

Love and Spinal Cord Injury: A Recipe for Sexual Sustainability

Having a Spinal Cord Injury is generally not thought of as a sexy change. Yet, people with SCIs are very desirous of maintaining their sexual capabilities. In this presentation, I will provide a recipe of specific steps for the clinician to follow when caring for the individual with SCI so as to maximize their potential for sexual sustainability. Early on it is important to let the patient know that their sexual concerns are a part of the issues that you will help with. It is important first to make sure that there were not sexual problems prior to injury. Next a good neurologic examination with attention to the T11-L2 and sacral areas will allow you to make an assessment of the anticipated impact of their spinal injury on their sexual responses. Information from the examination is used to educate the patient about the impact of their injury on their sexual responses. Patients are then encouraged to experiment with what works. The autonomic standards and the international data sets are utilized to document the reported impact of injury on sexual function and comparison of expected versus actual responses will allow you to determine if there are potential areas requiring treatment. With treatments the clinician is advised to first look at iatrogenic and partner causes and address these before considering any new therapies. Finally, it is recommended that open, candid communication be used throughout the process as the best way to help patients effectively conquer their sexual concerns.