



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Building a Passionate Love Life – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Clifford and Joyce Penner

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh, and this is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We have an insightful program for you today, but I have one small caution before we get started. The content discussed in this broadcast is intended for mature audiences and it may not be suitable for younger listeners. So if you have kids listening in with you right now, parental discretion is advised.

Okay, with that warning, let's get into our topic right now. In the Garden of Eden, God created the institution of marriage between one man and one woman, and husbands and wives truly become one flesh through the experience of physical intimacy. Sex was designed by God to be exclusively reserved for the marital relationship. However, as we'll learn through this broadcast, that divine purpose has been wildly disregarded by culture.

Today we're reaching into our audio vault to revisit Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dr. Clifford and Joyce Penner. The Penners are sex therapists and relationship experts who have years of experience helping heal and guide marriages. On this occasion, they identified the societal threats to intimacy and described the characteristics of a God-honoring relationship. There's a lot of content to get to, so let's begin. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to introduce his guests on this classic edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Today we're going to be specifically talking about the sexual aspect of marriage, the very precious and intimate union that God designed only to be shared by one man and one woman in the context of marriage. And to help us do that today we have two highly qualified individuals, husband and wife team. Their names are Dr. Clifford and Mrs. Joyce Penner. Dr. Clifford and Joyce Penner are an internationally recognized sex therapist, educators and authors. Joyce is a clinical nurse specialist, holds a master's degree in psychosomatic nursing from UCLA, and until recently was associate pastor of congregational life at Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena, California, where we used to live.

Dr. Penner is a clinical psychologist. He earned a master's degree in theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, and holds a Ph.D. from Fuller's Graduate School of Psychology. The Penners have authored nine books including *The Gift of Sex*, *Restoring the Pleasure*, and *Getting Your Sex Life Off to a Great Start*. In addition to conducting sex education and sexual enhancement seminars, the Penners specialize in sexual therapy at their clinic.

The title of the book is *The Married Guy's Guide to Great Sex: Building a Passionate, Intimate and Fun Love Life*. That's the goal, isn't it?

Joyce Penner: That's for sure.

Dr. James Dobson: You all have been working in this field for 30 years. I don't know anybody in the country that's more knowledgeable or better qualified in this area than you all are. Let's start with a kind of cultural checkup. What has changed in 30 years? Obviously we are a much more eroticized society now than we were then. I mean, it's everywhere, from Abercrombie and Fitch to the television, radio, books, films. I mean, it's absolutely everywhere. Has that resulted in greater spontaneity and greater passion in the bedroom?

Joyce Penner: Unfortunately not. And because the emphasis is on the erotic rather than on the intimacy, and so the expectations are that it will happen like we see in our culture when a couple gets married, and what we find is that the attraction of a new relationship that creates the passion, that initial hype of newness dissipates in about six to 30 months. And if we don't make the transfer into an intimate deep connection with our spouse, then that passion dies and then the couple will think, well, I married the wrong person. I'm just not in love anymore. And it doesn't have to do with love. It has to do with not being able to connect intimately at a deep level.

Dr. Clifford Penner: When we combine the erotic with the intimate, then we have a sexual life that can be celebrated over a lifetime.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Then is it safe to say that there are more people who have a sexual dysfunction now than 20, 30 years ago when you started?

Joyce Penner: Especially younger couples start out with more disappointment.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Because they come with an expectation that it's going to be like it is in the movies or they imagined it from whatever material has come their way, and in fact, it isn't that way, whereas in the past we didn't have that setup of expectations.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it's not all fantasy. You indicated in the book, this was a shock to me, I thought I knew the statistics that only 20% of the people who get married are virgins.

Joyce Penner: And probably less than that.

Dr. James Dobson: The politically correct belief at this point is that a young couple should go ahead and experience a sexual relationship before marriage so that they know what they're doing. It does not work that way.

Dr. Clifford Penner: You'd never buy a car without doing a test drive, that argument.

Dr. James Dobson: I was about 13-years-old when a 14-year-old boy told me that. He said people really ought to live together because then it's like trying out a shoe. Can you imagine this? That was my early sexual training education.

Joyce Penner: Sexual education.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I never forgot his advice, although I didn't accept it. But that is what's often believed, isn't it?

Joyce Penner: Yes. And it doesn't work because premarital sex is different than married sex, and many couples have difficulty transferring that premarital passion into their marriage because of our cultural expectations.

Dr. James Dobson: And there's a 50% greater chance of the marriage breaking up within five years if the couple has lived together before. It's a bad idea, but it's a very common one now.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Well, and still widely accepted in the culture even after that statistic came out.

Dr. James Dobson: What was God's original design for marriage? What do you think He had in mind when He gave us this gift?

Dr. Clifford Penner: The model as we see it, and this is why people over the centuries have compared the Song of Solomon to our relationship with Christ because there is a lot of parallel. For the woman, it doesn't start with a sexual approach, it starts with an emotional relational one.

Dr. James Dobson: Sure it does.

Dr. Clifford Penner: And then that opens her up sexually.

Joyce Penner: But many times men feel incredible pressure, particularly when sex isn't going well in the married relationship, because they feel like somehow they should be getting her to respond, they should be making it work. And so the pressure is in the wrong way. The pressure is on... and then she feels pressure because he's putting pressure on her.

Dr. James Dobson: Especially today.

Joyce Penner: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: When it is so open, there's no modesty when things that are on television should embarrass us, if they don't, and MTV for kids begins talking about these embarrassing aspects of our sexual nature. And when you see all that and hear all that, performance becomes more important. You begin to feel you've got to do what you've seen others do.

Joyce Penner: And it becomes so goal oriented rather than that relationship oriented, and it gets focused on measuring how well we're doing and watching and spectating and all that pressure.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Well, you see, that's what we as men do so naturally because we almost inevitably want to win. We want to achieve our goal.

Dr. James Dobson: Conquer.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Conquer. In fact, if you think about it, in Genesis, when God kicked Adam and Eve out of the garden, He said to Adam, you have to go out and till the fields. In other words, you got to do something out there. And the first thing He says to Eve is, "And your desire shall be for your husband," which is a very relational thing. And it was there, way back then already, and that's still true today.

Dr. James Dobson: Cliff, as a psychologist, isn't that amazing that you find in those early Scriptures the nature of mankind and womankind that is spelled out for us there, what was it, 5,000 years ago, at least?

Dr. Clifford Penner: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: And there it is.

Dr. Clifford Penner: And we see it lived out today, and so when men apply their goal-oriented approach to the sexual relationship where they're trying to achieve something or get somewhere or accomplish something rather than an experience of a relationship, it never works.

Dr. James Dobson: So when you're doing sex therapy with these couples, one of your first objectives is to get them to think in terms of relationships rather than achievement conquering-

Joyce Penner: Yes.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Accomplishment.

Dr. James Dobson: Accomplishment.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Exactly. That's why we address *The Married Guys Guide* first because that's a tough shift for a lot of men to make. Because in every other area, sports or games or work or anything else, we're supposed to accomplish the goal.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you find when men come in to talk about these kind of problems, they find it very difficult to open up and be honest? I mean, there's masculine pride all over this subject, isn't there?

Joyce Penner: Well, many times it's the woman who comes, or she will bring her husband, even though he's the one because he's hesitant to come. And then-

Dr. Clifford Penner: You're absolutely right. It's difficult for them. In fact, we find in seminars that you would think when you had a sex seminar at the church that all the men would sign up say, yeah, that's what I want. But men don't want to talk about it, they just want to do it. And so it's always the woman dragging the man to the seminar, which is a rather fascinating thing.

Dr. James Dobson: We were talking about the culture, again, I want to go back to that because I'm so concerned about pornography and what it's doing to us, especially internet pornography, which is so available. People in respectable jobs would have to go to an adult bookstore and hope nobody saw them in the past and bring out a product in a brown paper bag. Now they just turn on that computer and there they are.

Joyce Penner: There it is.

Dr. James Dobson: And so many people are getting hooked on it. Is that what you're hearing?

Dr. Clifford Penner: Oh, massively. I mean, we could fill our practice with just people who are sexually addicted to the internet. It is that great. And we're talking in all levels of life, all levels of education, Christian, non-Christian, it's just happening everywhere.

Joyce Penner: And men tend to get addicted to the pornography, but women are getting addicted to the chat lines and the relationship aspect.

Dr. Clifford Penner: See, and that makes sense if you think about it. We as men are oriented toward what we-

Dr. James Dobson: The visual.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Get visually. And women are oriented to the relational, and so that's where they get hooked.

Joyce Penner: And it so counters intimacy, it so counters what the man is really looking for. It always promises to fulfill, but it doesn't.

Dr. James Dobson: You said in your book that in 30 years of being sex therapists, you have never met a woman who was attracted to pornography, per se.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Let's be very clear about that. We do not have experience with any woman who was addicted to it. We know lots of women who have used it along the way and even been attracted to it, but the addictive quality that we see in men where they'll spend 2, 4, 6, 8, 12 hours at a stretch on it, we don't see in women.

Joyce Penner: But we see that happening with them on the chat lines.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's one of the things that's changed dramatically since you started.

Joyce Penner: Absolutely.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Yeah. When we were with you 21 years ago, there wasn't an internet and you did have to go to the sleazy part of town.

Joyce Penner: And we would've said at that time that all sexual addictions began between ages eight and 14, and that is mostly true, but with the internet pornography, we find adults getting addicted at any age.

Dr. Clifford Penner: When they have not evidenced any addictive patterns, any obvious addictive patterns, in their earlier years.

Dr. James Dobson: There are many people, I fear, husbands and wives, who use pornography to spice up their relationship, to generate something that's been lost and to get them back into a sexual frame of mind. Why does that not work?

Joyce Penner: And that's interesting because that's a common question that we get. Why can't we watch pornography together as a couple? It gets us great sex afterwards. What's wrong with it? And it's interesting because the secular research shows that couples who watch pornography together may have a much more exciting sexual experience right after they watch, but with time, they need more and more input for that to happen, more explicit, more involved, and they lose their ability to get turned onto each other.

Dr. Clifford Penner: So they get further and further apart because they're focused out rather than on each other.

Dr. James Dobson: They're into fantasy.

Dr. Clifford Penner: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And there's nothing in reality that can compete with fantasy-

Dr. Clifford Penner: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: When it comes right down to it, and what you mentioned, Joyce, when I was on the pornography commission, that progressive nature of pornography is something people don't count on. I mean, what stimulates you today will not be enough tomorrow.

Joyce Penner: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And that will not be enough the next day. And it walks you down the road toward harder and harder, more violent, more perverse activity in order to get the same stimulation. It's not unlike heroin. One little pill or one little shot is tremendously exciting, but it won't be enough a month from now. You'll need more and more and more until it destroys you. And that's what it does to a relationship. And furthermore, I hear, I'm talking like the expert, you guys are the expert, but I've been there.

Joyce Penner: You're the expert on the pornography, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: The pornography commission, but also the women don't want to do what the guy sees in the pornography and he demands things of her that are offensive to her and it becomes a barrier.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Well, let's talk about that, because-

Joyce Penner: That's a whole nother issue.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Because what the man sees on the pornography, whatever form he gets that in, what he likes about that is that the woman always does whatever he wants, he gets whatever his fantasy is, because he can pick and choose from 150 million choices and she never asks anything of him. So it is a total non-intimate, one-sided event, and they always behave as if they're loving it. That's the whole idea of pornography. And so it can't ever be translated back into the bedroom in a committed relationship.

Joyce Penner: But men do then come to the married relationship and want the wife to dress that way, they want her to behave that way, they want to do the activities they saw in pornography, and she is many times trying to go along with that, but feels offended, feels violated-

Dr. James Dobson: Used.

Joyce Penner: She feels used. She feels like she's an object rather than, again, it isn't connecting the erotic with the intimacy.

Dr. James Dobson: And he is not making love to her. He is making love to that image-

Joyce Penner: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: That he has seen. I wish everybody believed that. Do you attempt to treat pornography addictions?

Joyce Penner: We do.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Oh, all the time.

Dr. James Dobson: All the time.

Dr. Clifford Penner: All the time.

Dr. James Dobson: How successfully?

Dr. Clifford Penner: If we can get people to acknowledge that it is indeed an addiction, get them to cop for more than they were busted for. You see, usually somebody doesn't come in until the wife checks out the history channel, walks in on him, comes home when she wasn't expected to come home. Something comes up. It is very rare that a man will come and say, "I've just realized I need to stop this." That's happened every now and then, but very rarely. Most of the time it's when they get busted.

But when they are willing to acknowledge the extent of their habit and then commit to somebody who they will be accountable to and recognize that this is going to be something they will have a tendency to slip into for the rest of their life unless they are vigilant and diligent. And then, that's the one side, then on the other side, we also have to work on building the intimacy in their marriage. Because, you see, a sexual addiction usually is a result of somebody who has not developed that intimacy in their marriage. So we can't just cut out the addiction. We've got to replace it with something.

Dr. James Dobson: You're really marriage counselors.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Exactly right.

Dr. James Dobson: The sex is just a part of a much bigger picture.

Joyce Penner: Right. And we guide them through our book, *Restoring the Pleasure*, which starts with all over in building how do you connect with someone physically, emotionally, and spiritually? How do you bring-

Dr. James Dobson: How about that? We're talking to men right now, fewer men write to us, but they're out there and I meet them on the street.

Joyce Penner: Yes, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: I know they're there. Truck drivers and physicians and a lot of people are out there. Suppose that such a man is sitting in front of you and he says I really want

to connect with my wife. I really want to love her the way God intended. I know this is right, and I know that our sex life has been lacking and it has not been meaningful to either one of us, even though we go through the motions. Where do I start? How do I get an understanding of what she needs from me? I'm a man, I don't understand women, I don't even understand my own wife. Where do you start?

Joyce Penner: That's great. And what we would encourage them to do is to take a book, like *The Married Guy's Guide to Great Sex*, and read it out loud together. And then she can say, yes, that's exactly it, or, that isn't quite me. And he can say, I don't think that's true about men. And she can say, well, I think it is. That's often the way it goes.

Dr. Clifford Penner: A lot of times couples, if you just sat them down and said, okay, now start talking about your sex life, it's a great silence because they don't know what to talk about. That's why-

Joyce Penner: Don't know where to start.

Dr. James Dobson: That's part of the problem.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Yeah. That's why we have them read out loud together and then they've got something to bounce off of with each other so that they can begin to get into the experience of discovering where the other person is and what their needs are.

Joyce Penner: And then we recommend to couples that they spend 15 minutes a day together. And this isn't having sex, this is just connecting. And we have a little formula that in during that 15 minutes, they spend some time just face-to-face intimacy, just talking about where you are, how was your day, what happened. And then maybe read a Bible verse together, some scripture, a couple's devotional pray and 30 seconds or less or more of passionate kissing. But we believe that if couples kissed passionately every day and had some way to connect with each other and had some kind of prayer together, spiritual time, that this difference would start to happen. We doubt that many couples would get divorced if they could do that together.

Dr. Clifford Penner: 15 minutes a day sounds like very little, and we're all for an hour a day. But for most couples, 15 minutes a day of face-to-face contact would be a new experience.

Dr. James Dobson: Not talking about sex.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Not talking about sex.

Joyce Penner: Not talking about who's going to pick up the laundry or who's going to take the kids to their lessons or anything like that.

Dr. Clifford Penner: Just kind of where they are, what they're feeling, where their heart is.

Joyce Penner: There's so many couples over the years stopped kissing passionately, and the reason they stopped kissing is because the wife will think before she'll kiss passionately. She'll say, "Okay, now if I kiss passionately, I know he's going to want to have sex, so I've got to be sure I really want to have sex before I kiss." Eventually, they're not kissing very often and they're not kissing very passionately and we believe it's the connection and kissing passionately that keeps the pilot light on.

Dr. James Dobson: This half hour has gone by in a big hurry and all we have time left for is to say goodbye. Dr. Cliff and Joyce Penner, great friends to Shirley and me for many years, at least 30, I guess.

Dr. Clifford Penner: It seems like it.

Joyce Penner: I think so. I think so. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And I appreciate what you all are doing. Thank you for taking the time away from your practice to come over here to Colorado and be with us, and there's a whole lot more for us to cover here.

Roger Marsh: Romance and connecting with your husband or wife is about far more than just sex. You can take your marriage to a whole new level when you faithfully follow what God's word says about intimacy. If you found value in today's program with Dr. James Dobson and his guests, Dr. Clifford and Joyce Penner, be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of this essential conversation here on Family Talk. In the meantime, you can learn more about the Penners and their therapy work when you visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Now, if you're looking for a way to connect with your spouse and to grow closer to God in your marriage, I encourage you to sign up for our 10-day marriage series. Simply visit drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries. You'll be directed to input your email address and then click on the signup button. Starting with the day you sign up, and then for the next 10 days, you'll receive an encouraging email from Dr. James Dobson about how to strengthen your marriage. Each email includes some words of wisdom from Dr. Dobson and some questions for you and your spouse to answer, as well as a prayer to say together. All marriages require intention, dedication, and hard work to realize the gifts that God intended for marriage, and it's our prayer for you that you'll become even closer with the Lord and with each other after you go through this series. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries.

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I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening today to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

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