

EROTIC INTEGRITY: How to be True to Yourself Sexually

'Erotic Integrity': two words that we don't usually put together. Yet the concept underlies everyone's sexual and romantic behavior. Erotic is defined as "dealing with sexual love" & integrity means "adhering to a code of values", according to my dictionary. Most people don't define this for themselves, and thus aren't aware to what degree it guides their sexual behavior and decisions. Erotic integrity is an unexplored concept that is present in all of us. I define it as being true to oneself, having our actions be congruent with our proclivities, having a clean agenda rather than a hidden one, not being deceitful by omission as pertains to sexual or erotic activity. It requires us to come from the best in ourselves rather than our fears. Erotic integrity requires us to know ourselves, our turn-ons, what feels right in our gut, and act from that place. I believe it is the lack of erotic integrity causes some of us to repeat ineffective patterns in sex and relationships, leading to pain, lies, betrayals, disappointment of feeling like we never find what we want, knowing something more is possible but not knowing how to create it... Lack of erotic integrity is not necessarily a character flaw, just a lack of awareness. Let me explain with a couple of examples.

Eve originally called my practice because she felt no chemistry with her husband of a few years, Adam. She was not attracted to him and thought something was wrong with her. She was afraid her marriage might end. She had, however, felt attracted to, and even kissed, a few other men, since her marriage, which she was beating herself up about. I immediately assured her that she was not broken, and that there are always very good reasons why we have the difficulties we have in relationship. Eve had an emotionally abusive background, but that did not define her. She felt like she needed to stand up for herself, but she was going about it ineffectively. Rejecting her wholesome husband and pining for bad boys was not the way. Standing up for herself, owning that she had a high level of sexual desire, that she was a juicy and vibrant sexual being, and that she wanted to have passionate uninhibited sex with him, required her coming from a place of erotic integrity, and being accountable for her desires. Asking him to make love to her up one side and down the other and back again was more like it. When I suggested this she lit up, she sat up a little straighter, got a twinkle in her eye, and exuded an aliveness I had not seen in her. She saw hope. Adam got laid that night, and those following. In subsequent weeks, their marriage was thriving. Eve was also leading by example: Adam also shifted from settling for the occasional mercy fuck to bringing the best in himself to the marital bed. His erotic integrity was in the game also.

Another example is that of Bruce and Alice. They had just broken up and were in crisis. They hadn't been having sex because he didn't know how to approach her, and as a result she felt angry and rejected. This is another very common scenario. He squelched his desires; she told herself it didn't matter. Miscommunications had also led to both of them feeling unappreciated. Him finding his erotic integrity entailed taking the risk to be vulnerable and initiate, owning that he wanted her, picking a time that set him up for success rather than an inopportune time, finding a way to bridge the gap when he felt distant rather than retreat, masturbating less and turning more to her instead. Her erotic integrity entailed expressing her emotions and appreciation of him more, not expressing her anger passive

aggressively by putting him down in public, telling him that she loved the feel of his body and his crew cut, and taking down the emotional wall she had put up. This courageous couple did this and more, and are back together and happier than before, with hope for the future.

My hope is that you'll come to define erotic integrity for yourself. It means different things to different people. Once you know what it means to you, you'll know whether you're living it or not. This is a personal inquiry. You're only accountable to yourself. Your discovery may enliven debate, deepen your relationships with yourself and others, and enrich your life, erotic and otherwise.

Erotic integrity is the lens that I hold in my mind as I work with clients in my relationship and sexual counseling practice. It is the vision I hold for them, the path I help them find, often without ever using those words. And I am honored to be doing this work.

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