

Dr. Ruth: The Mini Myth-Buster

By Tobi Schwartz-Cassell



Sex Expert Dr. Ruth says there are things that every 50-something woman should know about sex. Read on for her opinions on Viagra, masturbation and whether size really does matter.



Dressed as casually as if she were sipping coffee at her kitchen table, Ruth Westheimer spoke to a sanctuary full of Baby Boomers at Temple Emanuel in Cherry Hill this past fall. It was their “Baby Boomer and Beyond” conference - a day of learning and communing for the 45 and over set. She traveled all the way from New York to give the keynote speech.

With no visible signs of makeup, her hair a bit disheveled, she looked just like a Bubbe (Jewish grandma), ready to share some homespun advice. But what spilled from her lips was anything but homespun.

At 4’7” she had to climb up onto the wooden box reserved for the Bar Mitzvah boys, just so she could see over the podium. Her lesson that day, “How to Have Great Sex After 50,” was intended to bury the myths surrounding the topic. Quoting from the Talmud she said, “A lesson taught with humor is one obtained.” So armed with both facts and humor, Dr. Ruth set to work.

Myth #1: Post-menopausal women can't have good sex.

Because she was in a synagogue, Dr. Ruth leaned heavily toward the law of the land. Therefore, much of her advice was based on the Talmud (the book of Jewish law). She was very clear, however, that since she is a woman of faith, she would never ask others to break the laws of their own religions, and cautioned the audience to stay within their comfort zones when it comes to sex in all its forms.

In terms of post-menopausal sex, she referred to an actual Jewish law, "It states that a man must continue to have intercourse with his wife after menopause because sex is not only for PRO-creation but for REC-reation. And, as we get older, we still need to be touched and caressed."

With thanks to Bob Dole *in absentia* for his courage in sharing with the world his erectile dysfunction, she said that his commercial was (pardon the pun) "too stiff." Viagra is an important drug, she assured, but it is a prescription drug, so she admonished the men to first see their doctors rather than borrow the 'little blue pill' from their friends.

In the meantime, she said, "That husband needs more than Viagra to get his wife in the mood. He needs to help with the dishes, talk to her, take her out to dinner. Or else she'll tell him what to do with his erection."

She suggested the use of a lubricant for women, and a little extra care for men, "If at a certain age, a man doesn't have a psychogenic erection (arising from mental or emotional processes), he needs physical stimulation to gain and maintain it."

Myth #2: Women don't masturbate.

Oy vey. Don't get her started. Add to the above myth that those who

masturbate will:

- Need glasses
- Suffer from baldness
- Grow hair on their palms.

When she lectured at Harvard and told them that it's okay to masturbate, "...plenty of lawyers looked at their hands. But this is not a bad thing. It's a private thing that should be done in the bedroom or bathroom. The problem is that not enough women are getting the message."

She explained that masturbation is the only sexual act that is linked with guilt. "You might think that since it's the only form of truly safe sex and since it causes harm to no one, the guilty factor would be minimal. But just the opposite is true."

She urges women to give themselves permission to masturbate. "If you begin to experience guilt or shame, you will fail to achieve satisfaction. So you have to trick your brain into cooperating." Some of the suggested tricks are the use of fantasy or books. In her own book, Dr. Ruth's Sex After 50, she recommends the following by Nancy Friday: *My Secret Garden*, *Forbidden Flowers*, *Women On Top* or *Men In Love*.

She also has a section in her book that suggests techniques and toys to get the job done.

Myth #3: Education and communication have no place in the bedroom.

Wrong! The bedroom is the perfect classroom for two people in love. "In a good relationship, a couple must be sexually literate. If intercourse is uncomfortable for the woman, he doesn't want to inflict pain. They must talk about these issues. They must also remember that older people need touch. Maybe a massage.

"A woman should be responsible for her own orgasm. If she needs fantasy, use it.

Just keep your mouth shut. Unless you want to share.

"A man should do it in the morning when his testosterone is up. Get up, eat a light breakfast, take the phone off the hook and have sex."

Myth #4: You shouldn't have to schedule sex.

"Sometimes, you have no choice. So check into a motel for two hours. Have a bubble bath, bring some flowers, some champagne and have a sex date."

Myth #5: Size matters.

"Wrong. Unless it's miniscule."

Myth #6: Dr. Ruth wants every able bodied adult to have sex.

According to Dr. Ruth, only those who want to have sex should have sex.

The good doctor also took a moment to remind the women in the audience that keeping physically fit is for every part of the body.

"Don't forget to do your Kegel exercises. Do them in the car at the red light. Contract and then relax the vaginal muscles. Then look in the next car and wink." ^g

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