

Joe Kort Erotic Orientation

Okay. Welcome to the show everyone. And welcome to Dr. Joe Kort.

Thank you so much for being here today.

It's great to be here. Thanks for inviting me.

Yeah. So we've overlapped in ASEC for a number of years and I have just loved all of the stuff that you've been putting out on social media over the past couple of years, like through COVID and everything. And I've been following you so closely and you really stood out on TikTok because of the videos that you created on the difference between sexual orientation and erotic orientation, particularly videos on straight men who have sex with men.

And there is so much to unpack in that topic. And so I had to have you on so that we could have a more in-depth discussion about it, because I think given the popularity of those videos, there are probably a lot of people who, A, not, you know, maybe relate to that, but B, have a lot of questions and curiosity about that. And so that's what I want to talk to you about today.

I'm always up for that.

Yeah. So let's dive right in. How do you describe the difference between sexual orientation and erotic orientation?

Yeah. So sexual orientation is to whom we're attracted, whether it's male, female, both, a blend of both, non-binary, whatever that is. It's to whom we're attracted to. Erotic orientation is what gets us off, is what we think about when we're with somebody or when we're alone, self-pleasuring that is part of our arousal template, our erotic template, and it's your erotic orientation and they don't always match up, but people think they do. So when I try to separate them, people get upset.

Yeah. And do you, what is the difference, if any, between erotic orientation and sexual fantasy?

The same. Well, right. So in your erotic orientation, you have sexual fantasies, but like, so for instance, in the kink fetish community, uh, even in the polyamory and consensual non-monogamy, they're looking at it as its own orientation. Right.

So the fact that I'm a dom, I'm a sub, I'm a foot fetishist, whatever that is, people are starting to, and research is starting to reinforce. This may be how you're wired. And it's not just like somebody might like, oh, every once in a while, I'm into feet.

Every once in a while, I like to be tied down. That's a sexual fantasy and preference.

Erotic orientation is this is who I am. This is what gets me off.

Interesting. And so when you say that this may just be how we're wired, can you speak to that a little bit more? Cause I think a lot of people might have a sexual fantasy or erotic orientation as you're describing.

And, you know, they're immediately looking back in their childhoods, trying to understand why they might have those particular thoughts or feelings. And it sounds like there may be a little bit more to it than that. So talk about that and what the research is showing.

Yeah. So I am one of these people that subscribes to the theory that, yes, we have non-sexual narratives embedded in the sexual narrative. So things do have threads to our childhood, not everything, but even if you're kinky, whether you're vanilla, whatever your erotic interests are, they do get eroticized from childhood, but not everything does. Some things we don't know, they're unexplainable. And, um, now I'm forgetting your question. I'm sorry. What did you ask me?

No, that's okay. Just, you know, in terms of people who may be wired to orient a certain way, erotically versus people who maybe had an experience or something in their childhood that triggered a particular sexual thought or fantasy, or in other words, contributed to the development of their arousal template. So I guess nature versus nurture is really the heart of the question. And it's hard to know, right? So like I did, I have my own podcast and the very first one was called Ropers, the Ropers, not the Ropers you saw on three's company, but the Ropers who are into roping.

And the guy admitted, he said, I remember being a boy scout and being taught how to tie a knot and being turned on. I had an erection while I was doing that. Now he didn't eroticize that, it was when he first discovered that he was wired toward that. And it just evolved over time to wanting to consensually rope other women that he was attracted to. And he would consider his being a Roper as his identity. Whereas someone else might say every once in a while, I like to tie someone down and yeah, that's kind of fun.

That sounds fun, but it's not, it's not an important necessity.

Right? So the occasional sexual interest or curiosity versus a true preference, which really I think is the difference between like a kink and a sexual fetish, meaning something that is fetishized as something that you are pretty dependent on to build arousal or have an orgasm that without that as part of your sexual repertoire, there might be great dealings of frustration or dissatisfaction versus something that's an occasional kink is something you might throw in periodically to spice things up or to scratch an itch, but isn't crucial to your sexuality.

A hundred percent. And then people get messed up and upset online when I say, and

sometimes lesbians think about sleeping with men. I've actually had some lesbians. I just talked to, I did a lesbian podcast yesterday with two lesbians or two women that identified as lesbians.

And I talked about how lesbians have rape fantasies about straight men gang raping them. And this doesn't make them less of a lesbian. It doesn't mean they're not really lesbians.

It doesn't even mean that they want to be raped. It's just an erotic fantasy, part of their erotic orientation. Does that make sense? Totally.

And for those of you listening, who are having a hard time wrapping your head around this, I think the example I can provide that would probably make you realize that you're holding a huge gender bias around this is think of a heterosexual couple and the female partner in that relationship expresses an interest to have a threesome with another woman. Most people would not bat an eye at that. That's considered hot.

Maybe she's having a great time with it, but most people would not say, Oh, she must be a lesbian because she wants to have sex with another woman. They would say things like, Oh, she's experimental. She's having a good time.

She knows how to spice things up. Maybe it's something that her partner's interested in. So she's happy to do for him or whatever.

And I think a lot of people wouldn't think twice about that. But when we think of a straight man expressing an interest in having sex with another man or a lesbian woman is having sex with another man or fantasizing about being raped by a man or something like that, people can't believe it. And so I just want to encourage anyone listening to really check those gender biases that may be coming into play.

The very first video I did on TikTok that went viral is this one. And I said this, when women have one, when wait, when men have one non heterosexual thought he's stigmatized when women have a non heterosexual thought she's fetishized and both are problematic. But the woman, like you just said, has more wiggle room than the man does.

Why do you think that is? I think it's homophobia. I think for women, because women are eroticized and sexualized primarily by a lot of straight men. And it's sort of like hot to them to think of two women, but disgusting for them to think of two men.

And so that disgust response dictates stigmatizing them that you can't be a straight man interested in having sex with another man. So would you say that it's in large part straight men or just really any man in particular that maybe has this gender bias? Do you see women, you know, kind of expressing the same reaction, disgust when they think? Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Because I work with so many men who have sex with men that aren't gay. Maybe they're by maybe they're gay, but they're usually straight men and they're caught by the wife and the disgust response.

Uh, and, um, yes, because she can't imagine that now, he's not an alpha male to her anymore is what they say. Now you're a beta. Now I don't even know if I can look at you the same. It's like that.

Right. Right. So what advice do you give to couples who come in with this issue? Maybe it's a heterosexual couple and the male in the relationship has expressed this interest. How do you help them navigate and really work through some of the internalized homophobia that they may carry?

I definitely have them address their own disgust responses because that's going to shape how they're going to want to go forward in this. And then I have the best, most successful way is helping them both understand where this fantasy comes from.

If they can find the non-sexual meaning, it can invite erotic compassion for their partner, erotic compassion for oneself. Oh, I get into this because I was sexually abused or my first experience or whatever entered, you know, made it become eroticized, but that's not always possible, right? Not everything is so easy in therapy or so, cookie cutter. So then I just help them talk about challenging their own belief systems about, you know, private sexual feelings, private sexual fantasies, and really differentiation. You know, about that, right? We're just letting the couple not agree having their own responses, but not having to force the other to be like them, like each other.

Exactly. So let's, I'm going to come back to a point you just made, which is the non-sexual meaning behind sexual fantasy. Cause I think that's what a lot of people are struggling to understand.

I mean, so many of my clients, they put sex into a box and they think that everything else is separate from it, where the lens I'm looking through, and I'm sure you are as well. It's like everything affects our sexuality and you cannot pull it apart from anything that makes you who you are as an individual. So what are some of the more common non-sexual meanings or components to sexual fantasies?

So one of them is, I'll give you this example. And I've seen this a lot where a woman finds her husband's porn and it's maybe him being dominated by a fem dom, female dom force feeding him, scat, let's say. You know, something that really to somebody who's not aroused by that would be totally disgusted by. So that is her response. And how can you be into this? And I'm never going to do this with you and what's wrong with you.

So when we do a childhood thread, everything to me comes back to childhood. I'm really

big about And not everything is going to be necessarily related. You find out that the guy was, in terms of punishment, force fed a bar of soap in his mouth, force fed hot sauce for talking badly to his parents. So now that painful, horrible experience gets eroticized. So there isn't porn out there that's feeding somebody hot sauce or putting a bar of soap.

There's a few fetish films where they have porn or soap in your mouth. But for the most part, the bigger genre is this forced scat eating. And so it's the imagery and the theme and the metaphor for what it is.

Once this particular couple I'm thinking about discovers this, she has more compassion. He has more compassion and it's not always objectifying the fantasy.

Right. Right. And I guess this is what you mean by the secret logic of sexual fantasies. You know, when we eroticize something, a lot of times what that does is take the sting out of something that was maybe painful for us in our childhood or, you know, in our family of origin, as you just described. It, for a lot of people, can be a really great way to reclaim some control over something that they didn't have control of from their past.

And so I think we see this a lot for people who do have some kind of trauma in their childhoods. Sometimes it's sexual trauma. Sometimes it isn't, you know, maybe they grew up in a household where control was a huge theme.

Maybe, you know, they grew up in a household where one parent used money to control. And so they have this kind of eroticized interest or kink or fantasy about being a sugar baby to someone else. I mean, there's all kinds of, I think, meaning below a lot of fantasies in most cases and other cases, of course, you know, it's just a fleeting thought that comes through for no apparent reason.

But I think by and large, a lot of people still feel a great deal of shame about some of the fantasies that we have, you know, but what I always like to remind people is that fantasy, what I say is really that by cutting off from our sexual, by cutting off from our fantasies, rather we're cutting off from a really essential human component of our sexuality. I think, you know, no other animal species, as far as we know, can utilize mental imagery the way that humans can. And so to cut off from that element of our sexual selves is really kind of dehumanizing.

Yes. I always tell people, yes, I always tell them, you can't give yourself an erotic ectomy. There's no such thing.

And that's when people come in and they just get cut this out of my brain. And then I love Jack Morin's quote, Jack Morin wrote *The Erotic Mind*, which is all about cracking the erotic code. And he says, "If you go to war with your sexuality, you will lose and cause more chaos than when you started."

And that's what I tell all my clients. I love that quote.

Me too.

I think it's so true and so fitting. I think that we really need to do everything we can for our clients to help them learn to embrace all aspects of their sexuality. So how you, you talked about helping people find compassion for their partner, as it relates to some fantasies that maybe they're not really interested in or not comfortable with. How can, how can they do that for anyone listening, whose partner has expressed a sexual interest like this to them that they're like, gosh, like I love this person.

I want to do whatever I can to please them. But that is just not at all something that I am interested in. What kind of advice do you offer those folks?

So I might talk to them and not in this order necessarily, but just thinking out loud, can you, can you watch erotica, read erotica around it? So you don't have to do it, but you're, you're reading it together or can you talk it out loud together? So I have a client right now who is really into having sex with men.

He's not gay. And he loves the idea of her having sex with men and they don't do that, but it's, but it's an erotic charge for them so that they talk about it at length and it turns him on and it's not all of their sex life, but it's a big part of their sex life. You know, is there a way to maybe get on cam with other people where you don't meet them and you're doing it safely and wisely.

So there's a lot of different things before the end result might be, do we want to open our relationship so you can go play, you know, in gay male relationships, this is often not a thing you go play and go do what you want to do. And just come back home to me. We have a secure attachment. In heterosexual couples, even some lesbian couples. It's not like that.

It's a no go. Yeah. And that's something that, you know, for those of you who don't know, it became really popular, especially during COVID, you know, the, this cam world or people going to virtual sex parties. There was like a huge spike in that because people were unable to do so during quarantine. And so for anyone listening who is interested in exploring that, I think you'll find a lot more online resources to virtually explore some of this behavior that maybe you're not sure whether or not you're comfortable exploring in real life.

Right. It's great. And then that way you're exploring, it kind of feels real, but it isn't necessarily real, but you got to be careful that somebody's not recording you and all that stuff.

Right. Of course. Go to like a masquerade party if you're just starting out.

Yeah. Yeah. So can you talk a little bit about how you got into this? Because what I know is that it was kind of a 180 for you, because I think you, like me, used to be a little bit

more in the sex addiction world, right?

Yeah. Yeah. 25 years of that. Because I self-identified as a sex addict, because I had... no problem being gay. I had a problem being kinky and I was troubled by that. And I actually fired therapists who said, "It's normal. Your kink is normal.

Let me help you integrate it." This was the 80s. And I was like, no, no, no.

And finally I found a therapist who said, no, you're a sex addict. You're fucked up. And I want to help you.

And I was like, bingo. You're the, you know, so then I went in that route and I was also sexually abused. So I found a therapist who said to me, I'm going to have to know everything about your sexual fantasies and erotica to help you crack that erotic code, to understand the non-sexual meanings, to help you with your abuse.

And it was a woman, my perpetrator was a woman. So, I mean, I went through and it took me a long time. It was before EMDR and, but it was the best thing that could happen.

Cause then it made me more comfortable to understand my own erotica, my own non-sexual threads, had my own self-compassion and my own embracing that I'm just a kinky guy. And there's nothing wrong with that. And so that then helped inform my work with clients. Yeah. I have a similar story. I mean, well, similar in some ways, but the first clinician who I worked under when I was doing my postgraduate hours, who I still have immense respect for because she taught me so much of what I know, but she was also a sex addiction therapist.

And she said, you know, if you want to work here, you need to go through the training. And I said, okay. And I didn't know that much about it, but I'll never forget as part of the training, you had to take an assessment of sex addiction so that you were familiar with the assessment tools. And I think it like scored me as being like high on the scale for sex addiction. And I knew that I was not at all a sex addict. And I thought there is something fundamentally wrong with this.

And there were items on the scale that were about use of sex toys and masturbation. And, you know, I was very sex positive and I'm like, there's nothing addictive about this. How did you finally break free from that world?

Becoming a sex therapist, getting training in the nuances and the diversity and all of the, um, you know, people in the sex addiction community think sex should look like this clean heteronormative, you know, non-kinky, um, just not understanding that it can look so many different ways.

It can be smelly. It can be dirty. It can be fun.

It can be pleasurable. And the more I learned, uh, and then that, and in addition to the industry, and it still does this, if somebody comes to them and says, I don't want to be a homosexual, I'd rather be a sex addict. They will do sex addiction treatment on somebody who's at odds with their own gayness.

And I tried to fight that. And it just became very moralistic, very religious. It never used to be that way.

But what it's always been that made me leave is it's not sexually informed. People think sex addiction therapists are sex therapists. Far from it. They're not.

No, they're not. So what is your advice to anyone listening who might be struggling thinking that maybe some of their behaviors mean that they have sexual dependency or compulsivity issues?

Go to a sexually informed, trained therapist, because there is compulsivity. People do struggle with out of control behaviors and you deserve the help, but to have somebody pathologizing it, like for instance, even you, I would even say they pathologize gay men's behavior, women's behavior, fetish behavior.

You don't want that. Because it might be normal for you, but you need a trained eye on you to help you gain mastery over it rather than it having mastery over you.

Right, definitely. Well, I think this is such an interesting conversation.

I could sit and talk with you about this forever. So I'll have to have you back on so we can dive more in depth, but I want to thank you for being here. Where can people learn more about you and you have a lot of books out.

So talk about where people can get your books and resources.

Yep. They can, first of all, go to my website, Joe Kort, J O E K O R T.com. And then amazon.com has all my books, but also all my social media; TikTok, which by the way, I have like 571,000 people following me.

I love that. And Twitter and everything is at Dr. Joe Kort, D R. J O E K O R T. And then you'll find me.

Great. And I'll be sure to link everything in the show notes. So check it out. Thank you, Joe.

Thank you.