

Gateway to Intimacy: A Married Couple's Guide to Love, Romance, Passion, and Phenomenal Sex

Edward M. Gomez

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The sexual techniques of our forefathers and foremothers are thoroughly updated and rebooted for the modern age.

With scientifically sound principles and poetic language, this updated guide to a nineteenth-century practice aims to enhance married couples' sexual connection. In *Gateway to Intimacy*, Edward M. Gomez introduces the relationship benefits of nonorgasmic sex (or "Karezza," Italian for "caress"), first propounded in the United States in the 1840s. Although the historical origin of the technique means this guide can feel old-fashioned, in that it advocates stereotypical gender roles in florid prose, Gomez bolsters his argument with practical diagrams and exercises designed to bring partners into better harmony.

All too often, orgasm is seen as the end-all of intimacy, even though it can produce lethargy or even disappointment. In nonejaculatory sex, however, couples practice "Caressive Love" (a method of translating raw passion into expressions of seductive affection), so as to remain in "pre-crises" arousal for fifteen to thirty minutes. Rather than being released, semen, symbolic of the life force, is reabsorbed into the body. Thus, in Gomez's system, sex becomes less a physical transaction than a tender exchange of spiritual energy. His own trademarked term is "Relationship-Building Sex," as distinguished from reproductive or recreational intercourse.

The book grounds this slightly unusual practice in hard science through explanations of hormones and drawings of the nervous system and the physiology of climax. The level of technical detail should satisfy skeptics without alienating laymen. The descriptions of deep breathing and pelvic-floor exercises, as well as the distinction between the separate incidents of male orgasm and ejaculation, may prove particularly helpful. Only occasionally does the book succumb to pseudoscientific New Ageisms, such as "the internal exchange of gender essence," or awkward acronyms like S.E.X. (Sacred Energy Xpression).

All the same, the text frequently resorts to a flowery style better suited to romance novels, as in "she may desire to be erotically and wantonly ravaged, overcome by...manly passion" or "you will unlock your man...your muscles respond with a salacious quiver." It also relies on metaphorical language and imagery, exhorting readers to "fill the beaker of life with the Wine of Sex" or nurture "the beautiful but fragile flame of your love."

Still, the book is logically organized, appropriately illustrated, and carefully researched. Its index and appendices are particularly admirable, with the history of Karezza providing the most interesting digression. It was gynecologist Alice B. Stockham, an early suffragette and birth-control activist, who popularized the term, while her disciple J. William Lloyd's book *Connubial Love* (1931) served as Gomez's direct inspiration.

Its obscure historical influence is evident in the book's somewhat antiquated sexual roles: it devotes separate chapters to male and female exercises or responses, an approach that is at times justified by physiological difference but more often serves to reinforce gender clichés. For instance, Gomez writes, "your husband must believe he is your knight and hero, or something will be amiss in your lovemaking." Moreover, he implies that his handbook is not for

unmarried couples, and it certainly seems unsuitable for same-sex partners. Yet, given the revolutionary stance, it seems unlikely that the method should be limited to married heterosexuals.

With its slight Judeo-Christian leaning, this book is suitable for traditional Mars and Venus readers who wish to introduce a tamer version of Tantra into their sex lives.

REBECCA FOSTER (May 27, 2014)

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