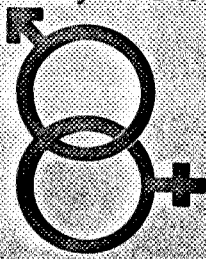


Biofeedback, meditation may enhance sexual intimacy, researchers conclude

As part of a conference titled "Human Loving: Sexuality and Intimacy" held recently in Palo Alto and Los Angeles, biofeedback researchers Erik Peper and Deane Shapiro described the use of centering techniques in enhancing sexual experience.

Their lecture and seminar—"Biofeed-



back, Meditation and Sexual Consciousness: An East-West Approach"—explored the sexual potential of relaxation and expanded states of consciousness.

Shapiro, author of *Precision Nirvang* (Prentice-Hall), said that the western sexual tradition emphasizes assertiveness, ego strength and social skills. "For instance, the girl in *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* was unable to function in the world because she had not learned the social skills for reaching out, establishing eye contact and so on."

The western approach establishes an initial relationship, he said. "However, the East has profound and powerful techniques that enable you to go further—to risk intimacy, to yield, techniques for egolessness."

The West is goal-oriented in its approach to sexuality, Shapiro said—"even the highly successful 'sensate focus' approach used by Masters and Johnson, because the individual is only trying to be 'in the present' to accomplish orgasm in the future.

"The East sees an altered state within the context of lovemaking—a state that is important for its own sake."

Peper summarized research in biofeedback techniques as an aid to sexuality. "Biofeedback is a psychophysiological mirror," he said, and has been successful for such sexual dysfunctions as impotence, frigidity and premature ejaculation. Biofeedback and other relaxation tools also can improve sexual experience just by reducing the fear of performance failure.

Biofeedback, which enables the individual

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Sexuality...

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to become more aware of inner processes, also can help a couple share subtle physiological experiences that otherwise would be hard to communicate. One member of a couple can be monitored while the partner listens to the feedback. "As a couple, they can discover which factors enhance, which inhibit arousal."

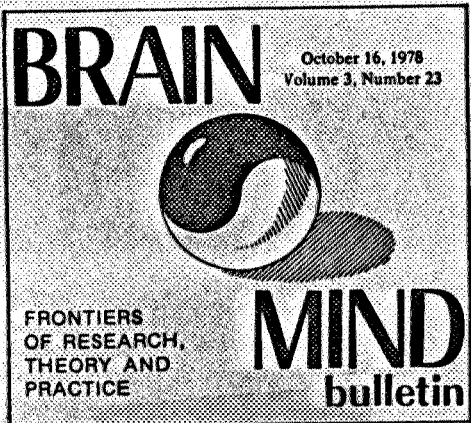
Vaginal blood-flow feedback also can teach women to become more sensitive to their physical arousal, Peper said. A reported 40 per cent of women are not conscious of the increased blood flow through the vaginal areas indicative of arousal.

Misplaced muscular efforts—straining is no need to exert—can be overcome by relaxation training (Feldenkrais-type exercises, for instance), Peper said. "People can be shown that they have a greater range of motion when they don't strain. You can economize activity. It's also helpful if people let go of their expectations. Imagery, theater games, exercises that teach people to be 'in the present'—these help."

Seminar participants were taught some of these consciousness-altering techniques. Shapiro also played the flute and urged them to try to "hear the colors." As an example of a strategy to inhibit left-brain activity (the right hemisphere has been associated with sexual arousal), he recited a haiku poem whose imagery requires some crosstalk, or synesthesia of the senses: "Over the darkened sea/ only the shrill voice of the flying duck is visible/ in soft white."

Peper told *Brain/Mind Bulletin* that this East/West approach to sexuality "introduces a kind of spirituality—that's not quite the right word, but there's a different quality in the sexual experience. The West has emphasized quantity."

William Masters and Virginia Johnson Masters, pioneering sex researchers, also were on the program and discussed their well-known approach to sexual dysfunction. William Kroger described the use of hypnosis and imagery in treating sexual dysfunctions.



Masters and Johnson talk in Palo Alto

Are meditators better lovers?

William H. Masters and Virginia Johnson Masters, nationally prominent sex researchers, will explain their pioneer work in a Palo Alto conference on "Human Loving: Sexuality and Intimacy."

The conference will be held Sept. 29-Oct. 1 at the Cabana Hyatt under the sponsorship of the Institute for the Advancement of Human Behavior.

Masters and Johnson teach psychological aspects of sexual behavior which have much in

common with meditation techniques.

That point will be elaborated in a talk by Deane Shapiro and Erick Peper on "Biofeedback, Meditation and Sexual Consciousness: An East/West Approach."

"The use of western self-regulation techniques, such as biofeedback, and Eastern techniques, such as meditation, will be examined as they relate to human sexual responsiveness," said Shapiro, a Stanford psychologist.

Other speakers will discuss such topics as sex and aggression or fair fight therapy for lovers; hypnosis and imagery conditioning in treating sexual dysfunctions; and male and female sexuality: social pressures, role models and dysfunction.

Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, D-San Jose, will be speaker at a closing dinner.