Let's talk about sex, baby [1]

Dear Alice,

Do women talk about sex as much or in the same manner as guys do?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Talking about sex and sexuality can be rather complex, so it's difficult to boil down the differences strictly to an individual's gender identity. How people talk about sex can be influenced by a number of factors including culture, religion, and life experiences, to name a few. Much of this reality, and even perhaps your question, is owed to the different ways people are socialized; these social rules often dictate what's appropriate sexual behavior for one gender versus another. Though there are some limitations, research suggests when comparing genders that those who identify as women tend to talk about sex less frequently with others and when they do, they mostly talk about it in the context of relationships. Whereas, those who identify as men will most frequently talk about sex in the context of their sexual desires.

Reader, before getting down to the differences in gender, it's critical to point out that the vast majority of research on this topic focuses on cisgender (a person whose sex assigned at birth matches their gender identity) heterosexual relationships; there's limited information about how those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) community talk about sex. The research that does exist shows that heterosexual men often talk about their sexual desires, partner(s), and acts, typically in a crude and joking way, but this certainly isn't the rule. This type of sex talk may be a way for them to play by, and reinforce, the social norms that define masculinity and reinforce that their behaviors are socially acceptable. What is often remiss in these conversations is a discussion of sexual health, which may also reinforce the masculine social norms that suggest talking about health is considered feminine. Those who do tend to talk about sexual health are non-heterosexual men, who typically talk about it with their non-heterosexual male friends.

To get at the earlier point: why are women not talking about sex as much as men? Researchers believe that gender stereotypes about sexual behavior are likely the culprit for this difference, leaving women feeling reluctant about sharing these thoughts. Similarly, women tend to worry about their reputation and judgment from others when talking about sex, which could contribute to them talking about it less frequently than men. Unlike men, women
tend to frame conversations around sex as a means of securing relationships or demonstrating love.

All in all, it may help to remember that how people think, what they do, and what they say reflect the world they live in and reinforce it at the same time. Though the social norms around sex tend to shape how different genders talk about it, it's worth noting that these are not the rules? so feel free to talk about sex in whatever way you're most comfortable!

Alice!
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