

woman



RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

THERAPY used to be seen as a taboo subject but nowadays, for many, it's as common as a trip to the dentist.

Sex and relationship therapist Juliet Grayson has more than 25 years of clinical experience and specialises in the Pessu Boyden System of psychotherapy.

Here, she reveals the intimate truths of sex and relationship therapy:

- Men and women really do have different attitudes to sex. Of course, this is a generalisation but many men have told me that for them sex is largely a recreational activity.

And yet for the majority of women there needs to be an emotional component for sex to be really satisfying.

One of my male clients said to me: "Having sex is like having a cup of tea with someone."

Not many of my female clients would agree with this.

- Being with my clients, and seeing their struggles, can act as a mirror for me. I remember one saying: "I hate it when my wife tries to tell me what to do." On the inside, a little voice said to me: "You do that to your husband, Juliet. And he hates it too." Thus, my clients often help my own relationship.

- Most people don't realise how much their childhood impacts on their thoughts and feelings as an adult. Although problems seem to be about what is happening currently, many have their roots in childhood.

For example, James felt controlled by his wife. In therapy, he suddenly remembered his mother telling him off when he was 10, for getting the handles of their bone-handled cutlery wet.

With this flash of insight, he recognised that his mother had been controlling.

Luckily, using some PBSP techniques, I could help James change how he reacted to his wife.

He imagined a completely new mother, an Ideal Mother, the kind of mother he needed (rather than the kind of mother he had).

We created a believable alternative history, with this Ideal Mother who would have been understanding, gentle and loving.

It changed how he felt, and he told me he was less reactive to his wife after that.

- The romantic phase of a relationship usually lasts six to 18 months. Then we move to the power struggle phase, which can be really tough. Finally, if we are lucky, we get to a phase where we work well as a couple, trust each other, feel like a partnership and know how to ride the ups and downs of life. I call these three phases the ideal, the ordeal and the real deal.

A client said: "I've learnt. In a new

Many of us are too kind in the early phase of a relationship because we want to impress

relationship, don't do anything in the first 30 days that you're not willing to do for the next 30 years."

Many of us are too generous in the early phase of a relationship, when we want to impress the other person, and are willing to put ourselves out.

If we do this, we set unrealistic expectations in our partner, only to disappoint them later.

- Through all the therapy and all the client work that I've done, I would say that the most important thing I have learnt is the power of self-acceptance. Until we can really love

and accept ourselves, it's very hard to love and accept someone else. Most people will benefit from being a little kinder to themselves.

- I have used carrots to help a woman be able to have sex again. A client suffered from vaginismus, a condition which causes the vagina to go into a spasm.

She even struggled to use tampons. She didn't have money for expensive equipment, so I sent her to the shops. She chose a carrot of just the right thickness (about that of a pen). Putting a condom over the top she practised inserting it in her vagina.

A week later, she went back and bought a slightly larger carrot. A few months later she had progressed to the stage where she was able to make

love with her partner, and now she has a child as the result of our work together. The day their daughter was born, I felt the pride that most grannies do.

- People looking at illegal pornography seems to be on the increase. Men and women, though it is mostly men, who would never have gone out to buy a magazine of child abuse images, seem to feel safe in the privacy of their own home.

They start to look at images of younger and younger women, then teenagers. The National Crime Agency said there are 750,000 men with a sexual interest in children in Britain. Therapy can help those who want to stop.

- A 17-year-old client of mine took a

photo of his 17-year-old girlfriend's breasts on his phone. Since it is illegal to possess a sexual image of anyone under 18, he was arrested and is now on the sex offenders register.

- According to a recent StopSO (The Specialist Treatment Organisation for the Prevention of Sexual Offending) survey, 72 per cent of sex offenders knew that they had inappropriate sexual thoughts or behaviour by the time they were 25. That could be your brother, sister, son or daughter.
- Some couples have stopped having sex. The longest time I've heard of that a couple had not made love was 26 years and six months.

It took us about six months to work through all the issues around this (miscommunication, feelings of

betrayal, and person's sign etc) but then again, and h week after t

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Confession of a sex therapist

Expert reveals some of the things she has learned during a long career helping couples deal with their relationship troubles