



EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

Embody - Good positions for bad backs

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

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I want to help you feel good in your body.

That is not only the purpose of this column, but also the driving force behind every healer I know. Many queer folks, and anyone else with a body that varies from what is called the norm but is actually rare, have likely had a very different experience when seeking healthcare. The best healers are trying to be not only a cure, but an antidote to that sense of betrayal, or shame, or invisibility that can come in a small room with an authority figure assessing you for wrong-ness.

Similarly, sex is often made out to be dirty, deviant, full of pitfalls, traps and guilt. While I fully support playing on those concepts of deviance and dirty during well negotiated and consensual sex play, I don't believe that sex is any of those things. To give and receive pleasure in this quirky bag of water, nerves and bones is one of the best gifts we've been given.

This space is for that antidote. For that sacred temple that is both your body, and the journey to being fully in it. For honest, kind, respectful answers to your questions, and examples of self care, and access to information about health and joy and pleasure. For the ways we can embody our stories, our truths, and our desires.

Like many adventures, it's good to start with some basics. I've asked Suzi Levy D.C. of Asha Wellness to give us the benefit of her many years of experience as both a massage therapist and a chiropractor.

PQ: Let's start with what a 'bad back' is. Suzi?

SL: First the disclaimer. This is a long disclaimer, a summary of what would otherwise be a book. For purposes of simplicity, I'm going to be focusing on penetrative sex; in order to be gender and identity inclusive, I will refer to a "giver" (someone who is doing the penetrating) and "receiver" (someone being penetrated). Please keep in mind that the mechanics will change slightly based on the tool someone is using to penetrate or depending on which part of the pelvis is being penetrated. Please use this article for educational purposes. If you are having back pain or need ergonomic advice for sex, please seek care from a qualified professional.

A 'bad back' is any issue that causes back pain, muscle spasm or other discomfort. The pain can be anywhere from the top of your neck to the bottom of your tailbone. Often people are referring to a pain they feel right now or to the fact that their back will feel pain if they engage in too much activity.

PQ: How is this most likely to affect sexual positions?

SL: It is not so much the positions they can't get into but the pain that stops them from wanting to participate in the first place. The few patients who actually admit that pain is interfering with their sex lives report frustration with having to choose between a fulfilling sexual experience and living the next 5 days without a "bad back."

PQ: Why do injuries get exacerbated during sex?

SL: As much as I would love all my patients to be perfectly aware of their ergonomics at all times, this is a tall order during sex. What most are aware of is the goal. “Feel good, make another feel good, contort into an awkward position so that I can watch while another feels good. Contort even further so I keep feeling good – need to go a little to the left to get to the right spot? Sure I can become a pretzel for the next 5 min.”

If you were to go to the gym and do 10 hip extensions properly and start to fail proper form on number 11, any good trainer would say, “OK you’re done. If you keep going you are going to injure yourself.” But in the moment of sex all you are hearing both inside and outside of your head is “more!” And how many more reps do you plan to do? AS MANY AS IT TAKES! And my back hurts? What’s a back? I believe that there are only two or three parts of my body right now and my low back ain't invited to this party.

Or even if one is aware enough to realize “ah, my perfect thrusting form has started to falter, I am now recruiting the incorrect muscles for this movement. Surely this will hurt later” Most of the time the answer is “so be it.” Unless you are riding solo, there is at least one other person who has a stake in your movements.

PQ: What are some good positions for people with bad backs?

SL: During sex, you are either in flexion or extension. If you are a person that feels better standing than sitting then you are going to do better with extension. If you are person who feel better sitting than standing you are going to do better with flexion.

If you are a person who is always having to go between standing and sitting because nothing feels good for long then, you guessed it, you are going to have to be switching up your positions a little

more often.

PQ: Anything else you want to leave our readers with?

SL: Hollywood teaches us that sex should be a whirlwind of spontaneous intensity that can act as a temporary reset button for all the troubles of your life. But remember, those Hollywood scenes are scripted. Communicate with your partner about what makes you feel good and what doesn't. It will not only increase your pleasure, it will increase trust and intimacy.

I look forward to the article you write on how to talk to your sex partners about pain during sex.

Sossity Chircuzio is a writer and columnist based out of Portland, Oregon. She is a regular contributor for PQ Monthly and focuses on social justice, communication, community, and changing the world. You can follow her adventures online @sossitywrites and find more at sossitywrites.com.