

Chapter 4 — Masturbation—Autoeroticism

from the 1938 edition of *The Sex Life Before and After Marriage* (a.k.a. *Living a Sane Sex Life*)
by
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Sources for Chapter 4, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Havelock **Ellis**, *Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students* (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1933, 1938)
- (2) William S. Sadler, M.D., *Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* (St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1936)
- (3) Millard S. **Everett**, Ph.D., *The Hygiene of Marriage: A Detailed Consideration of Sex and Marriage* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1932)
- (4) G. V. **Hamilton**, M.D., *A Research in Marriage* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, Inc., 1929)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author (other than Sadler) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Magenta** indicates an earlier Sadler book.
- (c) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (d) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (e) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.
- (f) **Pink** indicates passages where the Sadlers specifically share their own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.

- (g) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (h) **Red** indicates either an obvious error on the Sadlers' part, brought about, in some cases, by miscopying or misinterpreting their source, or an obvious inconsistency brought about by the Sadlers' use of an earlier Sadler text.
- (i) **Gold** highlights key words or themes which will be discussed in the analysis of the chapter.

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[See E 101 and E 120-21.]

III: THE SEXUAL IMPULSE OF YOUTH (Ellis 82)

The First Appearance of Sexual Impulse (Ellis 82)

[Margaret Mead, in *Coming of Age in Samoa*, writes that the Samoans] have an individual sex life from childhood; nearly every little girl masturbates from the age of six or seven,

more or less in secret, the boys also, but more usually in groups, and casual homosexual practices are common; on the part of growing girls or women working together such casual relationships are regarded as “a pleasant and natural diversion, just tinged with the salacious” (E 103-04).

It is claimed by Margaret Mead that the Samoans by this system “legislate a whole field of neurotic possibility out of existence”; there is no neurosis, no frigidity, no impotence (E 104).

IV— MASTURBATION — AUTOEROTICISM

4:0.1 Any physical practice which is carried on by the higher animals, and which is so well-nigh universal among human beings as masturbation can hardly be called vicious, perverse, or even unnatural.

This practice is general among even primitive peoples. Margaret Mead, in writing of Samoan children, says that masturbation is universal.

Every little girl masturbates, beginning at the age of six or seven.

Among these people the girls masturbate in secret; the boys in groups.

This author, in describing the free and easy sex life of Samoa, suggests that they thus “legislate a whole field of neurotic possibilities out of existence.”

SOURCE

It was not till the Reformation and at first mainly in Protestant countries, though the movement quickly spread to France and other Catholic countries, that moralists and physicians began to be much troubled about masturbation. This was in the eighteenth century.

At the same time opportunity was furnished to quacks to offer more or less fantastic remedies for the evils which were beginning to be attributed to “self-abuse” (E 104).

[Masturbation (onanism, as [the nineteenth-century sexologist] Venturi always terms it) is regarded as “the germ of what later will be love” (E 105).]

Masturbation (Ellis 120)

The term “onanism” is sometimes applied in the same sense [as “masturbation”], but without justification since the device of Onan was not in any sense an act of masturbation but simply *coitus interruptus* (E 120).

[I devised the term, “auto-erotism,” in 1898 for those spontaneous solitary sexual phenomena of which genital excitement during sleep may be said to be the type (E 107).]

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

4:0.2 The European and American attitude toward masturbation did not take on the serious aspects of the past generation until about the time of the Protestant Reformation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The belief that autoeroticism was harmful to the physical health and subversive of the mental integrity

of course opened the way for the quacks of the nineteenth century to prey upon gullible youths with their teachings of the dire results of self-abuse and secret vice,

and it was during these times that masturbation became confused with onanism.

There was little excuse for this confusion since onanism clearly refers to *coitus interruptus*,

commonly spoken of as “withdrawal.”

1. DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRACTICE

4:1.1 “Masturbation” is a word that has probably come to stay in the English language,

but “autoeroticism,” suggested by Havelock Ellis in 1898, is a far better term for describing the personal practice of genital excitation,

Masturbation ... means, in the strict sense, the use of the **hand** to procure sexual excitement on the subject himself. In a wider sense, it is applied to **all forms** of self-excitation adopted for this end,

and it is even possible to speak illogically of “**psychic masturbation**”

in which the excitation is brought about by thought **unaided by any physical act** (E 120).

We may even find **among peoples of a somewhat low state of culture** the use by the women of artificial refinements for masturbation, notably the **artificial phallus**, which is also used in Europe today, though not among the general population (E 121).

Thus **vegetables and fruits** (especially the **banana**) are frequently used by women but they are unlikely to lead to any dangerous results and so their use remains undetected.

A vast number of objects have, however, been removed from the vagina and urethra by surgical interference; among the commonest may specially be named **pencils**, sealing wax, cotton reels, **hair pins**, glass stoppers, **candles**, corks, and tumblers (E 121-22).

Hairpins have been found in the female **bladder** with special frequency,

although it must be understood that

autoeroticism is not limited to sexual excitation by the **hand**—**all other methods** of a physical nature employed by an individual to induce excitation and an orgasm are included.

Some writers even go so far as to include what has been called **psychic masturbation**,

for it is a fact that some highly imaginative individuals with delicately organized nervous systems are able, by the exercise of the imagination,

wholly **unaided by physical means**, to bring about such a high degree of sexual excitation as to cause complete orgasm.

4:1.2 Among the women of primitive peoples and **among those in a low state of culture** in the civilized races, it is a common practice to use some form of **artificial phallus**;

for this purpose **fruits and vegetables**, such as carrots and **bananas**, are commonly employed,

and surgeons frequently find individuals of low-grade mentality who have employed **pencils, hairpins, candles**, and other objects in the practice of urethral stimulation,

such things sometimes finding entrance into the **bladder**.

SOURCE

because the **urethra** is normally a highly erogenous sexual center and tends to “swallow” what is introduced into it, while the shape of the hair-pin (which used to be the implement most easily available to a woman in bed) specially lends itself to disappearance in this way (E 122).

[contd] Another class of objects used for masturbation does not come under the surgeon’s notice: the external objects with which the sexual region may be brought in contact. The **garments** worn, **chairs**, **tables**, and other articles of furniture come under this head.

Reference may also be made to the sexual excitement which may occur, accidentally or unintentionally, in the **gymnasium** (as in **climbing poles**), or when **riding**, or **cycling**, or using the treadle sewing machine, or by the influence of tight-lacing (E 122).

[**Thigh friction**] is sometimes practiced by men and is fairly common among women (E 122).

It is a widespread practice, and in some countries (as Sweden) it is stated to be the **commonest form of masturbation** in women (E 122).

[contd] Masturbation may also be exercised by applying friction or other stimulation to out-lying erogenous zones, as by flagellation or urtication of the nates, or **rubbing the breasts** and **nipples** (E 123).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

This is due to the fact that the **urethra**, in many individuals, is a highly erogenous area and tends to suck up or **swallow** objects entering into the external meatus.

4:1.3 It is not commonly understood that masturbation is sometimes carried out, especially in the case of the female, by means of certain types of **wearing apparel** and by the use of the edges of **chairs** and the legs of **tables**,

while both the male and female utilize the **climbing poles** of **gymnasiums**, as well as horseback **riding** and **bicycling**, as a technic of obtaining sexual self-relief.

Thigh friction is a practice commonly resorted to by both highly sexed women and men.

In some countries this technic is the **most common form of masturbation** among women.

The **rubbing of the breast**, titillation of the **nipples**, should also be mentioned.

SOURCE

With regard to their occurrence among males, the balance of reliable opinion is in favor of masturbation having been practiced at some time in life—though in many cases very rarely or for a very brief period—by over 90 per cent. individuals. Thus in England, Dukes, the experienced physician to Rugby school, states that from 90 to 95 per cent. of all boys at boarding-school masturbate. [Etc.] (E 123)

[Compare 4:5.5.]

After adolescence there can be little doubt that masturbation is more common in women than in men.

Men have, by this time, mostly adopted some method of sexual gratification with the opposite sex; women are to a larger extent shut out from such gratification; moreover, while in rare cases women are sexually precocious, it more often happens that their sexual impulses only gain strength and self-consciousness after adolescence has passed.

In many cases masturbation is occasionally (especially about the period of menstruation) practiced by active, intelligent, and healthy women, who otherwise lead a chaste life.

This is specially the case as regards young and healthy women who, after having normal sexual relationships, have been compelled for some reason or other to break them off and lead a lonely life (E 125).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

4:1.4 The extent of the practice of masturbation among the males of civilized races has been variously estimated to run anywhere from 90 to 98 or 99 per cent;

among females, from 75 to 85 per cent.

4:1.5 Most investigators have found that after puberty masturbation is much more common in women than in men.

This is undoubtedly due to the fact that, as adolescence progresses, men increasingly gratify the sex impulse in association with the opposite sex.

4:1.6 Masturbation has been found to be quite universal among even the highest type of civilized women

who have been accustomed to normal sexual gratification, either in or out of married life, and who have for one reason or another been compelled to break off this association.

IV: SEXUAL DEVIATION AND THE EROTIC SYMBOLISMS (Ellis 147)

Sexual Deviations in Childhood (Ellis 152)

While the auto-erotic practices of girls, though widely varied, are usually carried on very **secretly**, and often more or less unconsciously,

boys are inclined to be less secretive; in large schools are sometimes found **masturbation clubs**, **secret societies** of which of course the teachers rarely suspect the existence (E 159).

III: SEXUAL IMPULSE IN YOUTH (Ellis 82)

The First Appearance of the Sexual Impulse (Ellis 82)

Dr. **Katharine Davis**, who gave special attention to this point, found, among 1,000 American college women above the age of 22 that **60 per cent.** gave definite histories of masturbation (E 99-100).

Dr. **Hamilton**, in his careful study of 100 married men and 100 married women of good social standing, found that **97 per cent.** of the men and **74 per cent.** of the women had at some period masturbated (E 100).

4:1.7 Girls are far more **secret** than boys in their individual or **group** autoerotic practices.

Boys do not cultivate such secrecy, and **masturbation clubs** are very common in connection with the **secret societies** and gang activities of early adolescence.

4:1.8 **Katherine Davis**, in studying 1000 college women above the age of 22, got a history of masturbation in **60 per cent.**

4:1.9 **Hamilton** found in 100 married men a history of masturbation in **97 per cent.**, and in 100 married women, **74 per cent.**

2. ATTITUDE TOWARD MASTURBATION

38: THE SEXUAL NEUROSES (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 611)

I. Sexual Worries and Guilt (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 612)

[Preamble] (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 612)

[contd] The time has certainly come when medical men should speak frankly about the practice of masturbation.

Notwithstanding that each decade witnesses an increasing spread of wholesome knowledge respecting the whole domain of sex hygiene, there still continues to pass through the offices of the nerve specialist and psychiatrist a stream of young men and women, particularly men, who have worried themselves into a partial or complete neurotic state from entertaining erroneous views regarding either the physical harmfulness or the moral sinfulness of this common practice (*TPoP* 612).

[contd] Undoubtedly *men worry over masturbation* because they lose something in connection with the act.

It was the belief of ancient magic that everything coming from the body was portentous, and undoubtedly this olden idea persists even in modern times.

I well remember, when a young man, hearing a public lecturer say that the seminal ejaculation was equivalent to the loss of half a pint of blood, and of course such statements as that throw a tremendous scare into the hearts of certain susceptible youths.

4:2.1 The time has certainly come when we should speak plainly and frankly about the practice of masturbation.

Notwithstanding that each decade witnesses an increasing spread of wholesome knowledge respecting the whole domain of sex hygiene, there still continues to pass through the offices of nerve specialists and psychiatrists a stream of young men and women, particularly men, who have worried themselves into a more or less complete neurotic state because of entertaining incorrect ideas regarding either the physical harmfulness or the moral sinfulness of this common practice.

4:2.2 The worry of men over masturbation is undoubtedly accentuated because they lose something in connection with the act.

Ancient magic taught that everything coming from the body was portentous, and undoubtedly this idea persists today.

Forty years ago it was not uncommon for public lecturers to state that the seminal ejaculation is equivalent to the loss of a pint of blood; naturally, such statements are a source of terrible fear to susceptible boys and young men.

SOURCE

I have known of many cases where masturbation worry has prevented marriage and a few where it has led certain depressed types of individuals actually to commit suicide.

The long entertainment of such fears oftentimes leads to *psychic impotence* on the wedding night as the result of cumulative nervous tension, developing at that time into a veritable panic (*TPoP* 612).

[contd] In an age when youth of both sexes permit themselves so much freedom with each other's persons, there is bound to result a very high degree of sexual excitation.

The sex urge is directly stimulated by all forms of immediate physical contact, and in this era of "necking" and "petting," one of three things is going to result to the vast majority of youths who do not possess extraordinary self-control: *This sexual intimacy* is going to lead to masturbation or intercourse, or it is going gradually to wear down the nerves of many who make a habit of such practices.

Of course, young men and young women who possess strong constitutions and unusually well-balanced nervous systems can indulge in a vast amount of this sort of thing without fully yielding to their impulses and without bringing about a neurasthenic state (*TPoP* 612-13).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

We have known of many cases where masturbation worry has prevented marriage and a few where it has led certain depressed individuals actually to commit suicide.

The long entertainment of such fears often leads to psychic impotence on the wedding night as the result of cumulative nervous tension, which develops at that time into a veritable panic.

4:2.3 In an age when both young men and young women are so free with each other's persons, a very high degree of sexual excitation is bound to result.

The sex urge is directly stimulated by all forms of immediate physical contact; in this era of "necking" and "petting" one of three things is sure to happen to the majority of young people who are not thoroughly self-controlled; such intimacy leads to masturbation or to intercourse, or it gradually wears down the nerves of many who habitually engage in such practices.

Young men and women with strong constitutions and unusually well-balanced nervous systems might possibly indulge in such sexual fondling without fully yielding to their impulses or without developing a neurasthenic condition,

but such individuals are rare.

3. ERRONEOUS IDEAS ABOUT MASTURBATION

[See H 422 and E 125-26.]

4:3.1 During the nineteenth century it was the general belief among the medical profession and the clergy that autoeroticism was both unhealthful and immoral or sinful. With the passing of the first third of the twentieth century there has been a very definite, almost violent, swing to the other extreme. The belief is becoming almost universal that this practice is free from injurious effects upon both mind and body, and, at least in some circles, it is even regarded as advantageous to many types of highly sexed, but unmarried, individuals, particularly women.

[See 3:2.6.]

This attitude is undoubtedly due to the fact that the sexually unawakened female does not secure complete sex relief in the dream life as does the unmarried continent male.

III: SEXUAL IMPULSE IN YOUTH

(Ellis 82)

Masturbation (Ellis 120)

4:3.2 We are of the opinion that masturbation does not produce any serious results upon the average or normal nervous system.

It is only on a congenitally morbid nervous system, Emminghaus insisted, that masturbation can produce any serious results (E 126).

Only to highly neurotic individuals of a peculiar mental type does the practice become in any sense harmful.

Recent authorities may, indeed, be said to be almost unanimous in rejecting masturbation as a cause of insanity (E 127).

One thing is certain—medical authorities now agree that masturbation does not cause insanity,

“In moderation,” Erb remarked, “masturbation is not more dangerous to the spinal cord than natural coitus, and has no bad effects; it makes no difference whether the orgasm is effected normally or in solitude.” This is also the opinion of Toulouse, of Fürbringer, of Curschmann, and most other authorities (E 128).

[contd] It is, however, perhaps going too far to assert that masturbation has no more injurious effect than coitus. If the sexual orgasm were a purely physiological phenomenon, this position would be sound. But the sexual orgasm is normally bound up with a mass of powerful emotions aroused by a person of the opposite sex. It is in the joy caused by the play of these emotions, as well as in the discharge of the sexual orgasm, that the satisfaction of coitus resides (E 128).

38: THE SEXUAL NEUROSES (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 611)

I. Sexual Worries and Guilt (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 612)

2. Masturbation (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 613)

[contd] In thirty years of the practice of medicine I have yet to see a single bona fide case where masturbation has been definitely and unquestionably responsible for ill health of any sort—*except* in those hundreds upon hundreds of cases where worry over its supposed physical harmfulness or moral sinfulness had led to such long-continued and serious anxiety as directly to produce so-called sexual neurasthenia.

In brief, *the worry over the practice* and not the physical result has been responsible for the nervous manifestations I have observed.

and the majority of them regard it as in no essential different, from the physical standpoint, from the normal practice of coitus.

No one, however, will for a moment argue that masturbation can supply the gratification of those powerful and highly human emotions which are satisfied by sex experience in association with a love-partner of the opposite sex.

4:3.3 In more than thirty years of the practice of medicine we have yet to see a single bona fide case where masturbation has been definitely and unquestionably responsible for ill health of any sort—*except* in those many, many cases where worry over its supposed physical harmfulness or moral sinfulness has led to such long-continued and serious anxiety as directly to produce so-called sexual neurasthenia.

The worry over the practice, and not its actual physical results, has been responsible for the nervous manifestations we have observed.

SOURCE

True, excessive masturbation often accompanies marked neurasthenic states, but this is the result of the neurasthenia, not its cause (*TPoP* 613).

[contd] Many of the books of twenty-five to fifty years ago on the evil effects of autoeroticism, particularly those written by clergymen, grew out of the observations made in the institutions for the feeble-minded which were then just coming into existence.

The abnormal boys and girls, the village nit-wits, who had been gathered up and segregated in these institutions, afforded opportunity for observation of autoerotic practices on a large scale.

When clergymen and other well-meaning members of boards of directors and social-uplift advisory committees visited these institutions, they discovered the majority of the inmates indulging in these practices right out in public, "playing with themselves," enjoying secret vice, or self-pollution as it was termed.

Quite naturally these unscientific people associated masturbation and feeble-mindedness as cause and effect.

They failed to realize that these boys and girls were masturbating no more generally than the normal-minded youth at home, but the latter hid himself away to do this, whereas these subnormal children did not hesitate to indulge in it in public (*TPoP* 613-14).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

The excessive masturbation which so often accompanies marked neurasthenic states is the result of the neurasthenia, not its cause.

4:3.4 The majority of the books of twenty-five to fifty years ago on the evil effects of autoeroticism, especially those written by clergymen, were based on observations made in the institutions for the feeble-minded which were just coming into existence.

The abnormal boys and girls, the village nit-wits, who had been segregated in these institutions afforded opportunities for observing autoerotic practices on a large scale.

Visitors discovered the majority of the inmates indulging in these practices right out in public, "playing with themselves," engaging in secret vice, or self-pollution, as it was termed.

It was not to be wondered at that these unscientific people associated masturbation and feeble-mindedness as cause and effect.

They did not understand that these boys and girls were masturbating no more generally than normal-minded youths, but the latter hid themselves away to do it, whereas the subnormal children did not hesitate to indulge in the practice in public.

SOURCE

[contd] Even yet the idea still persists in the minds of a very considerable part of the population that autoeroticism is in some way harmful to the health.

The time has come in the discussion of this problem frankly to recognize that *masturbation is not directly harmful to the physical health*, certainly not as it is ordinarily practiced;

and as far as my personal experience goes I have yet to see a case where definite physical results can be attributed to it, where the individual is free from all idea that it is harmful and from all fear that it is morally wrong (*TPoP* 614).

V: MENTAL HYGIENE OF SEX (Everett 63)

ABNORMALITIES IN THE SEXUAL RESPONSE (Everett 78)

From the physical standpoint alone there is probably no more injury to health in a moderate amount of masturbation than there is in a moderate amount of normal sexual intercourse (Ev 80).

If one could indulge in the habit without any moral compunction, remorse or feelings of inferiority, there would be no injury to the health.

But it is usually impossible to avoid these mental conflicts and therefore most persons conclude that the pleasure is not worth the struggle and give up the habit sooner or later (Ev 80).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

4:3.5 A very great many people still think that autoeroticism is in some way harmful to the health.

The time has come frankly to admit that *masturbation is not directly harmful to the physical health*, certainly not as it is ordinarily practiced;

and as far as our personal experience goes, we have yet to see a case where definite physical results can be attributed to it, provided the individual is free from the idea that it is harmful and from all fear that it is morally wrong.

4:3.6 Physically speaking, there is probably no more harm in moderate masturbation than in normal sexual intercourse of average frequency.

When one engages in masturbation without moral compunctions, there are no noticeable untoward effects.

But it is next to impossible to avoid a certain amount of mental conflict.

SOURCE

There are, however, some rational objections to masturbation, apart from health, which should at least be borne in mind. In the first place, the practice is solitary and is likely always to be socially disapproved or looked down upon, and as long as this is the case, it will be difficult to avoid mental conflicts regarding it (Ev 80).

[Whether or not one accepts the view that all cases of *neurasthenia* are directly dependent on excessive masturbation the concept should be restricted to that ever-dwindling group of patients whose main complaints consist of lack of energy, diminished power of concentration, easy mental and physical fatigability, headache, pain in the back and ejaculatio precox or impotence (Israel S. Wechsler, M.D., *The Neuroses* [1929], p. 208).]

[Compare *Race Decadence* 269-70.]

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

Masturbation will probably always be regarded as an inferior and unsocial form of sexual gratification and will therefore produce mental conflict and conscience complexes,

and these psychic states will cause headaches, lassitude, and lack of concentration.

4:3.7 Among almost all boys, the great fear of detection and the constant brooding over their secret practices often lead to serious delinquencies, as juvenile-court attendants have discovered.

The clearing up of their mental conflicts seems to restore these delinquents to normal behavior. But all this only shows that the supposedly bad effects of masturbation are really mental and not physical. Whatever may be the best way to handle these cases, one thing is certain: Preaching fear and lengthy moralizing on the subject do more harm than good.

4. SEX ENLIGHTENMENT

38: THE SEXUAL NEUROSES (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 611)

I. Sexual Worries and Guilt (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 612)

4. Sex Enlightenment (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 615)

[contd] The question arises as how best to deal with this practice among preadolescent youth.

I, of course, think that sex hygiene is a matter for home instruction.

It is too bad that parents should lose the opportunity thus to draw very near their children as they are able to in giving this instruction.

I prefer to work on the plan of *always keeping the child's confidence*, always answering his or her questions, but in matters of sex never going very far ahead.

That is, do not volunteer very much advance information; *keep their curiosity satisfied* and make sure they are always going to come to you for more information.

Never be shocked by anything they tell you (*TPoP* 615).

[contd] Many parents hesitate to undertake to give their children the last phases of sex instruction which they should have when they are approaching puberty; so they bring them to the physician for such advice.

4:4.1 But what is the best way to deal with this practice among preadolescent youths?

We believe that sex hygiene is a matter for home instruction.

It is too bad that parents lose the opportunity it affords to draw very near their children as they are able to in giving this instruction.

We prefer to work on the plan of *always keeping the child's confidence*, always answering his or her questions, but in matters of sex never going very far ahead.

That is, do not volunteer very much advance information; *keep their curiosity satisfied* and make sure they are always going to come to you for more information.

Never be shocked by anything they tell you.

4:4.2 Many parents, declining the responsibility of giving their pubescent children sex instruction, bring them to the family physician for such advice.

SOURCE

It is sometimes amazing to find how thoroughly conversant these supposedly innocent children are with everything pertaining to sex, and how far they have already gone with their sex experimentation (*TPoP* 615).

[contd] I grant that if parents fail thus to instruct their children in sex matters, schools and colleges are warranted in providing special lectures dealing with these questions.

They should see to it that the lecturers are competent to advise on such matters,

and it is my opinion that more good and less harm are done if the *audiences are segregated and the age range is fairly uniform*.

I do not hesitate to talk on sex matters to young men or young women or to adults, married or unmarried, if the sexes can be segregated, and if the members of the audience are of about the same age (*TPoP* 615).

5. What Masturbation Does Not Do (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 615)

[contd] Let us consider more specifically just what masturbation does not do to those who are addicted to it (*TPoP* 615).

[contd] 1. *Autoerotism does not injure the mind*.

It does not lead to insanity.

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

It is sometimes amazing to find how thoroughly conversant these supposed innocents are with everything pertaining to sex, and how far they have already gone with their sex gratification.

4.4.3 But if parents fail to instruct their children in sex matters, schools and colleges are warranted in providing special lectures dealing with these questions.

The lecturers should be competent adequately to answer questions and otherwise to advise the students.

More good and less harm will be done if the *audiences are segregated* and the age range is fairly uniform.

Competent instructors should not hesitate to talk on sex matters to young men or women or to adults, married or unmarried, if the sexes can be segregated, and if the members of the audience are of about the same age.

5. WHAT MASTURBATION DOES NOT DO

4:5.1 To what extent does masturbation produce the ill effects which have been laid at its door?

4:5.2 1. *Autoerotism does not injure the mind*.

It does not lead to insanity.

SOURCE

It does not produce neurasthenic states. It does none of these unless, and only to the degree that, the individual worries over these matters because of ignorance or misinformation (*TPoP* 615).

[contd] 2. *It does not destroy the physical health.*

It does not deplete or break down the nervous system. It in no way affects the health except through the worry over its supposed harmfulness or sinfulness.

In fact, we must in all truthfulness, when facing this problem from a purely medical standpoint, recognize that to certain highly sexed and unmarried individuals, particularly women who are unable to find a normal sex outlet in married life, and whose ideals preclude illicit sex indulgence, masturbation, provided it is indulged without psychic fear or moral regret, may, and often does, become a veritable health practice in that it directly relieves the physical sex tension and thus indirectly prevents the gradual generation of a state of sexual neurasthenia consequent upon long-continued sexual oversuppression (*TPoP* 616).

[contd] 3. *Masturbation does not produce remote nervous after-effects.*

Whatever physical effects might attend excessive masturbation would be essentially identical with those accompanying excessive venery.

They would be manifested at the time of the indulgence or very soon afterward. They would not appear in five or ten or fifteen years as a nervous breakdown or something of that sort.

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

It does not produce neurasthenic states unless, and only to the degree that, the individual worries about it.

4:5.3 2. *It does not destroy the physical health.*

It does not injure the nervous system or affect the health except through worry over its supposed harmfulness or sinfulness.

From a purely medical standpoint, masturbation, for certain highly sexed, unmarried individuals, especially women who are unable to find a normal sex outlet in dreams or in married life, and whose ideals forbid illicit sex indulgence, if it is engaged in without psychic fear or moral regret, may, and frequently does, become a real health practice because it directly relieves the physical sex tension and by so doing indirectly prevents the gradual development of a sexual neurasthenia consequent upon long-continued sexual oversuppression.

4:5.4 3. *Masturbation does not produce remote nervous aftereffects.*

The physical effects of excessive masturbation would necessarily be identical, or essentially so, with those accompanying excessive venery.

Such results would be more or less immediate. They would not be manifested five, ten, or fifteen years later as a nervous breakdown.

SOURCE

There are no subtle and concealed effects of sexual gratification which may linger in the offing for years and then suddenly pounce down upon the unsuspecting victim (*TPoP* 616).

[contd] 4. *Autoeroticism does not unfit one for marriage.*

It does not unsex or sterilize its addicts. That this is true is not only an established scientific fact, but it is also proved by the progress of the race notwithstanding that almost 100 per cent of unmarried men have been more or less regularly or irregularly addicted to this practice, and somewhere between 70 and 80 per cent of unmarried women (*TPoP* 616).

[contd] 5. *Masturbation is not morally wrong.*

It does not involve either morals or religion. It is purely a physiologic and psychologic problem.

It is a practice that should be discussed on its own merits and as concerns each individual case and should be considered scientifically as a health problem and, in a remote sense, a social one, and should be divorced from the domain of sin and religion (*TPoP* 616).

6. Objections to Masturbation (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 616)

[contd] Now let us with equal frankness discuss the objections to masturbation, for there are some.

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

Sexual gratification is not characterized by subtle and concealed effects which suddenly attack their unsuspecting victim after years of quiescence.

4:5.5 4. *Autoeroticism does not unfit one for marriage.*

It neither unsexes nor sterilizes its addicts, a fact which, while scientifically established, is practically demonstrated by the progress of the race notwithstanding that almost 100 per cent of unmarried men and somewhere between 70 and 85 per cent of unmarried women have been more or less regularly or irregularly addicted to the practice.

4:5.6 5. *Masturbation is not morally wrong.*

This is a purely physiological and psychological problem, for it does not involve either morals or religion.

This practice should be considered on its merits in the light of each individual's situation and entirely divorced from the domain of sin and religion. From a scientific standpoint this is a health problem and remotely, perhaps, a social one.

6. OBJECTIONS TO MASTURBATION

4:6.1 With equal frankness we will discuss the objections to masturbation, for there are some.

SOURCE

We readily grant that it is not the ideal sex practice. It cannot be advocated for its own sake. The objections are:

1. *The psychic effects.*

There is something mildly antisocial in the practice of autoeroticism. Man is gregarious as well as bisexual.

Nature apparently intended that he should enjoy his gustatory pleasures in association with friends. I do not think it is good for one's digestion to eat alone too much.

Just so, the sex act in its ideal technic of gratification certainly demands a partner of the opposite sex to mutually share the experience.

There is no getting away from Nature's designs in this matter.

Even at best, masturbation is a compromise technic for gaining sex relief.

It would, therefore, appear that in certain individuals, particularly those of the introvert type, masturbation, when excessively indulged over a long period of time, might conduce to more or less social isolation, more particularly sexual isolation; it is probably this very fact that leads many youths to feel there is something wrong about the practice, even when no one has told them so.

I think such *feelings of guilt* often take origin in the consciousness of social or sexual isolation which accompanies the indulgence of such a secret habit (*TPoP* 616-17).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

Certainly this is not an ideal sex practice; it cannot be advocated for its own sake. The objections are:

4:6.2 1. *The psychic effects.*

Autoeroticism is mildly antisocial in its effects, man being gregarious as well as bisexual.

It is natural for human beings to enjoy their gustatory pleasures in the company of friends, and it is not good for one's digestion to eat alone too often.

The sex act, also, for its ideal enjoyment demands a partner of the opposite sex to share the experience.

There is no getting away from Nature's designs in this matter.

Even at best, masturbation is a compromise technic for gaining sex relief.

Particularly in introverts, masturbation, if excessively indulged over a long period of time, contributes to more or less social isolation, especially sexual isolation; probably this is why many young people feel that there is something wrong about the practice, even when no one has told them so.

Such feelings of guilt often originate in the consciousness of social or sexual loneliness which accompanies the indulgence in these secret habits.

SOURCE

[contd] 2. There is a certain undesirable tendency to *emotional short-circuiting* in the practice of autoeroticism.

The emotional life, especially as pertains to the sex urge, should be outgoing.

It is not ideal to short-circuit these sex feelings altogether within the experience of the individual.

There comes up for consideration in this connection the *ethics of cheating the opposite sex*.

I would not want to argue too strongly for this, but if we are going to consider the question in the light of idealism, I think we would be in duty bound to admit the validity of such an angle of observation (TPoP 617).

[contd] 3. *The elimination of the social and spiritual adjuncts of sex gratification.*

In the average individual autoeroticism only provides for the reduction of purely physical sex tensions. There is a vast social and spiritual experience connected with ideal sex gratification which the autoerotic technic does not afford,

and this must be taken into account in a scientific and dispassionate consideration of this subject (TPoP 617).

[contd] 4. *The indirect influence of masturbation upon marriage.*

I have said that it in no way unfits men and women for marriage, but I am convinced that occasionally it does prevent certain phlegmatic types of men from getting married.

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

4:6.3 2. *Autoeroticism tends toward a degree of emotional short-circuiting.*

One's emotional life, especially as it is related to the sex urge, should be outgoing.

It is not ideal to short-circuit these sex feelings altogether within the experience of the individual.

And then there is the ethics of cheating the opposite sex.

We do not urge this point too strongly, but from the standpoint of idealism, there is certainly an element of validity to this angle of observation.

4:6.4 3. *The elimination of the social and spiritual adjuncts of sex gratification.*

Ordinarily, autoeroticism provides for nothing but the reduction of purely physical sex tension, while in reality there is an important social and spiritual experience in ideal sex gratification.

This inadequacy of the autoerotic technic must be taken into account in a scientific and dispassionate consideration, of this matter.

4:6.5 4. *The indirect influence of masturbation upon marriage.*

Autoeroticism does not unfit men and women for marriage, but it does sometimes serve as an excuse to certain phlegmatic types of men for not getting married.

SOURCE

We meet with a man every now and then who is disposed to avoid the responsibilities of marriage and the rearing of children.

These individuals are somewhat enamored of the free and easy-going life of the bachelor, but between their moral scruples, on the one hand, and fear of venereal disease, on the other, they are chary of promiscuous sex relations.

Their sex urge is fairly strong, and they might be led to assume the responsibility of married life as a necessary accompaniment of sex gratification; but they have learned that masturbation is partially satisfactory, and knowing that it is not harmful in any way, they continue its indulgence, thereby *avoiding the responsibility of married life*, which otherwise might have been assumed.

In thirty years of practice I have not known more than half a dozen such cases, but I have seen a few. I cannot say I know a single woman who has been thus deterred from entering matrimony (*TPoP* 617).

[contd] 5. *The diminution of the finer natural sexual sensibility.*

There seems to be no doubt that long-continued masturbation—the manual or other excitation of the sexual organs—tends somewhat to blunt the finer sensibilities which are a part of the reaction of these delicate mechanisms in the normal orgasmal experience. It cannot be otherwise. Overstimulation always results in the blunting of sensitivity.

Persons who indulge day by day in highly seasoned viands undoubtedly dull their sense of taste so that simple and natural food flavors are all but unrecognized.

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

Occasionally a man seems disposed to avoid the responsibilities of marriage and a family.

These individuals are often somewhat enamored of the free and easy-going life of the bachelor, but between their moral scruples and the fear of venereal disease they are disinclined to engage in promiscuous sex relations.

Having a fairly strong sex urge, they might be led to assume the responsibility of married life as a necessary accompaniment of sex gratification; but they have learned that masturbation is partially satisfactory and not harmful and so they continue its indulgence and refuse to marry, which otherwise they might have done.

These cases are rare; in over thirty years of practice we have not known more than half a dozen, and in this same time we have not met even one woman who has offered this as an excuse for not marrying.

4:6.6 5. *The diminution of the finer natural sexual sensibility.*

Long-continued masturbation, whether manual or any other type, somewhat dulls the finer sensibilities of the delicate mechanisms concerned in the normal orgasm, just as overstimulation always results in the blunting of sensitivity.

The sense of taste is so dulled by the daily use of highly seasoned viands that simple and natural food flavors eventually are hardly recognized.

SOURCE

Likewise, long-continued gross overstimulation of the sex organs must, and does, produce much the same results on the sexual nerves (*TPoP* 617).

III: THE SEXUAL IMPULSE OF YOUTH (Ellis 82)

Masturbation (Ellis 120)

In some cases it would seem that masturbation, when practiced in excess, especially if begun before the age of puberty, leads to inaptitude for coitus, as well as to indifference to it, and sometimes to undue sexual irritability, involving premature emission and practical impotence (E 129).

In women an important occasional result of masturbation in early life is an aversion for normal coitus in later life (E 130).

It is important to realize that the possible evil results are exceptional. Dr. Katharine Davis in her extensive investigation, which is the most elaborate and valuable study of masturbation in women we possess, found when comparing the group of happily married women with the group of the unhappily unmarried, that the number in each group of those who before marriage had engaged in masturbation or other similar sex play (not including sexual intercourse) was almost identical (E 130).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

Habitual gross overstimulation of the sex organs produces much the same results on the sexual nerves.

It is possible that masturbation, when practiced excessively, if begun before puberty, may so lessen the sensitivity of the sex organs and so malcondition the psychic attitude as to produce some degree of incapacity for normal coitus.

Every now and then there comes to the physician's office a man or woman whose case suggests that such early and excessive masturbation may have contributed to their aversion to normal sex experience in adult life.

On the other hand, the studies of Dr. Katherine Davis who compared groups of happily married women with groups of those who were unhappily married, disclosed that the number in both classifications who had before marriage engaged in masturbation or other similar sex play, was almost identical.

4:6.7 6. *Exaggerated sex consciousness.*

[contd] On the psychic side the most frequent and the most characteristic result of persistent and excessive masturbation seems to be a morbid heightening of self-consciousness without any coordinated heightening of self-esteem.

The man or woman who is kissed by a desirable and desired person of the opposite sex feels a satisfying sense of pride and elation, which must always be absent from the manifestations of autoerotic activity. This must be so, even apart from the masturbator's consciousness of the general social attitude toward his practices and his dread of detection, for that may also exist as regards normal coitus without any corresponding psychic effect (E 131).

38: THE SEXUAL NEUROSES (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 611)

I. Sexual Worries and Guilt (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 612)

6. Objections to Masturbation (*Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* 616)

[contd from above] 6. *Absence of psychic association with home and children.*

While primitive man probably did not connect the pleasures of the sex act with the idea of home and the subsequent appearance of children, undoubtedly civilized man does;

The greatest single objection to the regular practice of masturbation is its contribution to a heightening of sexual self-consciousness without at the same time exalting legitimate self-approval.

These solitary autoerotic practices do not arouse that sense of sexual pride and egoistic esteem which grows out of the legitimate love life with the opposite sex, but in its place there reigns a feeling of fear, the fear of detection.

4:6.8 7. *Absence of psychic association with home and children.*

It is very probable that primitive man did not connect the pleasures of the sex act with the idea of home and the subsequent birth of children, but civilized man does;

SOURCE

and it would seem to be desirable that he should thus link sex indulgence with the higher things and ideals of home life and child rearing. This, of course, is absent in autoeroticism and constitutes, in my mind, one of the leading objections to such practices (*TPoP* 617-18).

[contd] 7. *The vicious fantasy circle.*

There is something of a tendency among certain young men of the introvert-reaction type for masturbation to become hooked up with their daydreaming proclivities so as to result in conditioning the whole fantasy life to this technic of purely physical sex relief.

This sort of conditioning of the sex experience and mechanism probably accounts for the occasional married man's, though possessing a charming wife who is normally sexed and in every way an acceptable sex partner, preferring to go on indulging in his autoerotic practice.

I meet these cases every now and then, and I am satisfied from my study of their psychology that they have been thus abnormally conditioned by masturbation and therefore find themselves unable, until they have been psychologically reconditioned, to enjoy the sex experience of a normal married life (*TPoP* 618).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

this very desirable linking of sex indulgence with the higher ideals of home life and child rearing is absent in autoeroticism and in our opinion constitutes one of the chief objections to such practices.

4:6.9 8. *The vicious fantasy circle.*

Some young men of the introvert-reaction type tend to hook up masturbation with their daydreaming, thus conditioning their whole fantasy lives to this technic of purely physical sex relief.

This probably accounts for the preference of the occasional married man, even though he has a charming wife who is normally sexed and in every way an acceptable sex partner, for his autoerotic practice.

We meet these cases every now and then, and from the study of their psychology we are convinced that they have been abnormally conditioned by masturbation, and that this is the reason why they do not enjoy normal sex experience until they have been psychologically reconditioned.

7. “DIRECT” AND “SUBSTITUTIVE” MASTURBATION

XVII: MASTURBATION (Hamilton 422)

4:7.1 In considering the indirect psychic results of masturbation, particularly as it affects the subsequent sex relations of married life, we must differentiate between its two distinct types: the “direct” and “substitutive.” The direct type is that practiced by individuals who engage in it purely for the physical pleasure it gives them. Their minds are wholly concentrated on physical pleasure and selfish gratification. In the substitutive type, the masturbator, while engaged in the act, allows his mind to be wholly occupied with sexual fantasies relating to normal and romantic associations and sex play with the opposite sex.

4:7.2 Hamilton’s investigation of the effect of these two types of masturbation upon the sex life after marriage showed that

5. The seventh question on *Card 31* was, “Were daydreams of yourself in a sexual situation with another person always an essential part of your pleasure in masturbation?” The 8 women who stated without reservations that such daydreams had always been an essential part of their pleasure in masturbation are all able to have the orgasm with satisfactory frequency.

Fifty-eight women said “No,” categorically: of these, only 26, or 44.83 percent, have an adequate orgasm capacity.

those women who practiced substitutive autoeroticism were all able to experience normal orgasm and to enjoy a thoroughly adequate sex life.

On the other hand, of those who indulged in direct self-relief, about 45 per cent had an **unsatisfactory** sex experience in the subsequent married life.

They suffered from **inadequate** and infrequent orgasm and were definitely deficient in sexual capacity.

Our own professional experience so fully corroborates Hamilton's observations that we think that, if psychiatrists ever feel led to prescribe masturbation to the middle-aged, unmarried female as the least of the possible evils of sex adjustment, this matter should be frankly discussed.

This raises a question as to whether there may not be a **fundamental difference between** masturbation which is an end in itself and masturbation which largely reflects an effort to give a touch of realism to **copulation fantasies**.

4:7.3 There is a **fundamental difference between** these types of masturbation in the psychic consciousness and the subsequent problem of sexual adjustment.

Masturbation which is indulged as an end in itself does tend somewhat to disqualify the individual for subsequent normal, adequate sex experience, while its practice as a part of a general **sex fantasy** experience pertaining to the opposite sex does not seem to interfere with an adequate sex experience in subsequent married life.

It seems to me that there must be an important **psychodynamic difference between**

There is a definite **psycho-dynamic difference between**

(1) a **longing for copulation** with a satisfactory person which is so insistent that it leads to fantasy construction of the act with an attending self-stimulation of the genitals and (2) mere masturbation **for the sake of the pleasurable experience** of this act in itself (H 442).

the purely Narcissistic and **self-pleasure craving** of the direct type of masturbation and that **craving for copulation** with the opposite sex which results in substitutive masturbation in an effort to relieve the physical tension and to accentuate and make real the psychic sexual situation.

In **substitutive masturbation**, on this hypothesis, the individual has been **so conditioned** that he tends to respond to sexual excitation by longing for the act with a satisfactory person,

4:7.4 **Substitutive masturbation** results in **so conditioning** the individual that the sex impulse is closely associated with an intense desire to have normal sex contact with a person of the opposite sex.

SOURCE

and when this is impossible he constructs **in fantasy** what he would like in reality (H 442).

It might be further assumed that conditioning factors which favor the tendency to substitutive masturbation will also favor—in the case of women—the tendency to have **complete, normal orgasm in the sex act**; and that conditioning factors which favor the tendency to autoerotic masturbation operate against the chance of having the normal orgasm.

To be able to copulate **frankly** and openly in one's imagination, and to pretend that the attending self-stimulation of the genitals is a part of the **imagined act**, argues an absence of those deeply **buried**, unwittingly operative **inhibitions** which we are compelled to postulate to account for the fact that there are women who have complete and satisfying orgasms in sleep who have never been able to achieve this goal in copulation (H 442-43).

4: LIVING A SANE SEX LIFE

He is merely **in fantasy** endeavoring to substitute an autoerotic practice for the more normal and complete sex experience which is impossible under the circumstances.

This type of autoeroticism is to be preferred to the Narcissistic and wholly self-conditioned type of practice.

It would therefore appear that the substitutive type of masturbation will favor psychic conditioning, especially **in the case of women**, which would be more favorable to the subsequent experiencing of **adequate orgasmal reaction in the normal sex relation**.

4:7.5 The substitutive type of autoerotic practice also contributes to the prevention of serious **inhibitions** and other mental attitudes that help to **bury** fantasy memories in the subconscious which later would be likely to develop into a guilt complex.

This **frank** indulgence of the imagination in association with the self-stimulation of the sex organs, all of which are bound up in the **imaginary sex act**,

tend to prevent the creation of memory complexes which result in the loss of self-respect.