

Between the Sheets...

May 2020

This column provides the platform for experts in the field to help men and women by providing answers to questions about sexual health and intimacy challenges that can result from prostate cancer treatment.

This column was compiled with the help of Dr. Jeffrey Albaugh, Director of Sexual Health at NorthShore University HealthSystem and at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, IL. Dr. Albaugh is a funded researcher, a board certified advanced practice urology clinical nurse specialist, and a board certified sexuality counselor. In addition to his many publications in peer reviewed journals and chapters in books on sexual dysfunction, Dr. Albaugh published *Reclaiming Sex and Intimacy After Prostate Cancer Treatment*. He has been quoted in media and publications as an expert in the treatment of sexual dysfunction, and is a member of the Us TOO Board of Directors.

QUESTION FROM PROSTATE CANCER SURVIVOR:

I have been feeling it is difficult to connect with others due to the coronavirus (in addition to the difficulty in continuing to deal with prostate cancer). Do you have any guidance?

RESPONSE FROM DR. JEFFREY ALBAUGH:

How to have hope in challenging times? Hope is a powerful, transforming force and an intrinsic part of each of us. When diagnosed with cancer, fear (rather than hope) sometimes becomes the dominant force in your life. As you mobilize hope, life dramatically changes for the better. I have found through my patients that hope can change everything. As Maya Angelou said, "Hope and fear cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Invite one to stay." Hope can dispel fear. Our world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic and, although infectious diseases are nothing new in our world, a new novel infectious disease that is impacting people across the globe to various degrees, including fighting for their lives, has changed how we live, how we interact and most everything about our lives. It definitely impacts our connection to others as most of us are living under a stay at home order and isolating ourselves physically from others, including our loved ones. As we struggle with not being able to make face-to-face eye contact and physically show our affection to the many family and friends we love, we do our best to stay connected through phones, video and social media. Make no mistake, each of us is hard wired for human connectedness (Goleman, D. 2007; Maslow, A. 1966) and as we see our way through the COVID-19 pandemic and future infectious diseases, we must find meaningful ways to be connected with other human beings. Brene Brown defines connection as the energy that exists between people who feel seen, heard and valued by the other person without feeling judged (Brown, B., 2003). Who doesn't want to feel seen, heard and valued by others? Now more than ever we need deep rooted connection with other human beings. This connectedness with others can magnify hope. If you are lucky enough like me, to be isolated at home with your partner whom you love, continue to take time for intimacy (communication on all levels) and connectedness. If you have been separated from your partner, when you are able to be together, take time to reconnect and re-establish intimacy. I can't think of anything more important than a deep sense of connection with the partner you love, as well as your friends and family.

Goleman, D. (2007). *Social Intelligence*. New York: Bantam.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality* (3rd ed.). Delhi, India: Pearson Education.

Brown, B. (2010). *The Gifts of Imperfection*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing.

You can access the new edition of my book or download a free copy of my original book at www.drjeffalbaugh.com.

Watch Dr. Albaugh's presentation on sexual health and intimacy from the *Prostate Cancer Pathways for Patients and Caregivers* event recorded at NorthShore University HealthSystem in Skokie, IL on November 3, 2018 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hiq0dDEb1l0&t=4483s>.

Read previous issues of *Between the Sheets* at www.ustoo.org/BTS.

Do you have a question about sexual health or intimacy? If so, we invite you to send it to Us TOO. We'll select questions to feature in future *Between the Sheets* columns.

Please email your question to: ustooBTS@ustoo.org

Or mail your letter to:

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feature on sex and intimacy,
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