas.

Disclosing TBI

- Be selective -- you don't have to tell everyone.
- Consider the five “W’s” when thinking about disclosure: Who, What, When, Where and Why. Who do you need to tell? What do you want to tell them about your disability, and what are you expecting from the person you’re disclosing your status to? When should you tell them? Where is the best place to have this conversation? Why are you telling them?
- Easy does it, can take your time to consider who to tell and how to tell them.

Disclosing TBI

- Consider whether there's a real purpose for you to tell this person or if you are simply feeling anxious and want to “dump” your feelings.
- Telling people indiscriminately may affect your life in ways you haven't considered.
- Never be apologetic. A disability doesn't mean you're any less of a caring, loving, attractive, and talented individual.
- Keep it simple – you don't have to tell the story of your life.

Disclosing TBI

- Whatever the response you receive in a specific situation, and even if it doesn't go the way you'd hoped, you're going to survive it and your life will go on. Many, many other people have dealt with this issue and have found their way through it. You will get through it too.

Resuming Sexual Activity after a TBI

- Talk about your expectations, fears and feelings.
- Arrange a non-distracting environment
- Take it easy, and try not to put too much pressure on yourselves.
- Focus on pleasure, rather than technique.
- Minimize fatigue/tiredness
- Concentrate on boosting the romance in your relationship.



Compensatory Strategies

- **Compensating for memory problems:**
 - Use a calendar to write down romantic dates with your partner.
 - Sometimes, the person with injury may have difficulty remembering that they had sexual activity. Reminding the person about some of the romantic details may strengthen the relationship.
 - Some people find that setting a date to reserve time for romantic encounters is helpful.
- **Compensating for decreased ability to fantasize or imagine sex:**
 - Watching movies with sexual content, viewing erotic pictures on the computer, reading books with sexual content, or looking at sexually-themed magazines may help to develop fantasies and/or may help the person with injury to become aroused prior to sexual activity.

Compensatory Strategies

- **Compensating for erectile dysfunction:**
 - There are some devices or medications that can help men who have difficulty getting or keeping an erection.
 - Vacuum pumps
 - A drug (Alprostadil) is also available that can be injected into the penis 20 minutes before sexual activity.
 - Oral medications that help men to get or keep erections have become very popular in recent years; however, it is very important to discuss use of these medications with your doctor and to find out how they interact with other medications that you may be taking.
- **Compensating for female sexual difficulties:**
 - Unfortunately, there is less known about female sexual problems.
 - Use of vaginal lubricants and/or erotic reading material or movies.
 - Involuntary contractions of the vagina muscles can cause pain. Treatments for this include insertion of devices into the vagina, with size gradually being increased.
 - For many women, certain sexual positions do not provide enough stimulation to have an orgasm. Exploring your body on your own, or asking for a partner's assistance in determining what feels good may improve your chances of obtaining pleasure

Impairment Specific Compensatory Strategies

- **Spasticity** (extremely tight muscles):
 - The effects of touching, stroking and foreplay can help relax your muscles. If you find it difficult to straighten your legs during penetration, then lie on your back with your partner assuming the 'top' position. If you have multiple sclerosis or spastic thigh muscles, vaginal penetration from behind can allow your legs to stay together.
- **Incontinence** (loss of bowel or bladder control):
 - If you suffer from bowel or bladder incontinence, sexual activities can increase the chances of this happening. If there is a time in the day when you are more likely to have sex, plan your bowel movements for earlier. If you have issues with bowel or urinary functioning, you can use a side-by-side position to avoid putting pressure on the bladder. Sex in the bathtub or shower can be a good way to deal with bodily fluids.



Impairment Specific Compensatory Strategies

- **Arthritis:**

- Taking a hot bath before sex can help ease your pain. Careful positioning using pillows and stopping for breaks can help during sex. Some women find both penetration and oral sex easier if they are lying down with their legs hanging over the bed and their partner kneeling on the floor.

- **Spinal Cord Injury:**

- If you have decreased vaginal lubrication, using lots of lubricants during penetration can help prevent vaginal irritation or tearing. Many women experience orgasms after injury, especially through cervical stimulation. You may feel the effects of the orgasms in places other than your genitals, like your breasts or stomach.

- **Cerebral Palsy:**

- Sexual activities that involve large movements rather than small manipulations may be easier for you, and more pleasurable for both you and your partner. An athetotic tongue (that sometimes moves beyond your control) can be great for kissing, oral sex, and stimulation of the nipples.

Don't Forget Safe Sex!

- Condoms for Men and Women
- Diaphragm and Cervical Cap
- Hormonal Methods
 - Pill, injection, patch, or implant
- IUDs (Intra-uterine devices)
- Dental dam
 - Used for oral sex
- Pulling out
 - Withdrawal before ejaculation
- Sterilization
 - Tying of fallopian tubes for women
 - Vasectomy for men
- Emergency Contraception (the morning after pill)

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Questions?

jmecklenburg@rmhumanservices.org

303-636-5931

