



The Birds, The Bees and The Therapies

An Introduction to Sex Positive Therapy

Calvin Hauer, MA, LMFT

Who Am I and Why am I Here?

- He/Him pronouns
- Masters from St. Thomas
 - Sex Therapy Certificate Education from University of Michigan
- 15 years experience as a Sex Educator
 - Smitten Kitten 5 years
 - Faculty for St. Mary's, Argosy, and UW Stout
- 10 years experience as a therapist
 - Trained by Laura Rademacher, Jennie Hilleren, and Roger Khun
 - I run a solo practice serving individuals, couples, and throuples



Sex and Culture

What is Sex Positivity?

Let's Define What These Concepts Are

Sex Negativity and Sex Positivity

Sex Negativity

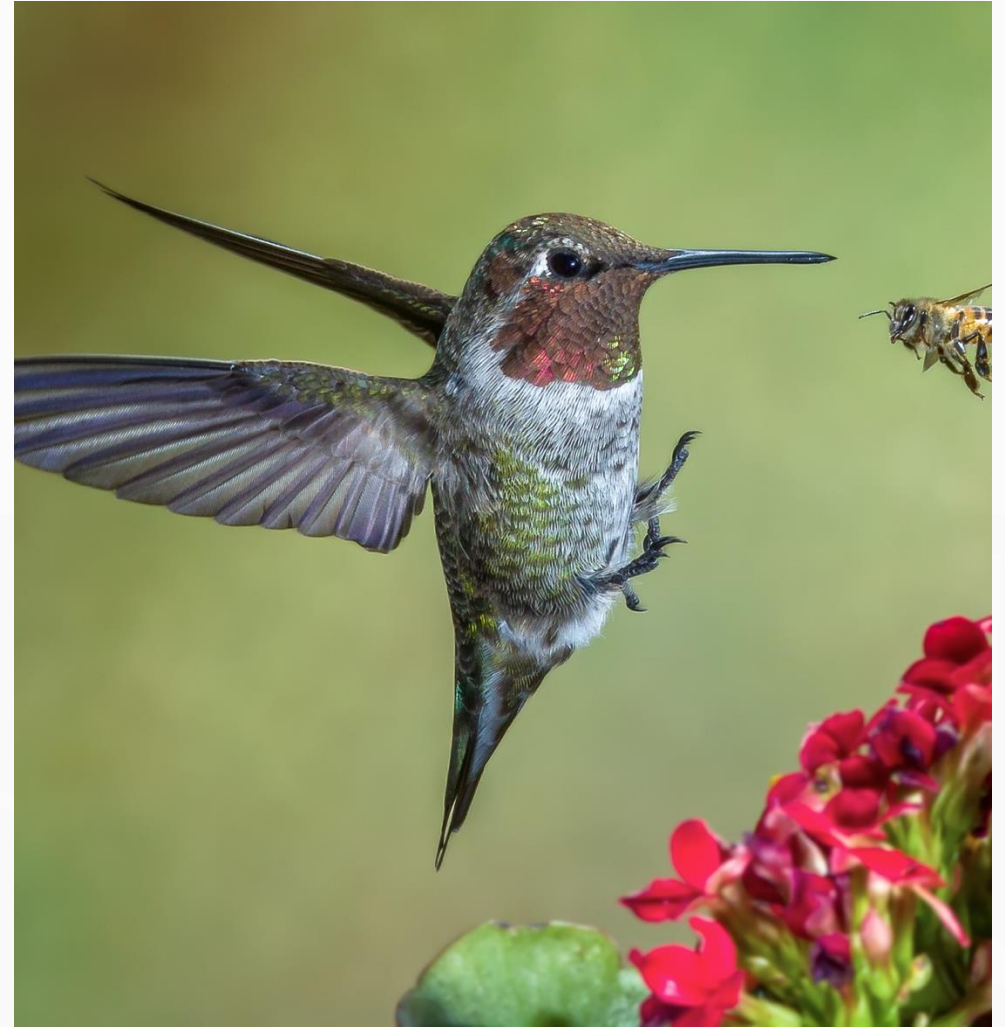
- The belief that some or all human sexual activity is intrinsically harmful, immoral, distasteful, or that sexual activity is only appropriate in the context of marriage or for procreation.”
–Michaels and Johnson
- How does Sex Negativity show up in our field?

Sex Positivity

- “The celebration and embrace of consensual human sexual expression”
–Michaels and Johnson

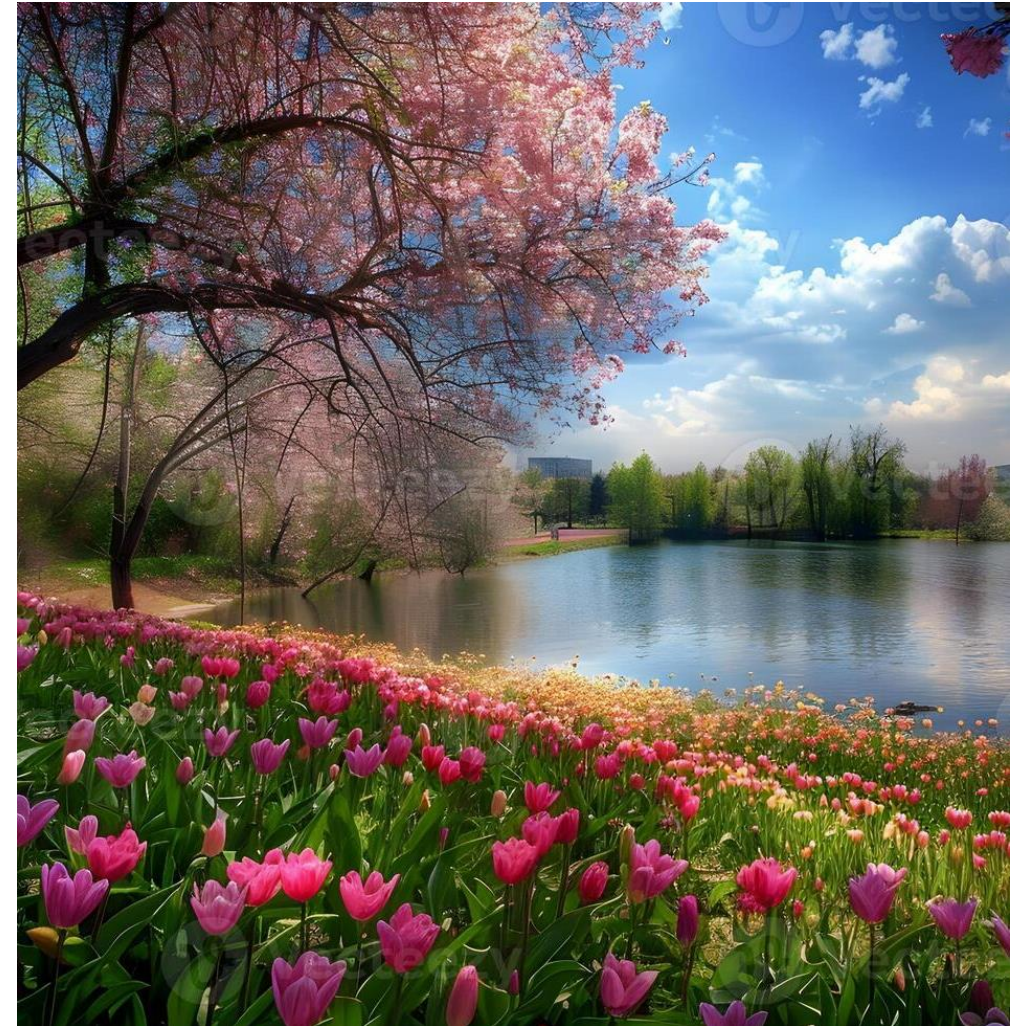
What is Sex Therapy?

What is Sex and
How Does it Show
Up in your Practice?



The Biopsychosocial Model of Sex

- When it comes to working with sex there are many considerations in case formulation
- Biological: What is biologically happening and has a medical professional been brought in?
- Psychological: How might someone's mental health be affecting their sexual experience?
- Social: What are the social scripts that the client has to contend with?



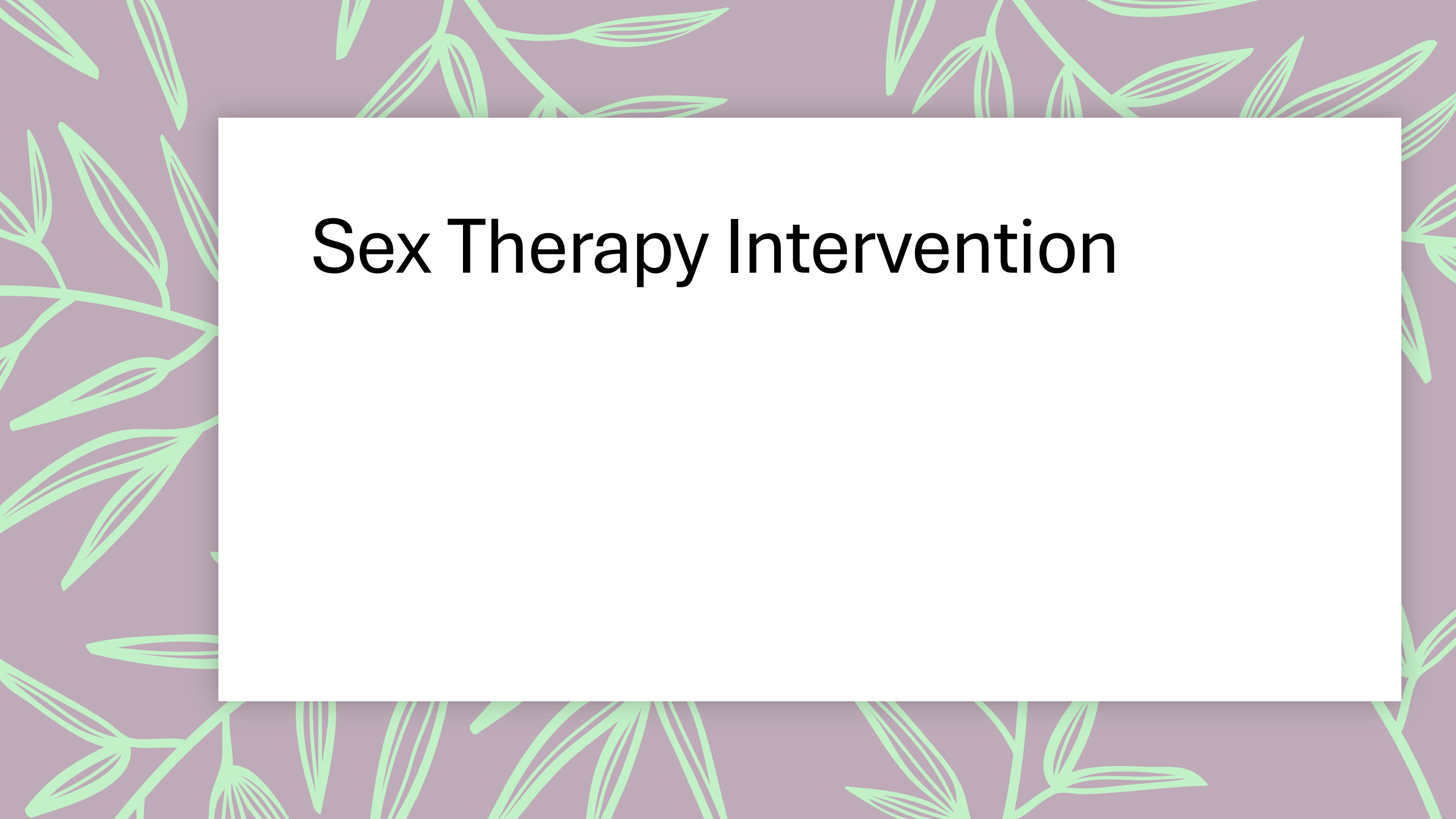
Talking About Sex

Talking About Sex

- When working with clients, it's imperative to talk about sexuality and their relationship with sex
- Everyone has a relationship with sex and sexuality
 - It's part of the human experience to connect with sexual needs, desires, and sexuality in general.

Modeling Talking About Sex

- Model that it's okay to talk about sex
 - Some clients may feel uncomfortable bringing sex up as a topic and may be waiting for the clinician to bring it up
 - What's your relationship with sex and sexuality?
 - What does sex look like in your life?
 - Any sexual concerns?
- Normalizing talking about it in therapy builds a script in their personal life
 - Working with clients to form their own script



Sex Therapy Intervention



The PLISSIT Model

Created by Jack Annon

P: Permission

LI: Limited Information

SS: Specific Suggestion

IT: Intensive Therapy

The Radical Intervention of Permission

- Davis and Taylor's EX-PLISSIT Model
 - Extended/Reviewing
 - Every Step in the PLISSIT model integrates Permission and reflection of assumptions



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Desire

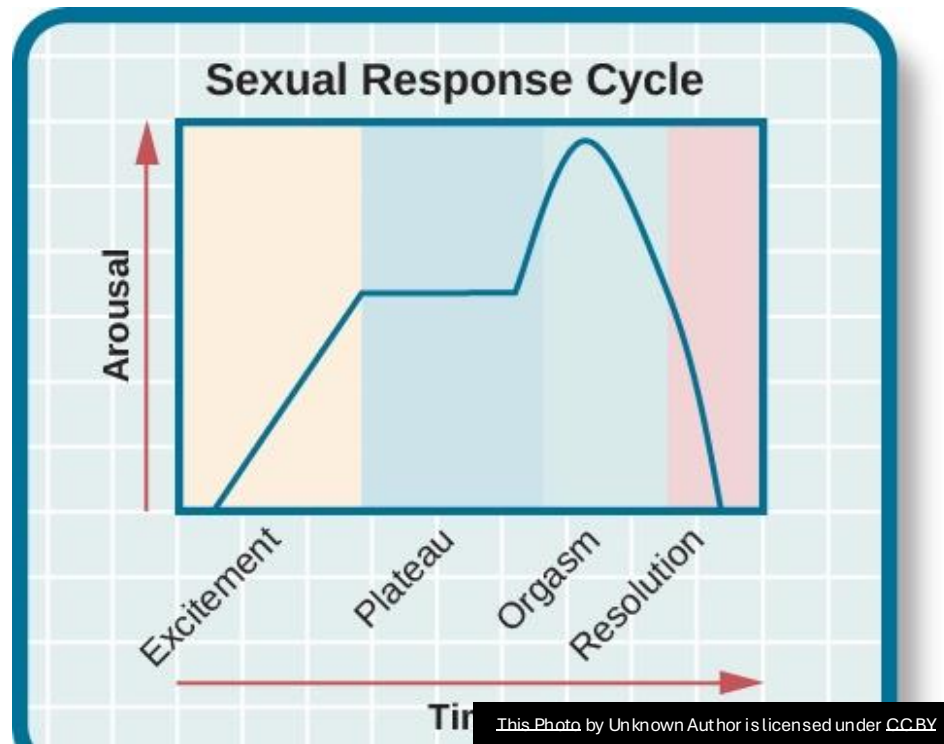
- What's are largest sexual organ?
- What's the most sensitive body part?





Desire

- How do we conceptualize desire?
 - Not as a drive
 - We *can* live a life without sex and survive as individuals
 - Despite what that weird guy online said
 - Incentive-Motivation System
 - We need incentive/motivation to reinforce sexual desire
 - There are many reasons one may feel motivation to be sexual
 - Reinforcing motivation may incentivize someone to explore their relationship with sex further
- Fogel Mersy and Vencill, 2023

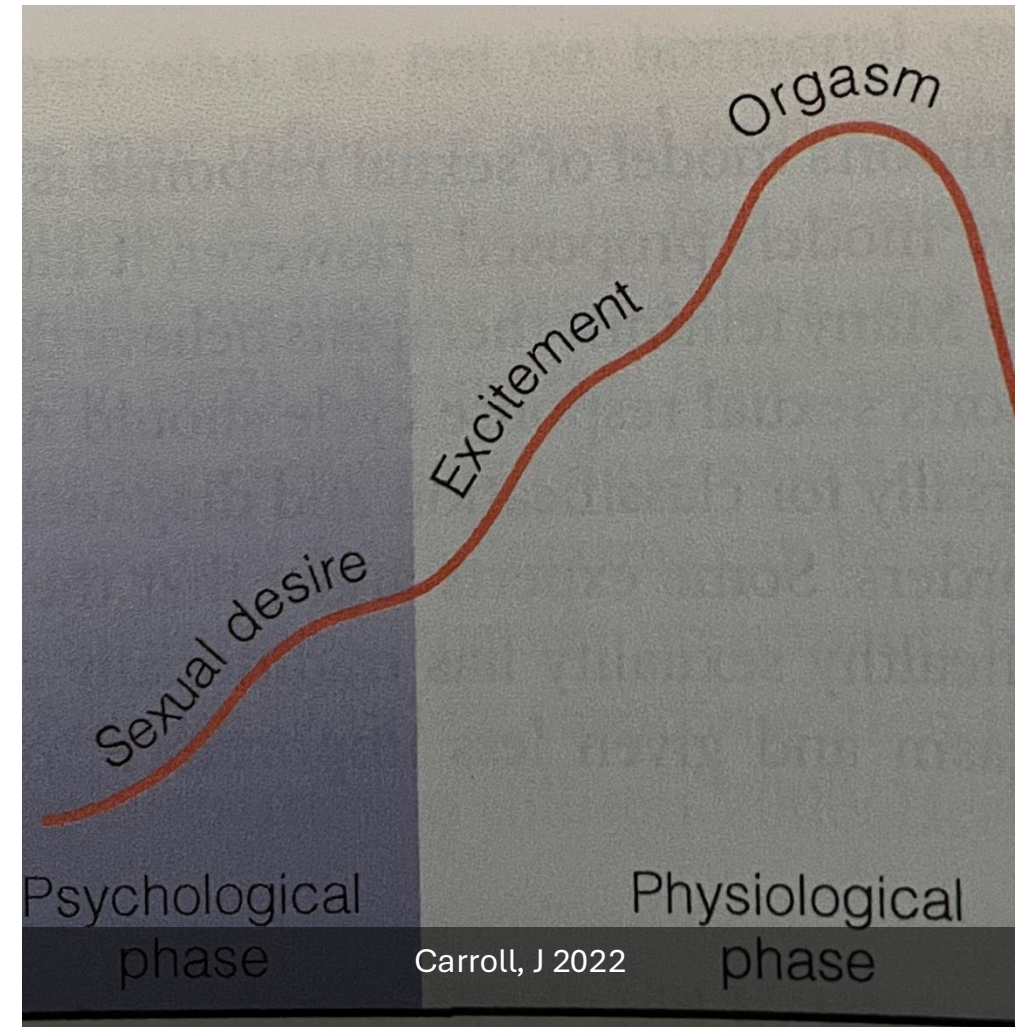


Orgasm and Desire

- Masters and Johnson developed their *Human Sexual Response Cycle*
- Four Stage model
 - Excitement Stage
 - Plateau
 - Orgasm
 - Resolution

Orgasm and Desire

- Helen Singer Kaplan responds with the *Triphasic Model*
- Integrating psychological and biological functioning
- Three Stages
 - Desire: Biological, psychological, hormonal motivators
 - Excitement : Blood flow/arousal heightened sensation
 - Orgasm : Muscle spasm, sexual release



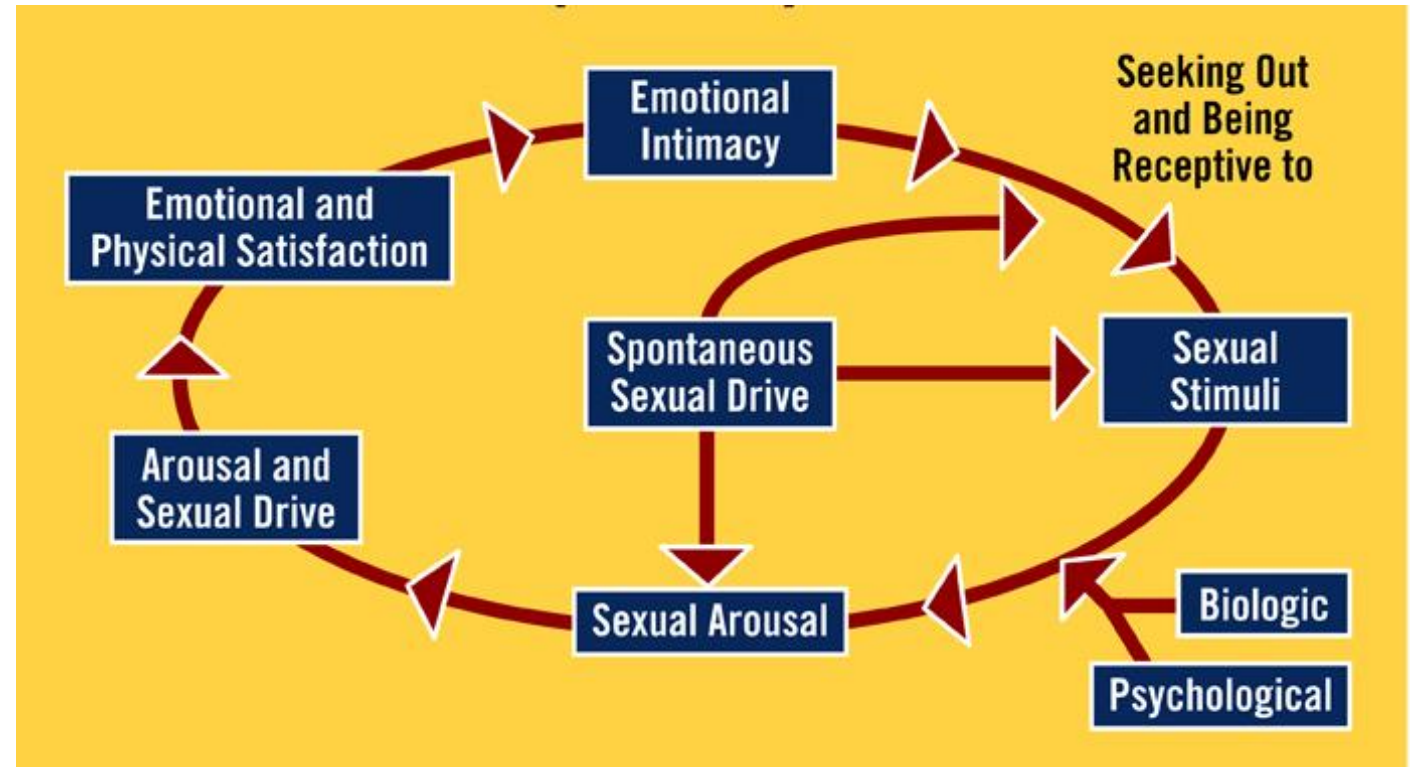
The Dual Control Model

- Bancroft and Janssen
- Plays to the excitatory and inhibitory process
- Exploring the balance of excitement and inhibition to explore desire development
 - The accelerators and the brakes



Orgasm and Desire

- Basson's Nonlinear Model
 - Integrated feminist thought, the dual control model and
 - Focuses on an assertion that women may not experience spontaneous desire as often
 - Focuses on neutrality to the biological arousal and building connection with intimacy
- Breaks from orgasm focus
- Can keep looping



- Bristol CBT

Building Desire

“Foreplay is not what you do before sex, it’s everything
done between one sexual encounter into the next”
(Esther Perel)

Desire

- The brain is CORE to the sexual experience
 - Spontaneous and Reactive Desire
- Desire and fantasy do not need to fit into neat categories
- Fantasy knows no limit, but clients may have Feelings™ about their own and/or others' fantasy content
 - It's imperative to acknowledge the difference between fantasy and action
- What are the accelerators?

Dems The Brakes

- Sometimes the braking system can be affected by a number of factors
 - A.)Shame
 - B.)Pain
 - C.)Trauma
 - D.) All of the above

Shame and Guilt

- We live in a culture of sexual guilt and shame.
- Exploring one's own relationship with guilt (I did something wrong) and shame (I am something wrong) allows for clarity in wants and needs
 - Regular discussion about needs regarding shame and guilt help alleviate the stress of reaction
 - Give your body a break

Slow it Down....WAYYYY DOWN

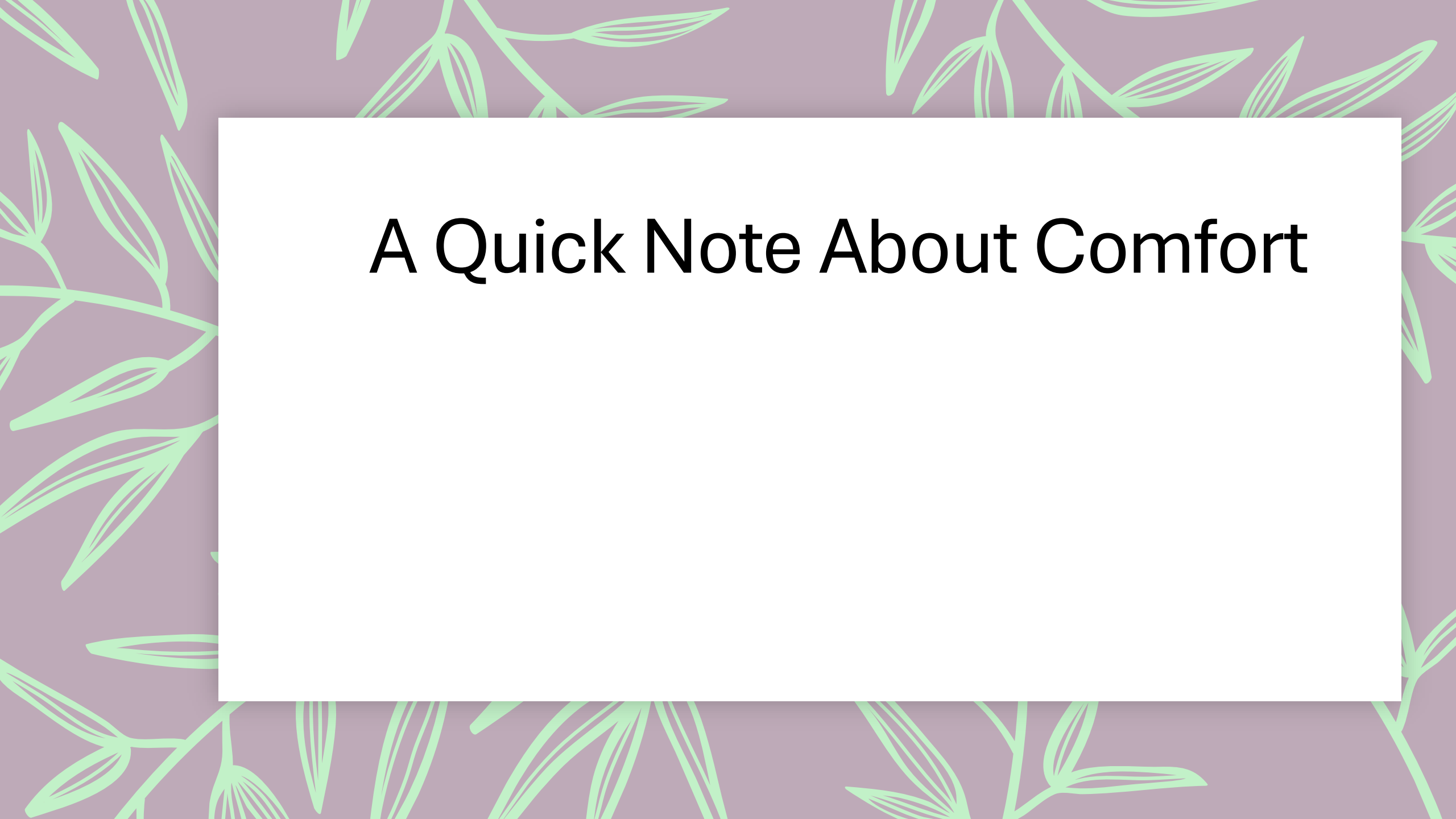
- Pain can originate from a number of places as it relates to sex, but one way to work with pain is to slow down sex
- Making Out, Massage, and Connection
- Communication
 - Leaning into explicit communication can assist in building comfort and allowing for relaxation
 - Communication can look many different ways
- Slow Sex
 - Allows for intention, building of desire, and development of safety

Pain

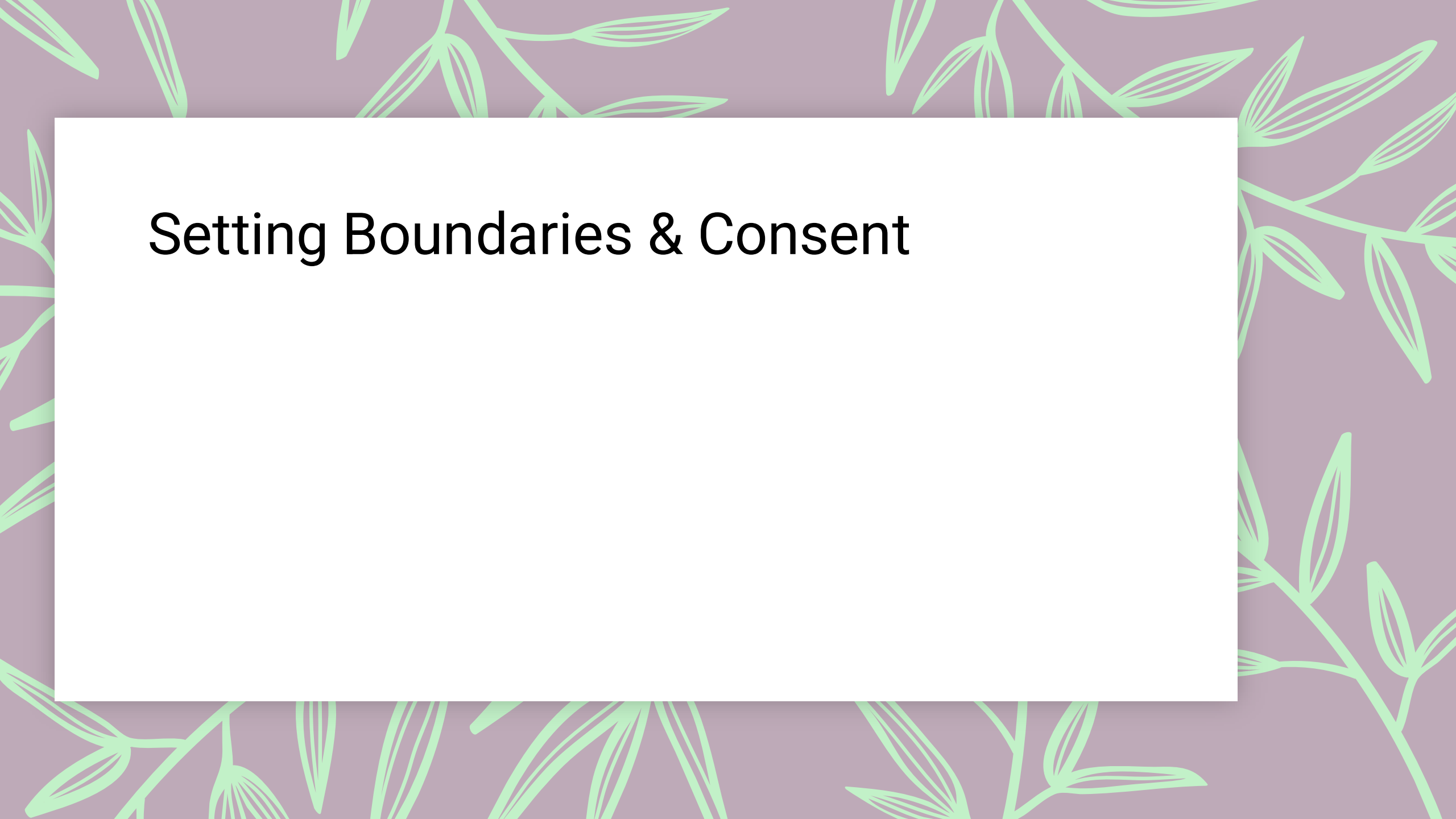
- The pelvic floor is so complex and pain can originate from any number of places
- Disgust response
 - Trauma reaction
- Hypertonic Pelvic Floor
 - Holding too much tension
- Irritation
 - Friction, intensity and a possible need for lube
 - Make sure the lube is body safe

Refer Out When Needed

Work with you client to advocate for their needs



A Quick Note About Comfort



Setting Boundaries & Consent



Boundaries and Consent

- Consent
 - To give assent or approval
 - Freely given without intoxication.
 - May be revoked at any time
- Boundaries
 - The limits within a relationship or experience to protect those involved
- Agreement
 - Collaborative boundary establishment mutually decided by those involved

Exploring the Body

When was the last time you invited your whole body to your sexual dalliance?

Erogenous Zone Exploration

- Our bodies are so cool and hold so many sensations
- Setting aside time to explore non-genital sensation and pleasure
- Focusing on giving/receiving touch and sensation vs orgasm oriented experience
 - In a world of deadlines, goals and pressure, why perpetuate these stressors in your sex life?

Mindreading

Who here can read minds?

Making the Implicit Explicit

- The horror of trying to read minds
- Empowering your clients to name their pleasure
- Ongoing consent
 - Continued consent can look many different ways
- Teaching clients to ask about body language/nonverbal as well as verbal communication
 - Explicitly naming the skill and collaboration that goes into nonverbal communication



Kink and BDSM

What is Kink?

What do we think of when we
think of kink?

What is Kink

- BDSM
 - Bondage
 - Dominance
 - Submission
 - Masochism
- Kink: Anything that falls outside of cultural definition of “Normal” (Stefani Goerlich, PhD 2024)
- Fetish: A strong desire and/or sexual interest in an object or non-genital body part



Cultural Baggage





Cultural Baggage

- BDSM and Kink are avenues to explore intimate connection, mental stimulation, and body sensation
- Culturally, sex negative culture may perpetuate harmful rhetoric regarding BDSM/Kink
- Falling outside of “allowable sex” may create sexual shame
 - However there are many normed BDSM/Kink practices within our culture



Jillian Keenan on kink as sexuality

- “most people don’t share my fetish so it makes sense for pop-culture to portray it as something unusual. And kink is often funny! But the problem was how relentless those messages were. I never got to see my burgeoning sexuality and a happy or healthy light. According to my culture, I was one of two things: a punchline for the pre-recorded laugh track, or a freak” (Keenan, 39)

Kink is Not Abuse

But there can still abuse
potential in kink

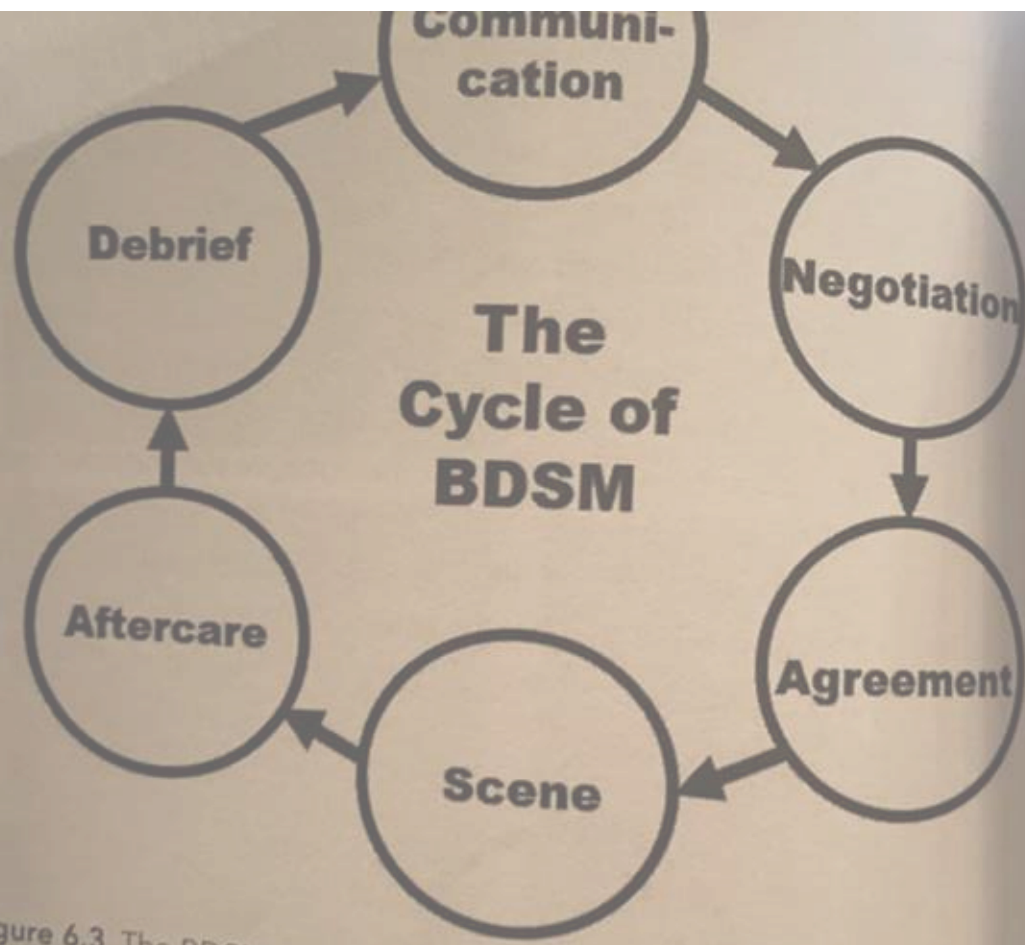
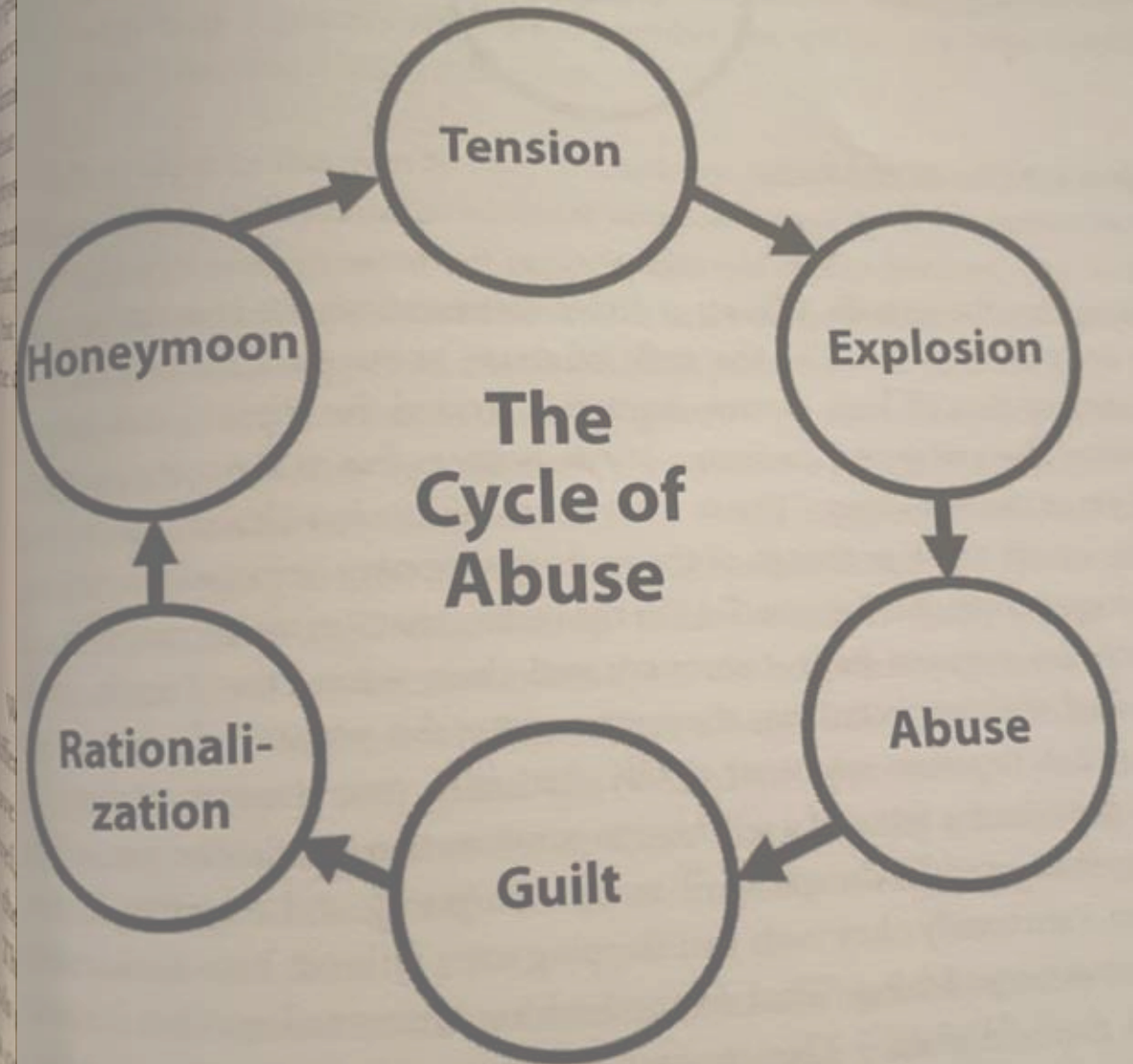
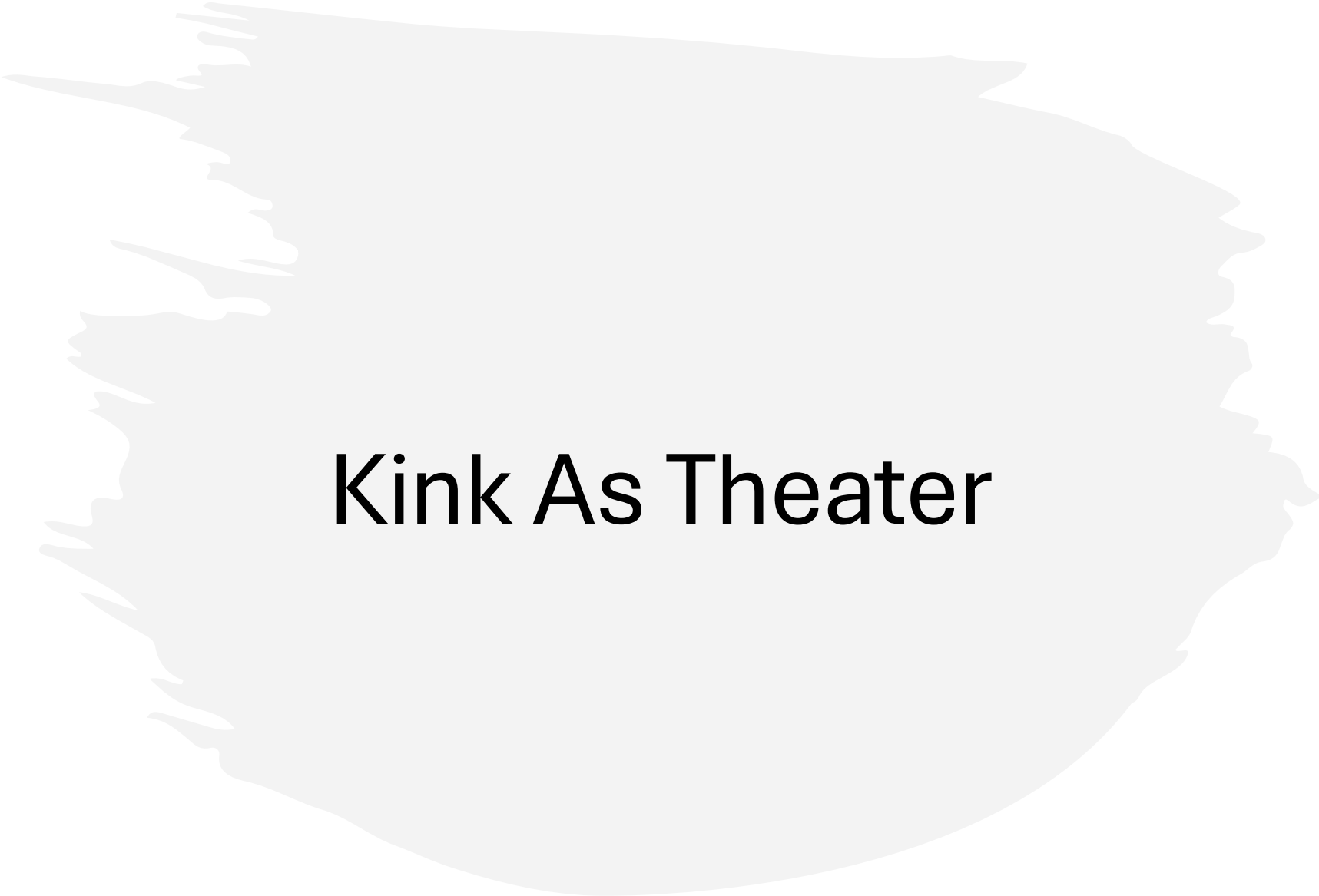


Figure 6.3 The BDSM Cycle

discern from the outside. What is coercive abuse and what is consensual play? The cycle of abuse, unlike the cycle of BDSM, starts with communication. We assume that all kink communication is around the physical activities of sensation play and power exchange, but sometimes this communication takes the form of the mundane: "This is what I like, this is what I know, this is what I want. I want to be in charge of the scene. I want to be really happy to do that."



This is primarily because, much like in the abusive relationship, we don't see the things that lead up to the physical encounter. We only see the violence. Sometimes we see the bruises. Because of this it can be difficult to



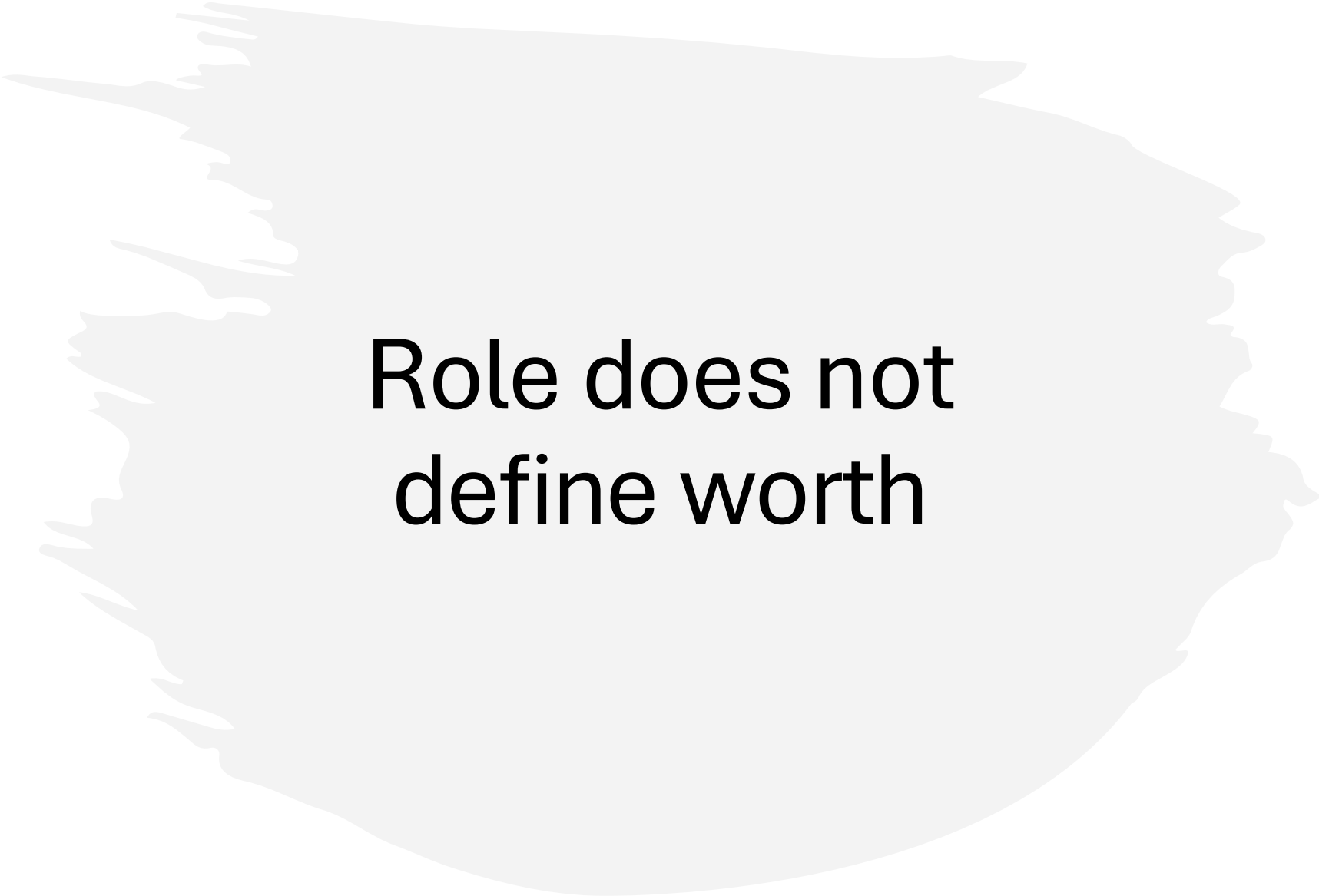
Kink As Theater

The Roles We Play

- Dominant
 - The person midwifing the scene.
- Submissive
 - The person relinquishing control
- Switch
 - Someone who can play in either role
- This is not hardcoded nor does it look only one way
 - Can be contextual, relational, or just how someone is

Role

- The roles we take on in sexual connection can bring with it a lot of cultural baggage
- Playing with and exploring our own expectations
- Bodies are cool and capable of so much pleasure
- Brains are even cooler and able to play with anything
 - Example: Who is in charge: Boot Blacking



Role does not
define worth

Planning a Scene



Lina Dune's Three Stages of Kink

- Collaborative Negotiation
 - What is or isn't in bounds
 - Communication (Safeword)
 - Environmental prep
- In Scene Communication
 - Continued communication and use of resource
- Aftercare and Process
 - Taking care of mental, emotional and physical needs
 - Coming down from "sub drop and top drop"
 - Process when ready

A group of business professionals in an office setting. A woman in a grey blazer is pointing at a tablet held by a man in a dark suit. Another man in a dark suit and striped tie is visible on the left. A woman with curly hair is partially visible on the right. They are gathered around a table with a tablet, a smartphone, and coffee cups. The text "These Are Transferrable Skills" is overlaid in the center.

These Are Transferrable Skills

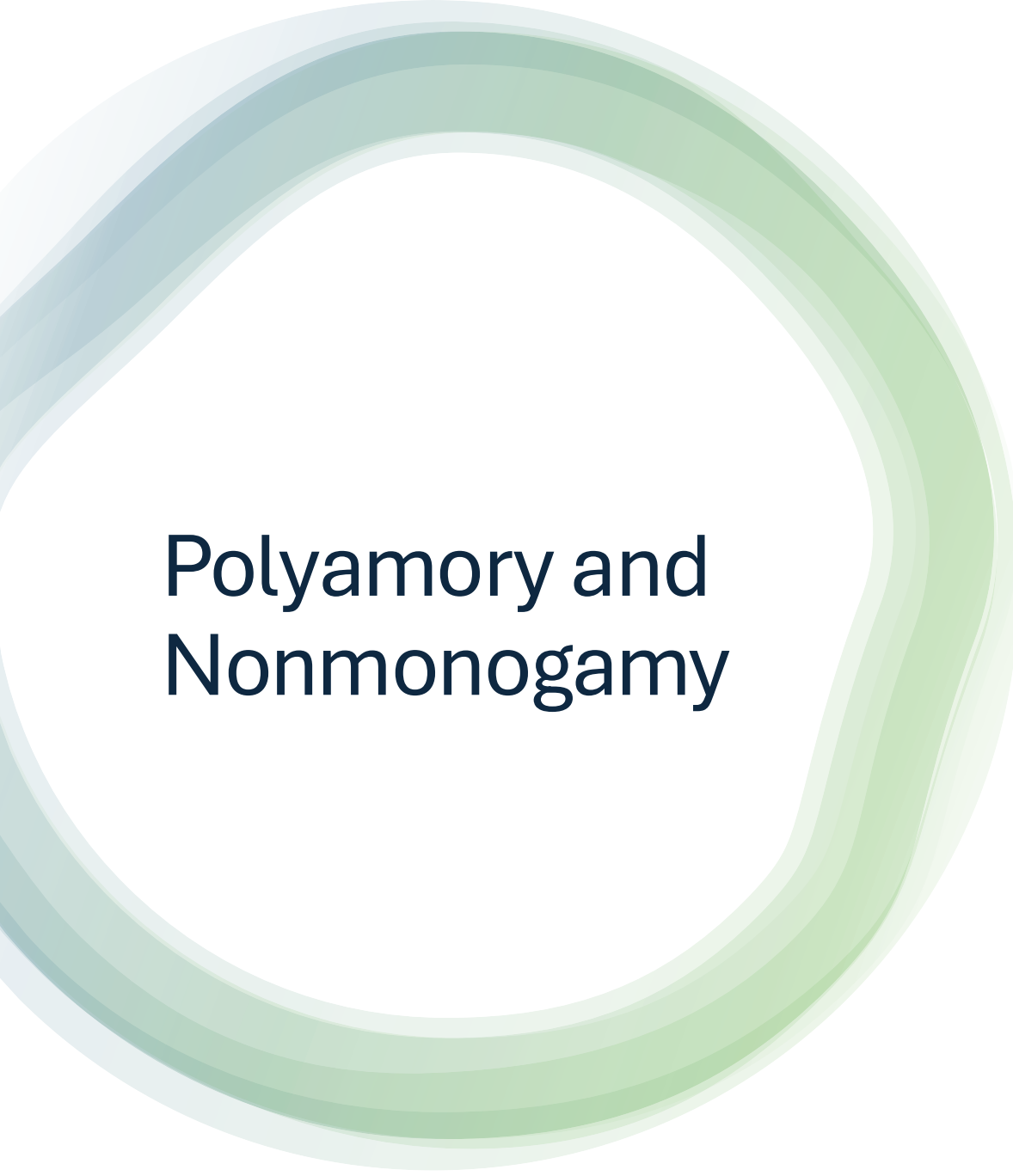


Kinky or Vanilla

Desire is desire as long as
everyone is into it

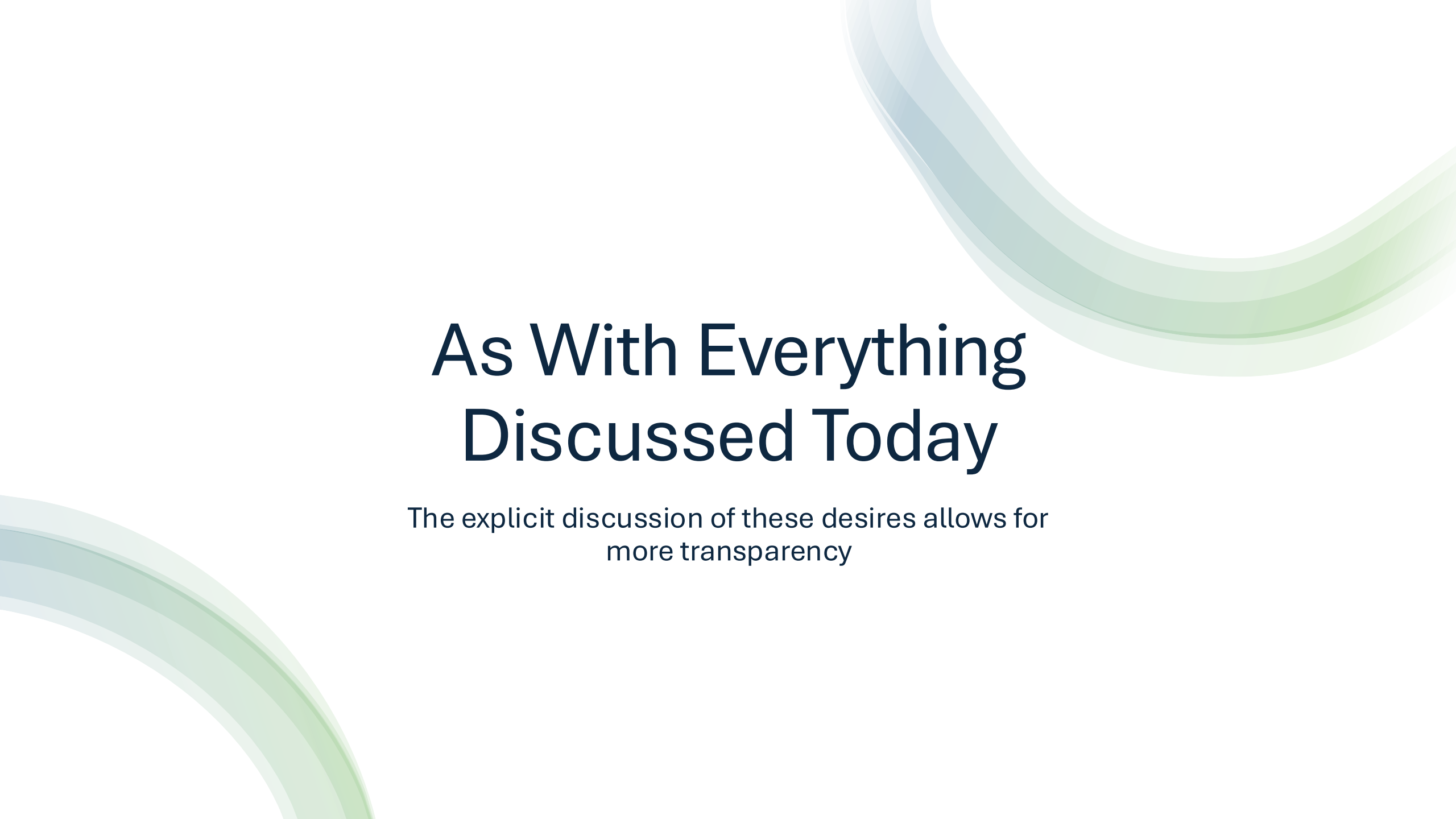


Speaking of....



Polyamory and Nonmonogamy

- There are many different versions of relationship structures
- Within everything we've talked about today, one can integrate as many folks as is invited to the experience
- Some find that differentiating kink and vanilla sex allows for different erotic partnerships
- Others may find that more partners may cause a *braking* response in their eroticism

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As With Everything Discussed Today

The explicit discussion of these desires allows for
more transparency



Wrapping Up

- As a therapist, providing permission is key to working with sexual concerns
- Desire can manifest and be challenged by many factors
- Communication can be explicit or implicit.
- Kink and vanilla sex is pretty similar in desire development
- When in doubt, “Don’t overthink what feels good” (Archie Bongiovanni)

Contacting me

- Calvin@calvinhauertherapy.com
- I can send you the slides from today
- Always up for a coffee talk/consultation
- Happy to yap about sex, generally