

Forget “Foreplay:” Cultivate Loveplay

By Michael Castleman

Everyone knows about foreplay. It’s what lovers do before intercourse. That’s why it’s called *fore*-play. It comes before the main event. But enlightened lovers who want really hot, erotic sex should forget foreplay, jettison the very notion. Foreplay makes no sense, and can actually detract from great sex.

Take Your Time

Foreplay tends to be rather brief. Inspired by what they see in pornography and on TV and in the movies, many couples rush through the preliminaries to get to intercourse. This robs both lovers of pleasure. Sex experts agree that the best, hottest sex—and the most intense orgasms—emerge from slow, playful, extended, non-formulaic lovemaking.

Speaking of brief, that’s one of women’s biggest complaints about how men make love—too quickly. Most women prefer a slower pace. It takes most women longer than men to warm up to sex, particularly genital play. In the foreplay-leads-to-intercourse model of lovemaking, women often don’t get enough warm-up time to be able to enjoy genital play.

Beyond Linear Lovemaking

Fundamental to the idea of foreplay is the notion that lovemaking proceeds in a linear progression: first, some kissing and hugging, and after that, some touching and rubbing here and there. Then the foreplay is over and the real deal begins, intercourse.

But the best sex isn’t linear. The best sex doesn’t go from A to B to C and then jump to I, for intercourse. Linear lovemaking is too predictable. Over time, it becomes boring. The best sex, the kind that never becomes boring, involves playfully unpredictable moves.

“Foreplay” implies that intercourse is the last activity of lovemaking, that once intercourse begins, foreplay is over, and the intercourse continues until the lovers have orgasms. But this model of lovemaking shortchanges both women and men—especially those over 40.

How “Foreplay” Shortchanges Women of All Ages

Lovemaking that begins with foreplay and ends with intercourse means that half of women—or more—don’t have orgasms. Forget what you see in movie and TV sex. Dozens of studies show that only about one-quarter of women are reliably orgasmic solely from vaginal intercourse. Another quarter of women or so have orgasms from intercourse only rarely or occasionally. Not that there’s anything wrong with intercourse. It involves intimate closeness and can be great fun, even for the majority of women who rarely or never experience orgasm with an erection inside their vaginas. But intercourse just doesn’t provide enough direct clitoral stimulation to allow most women to have orgasms.

Some women who find it difficult or impossible to have orgasms during intercourse are convinced that something is wrong with them. Nothing is wrong. Absolutely nothing. It’s a sad commentary on the state of sex education in America that so few people understand that a solid majority of women need direct clitoral stimulation to express orgasm—by hand, tongue, sex toy, or an erection that leaves the vagina and presses against the vulva, allowing the head of the penis to rub up against the clitoris.

The fixation on foreplay as prelude to intercourse is also particularly problematic for women over 40. After 40 as menopausal changes begin and then accelerate, vaginal dryness becomes a problem for many women. Lubricants can often alleviate this problem. But for many older women, even with lots of lube, intercourse becomes uncomfortable, and possibly even painful.

How “Foreplay” Shortchanges Men Over 40

After around age 40, erections change. The reliable, solid erections of young adulthood become the iffy, balky, temperamental erections of middle age. This is normal. It happens to every man. Even with the help of erection drugs, many men over 40 have erections that may not be firm enough to insert into even a highly-arouse, well-lubricated vagina.

As a result of the problems that both older women and men develop, intercourse becomes increasingly problematic with age. The conventional view that sex

involves a linear progression from foreplay to intercourse limits their pleasure and may frustrate them or leave them feeling inadequate. The fact is, vaginal intercourse is not necessary for erotic pleasure and fulfillment. There are plenty of marvelous ways to make love that don't include it.

It's All *Loveplay*

Forget "foreplay." From the moment you begin undressing until the last delicious vestiges of afterglow subside, you're making love. Everything you and your lover do together is "loveplay."

Loveplay isn't cookbook. Instead of plowing from A to B to C to I, make an effort to inject some unpredictability into your lovemaking. That helps keep it exciting.

Loveplay isn't linear. Loveplay doesn't put intercourse on a pedestal at the end of a one-way street. If you can have intercourse comfortably, feel free to enjoy it for a while, and then return to massaging each other, playing with toys, or having oral sex—whatever you like. And afterward perhaps some more intercourse, if that's possible for you.

Sex therapists agree that great sex is based on slow-paced, leisurely, playful, mutual whole-body massage that includes the genitals once lovers feel erotically warmed up. Massage is a marvelously meandering experience. There's no predicting which part of the body will be massaged next or for how long. Great lovemaking is similar, only it includes the genitals. Massage them for a while with your hand or mouth or a sex toy, then massage some other part of your lover's wonderful body for a while, and return to the genitals later.

Rather than the linear model of foreplay-then-intercourse, great sex is more circular. It moves from one form of mutual touch to another and back again, over and over, as many times as you like or have time for.

So forget "foreplay," and treat yourself and your lover to whole-body loveplay. It's more fun, more erotic, and ultimately, more fulfilling. —Michael Castleman

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