



Wendy Trainor  
*communication and healing*

## **Treating erectile disturbances: Changing the focus from performance to pleasure**

Once a man has experienced an erectile disturbance in one sexual encounter, he begins to “watch” his penis during sexual encounters to see if it is going to function. What might have started out as a one time occurrence can become an ongoing problem if performance anxiety sets it.

Individuals and couples often have difficulty making connections between the problems they are experiencing in their lives and their sexual disturbances. Many men have difficulty expressing their feelings and asserting themselves with their partners. Resentments can build up and be expressed sexually. At the same time, their partners may be complaining about a lack of intimacy and closeness in the relationship. They are both wanting the same thing but do not know how to get it. Relationship therapy can help couples navigate these troubled waters.

Single men often have more difficulty overcoming erectile problems. It is hard to approach a male or female partner sexually, for the first time, when you are not sure whether or not your penis will get or stay erect. To set up the best possible scenario for themselves, men with erectile disturbances need to talk about sexual concerns with potential sexual partners before they get into bed with them. While men approach this with a great deal of fear, this open communication creates a more intimate connection with their partner at an emotional level, before they attempt to connect at a sexual level. Potential partners tend to appreciate this openness. They are most often not scared away by the erectile disturbance as the man fears.

This is not to say that women or men are not affected by their partners’ erectile disturbances. Sometimes they feel they are not attractive enough, or not a skilled enough lover for their partners. People in long-term relationships may fear that their partner wants out of the relationship or is having an affair and is afraid to tell them. They may pull away from their partners in an attempt to protect both themselves and their partners from a potentially negative experience. Sexual difficulties of any kind affect both partners in the relationship. Effective treatment includes both partners whenever possible.

Many men would prefer a “quick fix” to their problem. Those who have become engaged in therapy have learned to be more intimate in their relationships. They have experienced benefits that extend far beyond their ability to function in bed.

Men need to develop a broader view of their sexuality, one that focuses on pleasure rather than performance. This sets the stage for a decrease in performance anxiety and increases the chance for enjoyment and the relaxation needed for blood to flow into the penis to achieve an erection.

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