

Unitarian Church of Edmonton

<http://www.uce.ca/wordpress>

Healthy Sexuality

Introduction

Welcome to a very special morning where we hope to wed what could be a controversial topic with an experiment in social media community building.

The topic is Healthy Sexuality, that wonderful component of being human that is seldom addressed in churches...well, seldom addressed in a positive way. I certainly have no intention of uttering the words "Thou shalt not" today.

Over the summer I took an online course designed for new ministers encouraging us to figure out our comfort levels around speaking on sexuality in our congregations, helping us think through what might come up in counseling sessions and – very, very importantly – getting clear on our own professional boundaries in order to prevent clergy sexual misconduct. It was a good course.

A Unitarian church is a place where we come to explore what it means to be human. The course reminded me that sexuality is a large part of our humanity and therefore deserved to be addressed in our services from time to time, and so here we are.

Now as we get started in this social network community building exercise, I would like to invite any who have the desire and the ability to chime in on the question of, what is healthy sexuality?

Video Reading Intro

Healthy sexuality, in my view, starts with liking yourself and respecting yourself. I will say more about that later. Today's media portrayal of human sexuality is problematic at best. Using various visual enhancement techniques, they tend to create false images that define beauty and desirability according to standards that just don't exist in the real world.

To counter that Karen Walrond has put together a wonderful three minute beauty pep talk for women that is currently a [Facebook hit](#). The ideas work for men as well and I might also suggest that the images remind me that real people have real lives that don't always fit into the media models of perfect romance either. Let this video serve as our reading today.

Meditation – I Am More by [Ginger Voight](#)

I am more than what I give myself credit for.

I am worth more than I have allowed myself to settle for.

I am more valuable than most people know, or even care to know.

And I am worth more than allowing anyone to decide how valuable, exactly, that is.

I am more than the mistakes of my past.

I am more than the limitations of my present.

I am more than the success of my future.

I am more than a conqueror, and braved through far too many circles of hell to allow myself to be anything less than all than all I deserve.

I deserve to reach higher and actually grasp those dreams in my hand.

There is no one that needs to hear this more than me. And there is no one who needs to say it more than me.

I am more than my own abuser.

I am more than my own hero.

I am more.

Because I am more than over being less.

Sermon

I'm going to say something I bet you haven't heard too many ministers say from the pulpit:

I like sex.

And I delight in my human sexuality – which is not the same thing. And before you get nervous about Too Much Information, that's the last thing I have to say today about my personal life.

I do think that sex and sexuality are one of the great gifts granted to us humans by whatever divine or natural forces that constructed this amazing network of biology and chemistry and electricity. What a spectacular combination we humans are of biochemical and neurological interaction, yes, but also let's note that we are creatures of imagination, passion, sensuality, intimacy, vulnerability, and intellect. All of that and more goes into our make-up as sexual beings

From the [Religious Institute](#) course I took this summer put together by Rev. Debra Haffner,

Sexuality . . . is more than just sexual behavior.

. . . unfolds our entire lives.

. . . includes our understandings of our gender, our sexual orientation, relationships with others, and how we express and understand intimacy broadly defined.

From the moment we are born to the moment we die we are sexual beings, growing, changing and rediscovering that wonderful gift in new and different ways. As children we work at discovering our bodies. As young people we discover attraction and, oh boy, do we discover chemistry. Later in 'adult prime' if you will, we adapt as children for some, the work of just managing life for others and the reality of diminishing drive change the equation causing us to rethink intimacy and relationship. As 'matures' we explore the changes aging brings to our bodies and those of our partners, finding still different ways of addressing our needs...and perhaps we even discover a different kind of chemistry in pill form. In 2001 Dr. David Satcher, the US Surgeon General issued a report on healthy sexuality:

Sexuality encompasses more than sexual behavior. The many aspects of sexuality include not only the physical but the

mental and spiritual as well. Sexuality is a core component of the personality and a fundamental part of human life. It carries potential to create new life, can foster intimacy and bonding as well as shared pleasure in our relationships. Human sexuality serves many functions in addition to reproduction, and implies psychological as well as physiological/biological responses.

In every age and at every stage we remain sexual beings, some more active and aware of it, some less so. The thing is, that part of our nature develops in a social context shaped by cultural and religious attitudes and even laws governing that part of our lives.

“The expression of sexuality is influenced by ethical, spiritual, cultural, and moral concerns.” SIECUS (Sexual Information and Education Council of the US)

“A sexually healthy adult... assesses the impact of family, cultural, religious, media, and societal messages on one’s thoughts, feelings, values, and behaviors related to sexuality.”

In other words, a healthy sexual adult thinks for themselves, decides for themselves after weighing the pros and cons of the positive and negative and outright fantastic messages that come their way through media, peers, religious teachings and so on.

Those messages can be challenging and conflicting. Some, certainly, are intended to keep us healthy and to help protect us from harming others or being harmed ourselves. Our own Unitarian Universalist [Our Whole Lives](#) or OWL program of age appropriate sex education courses falls into that category. We will be offering OWL for our Pathfinders –aged 9-12 – in January.

And some of those well intentioned messages – especially ancient religious ones -belong to another time and place and do not translate well into today’s culture. Condemnatory attitudes about divorce, sex outside of marriage, non-heterosexual sex and a whole list of categories come from a time and place far removed from our own and simply make little sense.

And on the other side, the “Thou shall” instead of “Thou shalt not” side, there are cultural messages that emphasize sex (as much and as often as possible) over healthy sexuality. Intended to liberate us from outdated attitudes, popular culture has often gone the way of titillation choosing sensationalism over sensuality. The most cruel thing our culture has done is to get us stuck, focused with laser-like intensity on one or two points instead of that lifelong process of embracing our sexuality.

Where are we stuck?

On lust (Sex over relationship or intimacy)

On manufactured ideals of beauty. (As noted in video reading)

On mostly on young adulthood. (Though I have noticed a few over 40 folks getting hot and bothered in TV and film recently- but really, really good looking folks)

On procreation (US election campaign and the so called war on women)

We are sidelined by an obsession with sex acts instead on a celebration of sexual being. And I am sad to say that religion has led the way in demonizing human sexuality by trying to force it into narrow definitions of acceptability. To go any further would start us down the road of a couple of doctoral theses on church history, so I will pass. I just want to note that in trying to honour our individual sexuality, we face a whole field of roadblocks thrown up culture, church and history.

There is another significant impediment in the way too, some of our fellow human beings. I am referring to the folks who, for whatever reason, exploit the vulnerabilities of those who are too young, not fully matured in their sexuality, who are confused about their self-worth or their gender identity or orientation.

Sexual abuse or exploitation, or – as we have observed so tragically in recent days – bullying, can cause deep harm to fragile sexual identity and prevent it from ever fully flowering and that is tragic beyond all boundaries. The acts of sexual predators make me wish I still believed in Hell.

So let me sum up this beginning of the conversation by paraphrasing a WHO document and then checking in with our media desk:

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human.

It exists throughout the lifespan.

It encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.

It is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.

While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed.

Sexuality is influenced by cultural, religious and spiritual factors.

BREAK see Tweets at bottom of document

Conclusion:

I love Sigrids Eepoel's comment, "A delicate topic. Healthy sexuality follows the pace of the slowest partner". It was the first I received when I started posting about this service and it has had me thinking.

Sexuality is a part of our self-identity. Whether we are aware of it or not it shapes how we see ourselves, has a huge impact on our confidence and even the choices we make in love, but also in work and other aspects of our social lives. Who we are in the work place, how we dress or behave there or when we go out has something to do with our sexuality and our willingness to embrace it sometimes, suppress it at other times.

The images of the women we saw in the video inspired Katherine Anderson to comment, "I saw one common thread- all those women were smiling with both their mouth and their eyes...the message to me was smile on the inside".

She reminds us that first a healthy sexuality comes from within. It begins with learning to like ourselves for who we are, and to give up comparing ourselves to some outside impossible standard. It is as simple and as hard as this: When you trust yourself enough to let your inner beauty shine, you will be beautiful, and attractive. You all know this, because you have all been attracted to people who won't make the cover of a fashion magazine.

So healthy sexuality starts with healthy self-identity.

But few of us spend our lives as sexual beings in a vacuum. Most of us form relationships, at least for a while. To be in relationship is to be trusted with this often fragile part of another person's psyche. Great and wonderful things can happen when we become sexual partners, but for it to be successful – no matter what sex acts are involved – that requires respect, respect for self and respect for the other. Sigrid's remark, "Healthy sexuality follows the pace of the slowest partner," speaks about that respect. We can teach each other, we can learn from each other, but any partner has to be sensitive to the comfort level of the other or risk harming relationship and even the well-being of other people.

And that is what makes sexual relationships so potentially wonderful. The best pleasure occurs in the mind, not the body. The true satisfaction comes in the trusting and loving embrace of the afterglow. Indeed, it's even possible to have a fulfilling relationship that is sexually healthy where there is no sex at all.

There is no single rule or precept that guarantees healthy sexuality, no proven technique or fixed promise. But if you start with loving yourself, loving the sexual nature of your own being, then you have a firm place to begin the journey, and a lower likelihood of doing harm or letting yourself be harmed.

As in all things, self-acceptance is the starting place. Come out to yourself as the sexual being you are, and go from there.

Tweets:

[LNSLNhomes Oct 21, 2:25pm via Twitter for Android](#)

RT @BrianKiely1: Come out to yourself as the sexual being you are, and go from there [#ucesermon](#)

[LNSLNhomes Oct 21, 2:21pm via Twitter for Android](#)

RT @BrianKiely1: I like sex. And I delight in my human sexuality, which is not the same thing [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 11:46am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Carry the flame in peace and love until we meet again [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger Oct 21, 11:36am via Twitter for Android](#)

RT @BrianKiely1: Sexuality is part of our self-identity. Whether we are aware of it or not it shapes how we see ourselves [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl](#) Oct 21, 11:35am via Twitter for iPhone

RT @[BrianKiely1](#): Come out to yourself as the sexual being you are, and go from there [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern](#) Oct 21, 11:33am via web

I can't wait to hear this sermon! [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern](#) Oct 21, 11:32am via web

RT @[BrianKiely1](#): Come out to yourself as the sexual being you are, and go from there [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop](#) Oct 21, 11:31am via TweetDeck

Start by loving the sexual being that you are. @[BrianKiely1](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1](#) Oct 21, 11:31am via HootSuite

Come out to yourself as the sexual being you are, and go from there [#ucesermon](#)

[BoMcX](#) Oct 21, 11:30am via Twitter for BlackBerry®

R E S P E C T!!!!!! First and foremost for yourself. [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern](#) Oct 21, 11:30am via web

RT @[BrianKiely1](#): Sexuality is part of our self-identity. Whether we are aware of it or not it shapes how we see ourselves [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop](#) Oct 21, 11:29am via TweetDeck

AMEN! RT @[ink_slinger](#) "Healthy sexuality follows the pace of the slowest partner." [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1](#) Oct 21, 11:29am via HootSuite

Sexuality is part of our self-identity. Whether we are aware of it or not it shapes how we see ourselves [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger](#) Oct 21, 11:28am via Twitter for Android

"Healthy sexuality follows the pace of the slowest partner." [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl](#) Oct 21, 11:27am via Twitter for iPhone

RT @[BrianKiely1](#): I like sex. And I delight in my human sexuality, which is not the same thing [#ucesermon](#)

[apolkov](#) Oct 21, 11:24am via Twitter for Android

RT @[artistflop](#): "The acts of sexual predators make me wish I still believed in Hell." @[BrianKiely1](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern](#) Oct 21, 11:23am via web

@[artistflop](#) @[BrianKiely1](#) Well stated, that one. [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger](#) Oct 21, 11:22am via [Twitter for Android](#)

@[BrianKiely1](#) says: "The acts of sexual predators make me wish I still believed in hell." [#ucesermon](#)

[BoMcX](#) Oct 21, 11:22am via [Twitter for BlackBerry®](#)

I love fantasies!!!!!!!!!! @[BrianKiely1](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop](#) Oct 21, 11:22am via [TweetDeck](#)

"The acts of sexual predators make me wish I still believed in Hell." @[BrianKiely1](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1](#) Oct 21, 11:21am via [HootSuite](#)

Sexual abuse, exploitation, bullying can cause deep harm to fragile sexual identity and prevent it from ever flowering
[#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1](#) Oct 21, 11:20am via [HootSuite](#)

In trying to honour our individual sexuality, we face a whole field of roadblocks thrown up by culture, church, history
[#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl](#) Oct 21, 11:20am via [Twitter for iPhone](#)

We are stuck on lust. Manufactured ideas of beauty, titillation and procreation and not on sexuality as a whole-
paraphrasing here [#ucesermon](#)

[BoMcX](#) Oct 21, 11:19am via [Twitter for BlackBerry®](#)

[#ucesermon](#) stuck on lust!!!! Totally!!!

[k8redfern](#) Oct 21, 11:19am via [web](#)

@[BrianKiely1](#) Couldn't agree more. [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1](#) Oct 21, 11:17am via [HootSuite](#)

On the other extreme, popular culture has often gone the way of titillation choosing sensationalism over sensuality
[#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger](#) Oct 21, 11:17am via [Twitter for Android](#)

"A healthy sexual adult thinks for themselves." I think we can remove the word "sexual" and that is still very true. [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop](#) Oct 21, 11:16am via [TweetDeck](#)

Or is John tweeting for him?... [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 11:15am via TweetDeck](#)

Okay @[BrianKiely1](#) must have his tweets queued because they keep coming up WHILE he's giving the sermon....
[#madskills](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern Oct 21, 11:15am via web](#)

RT @[ink_slinger](#): "Sexuality is more than just sexual behaviour; sexuality enfolds our whole lives." [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 11:14am via HootSuite](#)

Some well intentioned messages, especially ancient religious ones, belong to another time and place. [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 11:14am via TweetDeck](#)

Sermon notes on a tablet? [#yep](#) [#ucesermon](#) @[BrianKiely1](#) yfrog.com/odx74tfj

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 11:13am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Brian's (our Minister) opening sermon words "I like sex!" This will be interesting! [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger Oct 21, 11:12am via Twitter for Android](#)

"Sexuality is more than just sexual behaviour; sexuality enfolds our whole lives." [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern Oct 21, 11:11am via web](#)

RT @[BrianKiely1](#): I like sex. And I delight in my human sexuality, which is not the same thing [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 11:11am via HootSuite](#)

Sex, sexuality. One of the great gifts granted to us humans by whatever divine or natural forces constructed this amazing network [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 11:11am via TweetDeck](#)

Sermon opens with @[BrianKiely1](#) announcing "I like sex." [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 11:10am via HootSuite](#)

I like sex. And I delight in my human sexuality, which is not the same thing [#ucesermon](#)

[eliseholm1 Oct 21, 11:07am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

I love when my wife gets a little choked up in church. [#meditationinwords](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger Oct 21, 11:07am via Twitter for Android](#)

RT @[artistflop](#): Music for meditation: Everything Possible. LOVE this song!

[#ucesermon](#)

[BoMcX Oct 21, 11:07am via Twitter for BlackBerry®](#)

[#ucesermon](#) B E A utiful song @[BrianKiely1](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 11:06am via TweetDeck](#)

Music for meditation: Everything Possible. LOVE this song!

[#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 11:05am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Meditation words: I am more. I am more because I am more than over being less. [#ucesermon](#)

[BoMcX Oct 21, 11:02am via Twitter for BlackBerry®](#)

All is quiet on the [#ucesermon](#) front

[artistflop Oct 21, 11:01am via TweetDeck](#)

Today's hymn for meditation: without music! "Breathe in Breathe out" [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 10:59am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Meditation chant "when I breathe in I'll breathe in peace. When I breathe out, I'll breathe out love." Sounds lovely [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:58am via HootSuite](#)

Breathe in Breathe out, a meditation fitting the sexuality theme [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 10:56am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Today's Service: Healthy sexuality. I promise the words "Thou shall NOT" will not be said! Lol.

@BrianKeily1 [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 10:55am via TweetDeck](#)

@[ink_slinger](#) @[k8redfern](#) That is because @[BrianKiely1](#) has mad skills! [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern Oct 21, 10:54am via web](#)

@[ink_slinger](#) @[BrianKiely1](#) I was kind of wondering if he perhaps had someone tweeting on his behalf. [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:53am via HootSuite](#)

Our text for today's service – a wonderful three minute video beauty pep talk for women [#ucesermon](#)...

[ink_slinger Oct 21, 10:53am via Twitter for Android](#)

@[k8redfern](#) I'll do my best. @[BrianKiely1](#) is doing an impressive job of tweeting and sermonizing at the same time. [#ucesermon](#)

[eliseholm1 Oct 21, 10:53am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

"I'm going to get back at them using... my SEXUALITY..." – Jenna [#30Rock](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 10:52am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Lesson 1: You are different and you are beautiful. Now go be AMAZING!! [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:51am via HootSuite](#)

Media tend to create false images that define beauty and desirability according to standards that don't exist in the real world [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger Oct 21, 10:49am via Twitter for Android](#)

RT @[BrianKiely1](#): Healthy sexuality, in my view, starts with liking yourself and respecting yourself [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:46am via HootSuite](#)

Healthy sexuality, in my view, starts with liking yourself and respecting yourself [#ucesermon](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 10:45am via TweetDeck](#)

RT @[ink_slinger](#): We're being encouraged to livetweet today's [#ucesermon](#) on human sexuality. Feels weird to be tweeting during church.

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:44am via HootSuite](#)

Hymn: how could anyone ever tell you that you are anything less than beautiful [#ucesermon](#)

[bthebiogirl Oct 21, 10:42am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

Been asked to live tweet this am church service as social media experiment. Let's try it [#ucesermon](#)

[ink_slinger Oct 21, 10:42am via Twitter for Android](#)

We're being encouraged to livetweet today's [#ucesermon](#) on human sexuality. Feels weird to be tweeting during church.

[k8redfern Oct 21, 10:41am via web](#)

RT @[artistflop](#): John Pater at the 21st-Century newsdesk. Got enough laptops there John? [#ucesermon yfrog.com/h04l3cgj](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 10:40am via TweetDeck](#)

John Pater at the 21st-Century newsdesk. Got enough laptops there John? [#ucesermon yfrog.com/h04l3cgj](#)

[artistflop Oct 21, 10:37am via TweetDeck](#)

This is amazing! It's like [#yegprov](#), but church! [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:36am via HootSuite](#)

A UU church is a place where we come to explore what it means to be human, and since sexuality is a large part of being human... [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:31am via HootSuite](#)

For those who want to hear the sermon later, we are recording it and it will go on UCE webpage soon for downloading [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern Oct 21, 10:26am via web](#)

@[BrianKiely1](#) Do you know if the sermon is being recorded? [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:25am via HootSuite](#)

Welcome to today's UCE service where we combine a sexy topic with an experiment in social media community building [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern Oct 21, 10:24am via web](#)

Due to not feeling well, I will be following today's church service at my computer today, thanks to the live tweeting event. [#ucesermon](#)

[k8redfern Oct 21, 10:23am via web](#)

@[BrianKiely1](#) That's why I stick around with this church! [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 10:20am via HootSuite](#)

I certainly have no intention of uttering the words "Thou shalt not" today [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 21, 9:42am via Twitter for iPhone](#)

[#ucesermon](#) at church with all the tech toys up and running. A bit nervous- new format and sexuality is the topic. Good nervous.

[BoMcX Oct 21, 9:33am via Twitter for BlackBerry®](#)

Off to church for our first technologically friendly service. [#ucesermon](#)

[paterjc Oct 20, 11:17am via HootSuite](#)

Live tweeting from church tomorrow. An experiment in social media spirituality? Follow at [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 17, 5:25pm via Tweet Button](#)

Good start for Healthy Sex sermon- ALL are beautiful! [upworthy.com/finally-pictur...](#) [#ucesermon](#)

[BrianKiely1 Oct 16, 1:00pm via Twitter for iPhone](#)

UU Ministers Assn wrestling with guidelines on sex. When does attention become harassment? [#ucesermon](#)