

## For Immediate Release

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### **Sexual Adventuring for the Shy: Seven Tips to Help You Shake Your Inhibitions and Spice Up Your Relationship**

*Shaking things up in the sack is not only fun, it's great for your marriage. Mark A. Michaels and Patricia Johnson—coauthors of Designer Relationships—explain how the sexually timid can push their boundaries (without breaking the bonds of monogamy).*

**New York, NY** (August 2015)—It's a common problem for couples: After a while things get a bit ho-hum in the bedroom. Whether the issue is frequency (you can count this year's sexy-time sessions on one hand) or creativity (you're not quite stuck in a missionary-position-with-the-lights-off rut—unintentional pun—but close), you'd like to spice things up. Problem is, you're too shy/embarrassed/inhibited to bring it up...and even if you *could* find the nerve, you wouldn't know where to begin.

Mark A. Michaels and Patricia Johnson say you absolutely *should* become more sexually adventurous—and not just because it's a lot more fun. Many people (monogamous and otherwise) describe their sexual adventuring as something that enhances their emotional connection and brings them closer as a couple.

“Deliberately exploring and expanding your sexuality together will place you in situations that are optimal for growth,” says Michaels, coauthor along with Johnson of [\*Designer Relationships: A Guide to Happy Monogamy, Positive Polyamory, and Optimistic Open Relationships\*](#) (Cleis Press, September 2015, ISBN: 978-1-627-78147-3, \$15.95, [www.michaelsandjohnson.com](http://www.michaelsandjohnson.com)). “When this is done well and intelligently, it can strengthen your partnership and build deeper, more enduring trust, especially since trust is not only built but also earned.”

If you read the title of the book and thought, *Nope, that's not for me*, you can relax. You certainly don't have to go outside the relationship or abandon your values in any way to be a sexual adventurer.

“Yes, you're pushing your boundaries—otherwise it wouldn't be adventuring—but

you're both free to put the brakes on at any time," notes Johnson. "While many people want to explore beyond monogamy, most don't. Yet every couple can benefit from breaking out of their sexual comfort zone. What's most important is to communicate with your partner every step of the way in a manner that reassures and builds trust." **NOTE TO EDITOR: See attached tipsheet for some helpful hints on communicating with your partner about sex.**

So how do you get started? The authors offer some tips:

**Tap into your fantasy life.** Start by scheduling some, ahem, "alone time" to clarify your favorite scenarios before progressing to telling each other about your fantasies. Having an active fantasy life is one of the best ways to keep your passion alive.

"People fantasize in a variety of ways," says Michaels. "Some rely on actual experiences, perhaps with some embellishment; others prefer imaginary scenes. Whatever the nature of your inner erotic life, fantasizing is an act of imagination, and it will keep you sexually engaged and vital. We've been surprised to learn that some people just don't fantasize and don't know that they can make an active choice to do so as means to increase libido."

**Share your turn-ons with your partner—even when they involve other people.** Michaels and Johnson say that while most people have a strong biological and psychological need to form pair-bonds, they also have a strong urge for variety—at the very least to feel attracted by and attractive to others. To deny or suppress this truth is unhealthy. Better to be open about your desire for others (keeping in mind that admitting desire is not the same as acting on it). Not only can it be an erotic experience to share these fantasies, it will actually strengthen your relationship.

"Perhaps you work out at a gym, there's someone there, a trainer or another member, and you think he's hot," says Johnson. "Instead of just ignoring the feeling, or hiding it, make a point of telling your partner about it—what you find appealing and maybe even what you'd like to do with or to the object of your desire. We're not very interested in celebrity culture, but we've sometimes made a game of listing the movie stars with whom we'd have sex if the opportunity presented itself."

"This is not a small shift in thinking, and for many, it requires throwing away decades of conditioning," adds Michaels. "This may be difficult and scary at first; it is not entirely risk-free, since desire can be complicated, which is one reason people squelch it. And as you start giving voice to these feelings, there is a chance that jealousy may arise, especially at first. In time, however, this will become less of an issue. You will have built trust and will have had many experiences that reinforce the awareness that your desires are not a reflection on either of you and will not necessarily put your bond in jeopardy."

**Explore some erotica together.** Read erotica aloud to one another or watch a sexy movie together. This can be a good way to ease into a sexual arena that you've fantasized about but have been hesitant to mention to your partner—say, light BDSM or scenarios involving more

than two people. This may even be a way to segue into bringing some long-held fantasies into your real-life bedroom.

“It can be a lot easier for some to play out a scene from erotica instead of inventing their own scenarios as it seems less personal,” notes Johnson. “This may also allow for a more playful and humorous way of interacting.”

**Visit a sex toy store.** Today, there are many woman-owned, clean, bright, and friendly shops where people can purchase sex toys. If you have not visited one of these stores, they can be found in many North American cities, and shopping at one together can be a great sexual adventure. Go, talk to the staff, and learn how the various items work. Salespeople in these shops are knowledgeable about the products and very helpful. If there are no such shops in your area, or you live in one of the remaining states that restrict the sale of toys, there are plenty of online options.

“Many of these shops have education programs,” says Michaels. “The presenters may be staff members or visiting authors and educators. This can be a very unthreatening way to learn more about sexuality. You can simply observe and learn.”

**Attend a burlesque show.** There are neo-burlesque troupes in many parts of the country. These are usually campy and ironically risqué rather than raunchy and tend to include more varied body types. (For many women this is a less threatening alternative to strip clubs, as they may worry that their partners will compare them unfavorably with the dancers.) Many of the routines are filled with humor and innovative storytelling.

“If you want something a little raunchier, you can always visit a strip club together,” adds Johnson. “Of course, some of them can be pretty sleazy, so do your research first to make sure the club is couple-friendly, clean, and safe.”

**Visit a nudist resort or nude beach.** These exist all over the country, and while a few of these places are very popular with people in alternative sexual lifestyles and may cater to them, the general emphasis is on social nudity; in many cases, the resorts are family-friendly. Open sexual activity is almost universally frowned upon in nudist resorts and on nude beaches (where it’s also illegal).

“There is something about being with a group of naked people that lowers social barriers, makes conversation easier, and creates a feeling of camaraderie,” says Michaels. “Anecdotally, at least, the biggest hurdle for most people is that first moment of being naked around a group of strangers, but the discomfort tends to fade rapidly. While the environment at most nudist resorts is friendly rather than erotically charged, these are great places for shedding your clothes and some of your inhibitions and perhaps for opening new avenues of conversation.”

**Try out a sexuality workshop or a couples sensual massage class in a retreat- or resort-type setting.** These workshops can range from mildly erotic, with most or all of the explicit, hands-on work done in private, to more advanced intensives in which you may be in a room full of people giving each other erotic massages.

“Choose carefully, based on your comfort level,” advises Johnson. “Err on the side of the milder when you’re starting out, since pushing too far could produce emotional backlash and regret.”

This last advice applies to all forms of sexual adventuring, the authors assert.

“Once they try some of these things, some people will discover that they want to go even further,” notes Michaels. “That’s fine. Yet it’s also fine to know your limits and not venture beyond them. The important thing is that you do all this stuff together as a couple in the context of mutual respect and trust.”

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#### **About the Authors:**

Mark A. Michaels and Patricia Johnson are the authors of the new book *[Designer Relationships: A Guide to Happy Monogamy, Positive Polyamory, and Optimistic Open Relationships](#)* (Cleis Press, September 2015). A devoted married couple, they have been creative collaborators—teaching and writing about relationships, sexuality, and Tantra—since 1999. In addition to *Designer Relationships*, they have written *Partners in Passion* (Cleis Press), *Great Sex Made Simple*, *Tantra for Erotic Empowerment*, and *The Essence of Tantric Sexuality* (Llewellyn). They are also the creators of the COVR Award-winning meditation CD set *Ananda Nidra: Blissful Sleep*.

Internationally known as experts in sexuality, Michaels and Johnson have taught throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, Europe, and Australia. They have been featured on television and radio and widely quoted in numerous publications. They are cofounders of the Pleasure Salon, a monthly gathering in New York City that brings together sex-positive people and pleasure activists from a variety of communities.

Michaels is a graduate of New York University School of Law and holds master’s degrees in American Studies from NYU and Yale. Formerly a playwright and translator, he has translated, adapted, and cowritten various works for the stage. Johnson is a retired professional operatic soprano who toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and South America. She currently works in turtle conservation; she is certified in reptile monitoring by the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation and is a New York state-licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

#### **About the Book:**

*[Designer Relationships: A Guide to Happy Monogamy, Positive Polyamory, and Optimistic Open Relationships](#)* (Cleis Press, September 2015, ISBN: 978-1-627-78147-3, \$15.95, [www.michaelsandjohnson.com](http://www.michaelsandjohnson.com)) will be available in September 2015 at bookstores nationwide and from major online booksellers.