

Gender Creates Impotence Problems

Gender shows up in every aspect of our lives. For both men and women it is a haunting story. Our sexuality is profoundly affected by gender because it represents how we feel about ourselves and other people. A dominant gender message for men is the expectation of sexual competency. Above all things, men are expected to be capable of having an erection at a moment's notice. Gender expects men to be sexual too young, too often and to have sex without meaning. Sex is thought of as a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. Sex becomes the measure of his masculinity. It is often the most important source of intimacy. Masculinity is about power and sexuality is the first exercise of 'real' manly power. Sex then, becomes a way that a man uses his power to attract, to seduce, to conquer and to prove to himself that he is a man.

This over-identification of manhood with the 'penis' is one of the ways that gender victimizes men. In the movie, 'American Pie,' a young man admits: "I'm sick of sex and I haven't had it yet!" Most young men feel a tremendous amount of pressure to be sexual. Often, they are sexual before they are ready... just to 'get it over with.' After they have lost their virginity, they can brag with their buddies and feel like they 'belong.'

There are many negative consequences for this 'you are your penis' pressure men feel. First of all, the 'hurry up and get it over with' mentality makes performance more important than meaning. It separates sex from relationships. Men are expected to be aroused whether they are 'turned on' relationally, or not. This fundamental split of sexual performance from relational meaning is a profound problem for boys and men. It is, in my opinion, at the core of most problems men face today.

This story may highlight the anxiety of young men:

"A young twenty year old asked if I had a minute to speak with him after a video session. He shared with me, using the vaguest language imaginable, that he was suffering from sexual-performance anxiety. He was worried that this problem would ruin his chances with any girl he was 'lucky enough' to be with. I reminded him that no young woman worries about the erection of her clitoris when being sexual. She will, most likely, be more 'into him'. My advice was to forget about your penis. It is a follower of your heart and mind. Enjoy your girlfriend and the moments you share. I have never heard a woman worry about her clitoral functioning."

The issue of impotence, the term used to describe men who have difficulty having an erection or sustaining an erection, is every man's deepest dream. Because of cultural pressure, it is the ultimate threat to his masculinity. Sometimes, impotence can be caused by a medical condition, but, most of the time, it is caused by anxiety; Men will experience sexual health to the degree that they can separate themselves from the gender-trap that sexualize their lives from the

moment of their birth. This personal separation from gender victimization will help men focus on what is important about sex: enjoyment, connection, fulfillment, and meaning.

Here are some thoughts to keep in mind:

- You are more than your penis!
- Your penis is a marvelous organ that takes its lead from your heart and soul.
- What excites you about life and the person you are with is what makes your penis work best.
- Read about cultural messaging that define your manhood so you can reject them and be healthy
- Remember, that what turns women on can also turn you on.
- Avoid the 'rush' to be sexual. Don't let anyone make you believe that performance is manhood. You are not a machine. You are a person.
- If you are having difficulty with having or maintaining an erection, make sure your medications or a medical condition is not causing the problem.
- Sex is more than you having an erection. Sex is enjoying your own body and the body of your partner to live in complete wonderment of being alive.