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DYKE PSYCHE: Lesbian Sex at Menopause

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"Since menopause my sexual desire has increased, and so has the electric shock. I have never had so many orgasms in my life."

"Changes seem to have more to do with what is going on in relationship than menopause. Have had a recent resurgence of sexual activity after going to a lesbian sexuality workshop. Also doing better as a couple in our communication."

"No change - sex is still enjoyable and I look forward to my 60's."

"Sex is evener since menopause; less emotional up and down. I experience sex more as a part of life now than as an altered state. It's definitely different, but not better or worse."

"All of my sexual experiences with women - even prior to menopause have been quality - unlike the same with men, who I must admit that in my 20's and 30's I had more quantity...meaning, I was much more promiscuous with men (quantity) versus the quality of sexual intimacy since 1977 exclusively with women. Since menopause, my orgasms (whether from vibrator, self-stimulation or with a partner) have been much more qualitative; this means that they happen more quickly, and more multiply."

We asked women to indicate whether they felt that they have a sex problem, and whether this is new since menopause. The overwhelming majority of respondents (31 women, or 76%) answered "no" to this item. Of the 10 women who said they did have a sex problem, comments included being dry and taking longer time to reach orgasm. Nevertheless, many women indicated even here that these were not really problems to them, only differences since menopause.

Western culture, patriarchal culture, especially in North America, extols and glorifies youth. It is possible that lesbian women, who have had a great deal of practice living outside the mainstream, are less susceptible to the pitfalls of these values. Perhaps lesbians have an advantage when it comes to accepting the changes that the years bring.

Esther Rothblum is Professor of Psychology at the University of Vermont and Editor of the Journal of Lesbian Studies, and can be contacted at the Department of Psychology, John Dewey Hall, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405, email e_rothbl@dewey.uvm.edu.. DYKE PSYCHE is a monthly column.

This column is based on the chapter by Ellen Cole and Esther Rothblum that appeared in the book Lesbians at Midlife: The Creative Transition, edited by Barbara Sang, Adrienne Smith and Joyce Warshaw and published by Spinsters Book Co. in 1991.

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