

NHS Fife Department of Psychology

A photograph of green tree foliage is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the blue background.

Sexual Difficulties

Help Yourself @ moodcafe.co.uk



Understanding psychosexual problems

Sex is not just about the pleasurable aspect it is also about intimacy, caring and being held physically and emotionally.

Sexual difficulties are very common for men and women and have many causes. The impact of physical illness, treatment side effects, injury, some long term conditions, surgery, disability or the effects of prescribed medications can sometimes cause difficulties in our relationships and our sexual lives. There can also be a wide range of psychological and emotional issues. For example, anxiety and low mood can impact on our ability to perform sexually and lead to more stress and worry.

Often there is a mixture of contributing factors which combine to cause the sexual difficulty. These may appear quite suddenly without any obvious cause. Or they may emerge gradually over a long period of time. It may even be that the problem has existed since your first sexual experience.

It can be hard to talk about sexual problems, even with our partners. Yet many of us go through periods in our life when our sex lives are much less enjoyable than they could be.

Sometimes we can't solve these difficulties on our own. Sometimes the problem starts to affect the quality of our relationships and this can cause a great deal of stress and tension. Some of the more common types of sexual problems include:

Female Problems

- Vaginismus – protective spasm of the vaginal muscles making penetration impossible or painful

- Dyspareunia – pain associated with sex, usually at the vaginal entrance on penetration or deeper inside during intercourse
- Lack of sexual interest or desire
- Difficulty reaching orgasm
- Sexual phobias e.g. unhappy with appearance of genitalia, aversion to seminal fluid
- Past sexual abuse or assault
- Sexual addiction
- Issues relating to sexual identity / gender role / gender reassignment

Male Problems

- Difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection
- Premature ejaculation
- Difficulty reaching orgasm / ejaculation
- Lack of sexual interest or desire
- Sexual phobia e.g. concern about penis size
- Sexual addiction
- Past sexual abuse or assault
- Issues relating to sexual identity / gender role / gender reassignment

Where can I get help in Fife?

If you are having difficulties within your relationship or family there are other sources of help within your local area. Relationships Scotland offers a service which provides relationship counselling and they also work with psychosexual difficulties including issues relating to addiction and gender re-assignment (see www.relationships-scotland.org.uk).

If your sexual difficulty is directly related to your physical health the Clinical Health Psychology Psychosexual Service in NHS Fife offers talking therapies to deal with a

broad range of sexual difficulties. We offer assessment and treatment for individuals and couples who are experiencing difficulties with their sexual functioning, where the sexual difficulty is related to a physical health condition (e.g. chronic pain, congenital difficulties). As sex is something people do together it is more helpful when both partners attend together as they both need to be part of the solution. There are times people may feel rejected. Our experience is that partners have usually backed away through a process of being protective to avoid causing further pain and distress to their partner. Once people have an opportunity to discuss things through with their psychologist these issues can generally be resolved.

If you would like to be referred to NHS Fife Clinical Health Psychology Psychosexual Service, please speak to your general practitioner or secondary care clinic.

Visit moodcafe.co.uk
for more helpful resources

