The Art & Science For Better Communication And Hotter Sex Transcript

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Introduction to the Summit and Guest Background

All right, everybody, welcome back to the Solving Sexual Dysfunction Summit. And I'm very excited. We have with us doctor Sarah Salzman. She is the founder and CEO of the Couples Communication Institute.

And we're going to be talking about discussing desire, the foreplay of couples communication. Thank you so much, Sarah. Doctor Sarah, for being with us.

It's a pleasure to be here, Betsy. You know, it was one of those things that as a Euro gynecologist, I get really into the functionality of parts and hormones and this and that.

But there's so much more when we're talking about couples and relationships and sexual kind of stress that can happen. And, you know, I guess backing it up a little bit.

How did you come to form the Couples Communication Institute? I have been a couple psychologist for 35 years now, and while I was able to help, you know, the hand fulls of couples, I could see at once, I realized I really wanted to reach so many more couples.

So I formed the Online Couples Communication Institute, so I could really share all the great stuff that I have and learned with couples everywhere. That is wonderful.

And then, you know, getting into this sexual dysfunction and really it's more like sexual stress and, and relationships. What are the things that you see that commonly happens with couples?

Well, when you're calling it so sexual stress that stress word is really, I think the central part of it. Well, whether it is sexuality or any kind of connection with your partner, when you feel safe virtually, the world is your oyster.

Why Stress Disrupts Connection and Intimacy

When you feel safe, you can connect, you can communicate, you can be intimate, but stress in a certain way is synonymous with fight or flight. And when our body starts heading into fight or flight, when we're in fight or flight, when we're stressed, when we're worried, when we're concerned, when we're anxious, the person in front of us starts to look to our nervous system like our enemy.

And the whole cascade of that fight or flight, emotional response and everything that goes with it blocks us and shut us down. So that is kind of the underlying thing that I see.

Everywhere. And how can we avoid avoid that in our relationships? Because, I mean, it can be something just little that triggers you to start having like, you know, that that miscommunication and then that can turn into a big fight.

So how do we how do we kind of stop that to begin with? Okay. So I'm going to share with you a couple things. Stop it to begin with and stop it when it start to get going, like you just said that, you know, you start feeling that miscommunication.

So the first thing that I want to share with you is when you're planning, and I hope you do plan when you're planning to talk with your partner, to be intimate with your partner, when you plan ahead of time, then that opens the door for you to relax before you get started.

So just an extra word about planning. I know Spanish immediately feels like exciting, and maybe we're supposed to be spontaneous when it comes to sex, but the more you can plan, the more you set things up for success.

So ahead of time, if you know you want to talk with your partner, let your partner know, hey, I want to talk with you about something. How about we do that in 20 minutes?

How about we do that, at brunch on Saturday? Or if you want to have sex or you want to just play around. Hey, you know, let's do that after dinner. Then beforehand, focus on your body, take some time to relax your body and your mind.

Do your favorite thing to relax. Whether it's deep breathing or a bath or meditation, eating anything that works for you to relax your body and your mind.

That's how to get things ready ahead of time. Now let's suppose, like you said, that see, how do you, kind of catch things if they're headed off in the not good direction?

It's really related to the first thing that I was saying. And what you want to have is awareness. You want to be able to connect your awareness with your state of either relaxation or fight or flight.

So let's say you and I are talking Betsy, and I'm feeling fine. Like right now I'm feeling fine. I'm feeling good. I'm seeing you again, Betsy. It's lovely. It's great. I miss you.

Planning Conversations to Reduce Conflict

But then something shifts and I'm not understanding you or I'm feeling misunderstood or something. Do I recognize, my forehead is doing this, or like I'm feeling tight or whatever that good feeling was.

I was just describing a moment ago. It seems to starting to be fading. So this is power in your hands when you can recognize. Wait a minute, that easy, open, happy, relaxed feeling.

I had. It shifting what happened? And the more I can tune in to that, then I can bring you in. In on it. I can say, hey, Betsy, just a second. Give me a second.

I don't know how to put it in words. I'm not sure what to say, but something's off. Give me a minute. Or maybe I do know. And then I need to relax myself.

Hey, Betsy, give me a second. I need to take a couple of deep breaths, because I'm feeling a little tense, and I'm not sure where that came from. Or maybe I do know where it came from.

And then if I take a minute or two and I calm back down, then I'm. What do I want to say? Reconnecting with my own relaxation. So that's my long answer to that question.

I love that. And then maybe think about how many couples I've heard that, you know, they come in and they expect their whole lives to be like when they first start dating.

And when it comes to sex and they're like, they just expect, you know, or like the movies where they're just all of a sudden sitting on the couch one minute next to they know they're all over each other.

But we know that as time goes on, and that's not it's not like the movies. And how do we bring that up with partners when we're like, when one partner's maybe a little out of sync with the other partner when it comes to desire?

Okay, so I heard you say, how do we bring that up and how and like, if we're out of sync. So what I want to talk about is how do we bring up what everything is.

So there's something that doesn't feel right to me. There's something I want to talk with you about, whether it's being out of sync or any other thing, and I'm not sure how to bring it up.

The first thing you're going to do is think through in your mind. You're going to get clear. There's something I want

to bring up with my partner. What is it?

Put your finger on it. Put your finger on the one thing that you want to talk to your partner about. Maybe it's out of sync with becoming intimate, or maybe it's out of sync with the time of day that works best for us or whatever it is.

One thing, then you're going to identify how you feel about it. Are you annoyed? Are you worried? Are you angry? Whatever it is, then you're going to think about what do you want to come out of a conversation about it?

Do you want to vent? Do you want support? Do you want problem solving? You know, do you want to be heard? What is it that you want to come out of this?

You're going to put all that aside for a minute. Next, you're going to think about something that you appreciate about your partner that's related to this.

In some way. So if it's talking, like, I appreciate the great conversations that we've had before or I appreciate how we can get on the same page. And I'm going to think about some details.

And when this has happened before. So all of that I'm thinking about now, I'm going to ask myself, when is a good time and where is a good place for the two of us to talk about it?

So this is my work. I'm doing all by myself. The next thing that I'm going to do is not talk to you about it, but set up a conversation for us to talk.

So before I share those steps with you, I want to share with your audience. And Betsy, this is no surprise. Betsy and I did not spontaneously get on the zoom call right now.

Betsy said to me, what, a couple months ago, a month ago, hey, Sarah, can you come on my summit? I said, yes, she said, when is a good time for you? Here's my calendar.

Pick a time I picked a time. Now. Betsy and I both arrived ready today at the top of the hour to have this conversation, knowing full well we had agreed to it and we knew what we were doing, I told Betsy, here are some things I can talk about.

Betsy said, hey Sarah, I want to talk with you about these things. We're on the same page, and we set this up quite a while ago and we put it on our calendars.

So here's what I want you to do next. You've thought about it in your head. You're the first step is you're going to get your partner's attention. You're not going to go like this.

Hey, honey, can we talk? No, please don't do that.

Recognizing Escalation and Resetting Calm

I know I've been there. Right? You've been in there on both sides. Yeah. Yeah, right. You're going to get up and you're going to walk into the room where your partner is.

You're going to look at them and you're going to see, are they busy or are they concentrating? Are they, you know, if it looks like they are available to be interrupted?

And I'm going to tell you why this is so important in a second. If it looks like they are available to be interrupted, you're going to say very gently, you're going to say their name, hey, Betsy, and you're going to wait for your partner.

Maybe it's Betsy to look up and say, yes, honey or yes, Sarah. Now, this is so important because remember, at the very beginning how I told you that safety is, you know, the foundation of all good connection?

So if I walk in the room and I say, hey, Betsy, and you're like, you just got this shot of adrenaline through your body and you're like. No matter what happens next, it's not going to go, well, I've startled you.

I've interrupted you already. It's not okay. So I come in, I look, oh, Betsy, looks like I can say something. Hey, Betsy. Betsy says yes. Then I say, do you have a second?

Betsy feels seen and she might say yes. Now I'm going to start with my appreciation. I'm going to say, you know, Betsy, there's something I want to talk about, and I really appreciate how we really are able to have good conversations.

Remember that time last week when we talked? It went so well. Then I'm going to bring up those other things that I had prepared. I'm going to let my partner know, what is that one thing I want to talk about?

How do I feel about it and what's my goal? I need your support or I want to get on the same page, or I'd like you to hear me. And then I'm going to ask, when is a good time and place for us to have this conversation?

I was thinking, how about during brunch on Saturday or after the kids go to bed or whatever? And I'm going to see what you say and that, and we are going to schedule it on our calendar unless we say, how about 20 minutes?

Maybe we don't put it on the calendar, but if it's important enough, put it on your calendar. All right. So now we've talked about two things. You're prepared in your own mind.

And now you've set it up with your partner. They know what's on the table. You know what's on the table. All right. So I'm going to go on to the next part.

But do you have any questions or anything before I keep going? No. It's just I was thinking like I've talked to you about this stuff before and I have to say it works.

I've tried it with my husband, but there are some times where I just want to, like, spurt everything out on my mind. And I don't want to wait. But I will say sorry, you're so right.

It works so much better when we schedule it, when we're all both on the same page. As much as sometimes it can be difficult not to just that. Okay. And then see, when I see you go like this, where I don't feel very.

Yeah. When I start and you say I want to spread it out and yes, I want to go inside, I'm like, what's coming? What is she going to say? Oh no, I'm worried.

That's not how you want me to feel. You know, if I'm your partner, you don't want me to feel that way. You want me to feel open and ready. So, yeah, I mean, I totally get it.

There's something in my mind. I just want to say it. Of course I do. But when I am the leader and I take control, and I relax myself and I prepare myself, look how well I'm setting the stage and how inviting is that.

Bringing Up Desire Differences with Care

And especially if I want to talk about sex with you, with my partner. My partner wants to feel like, oh, I feel safe with her. I feel in good hands with her.

This is going to go well. I don't have to worry. Yeah. That's such a great point. Yeah, definitely. And and so just to answer the question that you brought up, I might say the one focuses, hey, I want to talk with you, honey, about what did you say, Betsy?

Like being were out of sync with how we initiate sex or something like. Yeah, definitely. And so that's the topic. And, you know, I can say what I want to do.

My goal is I want to hear how you like to initiate sex or how you want to talk about sex. And I want you to hear how how I do to that is so helpful. Now.

And then you were saying that there was a third part that we should. So this is something that I teach. I take, you know, a really long time to teach all of it.

So I can't teach you all the parts of it right now. But I just want to really highlight that even though I said, you know, what's the goal? Is our goal to problem solve really what I want you to do?

The first goal of your conversation should be understanding. The first goal should not be to problem solve, should not be to make a decision should not be to convince, empower or debate or make a point, but to understand each other.

I need to understand your point of view, and I would like you to understand my point of view. And that means not being defensive, not feeling like if I understand you that I have to agree with you.

No, understanding doesn't mean agreeing. But you know, if you say to me, for example, I just think spontaneity is the most important thing I want to say.

Tell me more about that. What about spontaneity? Do you value? You know, what does it mean to you to be a spontaneous person? What does it mean to you, to whatever it is I want to understand more.

Tell me more, tell me more, tell me more. You know, how is it felt when you've been spontaneous? How is it felt when you didn't have that opportunity?

Whatever. Just ask you questions. So I'm beginning to paint a picture so I can really see what your view is like in your head. And when I'm doing this, you're going to feel understood, probably seen and heard and understood.

And my turn is the speaker. I want to share with you how I see it. You know, I just made this up. I'm pretending you want to be spontaneous. I want to plan.

I want to say, you know, I like planning things ahead of time because. And I'm going to share with you some of the reasons this is how I feel, and this is what it lets me do.

And this is what happens when I don't get to plan. And I want you to hear me. I don't want you to talk me out of it. I don't want you to feel threatened. I want you to be like, oh, that makes sense.

I get it, you know, knowing you, that sure fits in with a lot of other things I know about you. And I remember this one time when we planned and how well that went.

Yeah, I get it. Now, if you're kind of set that date with your partner to talk and then that date comes because maybe, you know, it is some time because people are busy and now you get to that time period and you know, all right, we've we've decided the topic.

But let's say you like, let's say me like I'm like all ready to talk about the topic, but my partner doesn't really have anything to talk about. Is this where like, it seemed like when the examples you were giving this is like where we start asking a lot of questions and try to get them more engaged in the conversation.

Is that correct? So. You're saying, what if your partner has nothing to say? Yeah. What if they were kind of like, you're voicing your concerns and they're just like, okay, sounds good.

Like doesn't have much the kind of feedback as part of the conversation. Okay. So there's kind of feeding back. One thing is I might want to ask them, could you repeat back what you heard me say?

So what, because you know, they might be saying or sounds good or whatever. I might have no idea. Did they

actually literally hear me in in their brain or did it just like so?

Understanding Before Problem Solving

I always recommend repeat back what you heard me say and tell me that. Is there a part of it that makes sense to you? So that's one thing you brought up.

Misunderstandings. Yes, this really helps to be sure that we're not misunderstanding each other. No. So if I got to speak first and my partner did repeat back and they told me what made sense, I'm going to ask them, how do you see this subject?

Let's say we're talking about, you know, the spontaneity versus planning of of sexuality or a conversation and or something like that. What what's your view?

If your partner truly says I don't any anyway is fine. Maybe I'd ask some other questions, like what has worked for you more in the past? Or, you know, if really you could have it any way you wanted or, you know, to draw them out, let them know.

It's really important to me. I would like to hear what you have to say. Also, maybe reassure them I'm not going to shoot you down. I want to hear, you know, I was listening to this podcast with Doctor Betsy and Doctor Sarah and, you know, they talk about how you need to understand before problem solving.

So I just want to understand you. So help set things up as safe as possible. So that they can open up. I like that because, you know, really when it comes down, I think, you know, it's also just beyond couples communication.

This is human communication. And we all just want to be seen and heard. So absolutely, we really, really do. You know, just think about what it feels like when your coffee shop barista remembers your order.

It's like they see me, and it just it's just this lovely little spark, and it's all the more so when it's your partner who sees and hears you. And even just in our example here when we're talking, I'm notice every time you say my name in the conversation, it's like this little dopamine hit, like I actually said my name, like.

And I kind of like that too, as a, a little way to kind of interweave that connection with in the conversation. It is really true. Hearing your name, it's it's a little bit of intimacy, and it's even better than hearing your pet name.

So I could say, yes, honey, I get it. But, Betsy, I get it. I hear what you're saying. You know, you don't want to say it 100 times, but, yeah, it just.

It's like you're talking to me. You're seeing me? Yeah. Do you find is there anything that's. And I'm sure you've heard and seen so much in your career, but is there anything that's common, like a common complaint you see with couples that you're you're able to help and address in general?

Like the most? I would say, like probably the most common, actually the most common complaint I ever heard, which is why I founded the Couples Communication Institute, is we don't know how to communicate.

That is definitely the most common complaint. I mean, far and away the most common complaint. But, you know, drilling down a little bit further, it's really, I'm not sure how.

People are able to put this into words, but if I have a list of things that I'm trying to do in my day, and you just come over and start talking, I'm just not ready.

And it's it's a break. It's a disruption between the two of us if we have kids. And I'm trying to, you know, make the lunch and make sure they put their shoes on and get myself ready to go.

And I have, you know, the 16 things that have to be done. And you just come over and start talking to me. I'm like,

are you kidding? Do you see what I'm trying to do?

And maybe people just say, we just can't communicate, but it's it's a it's a, a lack of connection that's just so distressing, I think, to, to key into your partner.

That's why I said go in the room and look at them. What are they doing?

Helping a Partner Open Up

So if I'm frantically getting the lunches in my briefcase, like we don't have briefcases anymore, getting it all ready to go, and I'm scrambling just look at me and realize, oh, I bet she doesn't have bandwidth for whatever's on the top of my mind right now.

And I want to feel supported and seen like, oh, hi honey. I can see how busy you are. First of all, can I give you a hand? And second of all, can we talk after work today?

Because, you know, I see your busy. Oh, oh and something I want to tell you that's not, not a thing that goes wrong, but it is a turn on when your partner sees and hears and understands you.

When your partner actually listens to you or notices you and gets you, I want to spend time with you. You're the guy who just said, I see you're busy, can I help you?

And I want to talk to you. Do you have time later? Because I see you're busy now. You just got my attention, buddy. You know, I agree with you, because I was just thinking, like, we're in such a fast paced world nowadays and everyone's going and going in different directions, and just what a lovely thing to be able to stop and just listen to each other like that is amazing. So yeah.

Is there anything that I didn't ask you? And I know we could probably be sitting here for hours talking about this topic. I know I could. Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you specifically want us to know?

Well, one thing that comes to mind is I want to expand a little bit. I talked really briefly about what you appreciate about your partner's partner. If you want to talk with your partner as we do, but something that's not quite right, the more that you can connect that with, appreciate, and the more that you can connect that with what you positively want, with what you really enjoy, the better it's going to go.

So if I want to talk to you about sex and intimacy and any part of that, if I can start with something like, you know, honey, the the times when I think back when we have had the closest, the most enjoyable sexual connection, those have been amazing times for us.

And I want to reconnect in that way, like most people are going to be like, you just got my attention, honey. Rather than an opening like, I don't know, you never bring up sex in the right way, or I need you to, to stop pestering me or, you know, let them know what you like and want more of.

I like you, and I want more time with you. And I want, you know, this kind of sexual connection we used to have or this kind of whatever that we used to have.

And I feel so close to you when we have that together. And as I said, if you can include details like, what if there was this one time when we were, I don't know, at the cabin for the weekend?

I can say, honey, remember the sex we had at the cabin that weekend?

Common Communication Struggles in Couples

You know, hopefully your partner, you'd be like, oh, yeah, I want to talk with you about how we can make that happen more often. Would you like to have a conversation where that's our goal?

You know, so talking about appreciation, talking about positive things, talking about the good stuff, the juicy stuff, you want more of then you can when you bring that up and you see your partner light up, now, you know, you can say, so what I want to talk about is ways that we can start to connect, ways we can have a conversation about what we want more of or whatever, because some, some of it doesn't work so well with for me.

You know, when can we have that conversation? But starting with the good that I, I want more of I love this because it's like it's it's combination of like, well, let's not attack them the first thing that they're walking through the door.

So I like that you were setting this date and then we're also not coming from it to be like, hey, you know, I got this problem. You know, I like I like how we're like, oh, remember that time like that makes, like, just listening to you say, that makes me want to talk about it more to.

I'm like, getting this, you know, this is the stuff they needed to teach us. Like, we should have all gotten, like, couples communication, like one on one instead of, like, sex.

And and I call this this would have been so much, you know, more useful. And this is why, like, what you're doing is really amazing in the world and and just helping so many people.

I love this. So me see because I give a masterclass regularly. And that's right. In the beginning I say nobody ever taught us. We didn't learn from our parents.

We didn't learn in school. Like, how do you communicate? I never learned that. Oh my goodness, I love this.

Using Appreciation to Reconnect Sexually

So now where can people find out more about you? Well, my website is Couples Communication institute.com. So you know, there there is everything and, can I, can I share my quiz?

Yes, definitely. That would be wonderful. Yeah. So right on my home page I have a quiz. And when you take the quiz, you're going to find out which communication zone you're in with your partner, if things are closed or open or in between.

And then you're going to get a guide where you're going to get everything that I've talked about today pretty much and more. So for me, that's the best place for people to start to get to know me and what the Couples Communication Institute has to offer.

I also, as I said, give a regular masterclass and I have a course couples Communication Made Easy. But start with the free quiz and you'll get a guide.

And this will. It'll remind you of pretty much everything that we talked about today. I love this. Thank you so much. I'm so grateful that you took the time to talk to us about this, because this is so important, and I know it's going to make a different a lot of people's lives.

Resources, Quiz, and Closing Remarks

I'm already, like, thinking through my head, like when I'm going to go make that date to talk to my husband. So, I'm going to check back with you on that one because I am definitely like, ooh, I got a lot of a lot of tips and the out of this one.

So thank you so much, doctor Sarah, I really appreciate it. You are welcome Betsy. And here is to happy communicate to connect. And in sex or the world awesome.

Everybody make sure you go check out Doctor Sarah Salzman and stick with us because we got some great sessions coming up.