

GREAT SEX, IT'S NO SECRET

“Sex is a celebration of life,” says super-sex coach and therapist Jacqueline Hellyer. She thinks it’s time we changed our ideas about sexuality and started feeling empowered.

Interview by **Donna Duggan**

Sexuality is simply the way you experience and express yourself as a sexual being. According to Jacqueline Hellyer, for centuries many women have been struggling with their sexuality: “We’ve had the Madonna/whore mentality for so long – where you should be one or the other – that it’s really left women feeling confused.”

To get a better understanding of Hellyer’s work, I attend her “Luscious Woman” full-day, women-only workshop. The event offers the opportunity to “unleash the awesome power of your female sexuality”, which sounds new age and confronting, but I’m willing to keep an open mind.

At 8.30am I line up for registration with the other women who have chosen to part with \$400 for the workshop. I’m surprised by how gorgeous they are. Surely they have nothing to unleash? The 14 women range in age from mid-20s to mid-50s.

“Helping people get in touch with their sexuality and seeing it

in a really positive way is my main focus,” Hellyer says, as she eases us into the day. “Many of the sexual problems that women in modern society have stem from the fact that we have a very narrow view of what sex is all about, and it’s not a particularly good view.

“Sex is an intrinsic part of our being. It’s as natural as eating food. However, society tries to compartmentalise the experience, to judge it as good or bad. It’s left a lot of people confused.

No one really knows what they should or shouldn’t be doing. Additionally, there’s not a lot of good information out there about how to optimise your sexual experience. My goal is to give people that information so they can experience sex as something that is life-enhancing and very, very enjoyable.”

Our first topic is a history lesson. “Prior to the patrilineal civilisation we live in today,” Hellyer says, “women were more empowered and free in how they expressed themselves sexually. When man set out to

conquer the world and establish a more male-dominated religion, things changed. It’s now up to us to swing the pendulum back a bit and reclaim that sense of empowerment we once felt about our bodies and our sexuality.”

Next, we move on to biology, real biology. We see diagrams of how female arousal mechanically works and how large the clitoris actually is. Through illustrations we see that penis size really doesn’t matter; it’s how a man uses it.

WHAT’S “NORMAL”?

“The challenge for me is the way sex is viewed by society,” Hellyer says. “Because of that view, people may avoid my type of work because they expect it to be about sex toys and Tantric sex techniques. Or they think they couldn’t possibly do something like that because they don’t feel good about sex or because it’s too confronting.”

My experience of the workshop is it’s actually very tame, almost restrained. It’s really

FEMALE SEXUAL RESPONSE

ENHANCING

- liberal view
- initiation
- active participation
- self-pleasure
- experimentation
- fantasy
- extended foreplay
- education

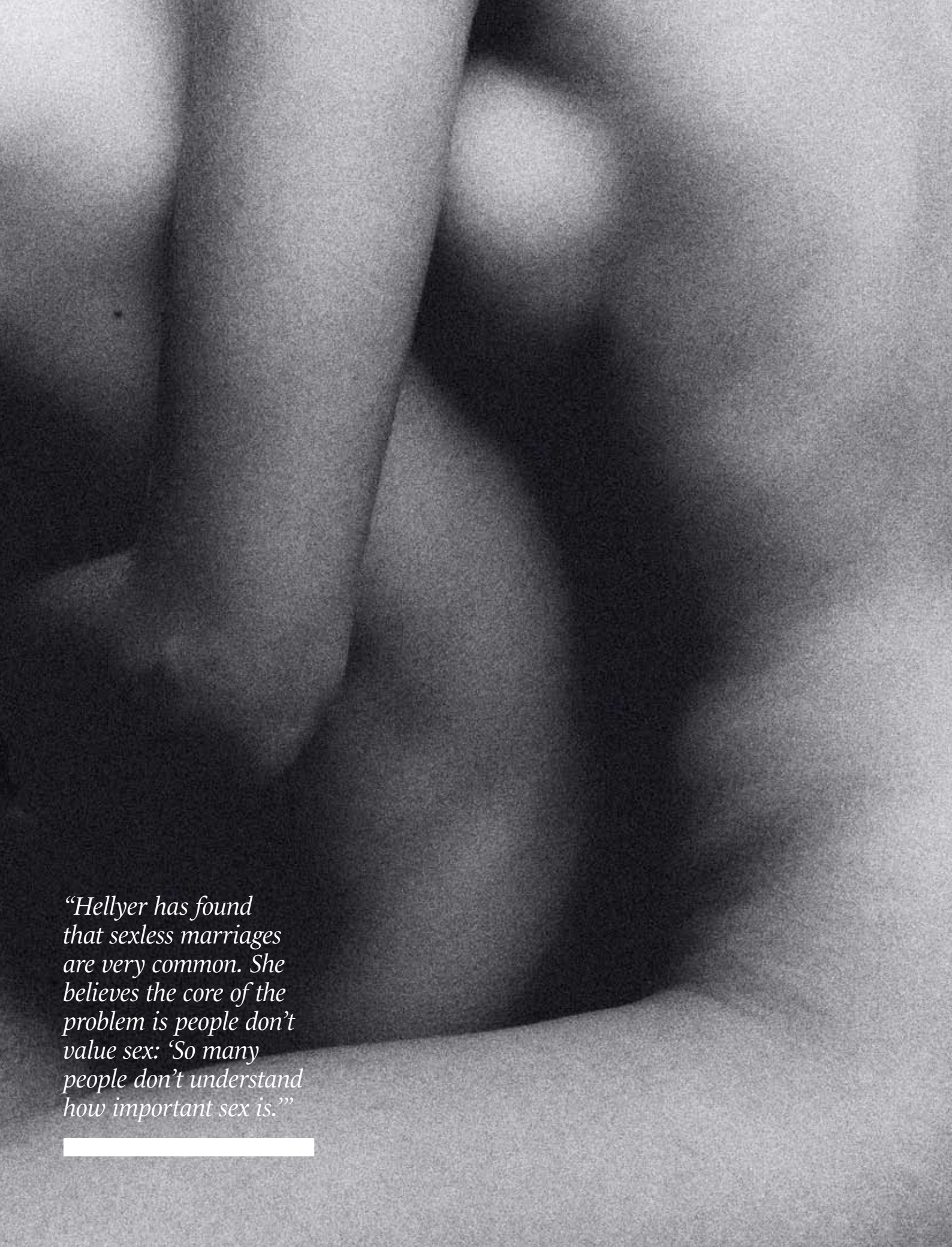
HINDERING

- guilt
- repressed emotions
- control needs
- conservative attitudes
- dependency
- apprehensiveness
- negativity



IT'S ONLY NATURAL

Jacqueline Hellyer says, "Sex is an intrinsic part of our being. It's as natural as eating food."



“Hellyer has found that sexless marriages are very common. She believes the core of the problem is people don’t value sex: ‘So many people don’t understand how important sex is.’”

about education. “My work is about feeling better about your sexuality,” Hellyer says. “It’s all about being a woman. I think society may be changing a little. I think people are starting to say, ‘Hang on – there’s more to sex than the raunchy stuff or sexual dysfunction.’”

“So many people are hung up on what is ‘normal’: how often should they be having sex, how long should it last, what time of day should they do it? Some people think they should be one thing but they feel another. For example, should they be dominant or submissive? Should they initiate sex or not? I’m trying to spread the message that you have permission to desire whatever you like, as long as it feels good and enhances your life.

“Being a coach, it’s amazing the range of sexual issues with which people present,” Hellyer says. She adds there are certain “types” who come to see her, such as older men who have been married for a number of years and want to spice up their now-boring sex life, and women who are getting back into relationships after being on their own for a while and want to talk through issues.

“People who see me for a therapy session usually have an issue they want to work on, but people often come to me for coaching just to learn, which is great,” Hellyer says. “The difference between therapy and coaching is therapy seeks to deal with a problem whereas coaching offers ways to reach your sexual potential.”

IN THE MOOD

Hellyer has found that sexless marriages are very common. She believes the core of the problem is people don’t value sex: “So many people don’t understand how important sex is. They say that they’re too tired; that they can’t be bothered to make the effort. They don’t understand that it doesn’t take much effort; that it doesn’t have to be a major production every time but that it may require a little creativity.”

Hellyer says you don’t need to be in the mood to have sex. Often, arousal will kick in once you get going. “Everyone goes through lulls, but they shouldn’t go

on forever,” she says. Many people arrive home from a stressful job and watch television or do more work, so they’re too tired. If you want to improve your sex life, you may need to watch less television or change your priorities.”

Originally a scientist, Hellyer understands how the chemicals released during sex can be the best thing for you if you’re tired, stressed or angry: “Sex helps you to set up a positive feedback link. During sex, you release feelgood hormones that also help you to bond with your partner.”

TOO OLD?

Hellyer has found that some people attribute their decline in sexual enjoyment to being “too old for it”. They’ve bought into the whole concept of raunchiness that suggests you need to be young, thin and beautiful and have plenty of time to have good sex. It follows that if you don’t meet this criteria – and most people over the age of 25 don’t – you’re not going to have good sex.

“People need to understand that we are intrinsically sexual beings and our sexuality is as natural as breathing and eating,” Hellyer says. “It doesn’t make sense to put it aside and say there’s something wrong with it. I’ve heard of many women who have become sexually active and fulfilled in their 70s after their husbands have died; they have a new partner who knows what he’s doing and they’re having good sex for the first time.

“We are physical beings and the core of our physicality is our sexuality. I don’t mean everyone has to be sexually active – many celibate people are very energetic and sensual, but that’s about rechannelling sexual energy, not denying or repressing it. I think a lot of sexual dysfunction comes from the belief that sex is simply not all it could be. Some women do have biological problems, but on the whole, if a woman is not feeling empowered and supported in her relationship and she’s not being proactive and creative in her lovemaking, she’s not going to have a good time and she’s going to have trouble with arousal. I don’t see it as a physical problem but more a spiritual and emotional issue.”

SENSUAL AWARENESS

The “Luscious Woman” workshop was unlike anything I’d done before. I remember Personal Development classes at school focusing more on “making babies” and sexually transmitted diseases than enjoyment. I’d since read books and articles in women’s magazines about sex, but they’d been more focused on finding your G-spot or pleasuring your partner than feeling comfortable with your sexuality.

Hellyer would like to overhaul the way society approaches sex. “From the earliest days, we let our three kids [now aged four, six and 12] know that Mum and Dad need cuddle time, and that it’s private time. If they do ask questions, we’re open with our responses. We have positive terms for their parts of the body. I’ve also brought up my children to be very sensually aware.

“What I’m teaching isn’t just about sex; it’s about the whole experience of life. If you have a good sensual experience of life, you won’t abuse sex, because it won’t feel right. Why would you eat bad food when you can have good food? Why would you have bad sex when you can have gorgeous sex?”

During the workshop we do very simple breathing and meditation techniques to fully relax the body. We are then blindfolded and treated to a range of gentle sensory experiences, from smelling vanilla to tasting chocolate. I’m amazed by how heightened my senses are when my body is relaxed. “One of the easiest ways to change your reality is to change the way you breathe,” Hellyer explains.

“One of the main myths that holds people back is that sex is natural, therefore it should be easy. But sex is really like cooking,” Hellyer says. “Anyone can cook, but to be a good cook takes learning, practice and dedication. Really glorious sex is an art that we all have the potential to experience.”

Hellyer is developing a Stage 2 workshop that’s a little less “G-rated”, focusing more specifically on the sex act. I will definitely be there!

For more information visit www.jacquelinehellyer.com. 