

SexSense[©]

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SEXUAL CHEMISTRY

Q: **READERS:** At a recent Pacific Sun singles party, several people asked me about sexual "chemistry."

For example:

Do you believe in sexual chemistry?

If chemistry is there at the beginning of a relationship and not at the end, will love continue?

Is there some way to create sexual chemistry to improve chances for being asked for a second date?

A: Many folks who are dating worry about sexual chemistry. But what exactly is sexual chemistry? According to an informal poll among friends, it's the inexplicable attraction two people feel for one another, especially upon meeting for the first time. My friends report that it's either there, or it isn't.

It has been suggested by research that sexual chemistry, or attraction, is increased if general feelings of arousal are present. In other words, if a person is feeling aroused from any source (i.e. fear, anxiety, jealousy, physical exertion) and that person encounters an individual of their preferred gender, those feelings will likely be defined as attraction.

In one study, participants ran around a track for 15 seconds (low physiological arousal) or for 2 minutes (high physiological arousal). Running stimulates the cardiovascular, respiratory and nervous systems in the body. Men in the high physiological state reported feeling more attracted to a female interviewer than men in the low physiological state. This may be why the aroused atmosphere of a singles party is helpful in forming attractions.

During the early stages of a courtship, arousal from sexual attraction may be related to the anxiety which often accompanies this period. Anxiety increases the level of epinephrine and other hormones in the body. If the hormonal reaction is perceived as uncomfortable, flight, fear or emotional withdrawal may result. If it is perceived as favorable, love and sexual attraction may be felt. As the relationship continues, anxiety lessens as trust, mutual understanding and acceptance are developed. Some individuals may misperceive this decrease in anxiety/arousal as a diminishment of loving feelings.

In summary, it seems to make sense to do something fun and action-oriented on the first date to improve chances of sexual chemistry. But you might save sex for a later time since it may as easily bring up uncomfortable as comfortable feelings, resulting in flight, not attraction.