

THE CIRCLES OF SEXUALITY

Sexuality encompasses nearly every aspect of our being, from attitudes and values to feelings and experiences. It is influenced by the individual, family, culture, religion/spirituality, laws, professions, institutions, science, and politics.

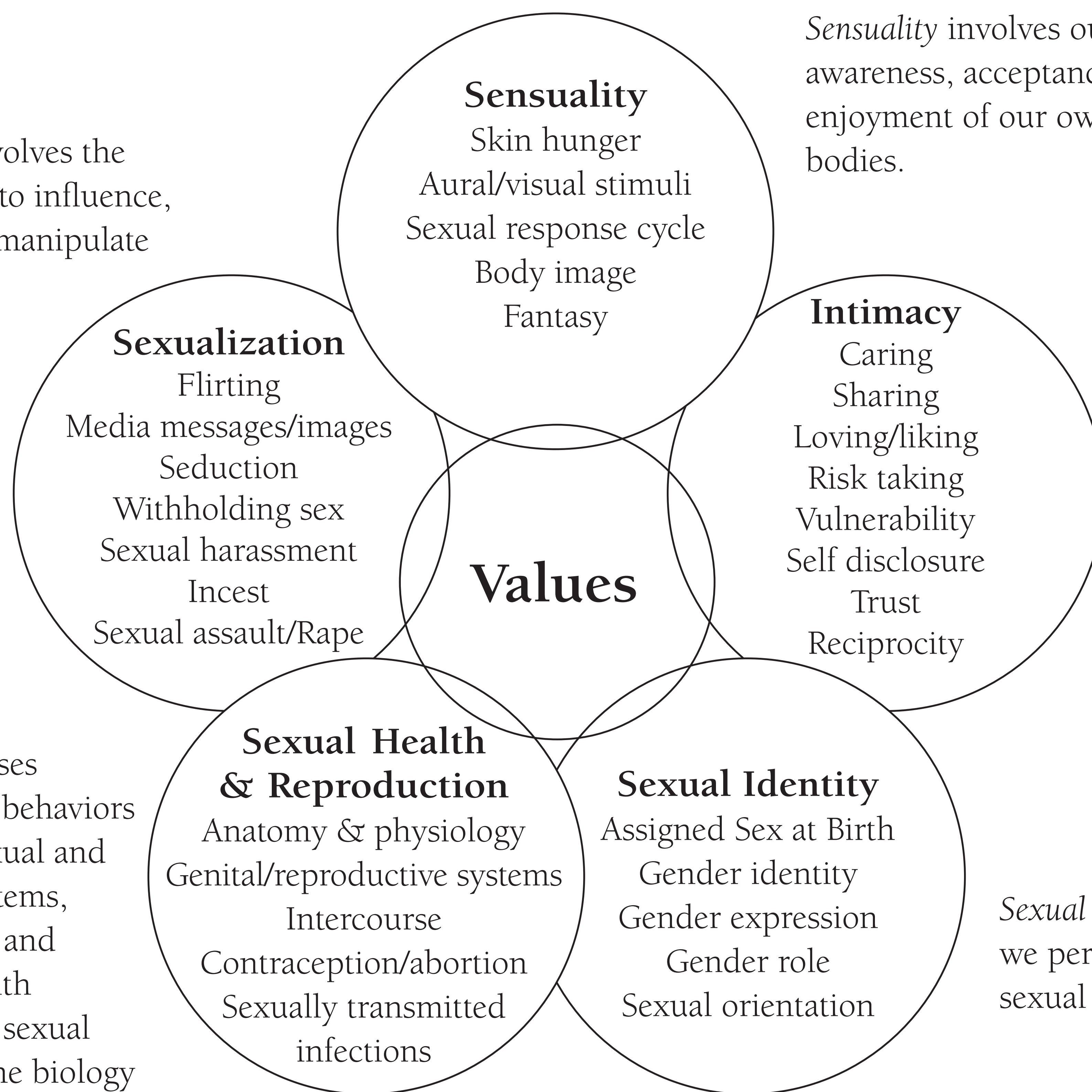
Sexualization involves the use of sexuality to influence, control, and/or manipulate others.

Sensuality involves our level of awareness, acceptance, and enjoyment of our own or others' bodies.

Intimacy is the experience of mutual closeness with another person.

Sexual health and reproduction focuses on attitudes and behaviors related to the sexual and reproductive systems, including health and hygiene, the health consequences of sexual behaviors, and the biology of producing children.

Sexual identity is how we perceive ourselves as sexual beings.



OUR WHOLE LIVES BILL OF RIGHTS AND PROGRAM ASSUMPTIONS

Bill of Rights

In this program, you have the right to

- ask any questions you have about sexuality
- receive full and accurate information about sexuality
- gain the knowledge and values you need to make decisions about sexual matters
- be supported in sexual expression that is healthy and life affirming
- be treated with respect by facilitators and other participants in this group

Program Assumptions

Our Whole Lives is based on the following assumptions about human sexuality:

- Human beings begin developing genitals and reproductive organs in utero and need to continue to care for them throughout their lives.
- Sexuality is a good part of the human experience.
- Sexuality includes much more than sexual behavior. It also includes physical changes, gender identity, feelings and thoughts about bodies and relationships, and social interactions.
- Sexuality affects human beings throughout the lifespan.
- It is natural to express sexual feelings in a variety of ways.
- People engage in healthy sexual behavior for a variety of reasons, including to express caring and love, to experience intimacy and connection with another, to share pleasure, to bring new life into the world, and to have fun and relax.
- Sexuality in our society is damaged by violence, exploitation, alienation, dis-honesty, abuse of power, and the treatment of persons as objects.
- It is healthier for young teens to postpone partnered sexual activity that could lead to unintended physical or emotional health outcomes.



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OUR WHOLE LIVES PROGRAM VALUES

Self-Worth

People are entitled to dignity and self-worth and to their own attitudes and beliefs about sexuality.

Sexual Health

- Knowledge about human sexuality is helpful, not harmful. Every person has the right to accurate information about sexuality and to have their questions answered.
- Healthy sexual relationships are
 - consensual (partners agree about what they will do together sexually)
 - nonexploitative (partners have equal power, and neither pressures or forces the other into activities or behaviors)
 - mutually pleasurable
 - safe (sexual activity brings no or low risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, or emotional pain)
 - developmentally appropriate (sexual activity is appropriate to the age and maturity of partners)
 - based on mutual expectations and caring
 - respectful (partners value honesty and keeping commitments made to others)
- Sexual intercourse is only one of the many valid ways of expressing sexual feelings with a partner. It is healthier for young teens to postpone partnered sexual activity that could lead to unintended physical or emotional health outcomes.

Responsibility

- We are called to enrich our lives by expressing sexuality in ways that enhance human wholeness and fulfillment and that express love, commitment, delight, and pleasure.
- All persons have the right and obligation to make responsible sexual choices.

Justice and Inclusivity

- We need to avoid double standards. People of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds, body sizes, income levels, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations must be treated equally and seen worth of equal value and rights.
- Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative. Coercion is when one person pressures another person to do something; exploitative is when one person's actions take advantage of another person.
- All of the following are natural in the range of human sexual experience: being romantically and sexually attracted to more than one gender (*bisexual*), the same gender (*homosexual*), another gender (*heterosexual*), and/or to those with a more fluid understanding of their own and others' gender (*pansexual*), and not experiencing sexual attraction (*asexual*).



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