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The Health Benefits of Sex

By Susie Michelle Cortright

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by: **Susie Michelle Cortright** Quick quiz: Would you rather run 75 miles or have sex three times per week for a year? Research shows that both activities burn the same number of calories. (7,500, to be exact.)

We often think that something that feels good can't possibly be good for us. Now it's time to think again.

Sex in a loving, intimate relationship has numerous health benefits. In women, for example, the sexual act triggers the release of oxytocin. Oxytocin promotes feelings of affection and triggers that nurturing instinct. In men, sex encourages the flow of testosterone, which strengthens bones and muscles and helps transport DHEA, a hormone that may be important in the function of the body's immune system.

Paul Pearsall, Ph.D., author of Superimmunity, also maintains that sex in a loving relationship helps the immune system by increasing the flow of certain chemicals in the body.

Hugh O'Neill, editor of Men's Health magazine, recently listed some health benefits of sex, as well. Regular sex is regular exercise and has similar benefits, including improved cholesterol levels and increased circulation. Men's Health also reported that men who have sex at least three times each week may have a decreased risk of developing prostate problems.

Sex, like exercise, releases endorphins. Endorphins contribute to the runner's high and diminishes pain levels.

An active sex life may help us live longer, too. Dr. David Weeks, a clinical neuropsychologist at Scotland's Royal Edinburgh Hospital, conducted a study of 3,500 people ranging in age from 18 to 102. Weeks concluded that sex actually slows the aging process.

Sexual therapists remind us that frequent sex is a form of exercise. And feeling secure in a relationship leads to feeling happier, which could lead to greater health—and a younger look.

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In fact, these studies indicate that intimacy plays a key role in the health benefits of sex. A promiscuous sexual relationship may actually produce an opposite effect by introducing a sense of anxiety and fear.

In spite of all these health benefits and the sheer pleasure of the act, Americans may still need a boost. At least one-third of American couples report "inhibited sexual desire," according to The Masters and Johnson Institute.

Sex therapists say sex acts on the principal of "use it or lose it." So, for your heart, mind, and soul, the best advice may be to "Just do it!"

Susie Michelle Cortright is the author of several books for women, including *Rekindling Your Romance After Kids*, and founder of the award-winning *Momscape.com*, a website designed to help busy women find balance. Visit

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Less Stress" and "Rekindling Your Romance After Kids."

Legal Protection for Same-Sex Couples

By Johnette Duff

Has anyone considered a compromise solution to the issue of legalization of same-sex marriages?

As an attorney who has spent years conducting research on the advantages and disadvantages of marriage vs. living together, my viewpoint is a legal one, unobscured by religious or moral questions. Legal recognition of a status for these couples is called for, as is their current need for self-help in making the laws work for them while they are still in flux.

Traditionally and legally, marriage has been defined as a union of a man and woman. Changing that definition is at the heart of the problem. Marriage, throughout history, has had more to do with procreation than romantic love or legal convenience. This legal definition and the issue of procreation have both been used to bolster the denial of the right of same-sex marriage.

What same-sex couples need, and should have, is the ability to form a legal relationship. The semantics used to describe this relationship should not matter as much as the rights and duties arising from it. Denial of these rights is the discrimination same-sex couples decry. We should not forget that only during the last generation was the denial of the right of marriage to members of different races overturned. The law is meant to serve the needs of the members of society – including same-sex couples.

My compromise solution is a law which allows same-sex couples the right to a legal relationship without the hot-button title of "marriage." With a simple change of terms, these couples could become

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legal "domestic partners" which confer the same rights and duties of their state's marriage contract. Similar licensing statutes could be enacted, along with the inevitable relationship dissolution laws.

The marriage contract from any state comes with built-in advantages and disadvantages. Married couples are bestowed with automatic inheritance rights. They enjoy the right to sue for loss of consortium if a third party injures their spouse, denying them services and companionship. Because a married couple has rights, they cannot be denied hospital visitation or the right to make medical decisions for each other. Employers often offer medical coverage and benefits to spouses of employees. Why should same-sex couples be denied these benefits?

Couples who live together do have flexibility to create their own rights and duties vis-a-vis each other. A same-sex couple can execute wills, written cohabitation agreements, durable powers of attorney for health care (giving a partner the right to hospital visitation and the right to make medical decisions in the event of an emergency) and, with careful financial awareness, create many of the advantages of marriage.

The question of medical insurance and benefits should be balanced against the "marriage penalty tax," which still exists.

The denial of the choice to same-sex couples, however, is the true discrimination. Same-sex couples

should have the option of forming a legal relationship under the law, no matter what title it is given.

Johnette Duff is the author of *The Spousal Equivalent Handbook: a legal and financial guide to living together*, *The Marriage Handbook: a legal and financial guide to your spousal rights*, and *Love After 50: the complete legal and financial guide*. Nationally, she has appeared on *Today*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS This Morning* and in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Self*, *Smart Money*, *New Woman* and *Modern Maturity* promoting information on love and the law. Ms. Duff has recently opened a web site titled, *love and the law*.

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