

Sexology with Shannon Boodram

Ologies Podcast

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Heeeeee! Helloooo. Hi. It's your old friend, ol' dad, Alie Ward. You guys, sexology. It's coming.
[cymbal crash]

Hey mom, dad, I know you listen sometimes. I'm here to tell you: don't. Byyyyye! Bye bye now. Bye. Okay.

OH MY GOD, OKAY. Fucking, you guys. Woo! Naked people. Psychology. Let's do this.

Sexology; it's a topic we all can relate to, given that we were all created by horniness. I'm keeping this intro short as fuck, because you guys don't want my intro. You want the good stuff.

Now, let's get creepy. Let's read some of your reviews. When you rate and review on iTunes, it keeps *Ologies* up in the charts. It really does, it helps so much. We hit #18 in Science this week – pretty cool - and your reviews really count. I read all of them. Every single one of them. And then, each week, I like to share one with you. This week, The Doodle Fox said:

This is the Katamari of facts. I love listening to this podcast while I draw because my eyes and hands can work that sweet, sweet pencil and my ears and brain are absorbing information, like a Katamari of facts rolling right into my head. Definitely the best science podcast I've ever listened to.

This left me with the question: what the fuck is *Katamari*? And I had to Google it, and then I watched some YouTube videos, and I realized that *katamari* is a thing like a ball that picks up stuff as it rolls, based on a video game. So, thank you, The Doodle Fox, a) for the review and b) for letting me into the splendor of *Katamari* because now that's gonna be a thing that I'm gonna think about.

Okay, back to boning. So, there are a lot of places to get info on sexology. I didn't want an episode that was essentially like a long audio ad for different vibrators, and if I read one more sex tip that tells me to run a feather over someone, like, no! I don't wanna do that! That tip is helpful maybe once, for one instance, when you and your partner are bored and you find half a weed cookie in the freezer or something and you're like, "ooh, I have this feather. I saw this in a magazine." So, while this episode addresses straight up anatomy, some of which, I will be honest, shocked me – things I did not know - plus myths and butt stuff, we also talk about the underlying psychology that can really make sex healthy; like gender identity, and getting over slumps, and love languages, and consent, and open relationships versus monogamy, and pizza.

This sexologist specializes, I think, in the communication aspect of the field, which is, if you ask me, the most important part of sex is usually connection and communication. She's an accomplished journalist, she's an author of the book *Laid*, she has this huge YouTube channel with hundreds of

thousands of subscribers. She talks about sex and she is a stunning presence. I emailed her on a lark to see if she might consider being on, and I was shocked to get a quick reply being like, "Sure!" A few days later, at 10:00 am on a weekday, I was headed up to her bright, sunny apartment where she answered the door in sweatpants and a sports bra, no makeup. She has this curly mermaid hair in a top knot. I liked her immediately. She's honest, she's hilarious, she's serious, she's so cool, she is sexologist Shan Boody aka Shannon Boodram.

Alie: It's Shannon Boodram?

Shan: Yes.

Alie: But you go by Shan Boody?

Shan: You can do Shan Boody or Shan Boodram. People hate that. I'm like, "it's Shan, it's Shannon, it's Shan Boodram." Like, "which one do you want, bitch? We don't care!" And I'm like, "I don't know!"

Aside: So, call her whatever you like.

Alie: Okay, so you are a certified sexologist. What is the certification process like?

Shan: I guess everyone has a unique way, I suppose, to do it, state by state, but I started out in Canada.

Aside: Shan's from Toronto originally, and she studied journalism, and later, sex education. She eventually spent over 300 hours getting certified as a clinical sexologist at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, which also offers a program in erotology (gotta get up in that). She also wrote a book called *Laid: Young People's Experiences with Sex in an Easy-Access Culture*, which came out in 2009. So, she knows what's up. Or what's down. I don't know.

Shan: By the time that had come out, I had been in the sex ed space for, like, 10 years.

Alie: When it came to sex ed in, like, grammar school, what was your reaction to it? I remember there was a period [*DJ airhorn*] - no pun intended - but fifth grade where they're like, "we're going to take the girls over here, the boys over here, we're gonna talk to you about your crotches." Do you remember that experience?

Shan: Yeah, I think mine was fourth grade. Yours was how old?

Alie: I think it was fourth or fifth grade. But, dude. I was too nervous about it and I faked a stomachache and I sat in the nurse's office. I didn't know what a boner was.

Shan: Do we swear?

Alie: [laughs] Yes!

Shan: Okay, you were being a bitch, then! [Alie laughs] Okay, fine! You're like, "I'm not doing it, mom! I don't want to hear it!"

Alie: I was too scared! And I didn't know what a boner was 'til, like, eighth grade. I was like, wait, they change? So, wait, yours was in fourth grade?

Shan: Yes. And we had this woman come in who I just remember being, like, a shadowy figure with a very long pleated skirt. And she was not our teacher. We had some older, weird person come into our class. I remember vividly her saying like, [soft, old timey voice] "sex happens when a man and a woman who love each other very much embrace for a long period of time and then withdraw from such an embrace." It left more questions than it answered. And at the time, I don't know if I had the facts, but I was like, "This definitely is not it, bitch. I'm not 100 % certain of the facts, but I know for a fact you don't know what you're talking about."

I don't remember a word that she said after that because I think I just tuned her out. I was like, "oh, this woman is oblivious." I think that happens a lot when it comes to that relationship between authority and the youth. The second that you lie - and even parents - if you tell your kids about storks or you make up any other lie, you become an un-credible source for them. I would suggest - for anybody - never lie. Never. No matter what the question is, find a way to answer it honestly. And if you want to do it very biologically so it doesn't come across salaciously or fun (heaven forbid), but answer it honestly.

Alie: With a lot of your outreach, do you work with adults or do you do sex education for 20 somethings? For youth? What's your favorite space to work in?

Shan: I tend to attract 18 to 24 or 18 to 35. When I wrote my first book in 2009 (which is a freaking long time ago now, to think about it), my target audience was 15 year-olds, 14 year-olds, because for me that was a time that I started to look for any literature, any movies, any porn that I possibly could to describe why I had this urge, what it was about and what I was supposed to do with it.

Alie: How did you recover from your fourth-grade pleated skirt nightmare? Did you go look things up online or did you go get an encyclopedia? I think I looked up the word 'coitus' in the dictionary.

Shan: And what did you find?

Alie: I think it was like, "intercourse." And then I was like, "fuck! What's intercourse? Now I gotta go look that up!"

How did you correct it? And at what point did you decide, "Oh, I think that this is going to be a career path."

Shan: I honestly believe that, how some children have a natural affinity for the piano, or are just really good at arts, I was always very physical. I was always very physically touchy; I was very affectionate and that was suppressed a lot. I remember my first sexual experience when I was like, five years old. It was with myself and my friend and our pillows. We didn't touch each other, but I remember it being really positive, and me enjoying it, and me instructing her to do something with her pillow. And then she told on me, I got in so much trouble and I was like, "bitch!"

But then after that, my Barbies were banned from being naked because they were naked all the time. But I just felt like there's nowhere for me to go. So, I had to find secret ways which ended up being fiction novels and pornography, which I watched a lot of. And that's where I answered questions, which never leads well. So, I had a really shitty teen sex life.

Aside: So, like a lot of 19-year-olds, she was like, "okay, so the sex happened, but was that supposed to be good? Eh." So, she'd only had one good partner by the time she went away to college in Baltimore, and it was there that she realized that there was a lot she didn't know.

Shan: And now I was surrounded by women constantly, because we were on the same track team. I started to hear stories of experiences like mine. People who had never orgasmed, people who felt emotionally unfulfilled, people who had tried anal and thought it was great, people who had same-sex experiences. I was introduced to this entire world where I was like, "Hang on. Whatever I've learned in the books and in porn that I've been trying to apply hasn't been working. There's clearly more out there." And that's when I went to the library and got myself a card and I got every sex book possible. Over that summer, I drowned myself in information when I was 19 years old.

Alie: Number one: porn as a documentary - not a thing. I think that if you're learning from porn, chances are you're maybe getting a little bit of a skewed version of things?

Shan: If you're learning from free, accessible, under the table porn. Because when you're in your teens, you're not getting your pick of the litter, you're not getting a subscription service anywhere. You're just like, "I have 10 minutes before my parents come back from grocery shopping - go." And I think that's the problem. There's a lot of great porn out there. I just think that as a young person, especially a young person who's discouraged from finding sexual information, you're not going to know where to look.

Alie: How much do you think shame plays a role in sexual dysfunction? Because I think in a lot of these stories, there's a layer of shame over sexuality and that seems to be a big barrier to intimacy and pleasure. Do you think that's a modern-day thing? Do you think it's an American thing? Was it a Canadian thing? Where is that coming from?

Shan: It's absolutely a cultural thing. One of the cool things that we did when we were studying in school is, we studied the attitudes of sex in different cultures. It found that the more

accepting the culture was of sex, the closer their pornography was to actual reality. In Thailand, for example - where they celebrate coming into your sexual awakening and there's a lot of conversation around it and you may see people on the street not completely clothed, it's not sexualized to see a boob, for example - their pornography looks really similar to how people experience sex.

But because in America we're so suppressed, we're so shunned, we're told constantly that it's a bad urge, that we should not dive into it - we don't want our porn to look like us. We want it to look cartoonish: massive breasts, huge penises, over-the-top scenes. Because if we saw ourselves in that role, we would experience shame. So, the only way to experience pleasure when thinking about sex as a fantasy is to have it as far removed from reality as possible. I think it is cultural in many ways. Of course, household to household is probably a different experience per person.

Alie: Wow. That's so fascinating. I never thought about the cartoonish aspects of it. It really is. Big makeup and...

Shan: Right, yeah! And massive lashes, over-the-top lipstick. It's just all of it.

Alie: I don't know where the bad tribal tattoos and New Jersey necklaces come from.

Shan: I'm not into it! Not into it! P.S. she's wearing one right now. Don't let her shame you. She got it on.

Alie: It's just an homage!

Aside: It's very normal to adopt things that you think look cool.

Shan: I think everybody agrees that everyone's main question is, "am I normal?" That comes from a society where there's little discussion, there's little discourse, and representation is very narrow, so we don't see a broad spectrum of what sexuality is. So, if you don't fit inside that box that you see at 8:00 PM on ABC, you're like, "oh, I'm not normal."

Aside: Are there any books she really likes?

Shan: I've read Mama Gena's *School of Womanly Arts*. That was really just about: as a person, enjoy your body. Enjoy the sensations that you have. If you're bored, stroke your arm. If you're in the DMV lineup, massage the back of your own head. Delight in the pleasure of your body. Don't run away from it. And of course, if you're in a private space, go to town. I think that that book really just allowed me to look at my body as a tool for pleasure and something that I got to play with, and that it wasn't like those napkins that you can only use on Christmas. It's mine for whatever I want. I think that was a book, for me, that was nice and transformative, especially at that age.

Alie: Especially in the 18 to 30 range, do you get a lot of questions about monogamy at that age, or about experimentation, or gender? What do you feel the conversation is heavy with?

Shan: A lot pleasure-based conversation, of 'why don't I experience it?' or 'how can I?' I get that a lot too, like, 'how can I orgasm with my partner during sex?' Maybe you can't, and that's okay. I always think that's an awesome one to get to answer somebody. Whenever someone comes to me and says, "As a woman, I don't orgasm during penetration, how do I fix that?" And I say, "Ask your partner to duct tape his penis to the side of his leg, and then you try to stimulate him somewhere else to get him to orgasm, and if he doesn't, put the pressure on him." No! We wouldn't do that because we acknowledge the fact that the penis is enough for many people and they don't have to force a prostate orgasm or a perineum orgasm if they can't achieve that. And so, for women you have the clitoris, which is the anatomical twin to the penis, so if you can orgasm that way, that should be enough for you and you don't have to try the other. You can find sensations, and joy, and pleasure, like how we would scratching our back, but it doesn't have to lead to the Big O.

Aside: What is an orgasm? That's a good question. I asked *Cosmo Magazine*, and someone who identified herself as 'Molly' (wink wink. That's her festival nickname) laid it down, saying:

The best explanation I can think of is the feeling of pleasure builds up like filling a glass of water until it overflows.

It could really be a glass of anything, like kombucha or Yoo-hoo. But you get the point. I think that's pretty poetic, Molls. Now let's ask a scientist, like Dr. Adam Safron, who writes about it for medical journals, like in this article, for example:

What is orgasm? A model of sexual trance and climax via rhythmic entrainment.

That is sexy words. Essentially, they say that given that reproduction is the bottom line of evolutionary fitness, it is unsurprising that orgasm would be a source of intense pleasure, says this doctor.

They say that the neuropsychopharmacology of sexual trance most closely mimics the effects of cocaine – COCAINE! - with orgasm itself mimicking the addition of heroin. Which, I'm gonna have to say, I feel like cocaine and heroin are mimicking sex, maybe? Either way, maybe that's why you're so thirsty.

I thought this was interesting – there's this whole passage in this article about the adaptive significance of rhythmic ability in terms of wanting to have good rhythmic motion with someone, and that telling us that if someone has rhythm, they'd be a good parent. Like, a whole paragraph about the frequency of ongoing oscillations of boning. So, I'll translate: if you fuck good, you're probably not a dummy.

Also, just a side note in terms of rhythmic entrainment: a clitoris isn't just that one spot at the top of a lady's *labes*. It's actually almost as big as a dude's dick, and it runs underground so you can't see all of it. You can Google this. I think that there's a common misconception that it's like one of Jackie O's pillbox hats. But, it's really more like the whole Chanel suit, motherfuckers. When I call you that, I'm saying that in a non-insulting, literal sense, because many of you listeners may enjoy coitus with women who have borne your children. In which case, treat her Chanel suit with respect.

While we're having this one-on-one, if you're a dude, prostate stimulation (or prostate milking, as it's called – which is very juicy - or a 'P-Spot orgasm,' as it's also called) is a thing. And apparently, according to Reddit, you should try it. There is no shame in ordering a vibrating butt plug or just, I don't know, playing around down there. Or up there. And to quote a high school friend who made this his motto even though he was a virgin: "If you love it, luuuube it."

Same goes for you, ladies. In fact, one way scientists can even measure orgasms is that spontaneous 8 to 13 Hz rectal contractions are a reliable signal of orgasm taking place in humans, and presumably some non-human animals, the paper states.

That was just a passage for you guys about all kinds of nitty gritty. I hope you enjoyed it. Back to relationship dynamics, which are really the first ingredient when it comes to finally getting nude with a person. Am I right?

Shan: That question I get asked a lot, and I think a lot of relationship-based, defining the relationship as you said, like monogamy. How do I navigate this world where I'm sexually intimate with somebody whom I maybe don't see in that light, doesn't see me in that light? How do I reconcile those two things together? Which is another favorite question of mine.

Alie: How do you do that?

Shan: My long answer for this, (I'm trying to shorten it up) but I think what was really fascinating that happened in nutrition like, 10 years ago... because when we grew up... I'm putting us in the same category right now. You may be way younger, but bear with me.

Alie: Uhhhh.... yeah, no.

Shan: Okay. [*laughs*] When we grew up - remember the food group systems? It was cheese, and milk, and Eggos are part of a balanced breakfast.

Alie: Oh yeah, wheat was the base layer. You put gluten, a little hamburger meat, some cheese, and then a vegetable.

Shan: Yeah, get some milk for a little nice balanced meal. And now, we're like, oh no, no, no, no, no. Oh, just because I want pizza, doesn't mean that me and pizza are destined to be

together. Just because I have a drive to eat a lot of cheese doesn't mean that it's a part of a healthy balanced diet. I think romantically we have a lot of outdated... and that's the problem, our society advanced really quickly.

And so romantically, we have a lot of outdated drives, and urges, or instincts that no longer work in our modern society. I went to this conference at Sundance last week and there was this woman talking about, "Sex is so sacred. Why do you think that after a woman orgasms, she releases oxytocin? Because she's meant to bond with that man." It's like, no! You don't release pleasure hormones when biting pizza because you're meant to eat it daily. There is a system that was in place, it doesn't apply anymore.

These things don't happen because – you know, if you have sex with this guy that you know is not the best or a woman that you know was just a fling for you, and then the next day you feel a draw towards them, it's not because you're destined to be together. You still have to imply or impose your logical mind in there, the same way you still have to be judicious about your diet. You can't just go with what feels good. I think the Go With What Feels Good attitude we have towards love and sex has to change like the nutritional one did.

Alie: What do you think the steps are to that? Do you think it's evaluating partners in terms of their long-term potential? Their short-term potential? How do you apply that kind of objectivity to your life?

Shan: I think as you understand, the same nutritionally, you kind of understand the system - what's good for you. Everybody has something different. Whenever someone comes to me and says, you know, "I'm 26 years old. I've never had a good relationship. I've never had a good sexual relationship. I have a hard time orgasming by myself and I just don't know where to start." I'm like, "Here's the good and bad news. The good news is, you're not abnormal. The bad news is, you have to get to know yourself. Get all the information possible, see what feels right for you, find out your attachment style, your love language, your sex language, your monogamy style, your relationship attachment style, and then you start to piece together who would fit well inside of that." And it can take a while in the same way that anything can. Finding out your skincare system takes a while.

Alie: Yeah, I still haven't really done that.

What is the sexology professional scene like? What are conventions like? Are a lot of sexologist friends sharing research or are some people like, "sex surrogacy (for example) is way off limits" and there's a divide there? What is that scene like?

Shan: I would hope not. I think sex surrogacy should be the Batman to someone's Robin. I'm not even sure. Maybe it's the Robin to someone's Batman. Sexologists work in criminology. They work in the school system. They work for pharmaceuticals, they work for Match.com and they help with the algorithms there. They write books, they write

curriculum, they write private curriculum. Of course, they have private practices, sometimes they're surrogates. There's a lot of different areas.

I am very definitively clear where I sit. I'm not a therapist, I'm not a certified therapist. I do not diagnose, I do not prescribe, I don't want to be that. I never envisioned myself as being a brick and mortar, pencil-pushing sexologist. I always envisioned I'd be doing it in this way: through mass media, through exposure, and hopefully, encouraging people to enter into this space to say, "well, maybe if I increased my knowledge of my intimate life, my entire life could improve." I liken myself to being the Walmart greeter of sex ed. [Alie laughs] I'm right in the beginning. I'm not in the butt plug aisle. I'm not in BDSM. I'm not at LGBTQIA, like where to go and how to define yourself. I'm right at the front and I will tell you what aisle I think would be great. I'll direct you and I'll make the experience awesome.

I think taking that approach, I've had a really good experience with people because I'm not trying to be more than I am and I'm always hungry for new information. So, I think we all work inclusively together. I refer people constantly to someone else. If I have somebody who comes to me - because I have a counseling service on Sundays - who approaches me with an issue that I know I'm not a specialist at, I refer them to somebody else who I think is great in the field.

Alie: I have a dumb question: LGBTQIA?

Shan: It's intersex and asexuality. But it's just LGBTQ+, you can even just say LGBT+. I think people get like - you know, I saw this article, like, "They're adding K to the thing. It's just too much." Just say plus. It's fine.

Alie: What's the K, actually?

Shan: Well, I don't think... because K stands for kink, which is not a sexual orientation in a specific way. I mean, in some ways, because a fetish is linked with your sexual identity, in the same way that maybe boobs or legs would be, it's a part of your arousal cycle.

Aside: What is an arousal cycle? It's not just a setting on your laundry machine. [laughs] Wokka wokka! [slow motion wokka wokka] Apparently, people like that.

The sexual response cycle has four phases: excitement, plateau, orgasm, resolution. Both men and women experience the phases, although the timing usually is different. It is unlikely that both partners are gonna *WOOOOO* at the same time. So, don't go feeling bad about that. Your buddies Shan and Alie tell you it's okay. It's normal.

Alie: Do friends come to you for advice a lot? Too much? The right amount? How often do you get texts, and emails, and Snapchats being like, "hey, it's me! What I do blah blah blah?" And do you love that or hate it?

Shan: I have particular friends that do and some that don't. Honestly, it'd probably be a 50/50 split. It's not that frequently that I'm bombarded. I definitely had to draw a line socially because I was getting bombarded from that regard. The reason I opened up the Sunday counseling service is because someone would pour their heart out to me in an email that was just pages long and I would just not respond because there was too many.

I charge a dollar a minute, which is a nominal fee that you would never find any licensed professionals charging. But the goal of that is to say, well look, (and it's a minimum of an hour) if you're gonna invest this amount of time in it, then it must mean something to you. And then we can go from there to see if you're best fit with a psychologist or you're best fit with a specialist. Or, for you, this is a good opportunity for you to open the floodgates and start your own education process. But I definitely went through a massive period of guilt. I was just getting so many messages from every platform possible that were all so intimate and I think things that people had never said aloud, and to say that to someone and get no response back, I think probably would've been pretty shitty.

Alie: Right. Yeah. That's a little crushing.

Shan: Everything for me - which is why I'm in a bra right now - in a way, has to have a sense of casualness to it. I think that's kind of refreshing for sexuality because there is so much pressure and weirdness on it already that I don't want to make it this formal, clinical thing. I think there's a lot of spaces for that to happen. I think the space I want to take up is where it's informal.

Alie: Right. And for the record, I am in a bra also. I'm just...

Shan: Thank you! I'm like, "are you not going to join in?" You got the necklace on.

Alie: I'm just wearing a shirt over it. *[laughs]* I took a hike in a sports bra yesterday and I felt very liberated.

Shan: Oh, nice!

Alie: I normally don't do that because my skin is like...

Shan: Do you burn easy?

Alie: No, it looks like a pickled fish and my abdomen doesn't see sunlight very often. So, when it does, it's alarming for people. But I was hot! And I took it off and I was like, look at me.

Shan: You're living!

Alie: I know. I'm living. Have you noticed a change in your personal life, I mean, definitely your sex life, since you became certified in this? Do you approach relationships differently? Are you, like, "if I'm not into you in the first six weeks, I'm out of here," or do you give people more time? How has this changed the way you approach?

Shan: Oh, girl! I am a roooooobot. I am a rooooooobot! I approach things very systematically. I think I just chose an awesome partner this time around. I went on a hunt I got really robotic. I wrote down - almost like I was HR - a job description, what I was looking for. Requirements, skills of interest, minimum amount of experience you had to have had. I think I was able to select somebody who allows me to be that because we over analyze all the time. If I'm experiencing new feelings, I'm excited. I'm like, "ooooh, anger! Let's talk about this and work it through!"

I think it definitely does impact my intimate life, but I chose somebody who I think accepts the fact that I love analyzing this side of my life. I'm in an open relationship because I want to continue to experience, and see, and bring that back. I look at myself as a source of research and so I don't want to close myself off in a way that wouldn't feel honoring to me.

Alie: How is the open relationship working out? I was going to ask about this anyway, because I feel like I've talked to a lot of friends recently who are like, "I love my partner, but I don't know if this is the only person I want to sleep with for the rest of my life. But what if I fall in love with someone when I'm in an open thing?" How do you recommend people approach that?

Shan: You have to do it the "for me" approach, not "because of you." I think, a lot of times, people think of open relationships as, "because my partner is not enough, because my partner comes too quickly, or because my partner doesn't come at all." Who cares? They have a "because of my partner, I want it to be open." That's never the right approach. It's probably the wrong person to have a committed relationship with. You do it because for you it feels really validating to be able to flirt with others without the guilt. For you, you are the best sexual partner when you're able to take information from new people.

For me in the past, and I got in a lot of - "trouble" is wrong word - but I was in a monogamous relationship where that person cheated constantly, for one, but number two, I was always being accused of not doing things right for things that felt innocent to me, like flirting, or communicating my feelings to somebody else. It's what you want to be open to.

Aside: Shan says it's a question of who you are when you're single. What's your general deal when you're single and how do you want to behave in a relationship as someone who technically still has those options?

Shan: If your answer is: "I want to bed down as many people as possible," for one person and the other person's is, "I just want to go to Starbucks and be able to flirt with the Barista," you guys may not be compatible for open in that regard. And I think me and my partner were both like, look, even when we were not in a relationship, we were not having sex with others. But maybe we do slide in someone's DMs, you know, maybe we do go out drinking and, like, dance with somebody else.

Alie: What happens if you're in an open relationship and it starts to go off the rails?

Shan: I mean, you've got to... same thing with monogamy or anything else. I think nothing should feel like it's set in stone. You know, the only thing constant in this world is change.

To me, really, what 'open' says, more than anything else, is we're always open to conversations, and I love conversations like that. If I was to go on a date with someone else, I come back to my partner and I talk about it with them. Nothing that I experience, or that I feel, is perceived as bad. We'll talk about it first and figure out how we feel about it as a unit.

Alie: Do you think that that's the direction that relationships will go? I mean, if you look at how relationships were, even in like the '70s, women couldn't get credit cards without their husband's consent. Shit's changed a lot in the last few decades.

Aside: Side note: In the 1960s, a bank could refuse to issue a credit card to an unmarried woman; even if she was married, her husband was required to cosign. It wasn't until 1974 that it became illegal to refuse a credit card to a woman based on her gender. That's crazy. In fact-checking this, I also learned that most Ivy League schools wouldn't accept women until the late '60s or early 1970s. President Kennedy once said on television:

We want to be sure that women are used as effectively as they can to provide a better life for our people, in addition to meeting their primary responsibility, which is in the home.

This was as woke as it got in 1962. *WHAT?* So, this is just an aside to say that everything is bullshit, everything is garbage! No matter how you are told you don't belong somewhere - no matter what your gender, no matter what the circumstance - fuck that very hard, swive that old-school bullshit, forge ahead, kick down doors because this is the only way things change. Social mores have historically proven to be bullshit, so if something feels oppressive, challenge it, because rules are broken every day. Now, climbing off my soapbox, returning to learning about primate anuses, and face masks, and volcanoes for my career.

Alie: Do you think that we're going to go further and further from this weird nuclear family of [*old timey snobbery voice*] 'a woman's stays home and they get married and you get married as virgins.'?

Shan: For example, even no sex before marriage in the Bible speaks to a time that there was no contraception and venereal diseases ran wild! Women, on top of that, to your point, couldn't go to school! You know, without a man, without a husband, they didn't have a path to survival. And so, they had to withhold the one thing that they have to get married quicker so they can ensure that they have money coming in, that they have a livelihood.

You think about it in terms of that - someone created monogamy based on a set of principles at the time made for the most logical life. As time goes on, we're not really

monogamous in a lot of things, you know, career wise, we're not in unions or signing formal jobs, working somewhere for 40 years. Even our cell phone contracts now are no longer three years.

Alie: So true. I'm trying to think of my longest commitment to anything.

Shan: I've been with T Mobile for four years but I've never been in a contract. I'm always pay as you go.

Alie: I know I've been with AT&T since 2009. I don't have to be, but I choose to be.

Shan: I choose to be! It makes sense. I think that this idea of closing people's options off... just do what makes sense for you for as long as it makes sense for you. I think monogamy is beautiful, and wonderful, and works for many people, and it's a very affirming and safe place, and obviously, if done right, the best way to ensure that we're not spreading diseases and we're keeping ourselves healthy sexually. But on the flip side, I think we'll have a more flexible attitude, as we do with other areas in life, towards what it means when two people are in love and how they're supposed to behave.

Alie: We have a really powerful movement right now. Women using their voices to speak out against a lot of *horrible* shit that's been going on.

Shan: Ah, the Me Too Movement

Alie: The Me Too Movement. Do you find that a lot of guys are questioning their innate maleness? Like, "I don't know how to divorce myself from my weird testosterone." What is the best way for men to handle their sexuality in a way that isn't being an asshole to women?

Shan: I've had this conversation frequently, which I'm very fortunate, I think, to have a lot of men who trust me to ask politically incorrect questions. To me, it's a loving approach. For example, if someone comes into your home (you came into my home today), and I say, "make yourself at home." I would understand, and you understand, that doesn't mean "use my toothbrush." It doesn't mean "climb into my bed." We have created a social encyclopedia of how to behave, after years of practice and of etiquette, of walking into someone's house as a kid and your parents stopping you and saying, "don't run around, don't touch that."

We're not doing that for adults when it comes to sexual interactions. They just get into the situation and they don't have any prior knowledge or information on how to behave. I think we should give each other more credit and explain things more. As much as it sounds like common sense, if someone came in your house and started doing crazy stuff, you may have to explain to them like, "Hey, this is how we behave in a home."

The same as, you know, with violence. It kinda took a long time to come out of our society. Violence began of like, "well, you can punch them if they make you angry." And

it's like, well, you can't do that. It was like, "well, you can punch your wife, still, if she makes you angry." And now we're like, okay, you can't do that either. And then like, "okay, well when can we punch?" Well, like actually never. There's never an appropriate time. It took a while, legally, for us to get there and of course, society, for us all to agree that violence is never the answer. Even children, that probably was the last thing to go, because I grew up with the generation of "it's okay to hit your kids," and now it's not anymore.

So, I think we have to have a patient attitude towards this and a persistent attitude, but one that's empathetic, in a way, not judgmental. Not, "why don't you know this." An, "oh, you didn't know this, so let's have this discussion now." Every woman, I think, who's friends with a male, have an opportunity to talk with them and talk it out.

I think dumbing it down, walking through those things with people, as much as it seems like, "why should I have to do this?" Why not?

Alie: How do you counsel people who have been triggered or who have had bad sexual experiences that have difficulty trusting again or giving themselves intimately, or are pissed? Because I think there's a lot of us that have had situations where you've maybe been in a situation you didn't want to be in. What's the best way to move forward from that?

Shan: As weird as it sounds, like with phobias - if you had a phobia of spiders, and we just sat down and talked about it, and described spiders in details, and went through the different kinds of spiders, and we watched a documentary, as much as that's your biggest fear, it would help to subside and give you relief because you feel you have more control or understanding.

Alie: I love spiders, by the way.

Shan: Do you? Like, literally?

Alie: Yeah, I do. I love bugs.

Shan: Are you joking?

Alie: No, I swear to God.

Shan: That's so weird. Why?

Alie: Yeah, no, I love bugs. I'd love this, but I see where you're going.

Shan: Right! But you're like, no, bitch. I love spiders.

Alie: But I'm like, that sounds like the best day ever.

Shan: It's like *Shark Week* for you.

Alie: Pretty much.

Shan: So, yeah, even with sharks, right? It's more knowledge and understanding. Fear and anger and those extreme emotions come out of a lack of understanding. And so, I think if you take the time to talk about your experiences, talk about it with others, talk about it with people who you perceive as the aggressors. Find a trusted male friend that you can talk it through with. I think when you take away that veil of uncertainty and of cloudiness and you really look that thing in the eye and understand it, it becomes easy to understand how to interact.

I had a sexual assault, like many people did in their college years, and nothing was better for me than doing the book, *Laid*, afterwards and hearing so many other people's stories and connecting with them, and talking about sex constantly and incessantly. I'm a beneficiary of the system. There's actually a study that says that if you do talk about something more, it's the most sure-fire way to get over that fear.

Alie: So, at least, don't bury it. Don't bury the experience in your subconscious.

Shan: Does anyone think you should do that?

Alie: I don't know. I was raised Catholic too, so we're like...

Shan: That is true. Catholics are like, talk about it once to your priest...

Alie: And then go chant a bunch of shit and you'll be fine. But if you don't, you will go to hell. No big deal. Catholicism is fun.

Okay. I have a bunch of questions from listeners. Can I rapid-fire them?

Shan: Yes, please. I'm going to try to keep the answers short.

Alie: No! I mean, it's a rapid-fire round but we don't always keep it quick. Just no pressure to elaborate if you don't want to.

Greg asked this question, I kind of asked it, but: How can men "unlearn" social stereotypes about sexuality? What would you teach the Aziz Ansaris of the world to get them to refocus on their partner's needs instead of their own? Also, why am I alone?

Shan: What a great question! The last one, I mean, we can't go there, but the rest of it, um... well, you can go there, Greg, and the reason why you're alone is you haven't learned to sell your strengths and minimize your weaknesses, which is a basic marketing tactic for everybody. I think applying a lot of marketing tips to why we can't correctly partner with someone else may be helpful, cause you're awesome! You're great! I don't have to know you to know that you have incredible things about you, but you're just failing to bring those things to the forefront and find an environment where those attributes really count.

The Aziz Ansari one, I think it's just, again, having trusted conversations and asking those awkward questions beforehand. Maybe, not even of the partner, of your date. Maybe it's even calling your mom or calling whoever it is, a woman that you know and asking them to walk you through it. Or, the great thing now is, you can go online as well, too. So, there's a plethora of places you can go to have this discussion, but find a trusted safe space to ask the stupid questions. "I have this girl coming over. I'm really not sure if she's feeling me or not. I want to have sex. Do I put the lube out or do I keep it in the drawer and see?" Those are great things just to talk through. It sounds silly saying it out loud, but I think that can be really helpful.

Alie: Yeah. Also, dudes, if someone's not feeling it, don't try to keep making her feel it.

Shan: That's the thing, you know what I mean? I was saying this too. I'm like, yo... Because a friend of mine was like, "but you know what it is, Shan. That guys think when women pull back, it's because they want you to pursue more." I was like, "yo, that has been true twice in history." The other times, it's not been true. Like, you guys had this rumor spread that [*mockingly*] 'when women say no, they actually mean yes.' And it's been true, I think maybe historically more, because there was so much shame associated with sexual expression that the reason why many women have rape fantasies, for example, is because they want someone to do it to them and it wasn't their will. So, then they can't feel shamed for it because they didn't ask for it even though they had wanted it.

But I think as we become more liberated, that becomes so much less true and true. Like, you know, when your girlfriend is like, "this dude's not texting me back and I haven't heard from him." And then that one friend in the group will be like, "it's because he likes you too much." What? Girl! No! That's been true twice too! It's not true often. So, getting it out of your head that no really means yes, I think, is a massive universal first step to ending this problem.

Alie: Yeah. You'll know when we want to fuck you, you guys. You'll know. Because we'll be fucking you.

Aside: So, no means no, as always, but more importantly is obtaining an enthusiastic yes. Yes means yes.

Alie: Michael asked: It's often said that porn negatively affects men and women's views on sex, creating an unrealistic set of expectations, but is there anything positive someone can learn from porn?

Shan: Yeah! I don't look at many things as negative or positive. It's all neutral. It's how you interact with it or what you choose to interact with based on who you are. So, for example, if you're somebody who's well aware of what the realities of sex are, you can watch porn for entertainment, like we can watch wrestling for entertainment without being like, "this is how we fight," or "this is how humans interact when they don't get the right sandwich at Subway," whatever it is.

It's you that assigns a characteristic to it. Porn is not good or bad. How you interact with porn may determine if it's good or bad. Erika Lust is a director who makes cinematic porn that is based on people's fantasies that she brings to life. And it's beautiful and it's great. It has story arcs. It's sexual, it's raw and it's hot as fuck. All the above. It's porn, and I think that that might be a great educational tool for people. *PornHub* introduced a sex education tab, or section, on their site. I'm not sure if it's visited often, but the information is there.

Alie: Oh, that's nice. Also, if they don't call it "sexxtion" with two Xs, what are they doing? [*Shan laughs*] And if Erika Lust – God, I hope that's her given name.

Shan: No, it's not.

Alie: Damn it. But sometimes you'll meet a Baker who actually does make cakes and...

Shan: You know, I'm reading this book called *Influence* right now, and it was saying that Dennis's are more likely to become dentists because people associate....

Alie: Dentist. Dennis. Aaahhh...life. The brain is such a weird mushy thing.

BK wants to know: Is it normal or odd that a woman can feel absolutely no sensation during sex from penetration? I mean, none. She notes: asking for a friend.

Shan: You know, okay... so, take your hand and put it up right now and put it backwards. If you stroke the back of your hand, that is the amount of nerve endings that are along the vaginal wall. So, it's somewhere in that range. There's not a lot going on inside of the actual vaginal walls, but if you apply pressure towards the belly button, which is where the clitoris is, which is shaped like a wishbone, which is where the bladder is, which there is for some people a Skene's gland.

Aside: I'm sorry, what is a Skene's gland? I literally thought I misheard her. What was this word she was saying? Y'all, there is a thing called a Skene's gland. I'm shook. It was named after a Scottish gyno from the 1800s (whose surname could have easily been Prober or Vagina Mechanic) and in 2002, it was renamed the female prostate, which still seems weird. That's like calling a dick a "male clit." Whatever.

Skene's glands are near the end of the *vageen* [vagina]. They drain into the urethra and they may be near or a part of the G-Spot. I love how even *Wikipedia* is like, "Maybe. I don't know, man." Also, they may be a source of female ejaculate, which is still hotly debated, and somehow there is a sportscar floating in the asteroid belt right now, blasting David Bowie, but no one knows definitively, like, if there's this whole other orgasm situation. Aaaaah!

By the by, learning about this was almost as thrilling as the time I found out that my Prius has an extra secret compartment underneath the cupholders. It's the perfect size to

stash a gun, or realistically, a small loaf of zucchini bread. Okay, back to vaginal stimulation and why it works for some people but isn't enough for others.

Shan: For some people, even just that friction pulls the clitoris up and down, which can be pleasurable, so that's the part of sexual penetration that's good. It's not the actual grazing along the sides of the walls. So, you're not abnormal if you find – because no one's putting in a tampon and being like, OOOHHH!! We're all just getting it done. Right?

Alie: Can you imagine the bathroom at work? “Oh, Wendy's on the rag!” So, that pressure toward the front is what's doing it?

Shan: Yeah. I'm reading this book right now; it's called *Come as you Are*. [kazoo: “doo-doo!”] How I used to understand the G-Spot is that the Skene's gland, which is the anatomical twin to the prostate... and, for example, nipples on a man are an evolutionary unnecessary. They have them. There's no point to them. And so, we sometimes have characteristics from each other. Some humans are born with tails, for example, that we don't really need. And nipples are one of those, and the Skene's gland is one of those. It's like, we don't need a prostate, but some women develop them. But it's pleasurable to touch in the same way. And if you have a large one, for you, penetration can be really pleasurable and you can have that deep orgasm how a man may have a deep anal orgasm. Or if, you know, by making a lot of pressure on the gooch, for example.

Aside: Hello, my name is Alie Ward and I just had to Google ‘gooch.’ And it's just what you think it is: it's a taint, it's a grundle, a bungus, a danger zone, a barse. And if you're talking to a doctor: a perineum. Back to boning.

Shan: So, if you have that, and I've also heard that the distance between your clitoris and your vaginal opening also determines a lot of how you might feel. So, all the actions towards the front, you have the clit, you have the mons pubis, you've got the uterine line. And also, when a woman becomes aroused, her erectile tissue - to protect the bladder, the same way a man's does - protects the uterine lining. So, that's the spongy tissue that's pleasurable to touch.

So, all the actions towards the front and, of course, the top where the cervix meets, that's where you get that painful feeling because it's like the neck of the uterus. Some people really enjoy that feeling of pleasure-pain. I like it in ratios, like maybe 10 to 1. I don't like constant pounding at that. But some people enjoy it. So, I think people's experience with it isn't the sliding up and down up the walls, how I think porn might make it appear.

Alie: Right. Good point. VP asks: Where is the line between normal slumps in the sex life during a long-term relationship and slumps you should be concerned about? Also, any tips for breaking a slump that are more casual than the over the top cheesy *Cosmo* style tips? So, sluuuuuuuuuuump!

Shan: A part of a life partnership, I think, is accepting that those things happen, that people go through peaks and valleys and can't necessarily explain why. Sex language is something that I talk about a lot. You know what love language is? It's kind of like that, where it's a direct mental negotiator, *Cat*.

Alie: *Cat* is one?

Shan: *Cat* is when you don't like to be pursued. You have to come to the person first. So, *Direct* is when you just want the language and that can just be like, "I want to take your top off right now. I want you." And that sends a sudden burst through you. *Sensual* is like, "you've got to clean the house, do the laundry." The person is unable to focus if there's so much around, and the smell isn't there. It has to be complete sensory experience. *Mental* is like, "we have to have a connection here before I would even consider opening up to you." *Negotiator* is a person who is like, they don't really have a lot of pleasure from sex, it's not a preferred activity for them, but if they know in return you're going to take the car in to get the oil changed or take the kids to ballet, whatever it is, they may be more inclined.

Learning why somebody wants to have sex and what encourages them to do it, that's how you get over slumps. I don't think it's a tip that anyone can issue out as a universal one. And it's also having a lot of intimacy that doesn't have the pre-cursor of sexuality attached to it. I think that breaks trust. If every time you get a hug and a kiss and a rub, you then go right in, it makes someone feel, one) cheap sometimes, and two) it puts a lot of distance, like, I don't want to touch at all then, because I may not want to go there.

So, I think the process of getting over a slump is accepting that sometimes you'll just kiss and make out and then it will stop there and you may go back to where you were before when you first dated. Knowing your partner, and what they like, and seducing them in a way that's particular to them, not the way that you think you'd want to be seduced or that you read somewhere else. And buying them lingerie, even though that may feel like a good idea for you, could actually be very traumatic for them because perhaps the reason why they're not wanting to have sex is they have bodily changes that they're not comfortable with, and being put on display in that way visually is horrific. So, you can't make assumptions. You have to ask and maybe just have this conversation with them of like, "what is your way of getting turned on?"

Alie: How much of reluctance to have sex is... do you feel like is usually self-directed? Like, "it's not that I'm not attracted to you, it's just that right now, I don't feel attractive." What's the best way to get over that?

Shan: Esther Perel, who I didn't talk about, who's incredible - you've probably heard of her before.

Alie: No, I don't think so! Esther Perel.

Shan: She's kind of become known for the cheating sexologist. So, she talks a lot about infidelity, why people do it. She says in her book, *Mating in Captivity*, that a woman's greatest turn on is herself. So, men tend to be - and people are sometimes uncomfortable about the men and women distinctions. I'm of the school thought - like, Dr. Helen Fisher, she did a lot of brain scans and found that there is a drastic difference. Of course, as the lines blend for some people who are intersex, or people who have more testosterone, these don't ring true. And there's no ring true of all women, all men. So, please don't feel I'm saying that.

But, for a lot of men, they're very visual, which is why porn for them is a higher service. It's a billion-dollar industry for them, and for women it's not equivalent. For women, it's not a visual, like a massive penis or the best boobs, that always turns them on. It can be themselves when they feel sexy, when they feel hot, when they feel like, "I'm the shit," that's when they're most inclined to want to engage in sexuality. So, I think that's an interesting kind of thing to Jedi Mind Trick, to make sure that you're making your woman feel amazing. And I think it is very true. The sexier that you feel, the more inclined you will feel to have sex.

Alie: Yeah, I totally feel that. I dated someone who wasn't very generous in that respect. He didn't make me feel very sexy or beautiful and I feel like I just totally shut down. And it wasn't because he wasn't nice to look at or anything. But I do think that making someone feel wanted and attractive is kind of a good way to get over, maybe, a slump.

I also think it's weird how you're like, "uuuuuuuuugh, I don't feel like having sex, I'm too tired." But then if you started having sex, one second into it, you're like, "oh! this is great!"

Shan: Yeeeeees!

Alie: What the fuck is that?!

Shan: I know! You know what? That's actually Dr. Ian Kerner, whom I love as well, he wrote *She Comes First* [cymbal crash] and talked about that. For a lot of women, their sexual response cycle doesn't begin until they are, like maybe, second phase in. So, you may not feel inclined to have sex, but once you start - it's like working out. You don't want to do it, but once you're doing it, you're like, "I'm enjoying this. I don't mind it." But then the next day, you forget that you liked it and you're like, "I don't want to work out." So, I feel like it's similar in that vein, but it's not abnormal to feel that way at all.

Aside: Please note: there is a really big difference between feeling tired and lazy and being like, "yeah, okay, why not" and not wanting to have sex but feeling pressured. Big difference. This is a decision you make for yourself, like going for a jog that feels really good versus running away from something. This all comes down to whether or not you want to do something.

Alie: And I think a lot of people in general, in all genders, put too much pressure on themselves that every time they have sex, it has to be The Best Sex, and you have to look The Hottest, and it has to be the most memorable, and if you feel like you can't achieve that, then you're like, "ugh, I don't feel like having sex because I feel like it's going to be lame." But it doesn't have to... you know what I mean?

Shan: I think a big part of great sex is working through it. Sometimes, it's so shitty, it's so awkward, and you gotta be like, "no, we're committing." Like, last night - I'm sorry, Jared, but your business is about to be put out there.

Last night, I was just on the balcony and I was just really, really like - this is going to be the sexual part of the podcast [*sensual music starts*] - really aroused, just really wet. I think I'm ovulating though, but I was just really wet. I was like, "oh, this must mean that I'm turned on." So, we started and I'm like, I'm actually not really turned on right now. I'm like, I need my vibrator. So, I got my vibrator and then we were on the bed, positioning to make this possible, and I couldn't really figure it out and I was like, "this isn't working for me. Get the coconut oil?" And he goes, gets the coconut oil and comes back and then we figured it out and it was like... by the time that we actually made it, it was like, 10 minutes of like, "this sucks!" And then, I just pictured myself on top of this mountain of flowers. It just became this really beautiful experience. And it felt really affirming that I had a partner who was willing to go through that ugliness with me to get to this place of a really great experience. But I don't think great sex starts out that way all the time. [*sensual music ends*]

Alie: Right! But I think that it's good that it can start messy and with some hiccups and it's still fine. It doesn't have to be perfect.

Shan: And it can end terrible too and then be okay. I don't know! I'm going to answer this question for this KY Brand deal I'm doing: the best and worst sex I've had with my partner. And we're like, the worst sex: this one time I tied him up and it was on a really heavy metal chair, and after orgasming I didn't back off right away. And he's very sensitive. And so he was rocking, and so he fell on his arm and severely hurt his arm. And it was this awkward experience of me trying to help him, trying to get cleaned up. And then he was yelling, I couldn't get the cuffs off. It was a lot! It's a bad experience and we had to the hospital, whatever.

Alie: Oh my God!

Shan: He was fine. He was just freaked out because his arm wasn't functioning, but it came back to life. Everything is fine. Nonetheless, I think it's bad, but it was great in kind of its own way.

Alie: Yeah. I think that remembering that you're a human being and not an object of sexual perfection is something that...

Shan: Yeah, because queefs happen!

Aside: The world may be ready now for a bumper sticker that says: Queefs Happen.

Alie: It's like after a good meal – it's like a burp. In some cultures, I'm sure that's a compliment to the chef.

Lily Masa wants to know: What's the biggest misconception you have come across when it comes to sexuality?

Shan: That it's linear.

Alie: Okay. Linear, how?

Shan: One size fits all. This is how you do it. This is what's good and bad. If you do this, you're weird or abnormal. I've just learned through talking to enough people that 80% don't fit in the "this is normal" box. So, whatever we've determined is the linear, like, "this is what most people like." I don't think it really applies to reality.

Alie: That's so liberating. Chances are you're a lot less weird than you think you are.

EK wants to know: why do I make horrible decisions? J/K. Real question. How linked is emotional to sexual experience with a person? How much does lust affect love and vice versa?

Shan: I think the answer to this is scientific and hormonal. If you look at yourself as though you're, like, a robot on two levels: there's your nervous system which is like the electrical current that tells you what to do and the synapses that fire, and then there is the endocrine system which is the hormones pumping through you which say, "be happy, be sad, go to sleep," et cetera. And so, a lot of our sexual response is based on those two systems that are puppeting you. If you understood those a bit more, then you could differentiate between like, "oh, here's my natural body response and here's the logical response."

I think the best way to describe that again is food, where it's like, "I naturally am drawn to this cake, but I'm not gonna eat it because it isn't the best cake or the most logical one." Or, "I'm going to have this cake and let that be enough for today, knowing that this cake isn't healthy for me going in the future."

A massive thing that is important to build is a muscle that determines the difference between healthy and comfortable. And that's for everything in life, and that directly applies to intimacy. There's a lot of very comfortable relationships or comfortable activities that aren't healthy for us, like comfort foods or fatty, sugary, you know, very heavy foods, but we can't choose those every day. But we can have them in moderation if we're really aware of what function they serve.

Alie: Okay. So, just try to do what's best for you and keep that in mind.

Shan: I think, learn the science. Honestly, that really helped to affirm me. So, if you look up “what is love in the brain? What is sex? How does the brain behave on sex?” When you understand what's happening in the puppeting system of your body, it's easier to make decisions, not based on what you feel, but what's reality. That has helped me a lot, so hopefully it will help this questioner.

One of my favorite books is *The Science of Happily Ever After*. It's by Ty Tashiro, who's a PhD. He talks about how everyone should make a list of three non-negotiables - I think if you live in a big city, you can have five because your options are bigger - but three to five non-negotiable things that you have to have in a partner, and outside of that you're going to have to be flexible. And so, if children is not in your three to five, if sex frequently is not in your three to five, you may find yourself in a position where you're going to have to be flexible. But if it is in your three to five, don't.

Alie: That's a good point. I should probably make a list. I hadn't really thought about that.

ES says: First of all, Shan is one of the coolest people ever, so I'm so excited for this episode. Secondly, why do some straight/bi/lesbian women get turned on by male gay porn? Lesbian porn I can understand because boobs are universally appreciated (true), but overall, dicks can be pretty weird to look at.

Shan: I don't have a scientific response to this, but I do have anecdotal of people that I've talked to. They've said the reason why they like male gay porn is because they know that the men are actually gay and enjoying it. When they watch girl on girl porn, they're aware that it's probably straight women who are being directed by a straight man to touch each other, and it doesn't make them feel as good. But when you watch gay male porn, you're like, these are men who, more than likely, enjoy having sex with men. So, there's less guilt with it and more enjoyment of watching people enjoy themselves.

Alie: You can't fake a boner too well.

Shan: Right! Yeah. I'm sure some could, some professionals, but there's enough heterosexual porn out there that I'm sure that you wouldn't dip into gay unless you were on the spectrum and that felt like it would be a good idea for you. Where a lot of women, I'm sure, who would never otherwise be with a woman, found themselves on girl on girl scenes.

Alie: I think consent is kind of sexy in that term. That should be a... 2018: Consent is Sexy.

Daniel wants to know: Is there a solution for sexual dysfunction due to taking SSRIs?

Shan: There are solutions, like the Center for Healthy Sex - which is in California, but they have a great program. There are specialists who do specifically talk about that. It's a lot of mental blocks. I think if I was to give a base tip to somebody, it's that you cannot

engage... a lot of times women tie their attractiveness scale towards the erection. So, if a man is erect, they feel desired. And so, you have to break out of that system with your partner, so it's like they can't reach for your penis in the first three minutes because it creates that panic mode.

Going back to the nervous system, there's fight or flight, there's calm and connect, and when you're in fight or flight mode, in panic mode, it's very difficult to get aroused. So, you've got to find a way with your partner to make sure that you're calm and connected and the second somebody reaches for your penis and it isn't erect, and you know that it's supposed to be, and they know it's supposed to be, that might put the person into panic and takes them further away from their goal. The first and foremost thing is talking about it with your partner, creating a safe system of intimacy that isn't hinged on the erection. It's a bonus, not a prerequisite or necessity for us to feel like we can do this.

Alie: That's actually also a good point with people who suffer from anxiety in general, on all sides, that if you're having an anxious day, one of the best things your partner can probably do is help calm you down before they try to hit it. You know what I mean?

Shan: That's so true. I worked with this couple whom the man had a really difficult time maintaining an erection or achieving one, and she was like, "you know, I just get so upset, I've just cried about it for so many nights. I don't understand why. What is it about me?" I'm like, why are you personalizing it? That's probably the biggest issue is that you're making it about you, and now your partner has this guilt and this need to please you, on top of the fact that they have their own issues to deal with. I think that that's probably the wrong approach. But there are specialists who have techniques.

Aside: I did do a little research for you. Once again, I am nooooo doctor, so please talk to yours. But some folks say that taking their SSRI after sex is better for them, so the medication isn't at peak levels in their blood stream when they're trying to get it on. Others augment treatment with a different type of antidepressant, like the addition of Wellbutrin, which isn't an SSRI. Did I mention that you should talk to your doctor about it? Because I am not a doctor. Okay, good.

Alie: JK wants to know: why do fetishes exist? I see some validity in the connection between being breastfed and digging big tatas, and control play with ropes, but why feet or why smooshing your face into bread? Why dressing up like a giant plush toy?

Shan: It's just an arousal pattern that you've created that, for whatever reason, whether it's manifested through... I think fantasy in general is an exaggeration of a base sexual desire we can all relate to. For example, the fantasy of non-consensual sex exists for a lot of people. One, it could be because of the shame. They want someone to take over and take responsibility. Two, it can be because we all kind of have this relationship with dominance and submissiveness, and so that's an exaggerated expression of that.

I think a lot of times kink can come out of an exaggerated expression, but it's a base drive that maybe we all have. Maybe we associate plushies with safety, with caretaking, with intimacy. It's our first cuddle toy. Seeing and having that experience with that just feels very nurturing. It's an expression that, in feet, the same way, maybe there's a taboo, or you find them very attractive. Who knows? We all create different arousal patterns based on exposure and experience. And if it comes up frequently enough, we can't act like it's a weird thing. It's obviously very normal for a lot of people to be extremely aroused by feet and there's a great cause for that.

Aside: Just an aside on foot fetishes: Freud claimed that people were horny for feet because they resemble dicks. Okay. People were like, no, Freud. That's not it. Recently, a neuroscientist in San Diego was studying phantom limb syndrome in amputees and found that feet and genitals are *neighbors*, right next to each other in the brain's body image map. So, foot fetishes could possibly be just from some cross-wiring next door in the brain. As for plushophilia fetish – furry stuff – if you ever want to seem in the know just be like, “Yeah man, nothing wrong with a little yiffing.” It's called ‘yiffing.’ I just learned that. I hope I said that right.

Alie: Two anonymous questions:

Shan: Ooooh! These are from you, obviously. Obviously, Alie, these are from you!

Alie: [*awkward voice*] Uumm, what happens if you're a red head and you only like three-foot long dicks?

Aside: Just kidding, that sounds literally awful. Okay, a few anonymous questions for real. P.S.: If I ever do another sexology episode – let me know if you want one – that's just all questions, I'll make an anonymous form for question submissions. Anony-question.

Alie: What if you *want* to want to swallow cum, but you don't want to? You don't want to, and you feel bad about it.

Shan: You shouldn't feel bad about it. I don't swallow. The refractory period for men is such a sharp curve where it's like, the building of ecstasy, which, if you look at biology, men are incentivized all along the way to continue to have sex, while women have a very empathetic experience that maybe we're getting nothing out of it, but we're there because we know it's for the good of, not just the man, but also for procreation. Because if we stopped having sex, we stopped feeling pleasure, there'd be no babies. But men, they're like, “we'll make sure it feels better and better for you until you ejaculate.” Because, if you orgasmed, and then you stopped feeling something, and ejaculation was 10 minutes after, we'd have a birth rate of, like, 0.2!

So, for them, as soon as they orgasm, they go through a very sharp curve of like, there's no longer that need for dopamine. So, I don't know if swallowing is going to really

enhance the experience. Even if they think that it will, I think by and large, they've already hit that spike and anything afterwards is probably fine. They're probably more concerned with a sandwich than what you do with their cum.

Alie: Anonymous question: why are we sometimes sexually attracted to people we don't find physically appealing and vice versa? So why, sometimes, is someone who isn't classically attractive, someone that you wanna bone, but someone that you should want to bone is someone you don't want to bone. Does that make sense?

Shan: Yeeeeeahh...

Alie: Kind of..

Shan: I think your subconscious frames a lot of your feelings towards the life and world based on familiarity. And so for example, if you watch porn with a certain kind of face that would feel maybe there'd be an association of arousal there. Maybe it even could be like a parental thing, or like a teacher thing, someone reminds you of someone in your life that gave you positive feelings or made you feel safe. And so, when you're faced with that person, you don't know why, but you feel very drawn to them. It's because you've created an archetype for that kind of person's look or personality that opens up a schema of safety or of arousal, whatever it is.

So, sometimes it's not that that person may not register for us as traditionally what we defined as X, but along the way somewhere, we have identified that this person makes us feel good, and when we're around them we may feel a sense of attraction. So, I don't know if I answered that question for that.

Alie: So, it could be association?

Shan: It's... Girl! Listen. That's the one word answer I was looking for. It's association. *[laughs]*

Alie: One more that I feel like probably a lot of people had that didn't want to ask: What if you're in a relationship but you feel like you missed out on a period of your life where you could experiment with same sex partners, or kinks, or fetishes and now you're in a relationship and you feel like you can't, but you don't want to give up that relationship? Do you know what I mean?

Shan: We can always get passes, but that's why I think, you know, playing with the parameters of monogamy. Like, there's a term that Dr. Jess, who's a Canadian as well and a sexologist, she calls 'monogamish.' It's actually Dan Savage's, but I think she adopted it in her own way. Essentially, it's that like, maybe as partners we watch webcam porn together, and so I get the experience of having a live – if my fantasy is to have a woman, for example - I have experience in having a live woman and my partner shares it with me. Or, we make an effort to go out to a strip club together where my partner pays for a lap dance. They get to be there to experience this, so I'm still getting to act it out while within the parameters of the two-partner system. So, it's not an experience outside of the

relationship. That might be a good way to negotiate that, to find a way to include them and to make it so that it's like, "I'm not replacing you with this. I want you to engage in this with me in a way that still honors our formal agreement of monogamy."

Alie: That's a good answer. That's a good compromise. That's a good diplomatic... you should go into politics after this.

Shan: There we go. Done.

Alie: Okay, least favorite thing about your job?

Shan: Oh my God. My answer is terrible for this!

Alie: No. There's no terrible answer.

Shan: Honestly, my least favorite thing is counseling on Sundays. I could not... It's terrible. It's so terrible. But I could not do that as a nine to five job. Bless people who do it.

Alie: What's your favorite thing about sexology?

Shan: Learning. Applying it to my own life, which is selfish. I am a narcissistic piece of shit. It really is. It's applying it to my own life. It's taking that information, seeing how it can improve my relationships or my interactions with people. It's just fun! I think it's like - it's a space that applies to everything. What I learn about seduction, I use at the grocery store and 7-Eleven. What I learn about good sexual practices, I actually apply to my job, as well. So, I think it's just becoming the best version of me and getting to get paid to do that.

Alie: I think passion is important both in your career and in nudity. You wanna want to be there. Right?

Shan: Yes.

Alie: Where can people find you?

Shan: Shan Boody! Just look it up. I always say that it's kind of a weird question because it's not me that I want you to be piqued by. I want you to be peaked by a topic that, while we were having this discussion, you were like, I actually really like X and I've never felt empowered to discover that more. So, I think, don't worry about me. I'm there. But whatever it is that for you would be like, "what's the next step to me intimately manifesting my greatest self?" That's what you should be googling right now.

Get to it. You can also, of course, find Shan Boody aka Shannon Boodram, at her YouTube channel [ShanBoody](#), which is so great. She's on [all](#) the [social media](#). I suggest following her because she is amazing. I love seeing her face in my feed.

Ologies is on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) as @Ologies. You can join the [Ologies Podcast Facebook group](#), which is great. There's so many amazingly hilarious people in there. Thank you, Erin and Hannah, for being admins. I'm @AlieWard on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and all of that. Do say hello.

I hope this episode answered a few questions or at least prompted you to do some exploring [*boing-oing-oing*] of your own. I hope you connect with your partners, or yourselves, or a photo of a foot, or whatever model of sexual trance and climax via rhythmic entrainment you prefer.

Thank you to Steven Ray Morris for editing this episode, especially since I fuuuucked up a little and I boned us on the turnaround time. Thank you for scrambling on a Sunday to edit this.

Thank you, as always, to every single person who donates on Patreon. You guys are Patrons. Thank you so much for supporting this Podcast. It literally would not exist without you. I wouldn't be able to pay anyone and this wouldn't exist, so thank you so much. You can become a Patron for as little \$1 a month. 25 cents an episode gets you in the club and then your questions are submitted to the ologists. So... [Patreon.com/Ologies](#).

Thanks to Shannon Feltus and Boni Dutch for their amazing, awesome help with [OlogiesMerch.com](#). There's so much stuff you can get there. Shirts, hats, T-Shirts, pins.

By the way, I'll be in Portland, Oregon, in America, February 22 at an Eat Feastly dinner with Thanatologist Cole Imperi from a few episodes back. In case you want to join, there are dinner ticket links. I'll put the link in the show notes. It's gonna be fun! I'll be in Portland!

The music for Ologies is by Nick Thorburn of the band Islands.

And make sure to ask smart people some sensual dumb questions all you want. That's, I think, how we make the planet a better place to be on, is by indulging curiosity and hearing what other people think about things.

And now for your secret of the day, because you're like, "sexology episode! What's her secret gonna be?!" Can you imagine if it was like, "sometimes, I eat popcorn with chopsticks!" Which I did do today. No, I'm gonna give you guys a good one.

Okay. The weirdest sex dream I ever had – well, the most memorable, really - was a very out of the blue, vivid, vivid one. Like, hot, good one, about 15 years ago, about Andy Richter, on the loveseat of Conan O'Brien's set. I do not know where this came from at all. And later, in the dream, I realized I had stuffed my bra between the cushions of the loveseat on Conan. And whenever I watch Conan, I see that and I always think, "what if I saw a bra from Target peeking out from beneath the pillows and life was just a surreal multiverse?" What if that happened? I always have kind of a weird reaction to pictures of Andy Richter like *heeeeeey! Heeeeeey! [deep voice] 'Sup Andy.*

Okay, berbye.

Transcribed by Mara Spensieri, Toronto, Ontario, Canada!

Some links that may be helpful:

[Sexology certification info](#)

[What is orgasm? A model of sexual trance and climax via rhythmic entrainment](#)

[History of tribal tattoos in America](#)

[People love prostate orgasms](#)

[Sexual surrogacy](#)

[Sexual arousal cycle](#)

[Things women couldn't do in the '60s](#)

[Sexual assault statistics](#)

[What is consent?](#)

[Words for TAINT](#)

[Where do fetishes come from?](#)

Books:

[L.A.I.D](#) by Shannon Boodram

[Mama Gena's School for Womanly Arts](#)

[She Comes First](#)

[Science of Happily Ever After](#)

Ester Perel's [Mating in Captivity](#)

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