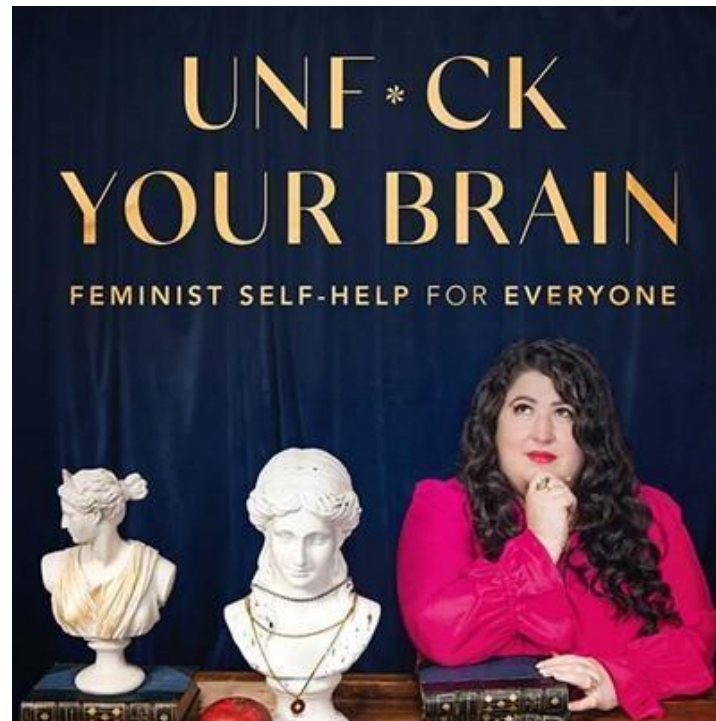


UFYB 294: Smart Sex: A Conversation with Emily Morse



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Welcome to *Unf*ck Your Brain*. I'm your host, Kara Loewentheil, Master Certified Coach and founder of The School of New Feminist Thought. I'm here to help you turn down your anxiety, turn up your confidence, and create a life on your own terms. One that you're truly excited to live. Let's go.

Kara Loewentheil: Hello, my chickens. We are here today for some... We're going to do some sex talk today. We're just going to get a little hot and steamy and talk about it. We have an amazing guest, Dr. Emily Morse. I'm going to let her tell you guys about herself soon. But she's a bestselling author, she's a masterclass instructor, she's the host of the number one sexuality podcast on iTunes. I have been on her radio show, I think you used to do.

Emily Morse: Yeah, I think you were on my podcast, but maybe we also...

Kara: I was on your podcast.

Emily: Yeah, we met in 2019 before the world checked out.

Kara: Yeah, I went to LA and everything.

Emily: I loved it.

Kara: It was before we all learned about using the internet for everything. So she's just got a new book out we're going to talk about. Tell us a little bit about your story.

Emily: Okay, yeah. Dr. Emily Morse. I have been working... So I found myself, at 35 years old, not having the sex life of my dreams, if you will. In fact, I was faking orgasms, I didn't understand sex, and I looked around and there wasn't a lot of sex information out there at all. We're talking 2005. And then I went on a journey to figure out what makes great sex? Are other

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people having great sex? And I actually started a podcast 18 years ago. And I've been doing it ever since and it's called Sex with Emily. And I've been doing it two times a week ever since then. And so we've been large archive, probably answering every sex question that people have.

But for me, when it started out, I was not the expert. I realized that once I started getting people to talk about sex, everybody had the same questions. People didn't have information about it. People wanted to know, "How do I have better sex? How do I have orgasms? How do I talk to my partner to get my partner to do A, B, C, fill in the blank?"

And I realized that those questions needed to be answered and I wanted to help people. Went back to grad school, got my Doctorate in Human Sexuality, and now I have my second book coming out and I'm very excited about that. It's called Smart Sex: How to Boost Your Sex IQ and Own Your Pleasure. I'm sure we're going to get into it. But after 20 years, I thought it's time to write this all down so people can have my very best tips in one place.

But then I realized, when I was writing it, it came to me that really a lot of people come to me for a quick fix. And I can give you, for sure, you need to know the right vibrator, you want a sex position, you want to know what lube to buy, you want to know what script to tell your partner to say this one thing. But the thing about sex is, it's part of our overall wellness. And it's sort of been siloed all these years, in this, there's wellness and then there's sex. So my book is all about being sexually intelligent and it's an overall wellness plan to boost your sexual pleasure and your sexual intelligence. That's what's happening.

Kara: Amazing. 18 years. I mean, this is an OG of podcasting here. And I remember going to your office to do the podcast a few years ago, and yeah, there was a closet full of vibrators. It was the best podcast I ever went to record. It was like, "Would you like a vibrator?" I was like, "Sure."

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Emily: I hope we gave you some good stuff.

Kara: You did. It was like I went home with more things than I came out to LA with.

Emily: I love that.

Kara: So let's dig into the book. So can you tell us what a sex IQ is?

Emily: Yes.

Kara: That's not a term most of us have heard before.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: And why that's important.

Emily: It didn't really exist before. So think about this, it's like emotional intelligence. You remember emotional intelligence in the nineties when you used to think, "Oh, my test scores made me smart. I got a high SAT, I got a high ACT." But really, what we found is intelligence can be measured in so many ways. It can be through empathy, through compassion.

Well, the same thing goes for sexual intelligence. It's not about how many people you've slept with, it's not about the size of your body parts, it's not about really any of that, or technique, it's more about an overall wellness plan. And I came up with five pillars that mark your sexual intelligence. And if anyone's curious, I do have a sex IQ quiz on my website at sexwithemily.com.

Kara: Kind of want to like, we should have taken that live.

Emily: I know, we should take it live.

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Kara: I should go through the Sex IQ Live.

Emily: I know, we should take it live, that would be fun.

Kara: It would be so fun. It would be fun.

Emily: We actually did a show on this recently, but it just came out the Sex IQ quiz. But it's more like the five pillars are people can check in with themselves and understand their own sexuality. It's like I want people to understand who they are as a sexual being and not have the outside world dictate it. And so this is the book that I wish that I had.

And also, so it has all the tips and it has all the things, but it's the book that I wish that I had. But also I just want people to understand that it's your emotional wellbeing, your physical wellbeing, your spiritual wellbeing, your self-confidence, which I know you talk a lot about self-acceptance, self-knowledge, your sexual history, all of that encompasses how you show up in the bedroom and your sexual intelligence.

And if you're weak in any area, you need to strengthen, I might be really, one of the pillars is, for example, really in my body and present during sex. But if I have low self-acceptance, self-confidence, I'm not loving my body, I'm not feeling confident in my experience, it's going to be really hard to have a healthy sex life. So this book sort of guides people on a path to figure out exactly what they need in their life to have more pleasure and communicate better and have just a more fulfilling life overall.

Kara: Yeah, I mean, I think pleasure is such a fraught topic, especially for women in the way women are socialized, even feeling entitled to pleasure. And there's obviously so much socialization around sex and how we're taught to see ourselves in sex. So I'm curious what you see as some of the biggest roadblocks women have and the way that they think about sex and about themselves that get in the way of having that high sex IQ.

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Emily: Yeah, it's a great question. So I think that for women in particular, what is keeping them from having a higher sex IQ, the first thing is, it's one of the pillars. And that is self-acceptance. I think that women are so concerned about their body image, how they look in the bedroom. And basically women, I have found more than men, men are actually disconnected in different ways. But the number one problem for women is that they are disassociated and disconnected from their body, from their sexual energy. Literally, it's split in half.

And so what I do in this book is I help people and in all of my work, make that mind body connection. Because think about it. If you're walking around all day and you're not feeling great in your body, you're actually hating your body. You're negative self-talk, you're not feeling great about it, you're feeling insecure about your sexual experiences. And then you get into the bedroom with somebody and you're expected to just perform and feel really good. And it's going to be really hard.

So I think a lot of women struggle with, I think accepting that. So there's a lot of tips that I give women to start to feel more comfortable in their body and more accepted so they can have the sex that they want. And I think that's probably one of the biggest things, is the disassociation and the disconnection from their sexual selves.

Kara: Yeah, it's interesting you were saying men are connected and disconnected in different ways. Because I think men are socialized to be very connected to their body sexually to their feeling of sexual desire. I mean, obviously there's certain stigmas, restrictions, limitations around that and what's considered masculinity and sexuality. Whereas women are socialized to believe that they're very emotional, but they're not sexual subjects. And men are socialized to connect to their sexuality but not their emotions. So interesting.

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So you say that our biggest sex organ is the brain, which I 100% agree with. And I feel like one of the things that I see women struggle with a lot, and I'd love to hear your kind of perspective on, is that women are so socialized to see themselves as the objects of somebody else's desire, that it's like they feel so dependent on that. So it's like if my partner isn't not only desiring me, but communicating it the way I think it's supposed to be communicated and making me feel sexual, then I can't feel sexual.

Emily: Oh my God. Yeah, exactly. I think that women, a lot of us, our sex is more performative. It's more based exactly on what you're saying, based around what our partner wants. We are so reliant on exactly someone else making us feel sexual. And then when we get in the bedroom, it's about a performance. And I used to think that great sex meant if my partner got off, he had an orgasm. If I did everything right, I moaned and arched in a certain way, and it was a good time, that meant sex was great. So spoiler alert, that is not how we have the best sex.

So I think that for women, the big thing is, and then relying on them to give you the orgasm and give you the pleasure, the redirect that I do and the rewiring I do for women is I help them realize that we are responsible for our own pleasure. Like your orgasm, your responsibility, and a great way to connect with yourself again. And again, super common that we're reliant on our partners to make us feel sexy, to make the first move, to ask us out.

We could go into why and society set up in a certain way that women have not been encouraged to be sexual. Because when you ask me about one of the other things that keeps women is this shame, body shame, even being sexual. If you grew up in an environment, which many of us did, where it wasn't okay to be overly sexual, to even show any interest in sex, maybe we were told that we wasn't okay to masturbate or you should wait until marriage.

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And so every time we have sex, we still have that shame voice in our heads saying, I shouldn't be doing this. I can't believe I'm doing this. Was this the right thing to do? And so therefore, we sort of absolved ourselves from any sexual responsibility and said, "Well, I'm just going to hand this over to my partner and hopefully they'll make me feel sexy and they'll give me the orgasm."

So this is sort of a reclaiming of who you are as a sexual being. And this whole book is about getting into that, understanding your body with really, even just starting with masturbation, which I hear this, and this is where I... There's a lot of stuff for the genders that we have found we are very similar. But with women, I have found, I often have to encourage them or remind them to masturbate.

For many reasons, maybe it doesn't just strike them. Think about it, men are always going to the bathroom, they're holding their penises all day long. I don't have to remind men. I'm like, dude, you're in Walgreens. Put it away. We don't need to be masturbating now.

But with women, it's often, "Hey, really this is how you're going to get to know your own body." And I often encourage women to take a mirror, look between your legs when you're masturbating, get to know yourself. I mean, I know for me personally, that was a game changer. I had never really masturbated that much.

And not only does it give you the confidence, more confidence because you're like, "Oh, I actually know what I need right now and then I can't explain that to a partner." But there's so many health benefits to orgasm and connecting with yourself.

Kara: Yeah. And I think you're having that sexual relationship with yourself, so whatever your gender identity, and there are men without penises and women who have them and all of that. And I think that's a whole other, it's

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obviously complicated. If you want to create sexual pleasure and your gender identity doesn't match the body you have, that's another layer of complication for people. But I think that the sort of part of the core of what you're saying is that, and what I often try to teach too, is that you have to have a sexual relationship with yourself first. And you have to set that and define that for yourself. It's just emotional responsibility.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: It's you have to be in charge of your own emotional life. You have to be in charge of your own sexual life, regardless of what socialization you've received and what body you live in, waiting for somebody else to make that happen for you.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: Even if you happen to get lucky, even if you get lucky and someone knows how to do what you like without you talking about it, you're still now dependent on them. It's just happening to have a partner who says a lot of nice things, well, that's great, but you now think that that person creates the feeling or the relationship with you. So I definitely have coached people where I'm like, it's not to your benefit that your first partner happened to be a really good sex match for you, because now you think that the other person creates it for you, and that if that person's gone, you can never have good sex again-

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: Which is not true.

Emily: So not true. I think that I always hear that. They're like, "Oh, but my ex was the best. I'll never have that again." I'm like, "No, it really has nothing to do with them." It's about the sexual energy that we bring into a

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situation. I think you can learn to have great sex with anybody, truly anybody, a willing partner who's open.

Kara: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, it really is the same exact thing that you teach. It truly is. It's about having agency and realizing that we are responsible for all of this, our life really, and who we choose and the partners we choose and the kind of sex we're going to have and learning to be our own best advocates. A lot of what I do, I always say it's really not about sex really. I could give you all the tips, but really it's about communication. If you can learn to communicate about sex, not only to your partner, but to yourself, what are my messages around sex? You can have incredible sex, I believe with anyone.

Kara: I think that's so important too, because I mean, I love coaching people about when like, "Oh, we used to have a lot of sex and now I'm not as attracted." And I'm like, "Okay, what were your thoughts back then?" And they were like, "Oh, this is so hot. I can't wait to tear your clothes off." And I was like, "What are your thoughts now?" And they're like, "Oh, I'm tired of looking at you." And I was like, "Okay, well, I don't think this is a mystery. If you take responsibility for your own sexual experience, then you can keep creating it and have good sex over a long-term relationship. Whereas if you act, it has to happen to you in some mystical process, you don't control, then of course, if it's going to be a lot harder to sustain it."

Emily: Yeah, exactly.

Kara: So you talk about pleasure thieves, such a good term. Some of these have come up like body dissatisfaction and other things, but are there other kind of important pleasure thieves you think that people should be looking out for?

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Emily: Yeah, absolutely. These are the things that are keeping us from having pleasure in our life. These are the things that are sort of hidden in plain sight that are probably keeping you from having the connection and the intimacy and the sex that you absolutely deserve. Because remember, pleasure is our birthright. So the pleasure thieves are stress, trauma, and shame. And that I also have little derivatives of shame in the book of different kinds of shame because there's so many different kinds. But-

Kara: Being a human is so funny. There's just 14 flavors of shame you can have on any given day.

Emily: Exactly. I'll let you guys take a deep dive in it, but I swear to God, the book is sexy once we get through this stuff. No, but it's stress. So first, people don't realize that if you are stressed and you are anxious and your cortisol levels are through the roof and you are living a life that is parasympathetic state always, fight or flight, it's going to be really hard to be turned on, to be ready for sex, to even become aroused, to be connected to your partner.

And so if we're constantly worried about everything, money, finances, the kids, it's going to be a challenge. And oftentimes that anxiety goes into the bedroom. So Kara, one of the top things I get asked is, why am I so distracted in the bedroom? How do I stay present in the moment when I'm having sex and not be worrying about my to-do list, about my body, about texting my boss back?

And I give a lot of tips for that in the book as well about how to deal with that anxiety in life and in the moment. And then the other one, which we haven't talked about is trauma and how trauma, we all have trauma, big Ts, little T traumas. And these are things that happen in our life that sort of get trapped in our bodies or in our nervous system, and they're also in our minds.

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But I highly encourage everybody to have therapy. I think that therapy is, if you can find a source or find a spiritual teacher, and I know you do coaching, and that might be some form of it for people, but especially if you had a trauma, sexual assault, rape, it's so common for women, more than I'd even to say that women have experienced this.

And so find a trauma-informed therapist to work with you on anything that you've been going through. Because unfortunately, and I used to think this too, that things just kind of go away. "Oh, well that was 10 years ago. That was 20 years ago." It doesn't. In fact, it sort of amplifies. And then the last one is shame. I think shame around our bodies, shame around just being sexual, shame around having needs. We don't think that we deserve it. We don't think that we're enough. Men have it too, but women have a whole different breed of it.

Kara: Yeah. I want to go back to that trauma piece because I think that one of the ways that I see sort of thought work really being helpful there is that in order to really, I think create working with a trauma therapist, but in your kind of sex life, in order to create the conditions for you to feel safe during sex, you really have to be in a relationship with yourself where you have your own back and you're willing to put it all out there and you're willing to get rid of a partner who can't respect it.

It all comes from having that much stronger relationship with yourself where you're willing to say to somebody, "Listen, I really like you and I have this sexual trauma and I need to go at this pace." And that you know yourself, this is how I may react, this is what it means.

Taking responsibility for your own experience doesn't mean that if you ever have trouble, it's your fault or that you should have an orgasm every time or anything like that. It's not a should or a shaming, but the more that you can own, it's my responsibility to help create the conditions where I can heal this and where I can learn how to have a sexual relationship that does work

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for me. I think that's why, as you're saying, as you said, that self-acceptance relationship with yourself is so foundational to all of this. Because if you don't have that, then you can't stand up for yourself in the scenario and you can't do your part of creating those conditions.

One of the things you talk about, I think this is an area where people are like, "Yeah, sounds great, but how the fuck am I supposed to say to someone, 'I hate how you do that.'" ... There's a great standup that I saw that, I forget her name, she's so funny. But she was talking about being with her partner and wanting to call up her ex and be like, "Brian, can you just tell them how you did it? Can you just do it how Brian did it?" So people have a hard time communicating this stuff.

Emily: Oh my God, you do, exactly.

Kara: Of course because in our culture, you're not taught to communicate about sex. The dream is like you're supposed to meet, and if you love each other, then just everybody has mutual orgasms at the same time.

Emily: Doesn't happen.

Kara: How do you recommend, can you give some example of how to deliver feedback?

Emily: Yes, yes.

Kara: Because also there's all the people pleasing comes in.

Emily: Oh God.

Kara: And being afraid to share that feedback.

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Emily: Yeah. It's really a challenge. I love everything that you're saying here because it's like we don't even know how to talk about sex in our culture. And we actually think if we do talk about it, if our partner says, "Hey, let's talk about our sex life," we're like uh. We also go in a fight or flight. "What did I do wrong? Oh my God, I must be a terrible person. I'm the worst lover you ever had."

And so one of my missions is to get people to liberate the conversation around sex and prioritize pleasure, because that is just what we have to ... And the great part about this, and I'm going to give you some tips now, is that I promise you, I've been doing this a very long time, I've helped millions of people on my show.

The sex conversation, well be it scary right now and you're thinking, how the hell am I going to do this, I promise you, it gets easier. You will learn to normalize it and you will actually learn to enjoy it. And it's going to become the secret. It's going to become part of your relationship that you look forward to helping you have the sex and the intimacy that you so desire.

So hear me out because I know. I've done this for so long, they'll be like, "No way." So that's why the book also has a lot of scripts in it because I know that people are like, "Okay, I'm going to get it. But what the fuck? When am I going to actually say this though?"

Kara: Yeah.

Emily: So let's say you want to give something to your partner or you want to give them some feedback, something that hasn't been going well in your sex life. And first I want to say that hopefully you already have a dialogue around talking about sex, and I also have some other tips for that, for how to start doing that. But let's just say I love the compliment sandwich.

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So perhaps you have found that kissing was so hot at the beginning of your relationship and you love kissing, and now your partner is just not kissing you. They're ripping your clothes off so fast, before you know it, you're having penetrative sex. You don't even know you got there. You're like, "What happened to making out in foreplay?"

So you would say to your partner, so the compliment sandwich starts with something that you like, that you love and appreciate about your sex life and your partner, "I love the sex that we have. It was so hot last night," the last time you had sex. "It was so hot the way you went down on me for so long. I felt like that was the best orgasm and it was really, really exciting."

And this is where the middle part, "And I realize that while I love oral, I also love kissing, making out with you and your lips. I miss that. For me, that's a really big source of my arousal." And then you end your last sandwich, your last piece of bread is how it's good for both of you. "And I really think if we could bring back some making out and sexy kisses that it would really take our sex life and our desire to another level."

Kara: I love that.

Emily: That's how you do it.

Kara: And I think you have to be willing to do that repeatedly. I've seen this with my partner. People have sexual habits, especially as you get older, I'm 42, my partner's 54. You've had a lot of sex with other people or long-term relationships, you just have sexual habits that you have been in or are used to, and it can take more than one try.

So if you had that conversation and your partner's receptive and you do make out the next time, but then the next time they forget, you have to be willing to be like, "Hey, that's great, but come on up here. I'd love to make out a little bit." Don't make it mean. I think because with people pleasing,

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especially for women, often it's so hard to say the thing at all that if we say it and then it doesn't work immediately we're just like, "Oh, okay. I tried. I give up. I can't say it again or I don't want to nag," or whatever.

But the truth is, even the most well-meaning partner does not always receive and integrate and do that feedback a hundred percent the first time. It takes like 2, 3, 4, 5 times sometimes.

Emily: Yeah, I love that you're normalizing that because again, I hear this all the time for people saying, "Well, I asked them, I told them that I wanted them to initiate, and they haven't." I'm like, "How many times did you ask?" "Once." Okay, well, who's ever changed a behavior from one request? Especially something so deeply embedded in us, our sexual activities and our behaviors, and there's a reason why your partner might not have been doing the thing.

So have grace, remind them again, don't feel it. So they don't love you and they didn't hear you. I don't know about you, every time I want to change a habit, it takes me several tries to remember.

Kara: Think how long it takes to change yourself. You don't just tell yourself once, "Okay, I'm changing this habit," and then you just do it. Then there wouldn't be any life coaches or therapists or sex coaches.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: Because they wouldn't need any of us. It takes you a long time when you're the one trying to do it. So I think that a lot of what we're talking about here is sort of seeing your sexual dynamic as just any other part of your relationship that requires care, requires nurturing, requires so much communication you sometimes want to die. And we'll evolve and change over time, but it's not set it and forget it. And it's not just magical, mystical, I hope it happens. You have to do all that communication.

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So I know another thing that you talk about that I think relates to this is all of the jokes and non-monogamy in my experience are all about how much communication you have to do be doing.

One of the benefits I think of kink and non-monogamy is that it's much more the norm in those communities to spell everything out and communicate about your expectations for time and communication and what you like sexually and what you don't and how to communicate. And that's just so much more the norm. So I know you have some kind of misconceptions about non-monogamy you talk about, so I would love to hear kind of what you see come up a lot.

Emily: Yeah, absolutely. The misconceptions about non-monogamy are that people get into non-monogamy to spice it up so they could have sex with anybody they want at any time, so they can just do what they want all willy-nilly. And that's really probably the biggest misconceptions. Or that it just doesn't last, that it means that people are sex addicts, that it means that people have something wrong with them.

And what I love is that, I actually say this in the book, my book was late going to the publisher, but I realized that I had to write a chapter on non-monogamy because I have seen a trend lately. It's been around since the beginning of time, but in recent years, I believe that there's more permission and there's more people who are openly talking about being open in a really healthy way that people don't think it's just for crazy swingers and oh my God, people who are messed up.

That it's actually, like you said, people I know in really healthy, consensual, non-monogamous relationships have rigorous honesty. They talk about everything. They didn't just jump into it, meet someone hot at the bar one night and bring them home. It was done with care and compassion and there's boundaries and they respect each other immensely. And they learn to talk about sex in a way that we could all learn from actually.

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And I wanted to include that because not as an encouragement, not suggesting that it's right for everybody, but we have seen that monogamy doesn't fit for everybody either. So I wanted to give people just the facts of just a little bit more information so they can make decisions for themselves. Monogamy is basically something that was assigned to us by our culture. When women became the property of men, and there was a lot more reasoning behind that.

But we haven't always been a monogamous culture. And I don't need to get into are we meant to be monogamous? I think we all get to decide what works for us.

Kara: Different people are meant to be different things.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: That's just like saying, are we all meant to eat this exact diet? Probably not. We came from pretty different genotypes and phenotypes.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: I think one of the benefits of non-monogamy that monogamous people could learn from and implement is that part of the problem with monogamy is that in terms of as a social institution, is that because it's the norm, people don't think they need to negotiate it or talk about it.

They just think that there is an obvious set of monogamous expectations that everyone understands. And that the only conversation you need to have is, "Hey, are we monogamous now? Okay, great." But in fact, people mean totally different, even within just both agreeing that the word monogamous applies to you, people mean totally different things. Some people mean you can't look at porn. Some people mean you can't flirt.

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Some people mean you can't be friends with the opposite sex, which I think is insane. But even within that.

And people aren't negotiating things like, "Well, okay, now we're monogamous and serious. What does that even mean to us? How much time are we spending together? What's our family integration look like?" When you are in non-monogamous relationships, especially beyond if you have a central one, if you're have a primary in your hierarchical, beyond that one, there's a lot of explicit negotiation that has to go on about how often and how much are we communicating?

What does it mean to be in a relationship? What are our agreements on disclosure? And I think a lot of the trouble that monogamous couples have is from mismatched expectations around the parameters of what it means to be in a relationship that they don't ever have to flesh out because we assume monogamy is a default. We assume it just means one thing and you never talk about it.

Emily: I love that you brought up that point. It's so true. I mean, we hear it all the time. I can't believe they're masturbating. I can't believe they've taken time away from me with their friends. I can't believe that they are flirting or all those things. And it's like, well, we can't assume. We make so many assumptions. We really talk about this stuff and talk about what it means is we're going to be much healthier for sure, much stronger relationships. It really does wreak havoc on so many monogamous couples. We can really learn that.

Kara: And I think the same is true of kink and that kind of sexual negotiation and that sexual explicitness of this is what I like. This is what I don't like. This is what I'll never do. This is what maybe once I know you better. People have the exact opposite. They think that non-monogamy is sexual chaos, and it's actually 17 Google calendars that I'll have to be coordinated.

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Emily: Right, exactly.

Kara: And they think that kink is like, you're just doing crazy stuff without talking about it. Actually it's like, no, there's like a rigorous precinct consultation that everybody [inaudible]. It's not like Eyes Wide Shut, it's more like a corporate negotiation first. People have such opposite ideas.

Emily: It really is. And I'm telling you, people in kink and non-monogamy don't want to make this blanket statement, but they tend to have really more satisfying sex than the rest of the population because literally they are negotiating. They have self-awareness, they self-acceptance, they know their bodies, they know how to communicate, they know what feels good. And I think we could learn so much from that for other areas of our life too, being our own best advocates.

So the people I know in these relationships, yeah, I'm getting my needs met. Rather than in other relationships and monogamous, they're like, "I hope my partner figures it out, hope they remind me."

Kara: Or as if good sex just means one thing, right? So I totally agree. You might be married to the first person you ever kissed and you love nothing more than missionary vanilla sex. And that's great. You can still learn from these practices of let me be explicit about what I like and what I don't like. Also, let me ask my partner.

I think because of the socialization also, there's like, obviously patriarchy is bad for everybody. And I think it's worse for women, especially sexually, but also it's not great for ... Men are not encouraged to think more broadly about their sexuality, to learn how to receive sexual care or action. There's all sorts of sexual acts that are completely natural and normal that men are socialized to think are wrong for them. The more that you can communicate and create space for also your partner to communicate what they like or

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what they don't like, rather than just assuming that there's one thing called good sex and-

Emily: Right, exactly. What is good sex? And then the problem with that is that we don't even know what that means sometimes. And I think the reason why my heart goes out to most people, because they don't even know what's on the menu. They're like, "I'm doing it the same way I've always done it." And so I give people just a lot of tools to literally a menu. I have my yes no, maybe list, which you can find on my website at sexwithemily.com. It has all these sex acts.

And you can take that with a partner and be like, is this a yes? Is it a no? Is it maybe? And it goes from dirty talk to spanking, to pegging to whatever you're into. But I just like to give people the tools so they're able to decide, "Well, I didn't even know that was in the menu, but let's talk about it. Let's have consent around things."

Kara: Love that. What do you think about, this is a little bit, it's not off topic, it's just another direction but I'm just curious, since we're talking about this stuff now. It sounds way too broad to be like, what's your position on porn? But I'm just curious kind of how you see-

Emily: Yeah.

Kara: Yeah, I don't want to ask the question that simply, I can say from my perspective, it's like I see both how freeing and validating it can be for certain people, especially people who maybe do have more fetish or kink orientations and nobody around them talks about that.

And then you realize you're not crazy. But also there's obviously this alienation disassociation that happens. And there is the sort of, I think the studies show the sort of extremification of porn, things have to get more and more extreme to stimulate novelty in the brain. So I'm just curious,

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what do you feel is a, I tend to not use the word healthy, unhealthy on this podcast, but how do you think about negotiating that or do you have any thoughts for people?

Emily: Yeah, I do. And I think that's great. I know what you mean by healthy and who's to say what is healthy? What is healthy foods, what is healthy anything? I'm with you. People get to decide. We are all so different. Thing about porn, here's what I think. Yes, it's titillating. It can be fun to watch with a partner in moderation. If you have a good relationship with porn, it's hot. It's been around since the beginning of time, hasn't been as available-

Kara: People have been drawing people having sex for a long time.

Emily: Literally in the caves, these cave men.

Kara: All the caves.

Emily: Yes. Our ancestors were drawing porn in the caves. That's been happening. However, what wasn't happening, and in the 18 years I've been doing this, it wasn't available in your pocket 24 7.

Kara: At all times.

Emily: No, it wasn't. And so now not only is it available for everyone, but your kids at eight years old, it's available to them as well. Or you grew up on it. I'm sure a lot of your listeners, how they learned about sex was through porn. And so my problem is porn without sex education is a disaster. It's a problem because we don't have any accurate information. The 17 states that require sex ed in America don't even require it to be medically accurate. Only 17 states require it to be medically accurate if they require it at all.

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And so here we have, people are like, "Okay, well here's porn. That must be sex, because I've never seen it anywhere. The only information I might have gotten in sex education was, here's how you get pregnant.

So just don't have sex." It's all fear based. It's all about danger and fear, but there's no pleasure and joy. So there's a big disconnect between porn and what actual sex is. And so that's where I think the problems lie. And I just want people have education around porn too. I have no problem if you have a healthy whatever, you have a moderate relationship with it, and you use it in a way that feels good to you.

But it's when there's consequences to anything when, "Well, maybe there's a challenge here around this, and I can no longer get aroused unless I'm looking at porn or I have to keep escalating it so my brain can be stimulated by more intense scenes in porn." So that's-

Kara: You're just using it for self ... I think men, especially because of how they're socialized and not being taught how to deal with their emotions and being taught that they're so primarily sexual, use porn for self-regulation. I've certainly seen that in my partners in relationships, porn becomes the thing they use to manage their emotions.

It's like you can use that instead of drinking or drugs or shopping or Netflix, it can be just another form of sort of numbing, especially because it produces a dopamine and you get the flood of chemicals in your brain. And so I will say for anybody listening, a lot of people just don't know this, if you are someone who likes porn, but you don't like what seems to be available to you, there's also feminist porn. There is ethical amateur porn. Seriously, do some Google searching, do some good-

Emily: Definitely. There's some good porn.

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Kara: I'm personally not a huge consumer, because I'm not super visual. But there is better than what also people even think of as porn as with anything.

Emily: Exactly. There's some great stuff. If you go to my site, there is a smart sex resource guide, and I have ethical porn sites. Audio erotica if you're not a visual person. Listening to sex can be really hot too. Just giving people the tools. There's such a dearth of sex information that's accurate that just like ... You'll see what works. Try audio porn. Try talking about sex. The good news is people are not set. Sex is a skillset actually. You can learn yourself

Kara: And you have to do it for your whole life. We didn't even talk about it. We'll have to do another interview sometime. I'm coming on your podcast in a while, but-

Emily: Yeah, can't wait talk about your book.

Kara: I even talked about ageism and sex. Especially for women, this cultural narrative that, well, you get to menopause and then you're just a dried up old hag. You should shuffle off to the woods and die.

Emily: Exactly.

Kara: Let's do two minutes on that just because I think it's so pervasive.

Emily: Okay, yeah. It's so pervasive, that, "Oh, you shouldn't be having sex in your fifties," or, "Menopause means your sex life is over." And it's just, again, so much information that really, you can have your best sex of your life whenever you decide to. So the thing is that-

Kara: Wait, say that again. Say that again. You can have the best sex of your life whenever you decide to.

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Emily: Yeah, whenever you decide to have Yeah. You can have the best sex of your life whenever you decide to. If you decide right now after listening to this podcast, and I hope you do, that, "You know what? Up until this point, I actually never really thought about my sex life." Or, "I wasn't really paying attention to it or had limiting beliefs around my sex life that I can only have an orgasm. I swear I can only find partners who will do this thing."

Let's wipe the slate clean to say and say, today you are deciding that you are going to take your sex life into your own hands and have agency over it. So yes. So at any age, so all this misinformation is ... So women, their hormones are changing. It doesn't mean that they're not aroused and turned on. And none of that is true.

I mean, there's so much information. Thank God, in the last year and a half now, women, there's all these menopause groups and women talking about perimenopause. But again, just a lot of things that have to do with women's health, it's been very understudied. There was misinformation 20 years ago about women taking hormone replacement, which is a game changer.

For the last 70 years, for women who went through menopause, there was a really bad study, women's health initiative, and they said, "Okay, well women shouldn't take any of these hormones." So anyway, it's healthy. You can read the New York Times study-

Kara: Do your research, yeah.

Emily: Do your research. But all I'm saying is that it is such a, actually is a really an exciting time. You know your body, you know who you are, you feel more comfortable perhaps asking for what want.

Kara: You take less shit as you get older, as a woman, usually.

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Emily: You don't take any shit, exactly. So all of that, it's never too late. None of it. I'm telling you, my listeners are literally 18 to 83. I hear from people in their seventies and eighties all the time. And they are having incredible sex, and they're asking the same exact questions that you are. Because a lot of us didn't have any sex education. But yeah, ageism in sex is real. But again, you get to decide that today's the day that you want to have more pleasure and better sex.

Kara: I love that. And that your pleasure is not, it doesn't even have to involve orgasm. I feel like, especially my listeners are so type A that they get very focused on the orgasm is the proof that I had the good sex or I need to have. I'm like, that's like anything else. If you put all the focus on it, then your brain's immediately like, "Nope, I'm never doing that." it's so counterproductive.

Emily: Exactly. I have a lot of exercises in the book actually. I do take the focus off of orgasm, and I want to put the focus to be an exploration, intimacy, connection. Because at the end of the day, when a lot of people are thinking they're craving sex, they associate that to orgasm, but really what they want is connection and intimacy. And so I take the focus off of this end goal and put it more on the experience and the journey.

Kara: People are so obsessed with nervous system regulation now. And I want to be like, "You know what's a good way to regulate your nervous system? Have some good sex." That really-

Emily: Yes.

Kara: Deep pressure.

Emily: Yeah.

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Kara: Oxytocin does a good job. All right. Tell people where they can find more about, we've talked about your website, but let's just give them-

Emily: Yeah, everything is.

Kara: [Crosstalk] title of the book and all that.

Emily: Okay, thank you. Yeah, it's Sexwithemily.com is my website. You can find everything, social Media, Sex with Emily. My podcast, Sex With Emily is released twice a week. My new book is Smart Sex. You can order it wherever you buy books. I do have a Sex IQ quiz you can find on my site. I have a new shop I just launched with my favorite toys and products.

Kara: Nice.

Emily: And yeah, I'd love to hear from you. Ask me any of your questions. And thank you for having me, Kara. It's so good to see you again. I can't wait for you to be on Sex With Emily with your new book next year. Everyone should pre-order her book. It's a thing. Pre-order it.

Kara: Yeah. I think when this comes out, my book isn't up for pre-orders yet, but we'll get there.

Emily: Okay. Got it.

Kara: Yes. Go check it out. Go get the book. Go take the Sex IQ quiz. She's got a one stop shop for all the adult sex ed you need. And I'm going to go check out the shop later. And we'll put all this in the show notes as well.

Emily: Okay.

Kara: Thanks for coming on.

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