

## Talking about Specific Problem

*"I can talk about anything except my double incontinence with regards to sex, but I do need to learn how to cope, and put my life on track"*

Anon

Specific sexual problems might include:

- For her: pain during intercourse; vaginismus; anorgasmia
- For him: erectile dysfunction; problems controlling ejaculation; anorgasmia
- For both: loss of desire; sexual identity issues; inhibition; communication; boredom; fear; sexual difficulties caused by ill health, medication or mental or physical impairment
- Looking at Sexual Problems on this site may help you feel you have the knowledge to cope with this.

Here are some useful guidelines for these more specific conversations:

Choose vocabulary carefully - Begin with terms for body parts and sexual activities that feel comfortable — perhaps clinical terms. If a client gets confused when they hear these terms, ask what words they would use and if possible, and use those.

**Ask about changes** - Use phrases such as "Have you noticed any difference lately in... the amount you have sex... your ability to have sex... your mobility during sex... your comfort in having sex?"

**Ask about distress** - Use phrases such as "Are you happy about how much sex you're having... the quality of sex you're having? ... Are any difficulties affecting your relationship?"

**Ask about specifics** - Use phrases such as "Are you able to .. feel desirable... feel aroused... have an erection... get lubricated... enjoy masturbation... enjoy oral sex... enjoy intercourse... enjoy anal sex... have an orgasm?"

**Ask about action already taken** - Use phrases such as "How have you tried to overcome these difficulties? ... What helps you... what doesn't help you?"

**Refer on** - Use phrases such as "There's a member of my team who specialises in... I have a Hand-Out with resources and practitioners that you might find helpful."

**Offer practical suggestions** - It will always help to find ways around practical concerns such as lack of sensation, restricted movement or discomfort. These ways could include guidance on easing pain, guidance on what level of sexual activity is safe after, for example, a heart attack or during pregnancy. Also doctors may consider altering medication if this is contributing to the problem.