Have arthritis? Get creative for pleasurable sex [1]

Hi Alice,

I'm concerned with something and would like to ask for your input. I'm a twenty-two-year-old male. I have arthritis to the point where I stay in a wheelchair when I'm going to the store and stuff. I have limited hip movement but can walk short distances. I have been afraid to meet a woman because I was afraid I couldn't satisfy her sexually. I still have decent range of motion, but as far as the normal guy on top routine goes, I don't think I can do that. Could you explain to me other ways I may be able to satisfy a woman to ease my fears? I really want to meet someone. If I can be sure, when our relationship turns sexual, I can satisfy her. I want to be a good lover. Thank you.

Answer

Dear Reader,

Plenty of people with varying degrees of physical ability, temporary or permanent, and their partners/lovers discover ways to have satisfying sexual relationships. For many, as they learn about their bodies and their sexuality, they find that orgasm during intercourse isn't always the most important part of positive sexual experiences. People can enjoy intimate moments in MANY ways that are pleasurable and safer for both partners. But before getting into the sexual aspects of your question, let's address some other issues you raised.

Your concerns about meeting and wanting to satisfy women are quite common for twenty-two-year-old men. The most important thing to remember is that fulfilling relationships are neither based on nor measured by sexual performance. Your worries about intercourse seem to be stopping you from meeting women. Don't let fears about sexual performance stop your relationships before they even start. Focus on less physical aspects to begin with. Stimulate her intellectual, romantic, and humorous sides. Your partner will be with you because she wants to, not because you can satisfy her sexually.

Having information about sex and more comfortable sexual positions will hopefully give you the courage to try out the dating scene. But understand that your partner's satisfaction doesn't rest solely on your shoulders. The journey to pleasurable and satisfying sex is one that you will take together. As your relationship progresses, she will clue you in to what she likes and dislikes. But when and if you find yourself in another relationship, remember that not all women find the same things pleasurable and you will start the process all over again.

Since your limited hip movement and its effects on your sexual repertoire are affecting your
self-confidence, it is important to address that issue. For starters, let's think about other options to penile-vaginal intercourse that can be satisfying for you and your partner.

Kissing and touching each other can be pleasurable. Make-out sessions are arousing and a simple touch in the right spot can be extremely erotic. Be sensitive to your partner's responses to find out what pushes her buttons and go from there.

Depending on the degree to which (or if) your arthritis affects your fingers, giving your partner a massage can be a pleasurable experience for you both. Use massage oils to reduce friction and add a slippery, sensual sensation. If your fingers begin to ache, a hand held massager can be a useful aide. Many couples find showering or bathing together (with or without intercourse) to be both romantic and exciting. The warm water may also soothe your joints and allow for further intimacy.

Oral sex is also a way that you and your partner can be intimate without putting added stress on your hips. Oral pleasuring requires limited movement on your part (other than your tongue and lips, that is). You can also use your hands to caress your partner. Again, let her responses guide you in the right direction.

An oral sex position many couples enjoy is the "69." This may be most comfortable with you lying on your back and your partner on top, facing in the opposite direction. This position would provide simultaneous oral-genital pleasure for both of you, while relieving stress on your hips.

Trial, error, and creativity will be the best way to find comfortable sexual positions for you and your partner. Talk with each other and bring up positions you both would like to try. But no matter what, don't put too much pressure on yourself. A positive sexual experience includes talking about and listening to each others likes and dislikes to make sure that you both are comfortable and satisfied.

You may find that your partner isn't into the traditional guy-on-top (missionary-style) position. While this may be the most common sexual position, it isn't necessarily the most pleasurable for all. Having her on top may work better for you both. Try lying on your back while your partner straddles you. This position can allow you to caress her breasts and touch her clitoris with your fingers (as well as provide you with a very nice view!). Another possibility is for you to sit in a chair while your partner sits on your lap straddling and facing you, or with her back to you. One benefit of these positions is that many women find it easier to orgasm because of the kind of pressure and rhythm they feel on their clitoris. If a sexual position becomes uncomfortable or painful for you, or your partner, you need to tell each other so that you can adjust your positions or try something else. Positioning pillows or placing a heating pad on certain areas of the body may also be a way to reduce pain or stress on joints.

A young man such as yourself, who is willing to ask questions and communicate your needs, need not have problems enjoying a satisfying relationship (sexual and otherwise) with his partner/lover. Focus on communication in order to make the most of your relationships. Sexual satisfaction isn't necessarily the ultimate goal. Remember, as they say, "It isn't the destination, it's the journey."

You may want to check out the following books for information on sex and disability and, more generally, male sexuality:
The Ultimate Guide to Sex and Disability: For All of Us Who Live With Disabilities, Chronic Pain, and Illness by Cory Silverberg, Miriam Kaufman, and Fran Odette
The New Male Sexuality by Bernie Zilbergeld

While it may require a little creative thinking, you can find a way to be satisfied sexually, with yourself and with a partner. Take care,

Alice!
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