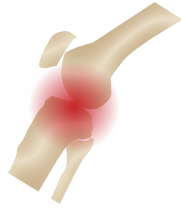
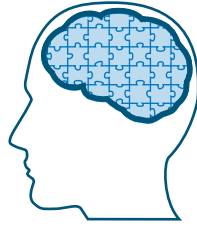


Communicate to Relate: Choose to ACT



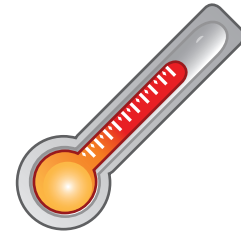
Physical wounds or injuries may impact intimacy through mobility issues, pain, sensitivity to touch, numbness, etc.

Research on spinal cord injuries (SCI) indicates the majority of participants stated that their SCI altered their sexual sense of self.¹



Psychological wounds may impact intimacy through behavioral and emotional changes such as anger, anxiety, depression, stress, etc.

Up to 76 percent of patients reported decreased sexual function related to sense of self and body image following an amputation.²



Illnesses that require treatments or surgeries can impact intimacy, as they may result in fatigue, nausea, etc.

Research indicated that 70 percent of participants involved in a study on intimacy and cancer reported a need to rediscover how to have sex and maintain intimacy.³



Medication side-effects may impact intimacy by causing nausea, lack of desire, fatigue, etc.

Between 30 - 60 percent of patients treated with SSRIs (a class of anti-depressants) may experience some form of treatment-induced sexual dysfunction.⁴

Acknowledge what you are going through



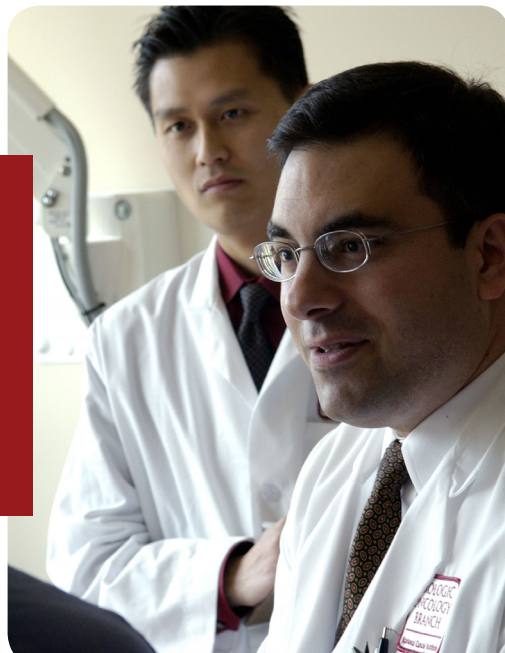
Communicate with your partner

Communication is critical to emotional and physical intimacy. Discuss what may now be physically painful, difficult, or impossible. Converse about feelings of fatigue, anger, anxiety, or depression affecting your desire. Make your partner aware of any sensitivity to scents or sounds.

Research concerning sexual arousal issues revealed that partner trust and caring are the main predictors of sexual satisfaction.⁵

Touch is a powerful way to communicate. Consider non-sexual forms of touch such as holding hands, foot rubs, or back massages. For many couples, it is easier to engage in physical intimacy when feeling close and emotionally intimate.

Intimate partners benefit from touch on a psychological level; it conveys a sense of strengthened bonds.⁶



Talk with your doctor

Healthcare providers may not routinely ask about intimacy issues, so you may have to take the first step. Talk with your doctor about how your physical or psychological wounds, illness, and related treatments or medications may affect your ability or desire to be intimate.

Research indicates that 55 percent of healthcare providers are likely to discuss sexuality or intimacy, if the discussion is initiated by the patient or partner.⁷

Consider whether other changes in your life may impact intimacy:

- Lack of sleep
- Drugs and alcohol
- Changes to your diet
- Work schedule
- Activity level
- Stress
- Depression

For more information, visit: [WII Toolbox Relationships and Intimacy Web page](#)

For references, visit: [References Web page](#)

