



WEBINAR 
WEDNESDAYS

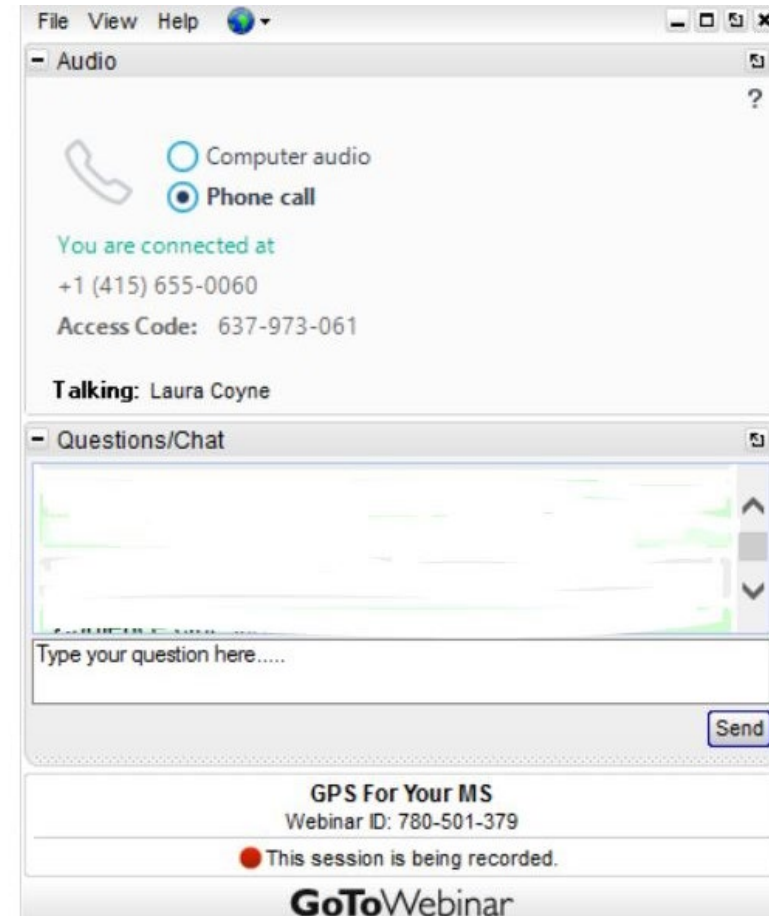
How To Be Your Sexual Self with MS

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How to Ask Questions During the Webinar

Type in your questions using the
Questions/Chat box





November Programs

JUMPSTART - Nov 3
Get Started with a Healthy Sex Life

Featured Seminar – Nov 9 & 10
MS Disrupted

Your Questions Answered - Nov 15
Sex and MS



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- Psychologist
- West Bath, ME



Shannon Schneider, MS OTR/L

- Occupational Therapist
- Atlanta, GA

Learning Objectives

1

Learn the interrelationship between communication, intimacy, and sexuality

2

Become familiar with the ways that MS can impact sexual feelings and functioning

3

Learn about the treatments available for sexual challenges

4

Get tips for starting difficult conversations with partners and healthcare providers



What role does our sexuality play in our lives?

- A way of enjoying our physical selves alone or with someone else
- A means of expressing love, connection, closeness
- A way to have fun, individually or with someone else
- A path to relaxation and calm
- A wonderful – but non-essential component of intimacy
 - If and when sexual expression changes due to aging, disability, the intimate connection can *lessen, stay the same, or grow* – the choice is yours!

YES – Your MS Self & Your Sexual Self Can Cooperate

STEP 1

Understand the facts about MS and the sexual response

STEP 2

Get to know your own body

STEP 3

If you have a partner, share what you've learned

STEP 4

Advocate for yourself with your healthcare team; if they aren't interested in your sexuality, find another provider

STEP 5

Be willing to do things differently, try new things, and *give yourself grace*

STEP 6

Keep a hold on your sense of humor



Polling Question

Have your healthcare providers ever asked you about sexuality and intimacy?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I'd faint if they did



Polling Question

Which aspect of your sexuality/sexual feelings has changed the most?

- a) Interest
- b) Arousal
- c) Comfort
- d) Enjoyment
- e) Orgasm



Polling Question

Where do you get information/support about these changes?

- a) Partner
- b) Healthcare professional
- c) Friend or family member
- d) Internet
- e) Nobody



Polling Question

What forms of intimacy do you find satisfying?

- a) Sexual Activity
- b) Talking
- c) Touching
- d) Cuddling
- e) None



Polling Question

Have you spent time getting more familiar with your own body (what feels good and what doesn't)?

- a) Yes
- b) No



Polling Question

What is your age?

- a) 20-40
- b) 41-50
- c) 51-65
- d) 66-75
- e) Over 75

What do we know about MS and Sexual Function?

- Sexual changes are a very common symptom of MS (but keep in mind that challenges are also common in the general population)
- The changes fall into three categories:

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes caused by disease-related damage in the central nervous system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes related to symptoms of MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes related to our cultural and societal attitudes about age, sexuality, disability, beauty

Sexual function is also impacted by aging/menopause, co-morbid health conditions, smoking, alcohol, medications, and diet.

	WOMEN	MEN
PRIMARY CHANGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced interest • Changes in sensation • Reduced vaginal lubrication • Changes in orgasm or inability to reach orgasm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in sensation • Inability to achieve/maintain an erection • Changes in orgasm or inability to reach orgasm
SECONDARY CHANGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of MS symptoms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue, pain, spasticity, bladder/bowel changes, depression, cognitive changes • Impact of Medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bladder medications, antidepressants, BP medications, among others 	
TERTIARY CHANGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings/Attitudes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I don't like my body anymore so why would anyone else?" • "I'm turned off by illness/disability" • Role changes in your relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It's hard to feel sexual as a "disabled person or as a support partner" • "I'm concerned about hurting or fatiguing my partner" • "It's the old way or NO WAY" 	

Tips for Reviving Your Sexual Self

- Think about what has changed (interest, feelings, sensation, responses) and what might be getting in the way (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary issues)
- Educate yourself (and your partner)
- Consult your MS provider and PCP and ask for a referral if necessary
- Do a Body Mapping Exercise with yourself (and share information with your partner)
- Be ready to be flexible, creative, and adventurous

BTW – this applies to normal aging as well as MS!



MS Team Members that Can Help

MS Team Member	How They Can Help
Neurologist/NP/PA	Information; Referrals; Treatment
Primary Care Physician	Information; Referrals; Treatment
Urologist	Bladder Management; Male Sexual Problems
Physical Therapist	Exercises; Stretching; Positioning; Pelvic Floor PT
Occupational Therapist	Energy Conservation; Tools & Tricks; Positioning
Mental Health Professional	Feelings; Attitudes; Relationship Issues; Communication Strategies
Speech/Language Pathologist	Cognitive Training – Attention & Concentration
Pharmacist	Medication Side Effects/Interactions

The most helpful provider is generally the person you feel most comfortable talking to

Occupational Therapy

- **What is an Occupational Therapist (OT)?**
 - Healthcare professionals skilled at analyzing and adapting activities to improve satisfaction and independence in daily activities
- **Why is sexuality/intimacy on the OT's radar?**
 - Access to intimacy, sexual participation (solo or partnered), and sexual identity are a part of a person's overall holistic health.
- **What is the OT's role in helping to break down barriers to sexual challenges?**
 - Addressing decreased mobility, altered sensation, pain, overheating, fatigue, bowel and/or bladder dysfunction





Tips & Tricks

- Planning in advance for the first few times will help ensure a positive experience
 - Plan around a time when pain and/or spasticity medications are most effective
- Use your communication skills – no one can read your mind!
- Understand your body (e.g., Body Mapping Exercise)
 - Changes in sensation, mobility changes, pain, spasticity
 - Experiment on yourself to see what is enjoyable



Tips & Tricks

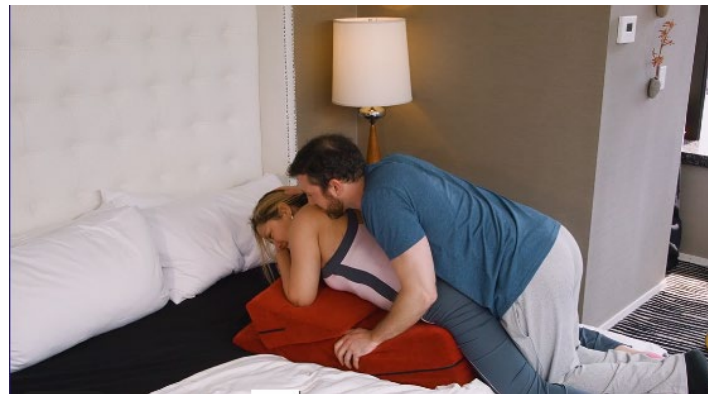
- Engage all your senses
 - Explore your erogenous zones– you have more than you think!
 - Very useful especially if sensation in genital region has changed
 - Light touch vs. deep sensation
 - Consider oral, manual, and mechanical stimulation
 - Smell and taste also play a role
- Consider managing bowel and bladder ahead of time
 - Females- manage bladder again when complete
 - Double voiding



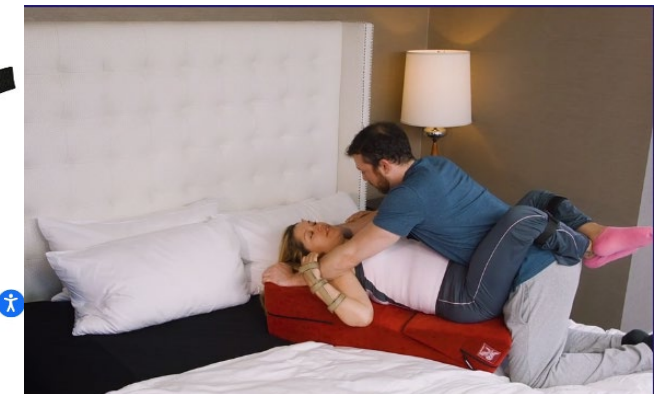
Tips & Tricks

- Energy conservation: try morning rather than evening if possible
- Yoga- stretching, flexibility, alternate positions
- Adaptive equipment-straps/harness, pillows, cooling devices
 - You can adapt your devices if hand function is limited
- Sex toys, vibrators, sexy videos are all fair game!
- Pelvic floor therapist
 - For males and females- assesses sensation and muscle function of pelvic floor muscles
 - Helpful if pain is present during sex
- Make it fun – laugh and use humor to lighten the mood

Intimate Rider, Liberator Wedge, Hoyer lift, Straps



Plus Size Doggie
Style Strap



Resources - Websites

- Sex Aide website with a section addressing disability
 - www.sportsheets.com
- Home - Sexuality and Disability
 - <https://sexualityanddisability.org>
- Intimate Rider - The Ultimate Guide to Sex and Disability: For All of Us Who Live with Disabilities, Chronic Pain, and Illness (book)
 - www.intimaterider.com
- Clitoral Vacuum Suction Device
 - <https://www.eros-therapy.com/>
- Videos, tips, and other educational resources for women with spinal cord injury
 - <https://www.myshepherdconnection.org/sci/women>
- Sex toys and other essentials
 - <https://www.justmindful.com/>

Resources - Downloads

We have 3 different documents that can be found under the 'handouts' section of your webinar dashboard that you can download.

- This presentation deck!
- Intimacy and Sexuality Brochure – National MS Society
- Pleasure ABLE Sexual Device Manual for Persons with Disabilities

Q & A





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JUMPSTART - Nov 3
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Your Questions Answered - Nov 15
Sex and MS



WEBINAR 
WEDNESDAYS

How To Bounce Back When Life Brings You Down

Wednesday, December 7 at 8pm ET

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