

## Sex and the Single Man

“I’m divorced and would like to get remarried. How do I build a new relationship given that I have been treated for prostate cancer and am impotent?” That’s a question Barbara and I had last week when we conducted one of our workshops for prostate cancer patients and significant others.

Given the emotional and practical considerations, it is a big dilemma. Older people usually have more difficulty meeting the opposite gender. Then there is the problem of letting go of the fears, inhibitions, and sharing experiences, needs, and desires. On top of all of this, the anxiety, “whether he or she will like me after they really get to know me.”

“And what will happen after I tell her I’m impotent? If I tell her on the first or second date, she probably won’t want to see me again. If I wait until we really get close to each other, she may get angry because I did not trust her. It’s really that I was afraid she wouldn’t want to see me again.” Then there is one man’s approach to let his new wife find out on their wedding night. (She was not pleased.)-

Clearly, there are two parts to the man’s question. The first is *when to tell* and the second, *what to tell* your partner. We think that saying anything on the first or second time you get together can kill a relationship before you know whether a relationship is even possible, whether both people could really get interested in learning about the other person. At the outset, you’re first trying to learn about each other and whether each of you could be interested in the other. Since the feelings of wanting to be close to someone is based on knowing the “whole” person, talking about the physical side of the relationship could end the “getting to know you” phase or throw it off course. When two people get together the third or fourth time, you have a pretty good idea whether you could become a strong pair.

The next part is what to say. The key guideline is *be truthful*. Some of the things you could say, for example, are “I’ve told you about my prostate cancer and my treatment. The treatment left me able to get a partial or no erection. We can still have sex, whether I have an erection or not. The key point is that I can still have sex and would enjoy it with you. It just means that I will be able to have limited or no penetration. And there are many aids out there that will help me have an erection. I can use medications occasionally to have an erection. And at any time you want, I can bring you around so you can have an orgasm. That would be exciting for me and give me lots of pleasure.”

We are glad to receive your comments and questions. All questions will be answered in this column or privately, as you prefer.

Ralph Alterowitz is coauthor with his wife Barbara Alterowitz of *The Lovin’ Ain’t Over: The Couple’s Guide to Better Sex after Prostate Disease*. For more information visit [www.thelovingaintover.org](http://www.thelovingaintover.org)