

A CELEBRATION OF SEX AFTER 50

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Introduction

Maturity Rocks!: *Embracing New Truths About Aging*

*Y*es, Baby Boomers, maturity does rock! This era of our fifties to our eighties represents an awesome time in our lives. We've paid our dues for wisdom and learned how to be comfortable in our own skin. We can create a higher quality of life—and pursue a fun, intimate companionship that may have eluded us in our younger years. Living life fully builds on the many tough lessons we have learned and is symbolized by our wrinkles and gray hair. We worked hard to earn these distinguished characteristics; wear them like medals of honor!

But somehow there's a disconnect. The truth is, most of us dread getting older. We would trade almost anything to be thirty or forty again. Why do many fear middle and old age, rather than embracing this wonderful stage of life?

Why do we chase youth and immaturity, and as a result lose the richness of this *capstone stage of the human life span*?

COMMON MISBELIEFS ABOUT AGING

The most obvious explanation centers in our false thinking about aging and our misunderstanding of what maturity means. We have bought into many myths that distort our attitudes and create dread or dissatisfaction. Here are some of the most toxic misbeliefs and the truths that dispute them:

1. Youth rules and old age stinks. We must maintain our youthfulness at all costs.

Truth: Like most things in life, a debit and credit column exists with positives and negatives during both youth and aging. Youth has more vitality and old age has more physical debilitation. Old age has a contemplative wisdom with the ability to slow down, while youth can be shortsighted and frantic.

Truth: Tight skin and firmer bodies may define youthfulness; but this does not equate to true beauty and sexiness as our youth-worshipping culture falsely thinks. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder; wrinkles and softer bodies reflect a sign of maturity with its own sensuality. A constant striving for youthfulness can actually be immature and quite silly.

2. We can define the stages of middle- and older-age maturity using the same ideas and vocabulary with which we define younger stages.

Truth: This new phenomenon, higher levels of develop-

ment, and greater skills of older years demand new vocabulary and concepts. An adolescent cannot be described with the concepts of infancy. What sixteen-year-old would want to be called cute and cuddly because he or she toddled around in such a precious way? Older age needs new lenses that extend beyond the way we would describe a thirty-year-old.

Truth: As "will be developed in the rest of this introduction and book, old age presents new horizons and new levels of development and intimacy. Gray hair, years of living life, and maturity require a totally different way of looking at life and intimacy.

3. Sexual desire and a longing for erotic connection are for the young and fade rapidly in our fifties and sixties.

Truth: The body and hormones change, but couples can enjoy sexual interacting into their nineties. Sexual desire can stem from a caring and intimate relationship and has much more complexity than being totally hormonally based. Desire depends on the interaction of the body, soul, and spirit.

Truth: The lessons of maturity involve an ability to accept the imperfect, put a higher priority on companionship, and live in the moment. This can become a powerful catalyst for deeper sexual intimacy and meaningful lovemaking. True passion and enjoyable sexual connecting can increase with the empty-nest days and postmenopausal freedom.

4. Great lovemaking depends on healthy, youthful bodies with stamina, flexibility, and exuberant intercourse and orgasms.

Truth: Fulfilling lovemaking is about 20 percent physical and about 80 percent mental and emotional. Intimate

sexual connecting involves much more than wild intercourse and explosive orgasms. "Playful, tender, trusting, and sensual" describe wonderful sex better than "intense, acrobatic, or all night."

Truth: It can be argued that to truly learn to *make love*, one must be at least fifty. Lovemaking involves a comfortable intimacy based on knowledge, acceptance, and tender eye-to-eye enjoyment of our lover. This grows with time together and a mature way of thinking and responding to life.

5. *Pain and mishaps, which totally impede happiness and contentment, must be avoided at all costs.*

Truth: The reality is that pain is a part of life and can be coped with graciously. We know that life, marriage, and love are complicated. Maturity can live with ambiguity and still experience joy and contentment. There's always plenty of ibuprofen, hot baths, and some contentment in the midst of pain and imperfection.

Truth: Many of the most important lessons grow out of experiences of physical or psychological pain and loss. The times of less pain become more enjoyable. Adapting to our limitations is a part of this adventure of aging.

6. *Mortality should be feared, and aging bodies are a curse.*

Truth: Understanding and accepting that we are in the last third of our lives makes every day more precious. We have different values, and quality of life becomes more crucial. The ability to slow down, relax, and enjoy recreation and relationships takes on special significance. Our aging bodies help create this important realization.

Truth: Mortality can be feared or embraced. Wisdom and maturity give us an ability to face this demon and

gain a peaceful, godly understanding and acceptance. We are closer to death, but these deteriorating bodies are a sign our Creator is calling us home. This gives us new ways of looking at time, eternity, and the importance of relationships.

7. Eternity and eternal values have little impact on this present life.

Truth: We know our days are limited. A new realization occurs when we are faced with our mortality. These eighty-plus earth years are just a small part of our existence when we pair them with everlasting eternity.

Truth: God and the eternal values of living in His presence encourage us to build deeply intimate relationships. Maturity gives us new depth and perspective so that we can practice God's love (patient, kind, forgiving) in ways that will have eternal impact.

THE PARADIGM SHIFT FROM A YOUTHFUL OBSESSION TO A MODERN MATURITY

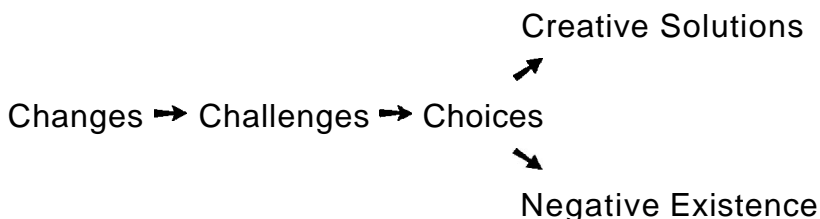
None of us can deny that dramatic changes occur in these mature years. The encouragement of this book is:

CHANGES bring **CHALLENGES**,
which present us with
CHOICES that can lead to
CREATIVE SOLUTIONS.

The part of aging that involves pain, deteriorating bodies, and facing our mortality isn't easy to work through.

We will never say that all of the changes should be celebrated. Aspects of aging are frustrating, but maturity can be magnificent. Our deep belief is that the after-fifty years are the best part of the life span. However, this requires an attitude that accepts challenges, choosing to turn them into creations of intimacy and comfortable solutions.

Let's be fair, there are probably days with each of us that we wonder if there are any solutions. The body has sagged or we are having the menopause from hell or the penis and orgasms just aren't the same. We are tempted to take the low road:



But, pessimism and believing the myths can cause us to grow increasingly bitter and resentful. We hope this book will encourage and facilitate many of those positive and creative solutions. We need one another as we support and fight our way through the difficult times into hopeful solutions.

Many older people find that long-term relationships have created a comfortable joy in their lives. We believe it is a truism that "old dogs learn more tricks!" Maturity has learned that it is insanity to keep doing things in the same way and expect different results. We choose, sometimes reluctantly, to take challenges through to creative solutions. The power of maturity can exist but be derailed

by myths and distorted thinking. Let's face it, we will have to dramatically shift our beliefs and attitudes to take advantage of our potential.

As we are confronted by the myths about middle and old age, a *paradigm shift* seems desperately needed. The idea of a "paradigm shift" conveys a wonderful variety of concepts. We're describing a complete shift in thinking and acting—so that we move outside the box and create a *whole new perspective* with a new vocabulary.

I [Doug] was at a party recently with friends in their fifties and sixties. I heard so many comments: "You look great—you're sure not showing your age." "He doesn't look a day over forty." "That haircut is so youthful." "She could put a thirty-year-old to shame." I felt like getting up on a chair and shouting, "People, we're in our mature years. Who cares about being described as being thirty years old?"

It made me aware that we need new attitudes and ways of appreciating one another: "Wow, your gray beard is distinguished." "You sure are spry." "What a wonderfully wise way of approaching your mother's nursing home." "I admire the courage you are showing in bringing Bill through his prostate cancer."

If we who are hitting our fifties and older will band together and embrace this paradigm shift, amazing results can occur. We can dispute our misbeliefs and develop a new and wise way of dealing with aging. It's been fun writing this book with the comradeship and fun humor of fellow older adults. (We've been asked if *A Celebration Of Sex After 50* will be listed under fiction or nonfiction.) We understand one another, and our joking, though it

seems like dark humor to someone in their thirties, gives us perspective on our aging bodies and changing values. Down deep we know:

Changes bring **challenges**, which present us with **choices** that can lead to **creative solutions**.

Maturity rocks. We think you will see this as the book progresses. Work on a whole new attitude about aging as you make a true "paradigm shift."

Chapter 1

Only Grown-ups Need Apply: *The Secret to Great Lovemaking*

What would a thirty-five-year-old say is the key to great lovemaking? Perhaps they would desire some powerful technique or to learn unique skills or develop a gymnast's body to make them stand out as a lover. Maturity knows better! These aren't prime bodies, and gymnastic moves aren't necessary. If there were a magic technique, we would already have discovered it. No, we know that lovemaking builds on who we are as a person and the intimate connection we have developed with our lover. The following formula sums it up:

**Great Lovemaking = A Whole Grown-up
Person + A Healthy Intimate Relationship**

GREAT LOVEMAKING

Remember our insistence on shifting the paradigm as we create new attitudes? If we define "great lovemaking"⁷ as fantastic intercourse and wild orgasms based on an always-functioning body (penis and vagina), we are sunk. But that doesn't fit God's definition either. Go back to the beginning of time and think through why the Almighty created sex in the first place. God is Love, and humans are created in His very image to love. Nowhere is this more clearly revealed than through God's grand metaphor for intimacy—sexuality.

God created sexuality to reveal Himself and the value He places on intimate relating. He needed His human creation to understand what love is all about. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27 **NKJV**). So marriage and great lovemaking foster intimacy and being "naked and unashamed." It transcends bodies, intercourse, and orgasms to the very soul of deep connection. How does this meaningful sex happen? Why can someone who is sixty better appreciate great lovemaking?

A WHOLE GROWN-UP PERSON

It's scary to realize that being a great lover depends on our personal maturity and growth. Neither our mate nor our chronological age can make us a grown-up. We are individually responsible for our character development and self-acceptance. In a critical manner, it takes two whole people to create a whole relationship. $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{4}$ of a truly

intimate relationship. The following traits are indispensable in becoming an enjoyable, self-assured, grown-up lover.

Playful

Making love is certainly built on the foundation of play. I [Doug] am reminded of Christ's teaching that to truly experience the kingdom of God, we need to become like little children. An important part of being childlike is reveling in the awe of the moment and exhibiting uninhibited excitement and curiosity. Children are great teachers of amusement, as I learn every time my granddaughter and I hang out together. She squeals, claps her hands, and is awed by life. I've taken the liberty of paraphrasing Christ's advice in Matthew 18:3: Unless you become childlike and learn to be playful, you will never experience God's kingdom of unbelievable intimacy.

Learn from children's playfulness, which is perhaps best described by the terms *uninhibited excitement*, *eager curiosity*, *lighthearted fun*, and *spontaneous frolicking*. Kids can be self-directed and demand pleasure. In their childlike mentality, life is a big playground, and they expect to have fun. Playfulness is the ability to be unpretentious and candid as you demand things with enthusiasm and laughter—expecting your needs to be met.

Being childlike lends itself to aging and maturity. Who cares what others think as we try new behaviors? We've been disciplined too long—let's let loose and indulge curiosity. Time exists for more lighthearted and spontaneous fun. We know that playing has a way of connecting people. Gentle teasing, shared games, and mutual laughter can be bonding. Even sexual mistakes can create

a playful memory. Life is too short to let false pride or inhibitions get in the way.

Time Out: Take time when you are out this week to stop and buy yourself a toy or two that would encourage you to play. You may want some that you and your mate can enjoy together, such as water pistols, rub-on tattoos, an edible lotion, or a board game.

Loving

An important part of love is respecting and unconditionally accepting your mate. If you want to find and focus on flaws, you will put a damper on your partner's attractiveness and the whole lovemaking process. Allowing your mind to become preoccupied with the natural body changes of aging can be very destructive. Your vocation as a mate is the nurturing and encouraging of your lover to revel in his or her sexual appeal.

Build some new attitudes. Remember that it is your lover you are enjoying and have become so comfortable with—that is what looking through the eyes of love is all about. Tender looks of shared history, a playful comfortableness, a growing eroticism that is based on intimacy and not firm bodies—yes, that is what love is all about. Again, your individual ability to love goes beyond your mate and his or her body or attitudes.

Don't assume that years together mean deeper love. You may need to forgive some old hurts and allow your

mate to mellow in older age. A great love life depends on allowing your partner to apologize and change. We all do dumb things that can damage our lovemaking, and we need to be able to let go and move on. Mature love incorporates loving gestures that are nonsexual as well as sexual. Partners who are over fifty can place a special value on the hugs and caresses outside the bedroom that build a loving ambience and lay the groundwork for romance.

Time Out: While you are making love this week and enjoying each other physically, what are your mate's eyes conveying nonverbally? "I'm blessed to have you, thank you for all you have shared with me over the years." "I love the person you have become with your magnificent maturity."

Knowledgeable

It takes more than chronological years to become a wise and knowledgeable lover. First, become a student of your mate and yourself. The apostle Peter tells husbands: "Be considerate as you live with your wives" (1 Peter 3:7 NIV). An integral aspect of true consideration is constantly trying to better know and understand your partner. Your lover often knows what makes them smile or truly feel loved; do you? Meaningful lovemaking stems from this foundation of being happy and fulfilled together.

In the language of the King James Version of the

Bible, the word *know* is used to describe intercourse. For example, Isaac knew his wife, Rebekah, and they conceived a son. I used to think this wording indicated a reluctance of that culture to speak about or deal with sex openly. Now, I like this word *know* in our era of casual sexual encounters. Lovemaking should be "knowing" what your mate enjoys and needs. This knowledge takes time, curiosity, a good memory, and the willingness to be a student.

Time Out: Take a minute to do a quick personal inventory. Which areas of your sex life can benefit from greater knowledge? How are you going to implement change?

Clients will come to us believing something is very wrong with their bodily reactions and sex lives, only to discover that they are simply experiencing normal changes with aging. Study your mate's responses to know what is most enjoyable. No book can give you that information. Women, even more than men, vary about what feels good—the strokes and rhythms that are most pleasurable. This, of course, will change even more as we age. Be an eternal student of your partner's body and responses. Acquire a reservoir of knowledge of what excites your partner physically and mentally. Set the romantic mood, practice the right moves, and reap the exciting benefits of being a wise lover.

Honest

In making love, dishonesty destroys trust, fosters avoidance, and can create confusion and hostility. It may take the form of the dishonest husband who needs more physical stimulation to achieve arousal but is afraid to ask and avoids sexual interaction. A wife may be irritated by some touch that used to feel good or be struggling with loss of sexual desire during menopause. Rather than speaking up, she begins to resent her husband and his approaches—and his continued enjoyment of lovemaking. Both may also be unaware of their changing sexual needs and feelings—a more subtle form of dishonesty. It is not easy to be self-aware and truly transparent with our needs and feelings. It takes real maturity to openly discuss issues and confront changes.

Time Out: Do you have any dishonest sexual games you need to eliminate from your sex life? Do you hint or avoid, rather than talk through your needs? Have you asked your mate what he or she needs? Do you fear confrontation and settle for mediocrity? When your needs are satisfied, do you know this and feel fulfilled? Over the next week, take a half hour to discuss any dishonesty that has crept into your lovemaking.

Before leaving the character trait of honesty, let's acknowledge the ultimate kiss of death to a great sex life:

the extramarital affair. Sometimes in our fifties or sixties we wonder if we are still sexually attractive. Nothing can sabotage trust and the sacredness of a love life more than adultery. Sneaking, keeping secrets, broken promises, and divided loyalties rob a couple of sexual celebration in their marriage. An affair is a powerful negative illustration of the importance of honesty for sexual love to flourish.

Creatively Romantic

Grown-up lovers take the time to develop the sensual, romantic part of their minds and personalities. Every person has an exciting romantic side, but few take the time and energy to unleash their passionate capacities. Mates might be surprised at how talented and creative they can be in planning sexual surprises for each other—yes, even husbands who may appear to be romantically challenged. They easily come up with exciting, unique ideas as they focus on the importance of sensuality and mood setting—anticipation builds, and fresh attitudes pervade the whole sexual scene.

This will be developed in Chapter 20, but we believe with conviction that we can choose to never stop learning. Aspects of maturity encourage creative romance: more time and flexibility, a comfortableness in risking new behaviors, and creating greater quality of life.

Couples enjoy expressing their romantic nature. This may include surprise gifts, foot and leg massages, verbal demonstrativeness, a bath together, or dinner with candlelight and soft glances. Of course, romantic lovemaking doesn't always involve new techniques and experiences. There are certain positions, ways of caressing, places,

rhythms, restaurants, moods, and vocabulary that remain enjoyable favorites. You will breathe life and excitement into the material of this book as you develop your imagination, relationship, and character traits.

Time Out: How would you define *romantic*?: creating moods, remaining sensual, recapturing the mystery, enjoying spontaneous passion, promoting tender sentimentality? Many wives and husbands wish their spouses would be more romantic. Make a brief list of behaviors that you consider romantic and practice one or two this week.

Disciplined

Discipline may seem an odd character trait to include for a fantastic lover. Most people think of discipline as the opposite of spontaneity, playfulness, and creativity. The truth is that an undisciplined lifestyle will end up producing very infrequent and disappointing sex. In fact, the creation of a scheduled time for sex will allow you and your spouse to anticipate and plan for creative and playful intimacy, with the possible added benefit of increased arousal. Discipline doesn't have to destroy the fun and spontaneity of sex or put pressure on you. The truth is that if you don't plan sex into your schedules and take advantage of optimal times, you will never make love with any frequency! The ambience, activity, place, timing, and technique are up to your romantic creativity. Just keep times sacredly reserved for sex.

Time Out: Put your heads together and plan when and how often you are going to make love each week as you allow time for lovemaking in your intimate companionship.

You have the promise of being a great grown-up lover. Incorporate the character traits of being loving, honest, playful, forgiving, knowledgeable, and disciplined. Practice these skills and remember, the formula for great lovemaking takes a whole, mature person:

**Great Lovemaking = A Whole Grown-up
Person + A Healthy Intimate Relationship**

A HEALTHY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

Most people over fifty have figured out this crucial piece of information: *Having sex* and *making love* are two very different acts. Exciting sex doesn't necessarily create intimacy—rather, long-term, satisfying lovemaking flows out of an emotionally close and comfortably intimate companionship. Even with this critical knowledge, falling deeper in love and staying emotionally close don't come easy. The following four concepts are crucial in building healthy intimacy as a foundation for great lovemaking.

1. Filling the Love Tank—Trying Smarter, Not Harder

In marriage each partner has a love tank or a love bank into which mates make deposits through strategic loving

deeds or withdrawals through negative behaviors. Part of great sex builds on a full love tank and feeling emotionally close—having the things done for us that make us feel loved. Bottom line #1: Some activities score points and some don't! Bottom line #2: Living with someone a long time doesn't guarantee you know how to fill their love tank.

Though sadly ineffective, we often practice on our mate what makes us feel loved or sexually aroused, hoping it will turn him or her on too. If your mate loves quality time spent together, a few candles or a quick back rub won't get the job done. What can be even tougher in this fifty-plus era of life is that some things that used to score points, like taking the kids for the afternoon or a quickie before work, won't work anymore and need to be revised.

Do you really want great lovemaking? Build real intimacy and remember, *it isn't how hard you try but if you are wisely pushing the right buttons*. Mature lovers learn what their mate enjoys and then remember and incorporate those things. If he speaks German, you learn a little German. If her language is French, you learn some French, no matter how difficult it is or how little sense it makes to you. When we are understood and our needs strategically attended to, we feel more in love and erotically inclined.

2. Affectionate Touch

Great romance and intimate lovemaking don't begin with sex. Feeling warmly attached through trust, tenderness, and *touch* produces the momentum. Remember the old adage that "embers reignite when placed in close proximity"? Similarly, emotional and physical warmth with tender emotions reignite physical closeness with your

lover. "Feeling in love" and enjoying "gourmet" sex mean learning to *keep your hands and body in close proximity* to your mate. Find routines like cuddling before you go to sleep or going over and touching your mate whenever you walk by him or her.

3. Thoughtfulness, Surprises, and Tender Connecting

Thoughtfulness and choosing to be nice spill over into wanting to connect sexually. It's not much fun sleeping with the enemy or making love with someone who takes you for granted. Surprises, in a fun way, tell your mate that you thought of them when you weren't with them. It truly isn't the cost but the attentiveness and time invested that score points. Remembering to buy a small gift (that special lotion in her favorite scent) contributes to her feeling loved. Romantic sexual surprises are meaningful too. These creative innovations say to your sweetheart, "I thought of you and your pleasure. I'm stretching to reach out beyond myself to nurture you." For example, knowing her husband's continued enjoyment of her breasts, his wife bought lingerie just for his enjoyment.

4. Three-Dimensional Intimacy

Falling deeper in love and experiencing moving sexual intimacy demands that lovers bring body, soul, and spirit together. In the Garden of Eden, these three parts (of God's image in us) were comfortably joined. In an exciting way, this becomes one of the critical tasks in celebrating sex after fifty and shifting our paradigm to

truly making love: learning to make love with our souls and spirits as well as our bodies.

Time Out: Plan a surprise for your mate that will convey, "I love you and I thought deeply about what could bring a smile to your face."

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How wonderful to know we are old and wise enough to understand this important formula. Great lovemaking certainly is achievable as we learn to be mature persons with effective intimacy skills.