

Shaunti Feldhahn Full ep Audio

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SPEAKERS

Shaunti Feldhahn, David Sandstrom



David Sandstrom 00:00

Welcome to the Natural Health Matters podcast where I want to help you look and feel your best at any age. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, naturopathic doctor and biblical Health Coach. And this is episode number 127. Before we get started today, I'd like you to know that I want to get to know my audience better. And I would enjoy having a one on one conversation with you about 10 minutes over zoom. If you'd be interested in that, go to my website, David sandstrom.com/coffee talk. And you could pick a date and a time and schedule a 10 minute zoom call with me one on one. I look forward to hearing from you. Hello there Natural Nation. In this episode, we're talking about sex and marriage. And I have on the show Harvard graduate and marriage researcher Shanti Feldhahn. Her latest book is called Secrets to Sex and Marriage. And we're talking about a book in this episode. Now, disclaimer, this episode is obviously mature topic, not the little ones. If you listen to the show with kids, you might want to hit the pause button and come back and listen to this one later. So you might be saying, Dave, I thought your podcast was about health and wellness. Why you talking about sex and marriage? Well, if you've been listening to the show for any length of time, you know, that it's my contention that we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's natural design for spirit, mind and body. And the spiritual component of health is all about loving relationships, the love we have for God, and love we have for one another, and the love relationship we have with ourselves. And if we're married, that most significant one another relationship is that with our spouse. Now marriage is really good for our health. I like to call marriage vitamin M. When I was researching for my book, The Christians Guide to Holistic Health, I came across a study that was published in the American Journal of Epidemiology. And they were researching the effects of loneliness and social isolation, on longevity. And they found that lifetime single men under the worst case scenario, died up to 17 years younger than married men. And women didn't fare much better, they died up to 15 years younger. That's a pretty significant impact on our health and well being. And that study included all marriages, not just good ones. So marriage is very, very good for our health. It's God's designed for marriage, that we experienced oneness on a physical level. So that makes sex and marriage a an important part of our wholeness and our overall health and well being. What's God's designed for sex? Well, we can go to the word in Genesis chapter two verses 24 and 25. We find this a man shall leave his father and his mother, and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and we're not ashamed. So

that's God's design for sex and marriage, naked and unashamed, and becoming one flesh. knows if that weren't enough, we can look at Proverbs chapter five verses 18 and 19. Rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe, let her breasts fill you at all times with the light, be intoxicated always in her love. So God's designed for marriages that we enjoy a vibrant, satisfying sexual relationship. If you've been married for more than a couple of years, you know that that's not quite as easy as we might think. A good sex life doesn't happen automatically. We're all believing some kind of myths when it comes to sex and many of us are uncomfortable talking about it with our spouses. So if you're interested in a more satisfying, fulfilling, regular sexual relationship with your spouse, stick around, this episode is for you. So let's jump into my conversation right now with Shanti filled on. Today we have in the show my friend and fellow marriage mentor Shanti Feldhahn. Shanti is a best selling author, social researcher, speaker and podcaster with a graduate degree from Harvard, she uses her analytical background to help relationships thrive. She and her husband Jeff have co authored groundbreaking relationship books, with nearly 3 million copies sold. Welcome to Natural Health Matters.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 04:00

It's great to be with you, David. Thanks.

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David Sandstrom 04:02

Oh, we've been talking about having you on the show for quite a few months now. And we finally made it happen. And I'm really excited and looking forward to this.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 04:10

Yeah, me too. I we we were at a dinner not too long ago, where we're like, we've been trying to do this forever. So we actually do this.

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David Sandstrom 04:18

Yeah, that's exactly right. Yeah. So here we are. So you've got a new book out. It's called Secrets of Sex and Marriage, Eight Surprises that Make all the Difference. And of course, relational connectedness is good for our health, and having a vibrant sexual relationship is good for your relationship. So overall, so I'd like to talk a little bit about you know, what you did with with this book, but first, let me tell you this. I read the book twice. I read it myself first. And then I read it with my wife, Michele, and I found the information there to be insightful, and a lot of it was just mind blowing. Some of it's counterintuitive, because you you dispel a lot of the myths that people are holding, and frankly I had some of those least myself, and you cleared up a lot of things. For me. There's really some great stuff in there. I wish I had this information 24 years ago when I got married. But anyway, let's start our conversation off the way you started the book off with the couple on the soccer field. Can you share, that story?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 05:17

Yes, that is one of my favorite stories of all time, because we and I should I should explain to your to your audience, that one of the things that's kind of funny about all of our projects is that we do just tons of interviews. And normally, if we're talking about any other topic, we also do a lot of random interviews, like, you know, in coffee shops, and on airplanes. I couldn't do that on this topic. Because I would get arrested. But we we actually did say, you know, does anyone want to share their experience and most of the time people shared with me and my husband, Jeff, with their camera blacked out and fake names. Yeah. And so we heard all sorts of funny stories. Anyway, this particular story, this one wife said she and her husband, you know, they, they were both very busy, and they didn't connect maybe as often as she wanted, she was a slightly higher desire person in the marriage. But one thing that they did try to do was to keep things fresh and fun, was to, to, let's just say keep promises that they had made to one another when they were younger, they've been dating since like, high school. And they because their faith was important to them, they had decided to wait on sex until marriage, but like they teased each other a little bit like through high school in college, like, okay, you know, when we're married, we're going to come back, and we're going to do it here, or something. And so they tried to keep those promises to each other now that they've been married for, you know, 12-15 years, I have a bunch of kids. And so one of those promises was He was apparently I guess, a soccer player. And they had said, on the sideline of a soccer game, you know, when we're married, we're going to come back to this park, you know, at some point in the middle of the night. And so they decided one Friday night that they were going to do that. And I'm like, blushing even as I'm listening to this story, she was so excited to tell the story that I'm like, I'm so blushing. Anyway. And so the grandma had the kids, and they drove through this dark park. And of course, it's way after hours, you know, it's like, one in the morning. And, and they got a backpack, and they went down on the soccer field, and, you know, they got started. And they're busy. They got busy. And then next thing they know, there's a booming policeman voice saying, Stop what you're doing and come up here, you know, and the, you know, the car with the search light the spotlight, and of course, she is mortified. And her husband thinks it's hilarious, but she is mortified. And, and so, you know, they're trying to stuff their, you know, give her clothes back on and, you know, put their stuff together in the backpack, and they go up, and these two policemen are like, name and license number, please. You know, like, I guess they're used to catching people in the park. And they were not amused. And this couple, they're handing their, their IDs to these police officers. And the police is like, Okay, Bob Smith, 1234 Jones road, and then it's like Sarah Smith. One, two, wait a minute. This is the same last name. This is the same address. Wait, you're married? And she's like, of course I'm married. Like I wouldn't do this if I wasn't married. And the husband is like, Yes, Officer 12 years, three kids. And the officers like I thought you were college students.. And he's like, Dude, this is awesome. And he fist pumps the husband. and so the they're like, We will let you off with a warning and huh, we're almost off of our shift and one of the one of the officers like, and I think I might just go home to my wife right now. And I thought that story was hilarious, both because, you know, it's just you can picture how mortified the wife especially was. But also the thing that I found really funny about it is yeah, you know, it's kind of embarrassing to even think about, but and that would not be what many couples would choose to do? Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying to, you know, go into a park late at night. No, yeah. But I loved the purposefulness that This couple had about how do we keep things kind of fresh and interesting. And that just happened to be, you know, keeping those old promises to one another happened to be their way of doing that. So that's that's the reason that in addition to the fact that the police officers thought that was Dude. That's why I love that story.

Well, I'm sure the police officers thinking the same thing I was thinking when I heard that story was, how do I get my wife to suggest something like that?

S Shaunti Feldhahn 10:45

I have told that story now to many people. And many husbands come up to me and ask that question. I'm like, That is probably not gonna be many wives. But you guys come up with your own thing.

D David Sandstrom 10:58

Well, in a sense, that's what the book is about. Right? It's about communicating and connecting. And, you know, understanding one another better and building that relational connectedness that leads to more sex, right? Yeah. So what makes this book Secrets of sex and marriage? What makes this different from other intimacy books? What did you do differently that others hadn't done? Yet? What? What trails? Did you blaze that were new?

S Shaunti Feldhahn 11:20

So all of the books that I have written over the last 20 plus years? Because I'm a social researcher? I approach it from a social research perspective of what and basically, we're trying to uncover the answer to one question for every single book, which is what are the little things that are going to make a big difference in whatever area that we're studying? With the idea of how do we thrive right in our lives? And how do we thrive in our relationships? And so, you know, I've studied things about helping women understand men like, what do you not know, about your husband or your boyfriend? Or women, right, the reverse, there's workplace stuff and parenting stuff. So I took that same approach to this incredibly important topic of intimacy in marriage. And going, okay, you know, this is not, this is not going to be a sex manual. This is this is a, this is a different approach. This is what are the little things that are going to matter. And, and so we ended up enlisting for this particular project, because it's so such a vulnerable sacred topic where we could do damage if we got it slightly slightly off. We enlisted one of our main advisors who's a sex therapist named Dr. Michael Seitz, Minh, he's one of the most renowned sex therapists, especially in the Christian community, in the country, he's trained most of the sex therapists out there, in one way or another. Or at least many of them and, and he and he and myself and my husband, Jeff, we basically spent about three years doing a bunch of research to try to okay, what are the myths that people are believing that are getting in a way? And what's the truth? What are the things that are running under the surface that we don't know are necessarily going on? That if we know them, we can go? Oh, like, we can change things slightly. And it has a really big impact. We basically spent three years identifying what are those things, we identified eight of them, that make a big difference to most not all, but to most married couples. And so that is the the premise all of we did a bunch of surveys, all of our surveys, and all of our projects that we've done, are pretty rigorous, nationally representative surveys, because that's something that's actually really important to us. So that we it's really expensive, it's pretty, it's it takes a lot of you know, mental energy, but at the end, we get really good rigorous data. And so that's what our conversation is based on. It's it's not our opinion.

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David Sandstrom 14:15

And I know you had a good diverse background, and you had all kinds of nationalities and yes, income brackets, and you did your best to really spread that around, didn't you? We

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Shaunti Feldhahn 14:25

did we basically matched we were doing the surveys in early 2021. And so the the latest census data for the demographics of the United States was the 2018 survey. We didn't the 2020 survey wasn't available yet. And so essentially, we were trying to match the 2018 census across race, religion, age, geography, socio economic gender Yeah, yeah. All the all sorts of things.

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David Sandstrom 15:04

Right, right. And I think in the way you represented in the book, you did a really good job with that. And one of the questions that is on my mind is, how did you get people to answer honestly, because I would think a lot of people might be hesitant to give you true, real raw answer

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Shaunti Feldhahn 15:20

. Oh, sure. Well, you know, it's interesting, we have actually found over the years, one of the things that's been encouraging, because we've had that, we've had that question from the very beginning. You know, we're asking, for example, men, how they really think about, you know, some areas like their visual temptations. And that can be a little, you know, you're asking some pretty sensitive stuff. And so that's like, from the very beginning, we've asked some of those types of questions. And one of the things that we have found is that when people know that they are completely anonymous, there is no way that I will ever know who they are. Because these are all completely anonymous surveys. And I all I know is that they're, you know, Person number 237, or whatever. They give me their, you know, they give me a man, I'm 44 years old, I've been married for 15 years. You know, I live in California. Well, and I'm, and I'm African American. Okay, well, there's lots of African American 44 year olds living in California. And so there's, there's just no way that you know, out of the 50 million people living in California that I would know who that one guy is. And so there's a sense of safety. And so what ends up happening at the very beginning, we basically say, we are going to be talking about some inner things, you know, like, we really would love your candid input, you don't have to take the survey. But if you want to just be aware that this is for research, this is for a book, this is going to help people in such in such a way, and a lot of people really want to help. Yeah, like, and they get compensated. I mean, there's a little compensation that happens with in order to get good data, you pay people for their time.

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David Sandstrom 17:20

I'm guessing, though, that the money that they got was really insignificant compared to the idea of. well. I'm gonna. I'm gonna require something that's gonna to help other individuals.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 17:30

Yeah. I mean, you know, I'm sure the different sort of companies have different amounts. But you know, you're taking a 15 minute survey, and you're getting five or \$10. I mean, drop in the bucket. It's a drop in the bucket for most people, right. But it's the Oh, wow, this is different. This isn't asking me about my favorite deodorant. This is like, you know, this is

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David Sandstrom 17:52

something that matters. Yeah, yeah. So I know you took a clinical as well as a biblical perspective with the research and the book. So just talk for a little bit about why that was important to you.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 18:05

Well, so in this topic, like I said earlier, this topic of physical intimacy, and marriage is so vulnerable and so sacred. And it is something that, you know, a lot of people never talk about, with even their closest friends, right? And maybe not even their spouse. And so, we, we wanted, we wanted to be able to have an approach that honored both science and Scripture, we wanted to have an approach that was clinically Excellent, well done and trustworthy across the board. And so that's why we enlisted Dr. Sytsma, right, because we have known him for 20 years, he's been one of our advisors, whenever we tackle this topic and other projects, which we've done. He's always helped us sort of think things through and, you know, figure out the right way of, you know, asking the questions or whatever. And, and so, because he has been a sex therapist for how he's probably, I think, 35 years of therapy experience, and more than 35,000 hours of client time. And he's got 1000s of hours of supervision, supervision, time, he knows all of the things to look for all of the traps all of the here's things that in order to get accurate data, we're gonna have to do it this way versus that way. Yeah. And so from a clinical perspective, it was so helpful because this really is such a specialized area. There were plenty of times that I interpreted the data, and I would, you know, write something in a chapter or whatever he'd be like, actually, no, that's not what we're looking at. And he would show me it'd be like, oh, like stuff I never would have No, I'm because I'm not a specialist. So from the clinical perspective, that's the way we handled it. From a scriptural perspective, both of us, he's actually a pastor, as well is an ordained pastor. And, you know, for Jeff and I, as followers of Jesus, one of the things that's important to us is, we really wanted to be able to bring the perspective of this isn't just honoring ourselves in our sex life or honoring our spouse, this is honoring God in this part of life that he designed for our marriages. And what does that mean? Like what does he say? And that's, that's not a huge part of the the actual content of the book. It's a big part of the last chapter kind of the conclusion. But all the way through, we wanted to make sure that, that we were bringing at least a biblical mindset, to secular research.

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David Sandstrom 21:00

So the biblical foundation for you, as you were going through the research, what kind of kept you within the guardrails, so to speak, you know, this is we're going to make sure everything

lines up with what we understand what the Bible teaches on this subject.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 21:12

And you know, for example, both from a biblical perspective and a research perspective, a lot of things end up coming out, in the same way, believe it or not, because research tends to prove what the Bible has said all along. And so for example, and when you when you, when you, for example, if you look at how married and unmarried people handle their physical relationship, it's vastly there's some vast differences. And so, both from a biblical perspective, and from a research perspective, we just focused on married couples.

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David Sandstrom 21:51

Yeah. that's excellent. Really good. So I'm thinking that a lot of people listening right now, the question on their mind is frequency. I know you talk about this in the book as you should have=, and it's not uncommon for a couples to have a difference of opinion there about how often they should be coming together. So in your book, you say if a spouse is unhappy about how often they have sex, they're 10 times more likely also be unhappy in their marriage? Yeah. Can you speak to that a little bit?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 22:27

Yes, this issue of frequency is highly correlated, to all sorts of other issues and marriage. And I need to say right up front, for people who are research oriented and listening, we do not know causation yet, right? Like, that's further research is needed. But there's strong correlation. And you can assume, in whatever we're going to be describing here, that in some, in some ways, you know, the causation, the arrow goes both ways, you know, something is happening, because, you know, you're having a lot of frequency because you're happy in marriage, for example, as opposed to your frequency is making you happy in marriage. It's probably both, right, it probably most goes both ways. However, you cannot ignore some correlative factors. And this one that you mentioned, about frequency is a, it just statistically was pretty eye opening. I'll give you a couple of examples. One of the most common areas of heartache in people's physical life and their intimate life and their marriage is the simple pain, but it's pain is the simple pain of one person wanting more than the other. And that is the case with 79% of couples, right? 20 21% of couples are happily on the same page, about

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David Sandstrom 24:05

One in five,

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Shaunti Feldhahn 24:08

About the amount, but in 79%, so you have 8 out of 10 couples, they're not on the same page. And sometimes they're actually not that far apart, but it still causes this immense, there's so much pain, and it's often because of the reason that you attribute to that. So you think, you

know, why doesn't my spouse find me desirable? You know, why would they why would they rather you know, stay up late and watch Netflix, then come to bed at the same time, you know, and engage in that way. You you, you attribute all these things who must be about me, I'm not desirable or they're just frigid. Or, you know, why am I having to chase them around the bed? Isn't this isn't this something that is supposed to be a part of the joy of marriage rule? Natural yeah. And so that is so common, like I said, 79%, right. And so the first thing to tell people who are listening to this, just to actually say this out loud, is for you to realize if that is your experience, you're obviously not alone. That's actually one of the big myths that we found that needs to be debunked, is that people, we don't even talk about this topic with our closest friends. Like I said earlier, we have no grid for what's going on out there. This is the only topic in marriage that you never talk about. Most people never talk about with me, I'll see you don't know. Like you, you think you're the only one who has this issue? Well, you're not right, you're you're not alone. And so that's sort of the first thing to be aware of. But then the second thing to be aware of, is that actually getting on the same page about frequency is it requires tearing down some other myths. And it requires actually recognizing what are the reasons for that, because they're not what people tend to think they are. Most, for example, what we found is that most of the time, when you're not on the same page, and you're not maybe connecting as often as one person, wants that the person with maybe the higher desire, right, the person with the higher drive, they will often think that there's just one reason for that. It's an in maybe both people think there's just one reason for that there, they just attribute it to, well, it's a person with the lowered desire, right? Like the one person just has a lower sex drive. And that's the reason. And if you think about it, that puts an immense amount of pressure on the person with the lower drive, because then it's their fault that we're not connecting. And all the arguments are your all because you and somebody could think what's wrong with me, right? And what we found that was so helpful to know is that it's actually it's usually statistically not because somebody has a lower sex drive, they do maybe have a lower sex drive. But the reason you're not connecting is probably not just that there's these all these other factors. And so that's what we were trying to cover in the book is what are all those other factors, right, like, that's some of the eight findings is what are the other things that get in the way. And so just as a starting point, that's, that's the encouragement to everybody is look underneath the surface, look at all the other things that could be going on, rather than just pointing the finger to yourself or to somebody else as the problem.

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David Sandstrom 27:56

That's very good. So you know, I almost hesitate to ask this, but I'm thinking to try to think of what someone might have on their mind. Because I know there's a wide variety of answers here. But on average, and averages can be deceiving. But on average, what does the average couple have for frequency? How often? Are they having sex?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 28:15

Okay, I can answer that question. But I have to say caveat first.

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David Sandstrom 28:18

Yes. Okay.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 28:18

Are you okay with it? Absolutely. So, one of the most common questions that you get when you start studying this topic is how often should we? Right? Like, that's what a lot of people are actually asking when they're asking for the average is like, How often should we? And they're in the the reality is, there is no, how often should we answer there? It is drastically different for different couples, different stages of life, different ages, do you have medical issues, you know, just one of you travel a lot? Is it like, there's just so many different variables. So that I will tell you the average, but I do want everybody to know, that is not what is necessarily right for you, there is a wide wide array. So that said the average across everybody on this nationally representative survey was one and a third times per week. And Jeff, and I do a lot of marriage conferences, like at churches, you know, will, will come in and you know, talk about some of our research and, you know, encourage the marriages. And if we didn't talk about this topic at all in that process, and I share that number. People always come up to me afterwards and they're like, Can you unpack that third for me? What does that mean? Like just stop a third of the way? What is that? And now it just means four times every three weeks? Yeah, is the average

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David Sandstrom 29:53

got you got you. But there's a wide range of what works for different couples, right.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 29:58

Well, actually And interestingly, again, one of the things we show in the book, which, you know, I encourage everybody to like, look at the pages of the book, rather than trying to just visualize this mentally. But if you picture a pie chart that shows the national distribution, one of the things that shocked me, didn't shock, Dr. Sytsma because, you know, nothing shocked him. But one of the things that really surprised me is the vast array of distribution, it was basically almost if you picture a pie chart, it was basically almost like a quarter, a quarter, a quarter a quarter like, there was no one main answer for how often people were engaging, it was all over the map. And, and actually, one of the things that was concerning was that one of those numbers the the twenty, it was actually 23% were in what the sex therapy community calls sexless marriages. So 23% of the population is having sex less than once a month, or never. So 9% of the population is never 14% of the population is somewhere between never and less than once a month. So you know, a few times a year. And, and that is interesting, because when now that can be related all sorts of different issues. That, by the way, is also very related to age, that as you can imagine, that tends to increase with age. But there's also a lot of other medical issues. There's also a correlation with sexual pain, a lot of women and even some men have sexual pain. And so there's all sorts of reasons for that sexless marriage number. But nevertheless, in the sexless marriages, it correlated with a lot of other marriage issues. Like there is something about our intimate relationship with our spouse, that God is designed to be protective. There's something about it, that God is designed to help kind of create more flow in all the other areas of our married life, and to make us softer with one another. And to have all the mean literally, it can be as simple as some of the chemicals that get stirred up in the body. That makes us more likely to have grace with our spouse. Yeah. And that is, so it appears to be so important to a marriage, that when it's not happening, it opens up the door for other difficulties that the couple would rather not have.

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David Sandstrom 32:59

Yeah, I'm thinking about this quote that you that you had in the book, and you said, just as oil is a lubricant of an internal combustion engine, sexual relationship can be the lubricant in a marriage.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 33:10

Yeah, I promise I did not intend a double entendre. Really, it just works as an analogy.

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David Sandstrom 33:18

It does work. And I'd like to add to that a little bit. You know, when I was younger, I used to I used to rebuild engines worked on outboard motors. And yeah, the oil is super important to the life of that engine. And if you have bad oil or no oil, it's going to add friction to the to the internal components of that engine, they're going to wear out prematurely, there's going to be extra heat, there's going to be extra wear and tear on that engine, and it eventually will fail. So I think we have a lot of parallels between that and a marital relationship, that you're going to have unintended friction, or if this is not resolved, if this isn't, you can't have a meeting of the minds here on sexual frequency, or your sex life in general, it's going to create friction in your marriage, and it's going to put unnecessary stress and wear and tear on your relationship. And hopefully wouldn't cause failure. But there's a lot of parallels there. I think that's a very good metaphor.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 34:08

Well, the thing that was encouraging is that even amongst some of the sexless marriages, they had a great marriage. Right. I can't remember the numbers were but it was something like a third of the sexless marriages call said that their marriage was spectacular. Both people agreed that was the we did this anonymous. It's called a matched pair survey where we knew you know, this husband number 135 is married to wife number 135. Like we could match their answers. And so we could tell, you know, both of them said, oh, yeah, we have a really happy marriage then. Okay, right. Like, we knew that I think it's about a third of the sexless marriages still had a great, you know, marriage, but it's very telling that I think it was two thirds that didn't, right like that. It was either kind of middle of the road or really actually kind of struggling. And again, you All goes both ways. You know, if you're not having sex, maybe your marriage gets worse. But maybe your marriage is worse. So you don't have sex, right? Like it could be either of those, probably both.

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David Sandstrom 35:13

What came first chicken or the egg? We don't know that.



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Shaunti Feldhahn 35:15

Right. and it's probably both. But again, you can't, you can't ignore that we saw all of these issues in marriage start to arise, if the couple wasn't making this a priority, or if, for example, let's just say one member of a couple was really kind of resistant to physical intimacy, maybe they had trauma in their past, or maybe the relationship needed to be worked on whatever the the issues were, if you know if one person wasn't willing to work on it, and so they kind of devolved into well, we just, we just don't connect in that way. It's you're missing this lubrication that God has designed for the engine to run. And so again, you can still have a good marriage. Like I said, I think it was a third. But it's something for everybody to take really seriously.

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David Sandstrom 36:12

For Sure. You have a lot of advice for couples on how they resolve differences. But one of the things I wanted to make sure we hit on was the different types of desire. Yes. And one of the things that you say in there is in general, for men desire leads to sex. Well, for women, sex leads to desire. Yeah, so we're wired differently, right? And we can use Can you speak to that for a little bit?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 36:34

Yeah, cuz I know everybody listening to you just went, what?

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David Sandstrom 36:37

What did he just say? Yeah,

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Shaunti Feldhahn 36:38

What did you just say? Yeah, so one of the things that was, to me a pivotal finding that we have actually seen make a, this alone has actually made a pretty substantial difference to many, many couples, is that most people don't realize there's different types of desires. So the one of the myths, you know, I said, we, you, and you said at the beginning, we kind of believe some myths are getting in the way, right, one of those that we haven't maybe even articulated to ourselves, but we just, we see, like, for example, the way that the process of getting into a sexual encounter is portrayed in a movie, right? Like, what's, what is, how does Hollywood portray that or what you read in a book, or whatever? Or is like Jeff always points out what you hear from 16 year old boys in the locker room, which was, you know, of course, 16 year olds are the, the best experts on this topic. But one of the things that we don't realize is, in our minds, most of us have this idea that there's just one way that sex and desire works. And you feel desire, like you look at the way Hollywood portrays it, and the man and the woman looked at each other, and they both feel this hunger, right? Like, there's this, there's this spark, there's this desire for sex. And so they do something about it, you know, pretty soon they're kissing and the clothes are off, and they're in bed. Right? And, and it turns out, that is one that is a portrayal of one primary type of desire, which you could call initiating desire. But there's actually two primary types of desire. And the second one is called receptive desire. And, and the key is to recognize that less than half by the way of the population has initiating desire 55%

of the population has receptive desire. And receptive desire is just as legitimate. It's just you never see it portrayed in a movie or on television, and she's like, You have no idea. It's a thing, like you have no idea that it exists. But so receptive desire, let me just, do you mind if I just explain what this is? Absolutely, briefly, okay. So the person with receptive desire, the physiology, of that person's makeup, actually kind of works in the reverse order, the desire process works in the reverse order, instead of feeling desire and doing something about it. The person with receptive desire generally, usually doesn't feel desire, like they don't have that feeling of hunger, and instead they decide to get engaged with their spouse sexually. It's a it's a decision that they're making, knowing that it'll be good for them eventually, right? Like, because I've done this many times, and they know that that sense of desire will kick in. And so the person with receptive desire, they're making a decision like an intellectual or out of love for their spouse or knowing it'll be good eventually, whatever. They're deciding to get engaged in as their physiology starts getting stimulated. it and assuming that they see that positively right like, because, you know, this is all assuming that we're talking about a generally healthy relationship. This is not abuse, you know. But assuming that they they see that positively, then their sense of desire may kick in. And that sense of desire is what their spouse felt five or 10 minutes ago. And so it is incredibly helpful for people to recognize, oh, wait, I'm not broken, like what I see in Hollywood, I felt broken, you know, because that's not me. And so that person who thinks that it's like, Oh, I'm not broken, this is my design, this is my physiology. And the key is for both people, if you have the by far the biggest. The the largest representation of couples was one person had initiating one person had receptive, and it tends to be men and women in that order. But not always, about a quarter of women have the initiating desire. But no, excuse me, about 16% of women, I believe have initiating desire. But regardless, if in most marriages, you have one that is initiating, and one that is receptive. The key is you just have to work with each other's wiring. Yeah, rather than wishing it was something different, and then getting upset, because it's never different. Because this is not going to be you have to work with it.

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David Sandstrom 36:50

Absolutely. And you know, I think it the real trouble might come in when you have both both spouses are receptive desire. So that's gonna be ah.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 41:48

Just stand around and look at each other.

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David Sandstrom 41:50

If you don't understand it, it's gonna you're gonna see you be likely that you just said likely to conclude there's something wrong with us. Right? Yeah, it doesn't interest us. You know, it just not. We're just weird. We're just strange. When the truth is, none of that is true.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 42:03

No. you just have receptive desire. Right. So and that's, I believe that's either 24 or 25%. of the population Yeah, actually, Yeah. So again, not a tiny number

population. Yeah, actually. Yeah. So again, not a tiny number,

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David Sandstrom 42:14

Right? Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, in your book for women only, you mentioned that three out of four women 73% said they would want to make love more frequently if their husband would maintain or increase his level of emotional attention. Yes, so that kind of applies and was another book, but it does apply here. So totally. So what can men do to do that? How can we more hit the bullseye for our wives? Because men do tend to have that initiating desire more often? Not? exclusively, but they do. So what can men do to reach their wives on an emotional level that would help stimulate some of that desire?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 42:53

Well, and the number by the way, is 58% 59%, something like that of men have initiating it's, it's actually surprising that 35% have receptive desire, by the way. But that, again, it tends to that tends to happen as a couple gets older, as well, as the man gets older, that receptive desire tends to come in. So I just want to encourage men, if you're not in that initiating bucket, you're not weird, right? Like, a lot of men aren't. But what can you do? If you are right? If you're the initiating spouse, and your wife is the receptive spouse? You see that survey question about, you know, increase your emotional attention. And you think, I don't know what that means. Right? So let me just give the husbands out there a little bit of a perspective, what you what you what will help is if you tell yourself if your spouse has receptive desire, okay, if then she is making a decision to get engaged with you sexually. What is that decision going to be based on? If you think about it, that decision is going to be based on how she feels about you in the relationship the rest of the day, right? Right, because she's making a decision. It's not like there's a sexual desire that just like overcomes her and she can't stop herself. I know that that's what every husband wants. But that is not unfortunately, the physiological reality for most women. Yeah. And so she is making a decision, so you have to kind of go Okay, so, if she's making a decision based on how she feels about me, based on how she feels about the relationship, the question is, am I making her feel cared for every day? Am I making her feel loved? Every day, doing what I can do? Because you know, there's some things you can't do. It's that you know, she has to decide to receive that love. For example, And, and recognize that actually, what you think will make her feel loved is not necessarily what actually works for her. Which is why, you know, again, our research from for women only, and for men only, which is the book for men about their wives, is so helpful, because it's like, statistically, these are the things that tend to make a woman feel loved. And giving you a couple of examples of that, believe it or not, you know, one of the things that is huge is the feeling that you're pursuing her still, even though you caught her, right, like, even though that you been married for 20 years, or whatever. And if you think about pursuit, and that sort of sense of pursuing her, think about it, like, Okay, what did you do when you were dating? And not by the way? You know, many men are like, oh, like, That was exhausting. No, not like, not like the candlelight dinners you arranged. Although, you know, that's fine. That's great. But that's not what we're talking about. When you were dating, you were sending her a message saying, I love you today. I want you today, I'm pursuing you today. And the reason that's important, and this is one of the things that we cover, is that for most women, even after they get married, they still have a question in their hearts of am I lovable? Like, does he really love me? Yeah, like, is he glad he married me. And so you can tell her I'm glad I married you just by reaching across and taking her hand when you're walking across a parking lot. Right? Like that is a that is pursuit. Or you're sitting at

church and you put your arm around or at church that says, I'm so glad I married you, I would choose you all over again your mind, right? Like these little messages, texting, or in the middle of the day, saying, This has been such a tough day, my boss has been all over me. I can't wait to see you later. I love you so much. I'm so glad you married me. And then sending that text message. Like she'll screenshot that text message and keep that is what sends that pursuit message.

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David Sandstrom 45:04

What you're saying is super true. And I gotta share a quick story. Michelle, and I've been married for 24 years, and I'm a very goal oriented guy I was then I still am today. And I like to set goals and go after him. And one of my good friends. At our wedding reception, Michelle, and I was sitting down with, you know, our meal. And we had a glass of champagne in front of us, my friend comes over to us and says, Oh, Dave, congratulations. Oh, thanks a lot. He says. So now that you got the wife, what's your next goal? Like and that was like a dagger to the heart of my new bride. And that was hurtful. And it there was some truth to it. That's what made it even more hurtful. And to this day, Michele will share that story from time to time on how much that was a she was in a state of shock to hear that from a good friend, someone who'd known me for most of my life. And yeah, that's not what a woman needs to hear.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 47:17

Well, if you think about it, it makes perfect sense from a guy's perspective. Because when a guy gets married, and this is an this is crucial, not just for your intimate life for the rest of your marriage. So guys, if you're listening, this is crucial, is when a guy gets married? He does not men, what we found is that men and women tend to have two different, like primary insecurities running under the surface, where women's is am I lovable? Like that is the one for women, men's is more likely to be am I able, right? Yes. And so when a guy gets married, he just stops questioning. Does my wife love me? Like that's been settled? In? Maybe things go really bad, you know? Sure. But I mean, in general, like, it just doesn't come up. Does she love me while like, of course, like we're married, like, of course, she loves me. And he doesn't realize that's because you don't have that insecurity running under the surface. Your insecurity is more. Am I any good at being a great dad? You know, am I any good at what I do at work? Am I you know, it's about what I do? Yeah. And so you don't realize as a husband, there is no switch in a woman's brain that gets flipped to the oh, now I feel permanently loved position. And she has that question every day. And so she's looking to you for the answer to that question every day, which is why the Bible talks about Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church. It's a command because God knows that men will just otherwise assume that oh, she knows I love her. Oh, no. That's why that command is there because she doesn't necessarily she doubts that sometimes. And so the command is no, no, like, find ways to love your wife every day.

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David Sandstrom 50:10

Yeah, very good. So Shanti we're running out of time here. But man, this was this has been so great. So if you could, by wrap up and wave wrap up, just share the most, most important thing you want people to take with them from this conversation, what would it be?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 50:25

So the most important thing for me is that was so encouraging about this project. Is that it? It is, it is a truism that we don't realize this true that even when we are not on the same page, about our intimate life, and even when there's heartache that we are, it turns out much closer than we think we are like when you actually look at the statistics. Yeah, I mean, the husband, for example, might say, Yeah, I want sex to be three times a week, and the wife might say, I want it one to two times a week. Okay, as our co author said, there's not much difference between two and two. And so what is getting in the way, when you actually both are relatively close, it turns out is all these relatively little things that you just didn't know mattered, but that you have myths that are kind of getting in the way, and once you debunk those myths, and once you get a little new knowledge? It's like, Oh, my goodness, like it is so much simpler than in. For most couples, it is so much simpler than you realize. Now, there are going to be some couples that have more significant road ahead, because they are going to be having to solve, you know, trauma from childhood or sexual pain, or somebody has an addiction or whatever. But the good news is, even those can all be addressed. And so that's one of the reasons we wrote the book is that we wanted to help people get that hope.

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David Sandstrom 51:57

Yeah. So again, the book is called Secrets of sex and marriage. Eight Surprises that Make all the Difference. Shaunti, if someone want to ge ahold of you or get a copy of the book, where should they go?

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Shaunti Feldhahn 52:07

Well, the easiest thing and there's a lot of resources for you if you're interested, is it SecretsOfSexSndMarriage.com is a website that we created with Dr. Michael Sytsma with a bunch of other resources. So including referral resources, like the person who says, yeah, actually, we do have somebody with an addiction, like, what do we do? Okay, there's referral resources there that can help you get help, more specialized help, and there's some really good articles, links to different courses that might help. So I'm hoping that people will get will be encouraged. Once they actually look at this. They'll be encouraged to see that it is simpler than they thought.

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David Sandstrom 52:53

Yeah, well, I believe they will be I sure was by reading the book. Thank you so much for your time today.

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Shaunti Feldhahn 52:59

Absolutely, David, thanks for having me on.

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David Sandstrom 53:00



David Sandstrom 53:02

For more, go to the show notes page at DavidSandstrom.com/127. There you can find links to all the resources that we mentioned, as well as an audio and a video version of podcast and more. If you're getting value out of this podcast, I sure would appreciate you letting a friend know about it. Holistic Health from a biblical perspective is relatively hard to come by. And I believe that your friend will appreciate you sharing the show with them. That's it for now. Thank you for listening. I'll talk with you next time be blessed.