

On chesil beach



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The importance of discussing sexual desires within a marriage January 26, 2013 On Chesil Beach, by Ian McEwan shows a reader the adverse effect on a marriage when sexual wants, desires, fears and expectations are not openly discussed prior to engaging in sexual acts. The lack of communication by the characters causes them to end their marriage less than 24 hours after taking their vows. While I agree that sexual relationships in a marriage are vital; they are not the tell all of a long-lasting committed relationship.

From conversations with friends and family members, I've learned that as time passes in marriage and you become consumed with the business of life; the sexual aspect of your life becomes less important. When speaking to my 82 year old grandmother, she told me she'd like to meet someone again just so she wasn't alone. She said sex didn't matter anymore, but it would be nice to have someone hold her hand and take her to dinner. She acknowledged that at her age, a lot of men may not be able to physically have sex but also stressed if they could, it would certainly be a bonus.

She just wanted companionship. Most important is open communication about sex. These are values that should be discussed prior to marriage, as well as finances, child rearing, and where you will make your home. These are issues that can have wiggle room in a conversation; but they must be discussed. You must give your partner the respect of hearing their concerns, recognizing them as real (even if you don't agree) and working towards a manageable solution that does not require either of you to completely forfeit your belief. When we first meet someone the first attraction is physical appearance.

The thoughts of their sparkling eyes, wide smile and attractive physique appeal to us. In a group of 10 women, you will find 10 different “types” described. If this were not the case, and every woman was attracted to “my type” then only the 6’2”, muscular, physically active men with dark brown eyes, dimples and a clean shaven head would ever get dates. Due to this physical attraction, we want to meet them; so we approach. We hope they have the intelligence, interest and humor we are searching for. It is not until we establish these basics that we can decide to establish an ongoing relationship. In a successful relationship you are comfortable to talk about your past; the lovers who have come and go; or lack thereof; the heartaches you have suffered or caused; your youthful memories and relationships built with your family. This shares your core with your partner. When I first met my husband we would spend hours at night sitting on the porch with some wine or cold beers and just talk for hours. He was the first man I ever felt comfortable enough to share my real history with. He is convinced I was attempting to scare him away with the tales of my wild younger days and stories of my criminal family; but he stuck it out.

Perhaps he is right; perhaps I was testing him. When Florence and Edward in *On Chesil Beach* do not discuss their expectations they leave the imaginations free to run wild as to how things will play out. Edward so desires his wife and she is repulsed by him. There are lines in the book that made me almost believe she may have been sexually abused by her father; but it is never actually stated. That is a fact that should be shared with a spouse; that touching will make you uncomfortable. The idea that her

repulsion of his premature ejaculation repulses her to the point of fleeing the room is unfathomable to me.

It seems this is an idea that should be understood as an extreme desire of lust so wild it cannot be controlled. My husband was molested, one time, as a young man. He told me this; there are jokes that are not made and conversations that quickly get turned to something else because of his past. This is the respect I have for him. When the story of a child molester comes on the news, I know it touches him even deeper than it does me. I am his support through this. Without this information, I would find his behaviors of walking out of the room during the news to be a strange reaction.

I would believe that when I walk up behind him without his knowledge and touch him; his jump was outward expression that he doesn't want me doing that; when in all actuality, he loves it, but startles very easily. He was raised in a home where sex was never discussed. He tells me about his parents having a black light in their bedroom. When I joke they " liked to get their freak on", he just shakes his head as if it's the most preposterous idea that could be presented. He was never really told about female anatomy or that masturbation was normal; the topics were avoided altogether.

He said he felt shame about things he was doing as he perceived them to be secretive. I was raised in a family where sex was openly discussed. We, as children, were comfortable enough to speak to either of our parents about any questions or concerns we had about sex. We were never judged; we were never shushed and complete attention was given to us to ensure we had the clearest answer possible. My father has passed, but to this day, I will

make a joke with my mother as to whether or not “ she got some sugar” after a night out with her friends.

I get that it’s out there and we may be the extreme end of the spectrum but it worked for us and we never had any doubt what we were getting ourselves in to. We were not given permission to have sex but when my mother realized that my high school sweetheart and I were spending a lot of time together; she sat me down and asked if I needed to be put on birth control and if not now, to please speak to her when I thought we were getting to that point. I did and without question or hesitation, she made an appointment the next day for me to see the gynecologist for birth control.

If my husband did not know this information about me; he may think we were part of some sex cult; whackos who joke with their parents/kids about sex too much. We have chosen to be open with our boys about sex. As they reach the ages of sexual interest (14 and 16); we are well aware that sexual temptation is all around them. We do not encourage or condone them engaging in sexual activity at this age, as we believe they are not yet mature enough to handle the seriousness of a relationship that has become sexual.

We have explained the seriousness of consequences once a relationship becomes sexual. We encourage them to remain children and enjoy that innocence that can never be taken back for as long as they can. But when the time comes that their desires overwhelm their rationality; and they feel they are mature enough to handle a sexual relationship; I hope we, as their parents, have given them the information they need to be kind, loving, understanding and respectful men.

After years of marriage, my husband and I still have an active sex life. While we are not tearing each other apart on the kitchen counter anymore; we know that each has their own desires and wants. We understand those desires are fueled by certain actions. For him, it's holding his hand while we watch some horrible Star Trek rerun that I pretend to find intriguing followed by an amazing home cooked meal by me. For me, it's cleaning the refrigerator, and folding the laundry so I don't have to and kissing my forehead.

Those are the things we love; those are the things that make us feel special. I know if he does something that I don't like, I can tell him that without the worry that he's going to run away and divorce me because of a bad sexual experience. We are on the same page because we talked about this at lengths PRIOR to being married. We have succeeded. So far. References
McEwan, I. 2007. On Chesil Beach. London: Jonathan Cape