

with the father. Such a wife would not only fear the mother's expected interference in the daughter's sexual activity, but would actually desire it in a conflicted manner.

The advice to be given to such a couple would derive from ascertaining the reasons why the parents are living with the younger couple. These reasons would indicate the nature of the corrective procedures, which would almost certainly include some psychotherapeutic clarification of the underlying problem.

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Nonmarital sex in retirement areas

Q In retirement communities where women greatly outnumber men, do some men become promiscuous "playboys" for the first time in their lives?

A I have found that to be true particularly of single men, and women also, living in retirement communities. It is no exaggeration to state that the human being is born with libido and dies with it. More than a decade ago, the nation learned that thousands of its senior citizens were "living in sin." When a widow remarried, for example, she forfeited her deceased husband's Social Security allotment, so elderly singles found it more practical to live together without benefit of clergy. My report at that time was published in the Congressional Record¹ and eventually Congressman Claude Pepper helped get the law changed to enable a widow to retain a good part of her allotment when she remarried.

Loneliness, vanity, and castration fears also contribute to sexual pursuits. Sometimes these become more promiscuous than in earlier years, and even more extreme as elderly individuals seek more innovative and newer ways to provide sexual stimulation. In a survey of nursing and retirement homes, I was told that their residents often "behave a lot like kids; romancing, petting, holding hands, jealousies, and outright explicit sex are the rule rather

than the exception." Fortunately, more often than not such romancing is not sordid. In many cases true love blossoms as it does at an earlier time of life, and with it a companionship and tenderness that are touching to behold. Too often aging is regarded as a herald of approaching death, whereas sexuality is equated with life. That is why sexuality is especially significant for an older person's morale—it is an affirmation of life and a denial of death. Many elderly lovers will affirm that even when short of complete physical fulfillment, there is enough beauty in the realm of sex to make the journey full of rapture and delight.²

1. Sin and Social Security (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Record, Vol. 112, No. 51, Mar. 24, 1966).

2. Dean, S.R.: Geriatric sexuality: normal, needed, and neglected. *Geriatrics* 29:134, July 1974.

STANLEY R. DEAN, M.D.

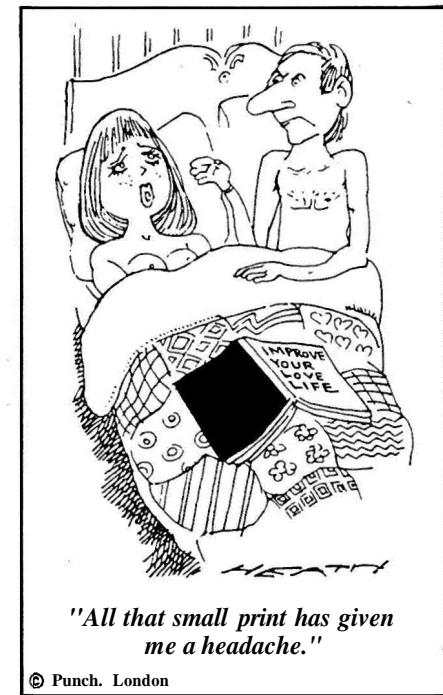
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Sexual aspect of lesbian relationships

Q Is it true that lesbians can live together and feel great love for each other, yet not have sex for many years?

A Yes, it is possible for lesbians to live in a loving relationship without currently being sexual partners, but this arrangement is probably quite unusual. In our research on lesbian relationships, we have found that lesbian couples have sex with about the same frequency as do heterosexual couples of the same age. Most lesbians in our study reported being extremely satisfied with the sexual aspects of their relationship. Research suggests that lesbian women may experience orgasms more frequently when having sex with a woman partner than other women do with men. The lesbians in our own study typically reported having orgasms in most of their sexual encounters with their partner, and indicated that they would like to have sex more frequently were they not distracted by the pressures of work and daily living.

Some lesbians who live together



"All that small print has given me a headache."

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without being active sexual partners may indeed have happy and fulfilling relationships. For others, however, the absence of sex in a relationship may signal some sort of difficulty. The sensitive clinician should be aware of both possibilities.

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Career demands which detract from family life

Q Many wives feel neglected and unappreciated by husbands who must frequently stay late at the office or keep after-hours business engagements. Not being close to the business world, I would like the impression of someone who is as to how common it is for husbands to labor after-hours unnecessarily out of desire to avoid home life.

A I am unaware of any statistics on the motivation(s) of husbands whose "after-hours" business activities arouse feelings of neglect in their spouses. A recent survey of 1200 executives reported that on the average they work more than 10 hours a day, and 40% work more than 60 hours a week. My impression from speaking