

Transitioning from Sexually Active to Sexually Inactive

by Paige Gifford

Some people may find themselves single after being married. This may be due to divorce or death of a spouse. If this is you, I'm so sorry.

Although you may be experiencing a variety of difficulties, I hope this can be a safe space for you to explore one aspect of your life that has evolved since the divorce or the death of your spouse. The aspect that I am talking about is sexuality. You are likely experiencing a transition between being sexually active to sexually inactive.

Not many people talk about sexuality in terms of how to tend to your sexuality post-divorce or death of a spouse. There hasn't been much research on this subject either. For this reason, I hope that by reading this article, you can seek within yourself and discover what your soul is yearning for.

Why is this Transition Difficult?

In general, any transition is difficult because you leave behind comfortable familiarity and you are exposed to unfamiliar circumstances and experiences. In particular, by transitioning from being sexually active to inactive, you may feel like you have lost a part of life that was familiar and fulfilling.

You likely won't be able to completely regain the fulfillment that you received from sexual intimacy from your marriage. However, by examining the role that sexual intimacy played in your wellbeing, you may be able to identify ways that you can fill the holes that were once filled by sexual intimacy. As we examine three dimensions of sexuality, be thinking of how you would like to tend to your personal needs in each of these dimensions.



Sexuality as Multi-Dimensional

BYU scholars have proposed there are three dimensions to sexuality: physical, emotional, and spiritual.¹ The scholars teach that in order to feel complete fulfillment and wholeness (or, that we are honoring all of our needs) in our sexual experiences, we must meet our individual needs in each of these dimensions of sexuality.

1 Busby, D. M., Carroll, J. S., & Leavitt, C. E. (2013). *Sexual wholeness in marriage: an Lds perspective on integrating sexuality and spirituality in our marriages.*



The physical dimension: a connection to our physical body. The physical dimension relates to the physical anatomy of sexual organs and hormones. This dimension also includes the natural desire that humans have for physical connection and sexual satisfaction.

Because sexual intercourse may no longer be a source of physical fulfillment, you may want to seek other ways to feel physically connected with your body. An anonymous contributor who recently divorced after 25+ years of marriage relates how she seeks to feel physical connection with herself:

“I try to listen to my body and provide it with what it needs, whether that be rest, delicious and healthy foods, sports, physical movement, or yoga. I just try to honor and appreciate my body.”

What did sex make you feel physically? Did sex make you feel enlivened, strong or beautiful? You may want to explore activities such as dance, yoga, or meditation that help you feel these same feelings.

The emotional dimension: a connection to our feelings. The emotional dimension relates to the natural desire to emotionally connect with others. Sexual intimacy is one way that we can foster greater feelings of connection, love, and unity with our spouse.

You may try to fill the emotional gaps you are feeling from the loss or divorce of your spouse by fostering emotional connections with others. Now might be a great time to connect with family members and friends, and maybe even seek new social circles.

The spiritual dimension: a connection to God or greater meaning through sexual experiences. The spiritual dimension relates to the search of meaning attached to sexual intimacy. As we use sexual intimacy in ways that are aligned with our beliefs about the purpose of sexual intimacy, we find sexual meaning. Because we believe that God has ordained sexual intimacy for the purpose of unifying and pleasuring spouses (as well as reproduction), we will feel a greater spiritual meaning in regards to sex if we are using sex in accordance with these purposes. If we use sex contrary to its intended purposes, we may experience spiritual disconnection from sex.

Now that you are a single adult, you may want to consider what this means to you in regards to keeping the Law of Chastity. You may want to ponder the meaning and purpose behind sexual intimacy. What does sexual intimacy mean to you? What does it mean to God? How are you going to live true to these purposes of sexual intimacies?

In order to feel more connected to your spirituality, you may want to try to find deeper purpose and meaning within other aspects of your life. For example, you may look for ways that you are fulfilling your life's purpose through your career, callings, or relationships with others. You may also try to feel more connected to your spiritual nature through art, music, nature, prayer, or gratitude.

As you think about yourself in regards to your physical, emotional, and spiritual connections, in which of these dimensions are you lacking fulfillment? Although sexual intimacy may not be able to fill the gaps right now, you might be able to discover other activities that can help fill your needs in these dimensions.