



**Wild & Sublime® Podcast, Season 2 Episode 11
“Andropause, Desire Discrepancy, and MORE”
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Andropause: Is it real? Sexperts chat about testosterone and sex drive as we age and offer surefire suggestions for upping your mojo. We also tackle desire discrepancy in relationships. And a storyteller recounts losing his virginity in the height of a Texas heat wave.

Host: Karen Yates

Guests: Korey McWilliams, Jason Best, Jo Flannery, Tazima Parris, Alan Colorado

[Wild & Sublime theme music]

Korey McWilliams

I think a lot of people conflate menopause and andropause and make this comparison, and think that it's fully analogous.

Jason Best

I think that there is a lot of people that really want you to feel bad. I think there's a lot of people that want you to feel insecure, along with a lot of people that make you want to feel anxious. And I think is super easy target in our culture is sex.

Jo Flannery

Every culture receives messages about what sex should be like, and in our Western culture, we receive messages that we should be ready to have sex at the drop of a hat, and we should desire sex all the time. And then on top of that, we should just come -- like, right away.

Karen Yates

Welcome to Wild & Sublime, a sexy spin on infotainment®, no matter your preferences, orientation or relationship style, based on the popular live Chicago show. Each week, I'll chat about sex and relationships with citizens from the world of sex positivity. You'll hear meaningful conversation, dialogues that go deeper, and information that can help you become more free in your sexual expression. I'm sex educator Karen Yates. Today, panelists talk about andropause: Real? Not real? We also get tips for working

through desire discrepancy, and a storyteller recounts losing his virginity in Texas. Keep listening.

Korey, I'm going to start with you, if you don't mind. Someone who has not signed themselves says, "I'm a gay male in my 50s. My partner is 10 years younger than me, and always ready to have sex. I'm slowing down. I saw an article on andropause. Is this really a thing, or just a pharmaceutical scheme to sell testosterone and Viagra? Are there any natural enhancements I can do?"

Korey McWilliams

Is it real? Yeah, a little bit. Probably not the way that we think about it. I think a lot of people conflate menopause and andropause, and make this comparison and think that it's fully analogous. But menopause is much shorter, over a matter of years, and it's pretty much universal. Whereas andropause, true andropause, which, if it were analogous to menopause, would be a complete shutting down of testicular function. Which isn't really what people are talking about, I think, when they're talking about andropause. I think when people are talking about andropause, they're talking about this kind of natural, gradual decline in testosterone that just comes with aging over time. Yeah, I mean, our testosterone peaks in our late teen years, and stays relatively high up until our early 30s. And then, over the next couple decades, over the next decades of our lives, it just kind of gradually declines. And most people don't notice. Most people don't notice. A very small percentage of people notice. And an even smaller percentage of people actually have a true andropause, where there's a complete shutting down. But a lot of people do feel different, and they wonder about T, because they do see so much marketing going on about it. But if it's problematic, or if it is andropause, you know, we can take a look at some of the things that are going on with us. You know, we can look you know, as the questioner said, "I'm slowing down, my partner's got a higher sex drive than I do." Is this a problem? Is it testosterone? We don't know. What else is going on? Are there erection challenges? Is there a loss of the body mass, increase in body fat, is it problems with concentration, problems with memory? Is there mood swings, irritability, depression, sleep disturbances? You know, if there's a lot of different things going on that feel like changes, then we go to the internet, and we self diagnose... No. No, no, no. We go to the doctor! If you want to know if you've got low T, and you're interested in figuring out what all these symptoms are, that's your only hope. If you want to get testosterone, you really need to go to the doctor anyway. They're probably gonna take some baseline levels. Just taking one measure of testosterone and time is not optimal, because it could be suppressed for reasons that might have nothing to do with taking testosterone to get boosted back up. It might just be things in the environment, so if we fix all that, our T might go back up.

So we want to try and do that naturally first, of course. You can also talk to your doctor. Figure it out, talk about side effects, interactions with other medications, interactions with other medical conditions. If you absolutely, positively, 100% do not want to take testosterone, or at the very least you want to try some other things first, you know, those cheap and universal lifestyle changes, the ones you always hear about. But sexual health, if you're particularly interested in sexual health, you've got to work on physical health first. Take care of physical health, you're going to be taking care of sexual health. So, nutrition: What do you put in your body? Good food, not too much alcohol, not too many cigarettes, not too many other toxins and things. You want to do activity. Some people say that exercise will raise T levels. You see a lot of different stuff in the literature about it; maybe there's an emphasis on weight training as a method of keeping it up, as opposed to just like, purely running. Again, talk to your doctor, find out your body, your interests, figure out what's going to work best for you.

So nutrition, activity or exercise, and then the big one that kills testosterone, and it can kill sex drive, is problems with sleep. If you're not getting good sleep, if you have sleep apnea, where you're not getting full breath throughout the night, your sleep is getting interrupted, then you're probably going to have depressed testosterone, and you're probably gonna need to talk to a doctor about that. So check it out. The only other thing, just real quick, if there might be psychological factors -- you know, your stress, anxiety, depression, those can certainly contribute to it. Or they can also be symptoms of it, as well. So it's not always easy to get a handle on what's causing and what's the symptom. But the best cheap, universal treatments, therapies, for stress, anxiety, and depression, are the same things I just mentioned. Exercise, nutrition, and get good sleep. If that doesn't do it, go see your sex therapist, or your therapist, or your coach, or whoever. Talk it through.

Karen Yates

Awesome. Thank you, Korey. Jason.

Jason Best

Yeah, I think that there is a lot of people that really want you to feel bad. I think there's a lot of people that want you to feel insecure. I think there's a lot of people who make you want to feel anxious. And I think a super easy target in our culture is sex. You know, people are worried about their performance. Eighty percent of men think their dick is undersized. You know, like, there is so much anxiety and insecurity floating around -- you know, am I orgasmic enough? Am I too orgasmic? Am I interested in sex enough? Am I too interested in sex? Like, people get so anxious about so many things. When I heard this, my first thought is: One, it's okay to age. Like, you can be a

55-year-old person, or you know, in your 50s, and maybe you're not, you know, fucking like a 20-year-old. Yeah -- that's okay. You don't have to be that. We have a youth-obsessed culture and this performance-obsessed culture that really puts a lot of insecurity and anxiety on people if they can't meet this ideal. But in trying to, they oftentimes are getting away from pleasure. They're getting away from connecting with their partner. I've seen that very insecurity, about "Am I enough for them? Am I doing enough? Am I hot enough? Am I wanting sex enough?" cause people to get very anxious about sex, and then they avoid sex. They want to avoid their partner, because it becomes scary and awkward and painful. I think that in a lot of these cases, yeah, if you're worried that there's a medical thing going on, absolutely talk to your doctor. I would recommend that across the board. If you're worried, talk to the doctor. Why not? That's what doctors are there [for]. But also, be prepared for maybe this is normal aging. And, you know, while I'm a sci-fi nerd, I'm all for body modification and being weird, I don't think it should be coming from such a place of fear. I think that if you're interested in it, have a good conversation with your partner. You can be involved in your partner's sex and sexuality without you yourself having sex. Like you can, you know, give them oral sex, you could hold them while they masturbate. You could, you know, send them a filthy-ass text or a long email that they then masturbate to. You could have a kinky scene together. You guys could plan an erotic night out for them and a friend. Like, whatever. There's lots of ways to be sexy and filthy and awesome, without you having to have sex if you're not into it. It's okay to not be into it.

Karen Yates

Great. Tazima, do you have any thoughts?

Tazima Parris

I want to underscore that it's okay to age. I think our society has an absolutely unrealistic obsession with being 20, and having the performance, having the lifestyle of a 20 year old -- which, by the way, I remember as being... NOT ideal [all laugh] in many ways, especially around freedom and choice. And so, with this sort of sexuality space, as we look at what's happening in our partners and with our partnerships, we're affected by our entire society, like, everything that's happening. And yes, men have more of a capacity to compartmentalize than women. And this stress still affects us. Also, you've never been the age that you are today, and you won't be tomorrow. So this is a new experience. And you can look at it as that.

I'm also going to underscore what Jason was saying, about looking at those alternative activities. I love the examples he gave. I love the -- if you want to move toward a more youthful way of being, try a makeout instead of "real sex." Like, try -- put a timer on

and see what you can get done in 10 minutes. Like, how naughty can you be in 10 minutes, versus trying to create whatever experience that you're expecting to have. Switch it up, allow yourself to get creative with whatever you're experiencing, and take the pressure off of the traditional ways and traditional expectations, and these expectations that you have from a time that has already passed. And I want to underscore here as well that, even though you may have had more arousal in the past, there were different conditions in the past. You are now in this present moment, under conditions that we've never experienced all at the same time. Hello!

Karen Yates

Oh my God, yes.

Tazima Parris

[laughing] And so, take that into consideration. And less pressure. No one needs any more pressure to perform, or pressure to be a certain way. You are where you are right now, and it's all good, and I 100% support you, and I know my fellow panelists support you. And, like, explore what's possible for you now, today.

Karen Yates

I love it. Love it, love it, love it.

If you're interested in finding out more about therapist Korey McWilliams, Jason Best and his practice Best Therapies, or Tazima Parris and her company Infinite Relating, go to our show notes. Did you like what you just heard? This is only part of what our Afterglow members on Patreon get every month. Our rotating panel of sexperts answer members questions in a cool, 30-minute monthly Zoom call, plus other goodies await! Like in February, all members can select one book from the SinCyr erotic literature catalog for free ebook download. Flexible levels start at \$5 a month. The link to The Afterglow is in our show notes.

About 80% of couples experience desire discrepancy. According to Psychology Today, sexual desire discrepancy is the difference between one's desired frequency of sex and the actual frequency of sex within a relationship. One study says that when couples report high sexual satisfaction, it contributes 15 to 20% to their overall relationship satisfaction. But when there is ongoing low sexual satisfaction, then it accounts for 50 to 70% of total relationship satisfaction -- or DISsatisfaction, as the case may be. To hear more about it, let's listen to my live interview with clinical sexologist and relationship and family therapist Jo Flannery, from the September 2019 show at Constellation in Chicago.

Hi. It's so nice to have you here.

Jo Flannery

Thank you. It's nice to be here. This is super tasty.

Karen Yates

Yeah. Okay, so we're talking about desire discrepancy. Do you think there are cultural messages we get about desire? Do you think it's a thing?

Jo Flannery

Yes. Oh, that's definitely a thing. Every culture receives messages about what sex should be like. And in our Western culture, we receive messages that we should be ready to have sex at the drop of a hat, and we should desire sex all the time. And then on top of that, we should just come -- like, right away. [audience laughter]

Karen Yates

Right away. It's like, boom, come. Ahhh! I did it. Thank you!

Jo Flannery

Yeah, you loved it, too, Karen.

Karen Yates

Some of the main research you've done has been on desire discrepancy. It's one of your specialties, right?

Jo Flannery

Yeah, that's right.

Karen Yates

A lot of couples come to you, I'm sure, with this issue.

Jo Flannery

Yes, yeah.

Karen Yates

So when you started studying desire discrepancy, and talking with folks who were coming to see you, what were some of the very first surprises you had? Like, what got debunked immediately for you?

Jo Flannery

Immediately? So immediately in my research, I learned that sexual desire discrepancy does not discriminate across race, gender, looks -- nothing. Sexual desire discrepancy is equal for everyone. Most people think that women have low desire in a relationship -- or female-bodied people. And that's not true. Low sexual desire is basically for everybody. Anyone can experience low sexual desire.

Karen Yates

So what else?

Jo Flannery

Oh, yeah. You wanna talk? Let's go! [laugh] One the cool things that I learned is that there are two types of sexual desire. The first one is spontaneous sexual desire. And that's the one that I think everyone is familiar with. That happens in the beginning of new relationships. It's that NRE, that new relationship energy, when you see the person that you're with, or it could be a stranger, it could be anyone, and you feel sexual desire for them. You want to have sex, or you want to self pleasure. That's spontaneous sexual desire. But the sleeper, that people really don't know about, and this is one of the most important bits, I think, is that there's another type of sexual desire, called responsive sexual desire. And that happens after someone has already decided that they want to engage in sex, they're willing to engage in sex, they're stimulated, they feel aroused, and then they feel responsive desire. It comes after foreplay, it comes after arousal.

Karen Yates

What does that look like? So let's say I'm with a partner, and we've been together for quite some time. Like, can you walk me through that a little bit?

Sure. Yes. So typically, in a relationship, if it's two people in a relationship, one person -- well, if there is desire in their relationship at all, one person will feel spontaneous desire, and they'll say to their partner, "Do you want to have sex?" Or try to come on to them. And the other person, who doesn't feel that spontaneous desire just then, they have to think: Do I want to have sex with this person? Do I feel safe with this person? Do I like this person? Okay. Yeah, I do. I want to feel close to this person. I'd like to feel physical pleasure, possibly orgasm, but I definitely want to feel sexually intimate with this person. That's number one. So they're willing to engage in the sex act, to see how it goes. After they decide they're willing to engage in the sex act, they need to have the appropriate sexual stimulus. It needs to be something that's turning them on, that's

making them feel aroused. All this time, they're checking back in with their body to see, is this something that I like? Okay, yeah, my body is responding. Maybe I'm feeling flushed, my nipples are erect, I'm starting to breathe through my mouth. These are all signs of arousal. And after they realize that they're aroused, then they feel this really strong, life-giving feeling, that is sexual desire. And for someone with responsive desire, that could just be -- you know, it could bring tears to someone's eyes, if you don't feel desire for so long, and then you realize that you do have it, it's just dormant. It takes some time.

It sounds to me like the responsive part of sexual desire, it sounds like it's kind of like nurturing it. Is it about nurturing these stages? I notice, sometimes in my life, it's like, there's a resistance, right? Because I'm pissed off. Right? [play-acting] Ehh... You. [makes dismissive sound] [audience laughter] You know, there can be a resistance. But like, that's up to me, to kind of soften that "Ehhh." [laughter] And what's the next phase? It's checking in, and?

Appropriate sexual stimulus in the context.

Okay. Like, [grudgingly admitting voice] "Yeah, okay, it is turning me on. Ehhh." [makes dismissive sound] [laughter] Or it's, it's turning me on -- or like, at that point, I have to be communicative, right?

Jo Flannery

Oh, yeah. Yeah, that would be good.

Karen Yates

That'd be good. Yeah, right. So just being like, "YOU do it."

Jo Flannery

"You do it." Yeah.

Karen Yates

"You do it!"

Jo Flannery

Because you are responsible for your own desire. No one else. It's all you.

Karen Yates

That's right. Yes, absolutely. Right. So what are some tips you can give people who maybe are experiencing desire discrepancy? Can you give tips, either for the person who is feeling way more desire for sexual contact? And then a tip for the person who is like, way not feeling the desire?

Jo Flannery

Okay. Yeah, but I want to give them for both.

Karen Yates

Okay. Yeah, right.

Jo Flannery

This is for everyone! Everyone needs to be patient. This is a normal part of a healthy relationship, sexual desire discrepancy. So please be patient with yourself. And please be patient with your partner or partners. That's important. But then the other bit that's for everyone is that sex starts with you. And so, if you love having sex with yourself and you love self-pleasuring, if you feel good in your body, if you accept pleasure into your life, that's really a starting point for having a fulfilling sex life with anyone, including yourself. It starts with you.

Karen Yates

Yeah. What about touch? Sometimes I think, some of the experiences I've had, it's just being with each other, being willing to be with each other naked, just touching without an outcome, is so critical sometimes. It's just like, getting on the same page of like, we're together. We're together naked, and like, this is what we've got right now.

Jo Flannery

Right. Yeah. And so, creating a stronger bond with your partner or partners is really important, to be able to be comfortable with each other and exist in that space of being naked and sexual together -- not necessarily to have an orgasm, but just to bond, and be together, and touch each other's flesh. I mean, that also can bring desire, but it can also just feel really good, and bond the relationship. [music under]

Karen Yates

For more information on Jo Flannery, check out the show notes. Wild & Sublime is also sponsored in part by our Sublime Supporter, Chicago-based Full Color Life Therapy, therapy for all of you, at fullcolorlifetherapy.com. If you would like to be a Sublime Supporter, showcasing you and your business and supporting us at the same time, contact us at info@wildandsublime.com.

And now, to finish us off, a story of youthful endeavors from Chicago actor and storyteller Alan Colorado. This was from our May 2019 show. [music out]

Alan Colorado

[live in front of audience] So, the summer of 1998, in Dallas, Texas, and I was 17 years old, and it was so hot. And it's nothing like Chicago summer. It's like 100 degrees, every single day. And in the summer of 1998, my dad got cancer. It was cancer that would later go on to kill him. It was very serious. So things were very tense at the house. And then also, my brother dropped out of college and came back to live with us at the house. Because when you have an Afro that goes out to your shoulders, and you're stealing a giant canister of nitrous oxide from a hospital, and the surveillance tape has your Afro going back and forth as you walk along with this thing, it's kind of hard to say it isn't you. So, he got in a lot of trouble. My parents bailed him out, and he's kind of cramping my style that summer. I'm like, senior year, but things are getting stressed out. But you know, I'm keeping my cool, because I have the most amazing girlfriend in the world. Her name is Amber Garrison, and she is... I worshipped her body. I can't even talk about it. She was way out of my league. I looked nothing like I do now. I had this horrible-- I had hair. Not great. And then I had no beard -- even worse. And then... I would wear jean shorts. Not that there's anything wrong with that, necessarily. But the socks, the combo, it was bad.

There I was. I was out of my league. She had these legs, they were like Roman columns, and this giant ass. She was like an R. Crumb drawing come to life, if you know what I'm talking [about]. She was mind-warping. And she was horny all the time, and was really into doing lots of stuff, like blowing me. And then she was like, "Let's have sex." And I was like, "Yes. Let's have SEX." I will become a man this summer, was what I think to myself. And I was ready for sex too. I mean, I already had the song picked out that I wanted to lose my virginity to. It was a deep cut off of Stone Temple Pilots' second album. [audience laughter] Deep cut. It's called "Still Remains." And it goes like this.

[awesome guitar music plays]

...What you're thinking to yourself? Well, yeah, so we finally got our opportunity right away. My parents were like, "We're going to take a trip down to Austin to see some friends." And so they're gone, the house is empty. And I'm just sitting there in the air conditioning, watching a VHS of the first season of South Park, which a friend loaned to me, that he taped off of TV. And I'm just like, in the AC, letting it wash over me. It

feels so good. And then my brother comes in, with his friend Adam Pickarel -- or, not a joke, "Pickle," as they called him. So they come in and they're like, "Hey, Alan, good news. We're gonna throw a big party here tonight." And I was like, "No, no, you're not. You're not gonna throw a party here, because that's crazy. You're already fucking up my whole life here, Eric. Last thing I'm gonna do is let you have a party." And he's like, "No, come on, man. You know, you'll be able to drink, you know, you're too young to drink. Come on, man. We'll have a party, it'll be great." They were like, "We're gonna take all the furniture and put it in the other room and put these turntables here and have a DJ." Like, this is the kind of party they wanted to throw. I was like, "Eric, have you ever seen a sitcom? Like, this is not gonna go well, we're all gonna get busted." So I put my foot down. I'm like, "If you throw this party, I'm gonna call Dad." And that's the end of it. And so he's like butthurt, but I'm like, sorry.

So that party never happened. And so I went to Amber's that night, and we -- we were so good. We were so in love, too. I mean, she was wearing this like, sexy outfit, and had some sort of like, spermicidal lube -- like, we were being so careful. And I have more spermicidal lube, and condoms in my other hand, and I'm like, "I will NOT fuck up my life like my brother!" Like, I'm ready to have sex, as responsible as a 17-year-old possibly could. And so there I am. We have the great time, and it comes time for actual coitus. And I'm there, and I go inside of her. And I don't even make it out. Like, I come immediately. I just like, blow my -- and I don't even know it's happening. I don't know enough at all. I'm like, What year is it? Is it--? I don't know what just happened? And she's like, "Relax. It'll be fine. Let's try it again." Yeah, so no problem. I'm 17. [audience laughter] So I'm like, "Yeah, let's try it again." And so boom. And I come in there-- BOOM! [Stone Temple Pilots plays] [laughter]

That's good. But no, I... It's the same story again. Boom, hair trigger, second time around. And then I started to get a little worried. But again, I gotta say, God bless Amber Garrison. This woman is an angel. She's like, "Don't worry, who cares? Look, I'm Amber Garrison, I'm the greatest girl in the world, check out my legs..." And I'm like, "Alright, okay, everything's cool." And then we fuck, and we fuck seriously. And then I obviously don't blow my top, because even a 17 year old Alan Colorado can't come three times in like, 40 minutes. That's crazy. So it really is this amazing kind of loving, like wonderful virginity-losing experience that I have. And then a couple of days later, after my parents are back in town, my mom finds this crumpled-up note that I wrote for my brother. And it says, "Hey, Eric, I'm going over to Amber's tonight to get lucky. See you tomorrow, I'll be back." And it mentions no party. And my mom gets so pissed at me. And she starts talking about how I'm irresponsible. And she starts talking about how she thought that she could trust me. And I am just seething. And I'm dying

on the inside. Because, you know, it's all becoming so clear to me in my mind, that like, becoming a man doesn't have anything to do with some stupid losing your virginity masculinity bullshit. It means like, being an adult, and not trashing your parents' house as soon as they leave. And I'm the one who has to be the man around here, because Eric is a freakin' mess. And I'm so angry at him. And it was in that moment that I thought to myself, "I really should tell them what Eric wanted to do here...." And I was so angry at him. And I have no idea why I didn't. Thank you. [applause]

Karen Yates

Next week, it's time for a COVID dating update. We talk to Sarah Sloane from #open about what's going on. Thank you for listening. If you know someone who might be interested in this episode, send it to them. Do you like what you heard? Then give us a nice review on your podcast app. You can follow us on social media @wildandsublime, and sign up for newsletters at wildandsublime.com. I'd like to thank associate producer Julia Williams and design guru Jean-Francois Gervais. Theme Music by David Ben-Porat. This episode was edited by The Creative Impostor Studios. Our media sponsor is Rebellious Magazine, feminist media at rebelliousmagazine.com.