

Self-Care in Sex

**Is it okay to do sexual favours for others,
mainly just to please *them*?**

**by
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Sexual situations of all kinds can very often create uncomfortable and anxiety-creating contexts for those involved. And such developments can appear out of nowhere. In this short article I'm looking specifically at something that happens, sooner or later, in virtually every sexual relationship or sexual encounter. As a part of looking at sexual favours I'll also be involving you in thinking about areas of sexual consent, knowing your sexual boundaries, decision-making, and sexual boundary maintenance.

So, what about that moment when a lover, marriage partner, fuck buddy or hook-up partner asks you - or expects you - to perform a sex act which involves you doing something with them, or for them, that you don't normally do? If you're involved in enjoying sex with others, at whatever level of physical pleasure or emotional commitment, this situation will certainly require some consideration sooner or later, even if it's never been an issue thus far. And, if you're involved in a non-monogamous lifestyle, or are generally a monogamous individual or couple but are up for an adventurous occasional or one-time-only threesome (or similar), this problem may be heading down your street even sooner.

Being tempted to do something new, taking your consensual sexual involvement to a point which feels somewhat edgy can, for some people, introduce a breathtakingly daring and irresistible element to sex. However, allowing someone to bully, shame you or cajole you into doing something you don't want to do may introduce the risk of you ending up with deep regrets. And, if you do something that you don't usually do, or something you've never wanted to do, just to please someone else, there exists the possibility of a very badly damaged friendship or relationship. You may also even find yourself psychologically traumatised or physically injured.

Since, hopefully, you're never going to allow yourself to become consensually involved in any sexual acts which are unpleasant or repugnant to you, the key question is how far ought you to go in giving sexual pleasure to someone else? And I'm writing here specifically about if you're being asked to do, or participate in, something which, for whatever reason, does not personally turn you on.

My professional and personal viewpoint is that, for many good reasons, it is never - under any circumstances - worth you doing something sexual for, or with, someone else in a way that gives you no form of pleasure in return. However, note that I said "*no form of pleasure*" rather

than “*no form of sexual pleasure*”. I wrote this quite deliberately because there is a very important distinction to be made here.

The first thing of importance to ask yourself is why do you - or any of us for that matter - perform sex with partners at all? After all, if it's just for orgasmic pleasure we are each of us mostly capable of achieving orgasm by our self, without involving physical contact with any other person. Aside from the very basic biological act of making a baby, the obvious answer for most of us is that partnered sex results in direct physical contact with one, or more, other human(s). In other words, a shared experience. This sex with someone else can be significantly different from, but not necessarily always feel better than, masturbation performed alone. This, of course, depends upon many elements such as the level of trust and sexual skills shared between yourself and the person(s) with whom you are having sex. And within this, sometimes we specifically do some particular form of sexual sharing with a partner because the sharing of this particular act - as a human contact experience - is a great favourite of theirs, but yet it may not be a turn-on for the giver of this favour.

So why do something sexual for someone else if it doesn't turn you on personally? Well, let's look at broader aspects of life in general. Quite often in life we do things *for other people*, even though sometimes the thing we do actually gives us no inherent pleasure in and of itself. If we go out and purchase a gift for someone it actually costs us something in terms of time, money, thoughtfulness, etc. Other than when this is done through a feeling of obligation, the pleasure and fulfilment we're rewarded with come to us from doing this to make someone else feel good in some way. In other words, to bring happiness into their life brings happiness into our own. This is a living example of the yoga concept that what we give to the universe, the universe gives back to us.

Translated into the world of sexuality this can mean, sometimes, obtaining personal pleasure, but no sexual pleasure, from doing something sexual for, or with, another person. From doing this thing we personally gain an amount of pleasure proportional, in some way, to the value of our sexual gift to the recipient. This is doing sex - sharing our body sexually with someone - *as a gift*, but, crucially it is *never* done under coercion, threat, or cajolement. It is done as our willing, fully consensual *gift* to them. This means that it's most definitely never done as a reluctant surrender to one version or the other of the plaintive and pathetically immature, “...if you loved me or cared for me you'd do this for me...!”

And no matter how much you might wish to give pleasure to the other person, you certainly shouldn't do it, even as a gift, if you find the kind of sexual act or involvement unpleasant, repulsive or distasteful to you personally. Nor if you're unhappy regarding its potential safety for you personally, either in physical, sexual health, or psychological respects. Remember the golden rule in sex: CONSENT! If your decision is "NO", then that's it, your boundaries are sacrosanct -- and that's the end of the matter right there. No further explanation is ever needed or required of you, unless you choose to give one. And if you do choose to offer an explanation, you need to make it very clear *before* you begin that this is not the opening of negotiations on the matter, the decision already made is final.

But what about those fringe sexuality areas where physical and psychological dangers may be potentially more serious than in mainstream sex play? For example, you will need some very particular and highly focused extra thought and consideration if you're involved in, or are considering whether or not to become involved in, any areas of BDSM or role-playing sex. Within this I include sado-masochistic sex, bondage, domination, submission, or even breath play (choking). Very obviously, in this context, it's highly dangerous to ever allow yourself to be tied, choked, restrained in any kind of bondage, handcuffed, or shackled unless you are with people to whom you would - quite literally - entrust your life.

These areas of sex are all relatively safe if performed with experienced, trustworthy, mature adults who will have your safety, pleasure and welfare (and a safe-word to stop all sex play immediately) in mind throughout. But, unless it's between yourself and a loving, caring partner -- just having fun and learning the ropes together (no pun intended) -- this stuff is not for doing with strangers or casual partners that you have no emotional connection with or knowledge about. If you do want to become involved in these areas, with the right mental attitude and the right caring person / people, all well and good: there are ample scientific psychosexual studies out there showing that this is perfectly normal -- though not mainstream -- sexual pleasure. However, you'd quite naturally not want to become involved in these areas just as a favour to someone else, and most definitely not without some serious investigation and talking to people first.

Moving on though, assuming that safety, ethical, and emotional considerations pose no immediate concern, there may be many areas of sex which, although new and perhaps very edgy and boundary pushing for you personally, would not feel any problem for you to offer as a gift to someone. This could be either for your loved one, or, if you're non-monogamous or

not partnered romantically, for someone else whom you would enjoy really pleasing by bestowing something special on them. For non-monogamous couples it could, of course, be something as simple as involving yourself in a particular kind of sexual fun with an outsider whilst your partner enjoys sharing, or simply just watching. Or, in a traditional coupleship, it could, perhaps, be doing something with your loved one which has never been openly considered before, but which possibly comes up for discussion through having read or fantasised about it, or seen it in porn movies or elsewhere. And, of course, if you do indulge your partner(s) with a sexual gift for their pleasure, in this case never be afraid to require some kind of reciprocity if you feel inclined - one good deed deserves another! So, what might you like back as a sexual favour in return for your sexual generosity?

In the end, the crucial thing in this, as in all sexual situations, is to take control of any context or action that involves you, your body and wellbeing. Be (and feel) confident and comfortable in your decision-making, and make clear by your words, your body language and actions that you are firm in your resolve. This is empowering and has many positives for you and your mental and physical health, self-care and sexual wellbeing. Whatever decision you make in such circumstances, by creating and reinforcing your agency over your mind, body and sexuality, you will keep sex pleasurable for yourself. You will avoid the self-destructive health-damaging deep resentment and anger at yourself and at your partner(s) for having given-in and travelled down a road that you never, ever, really wanted to explore.

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