

# **SEX: FEMALE**

AN INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

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## **OVERVIEW**

*Sex: female* is a seventy-minute documentary exploring the sex lives of everyday women. Specific details from intimate, informative interviews with dozens of ordinary women provide context for more expansive conversations around the topic of sexuality. Several lengthier interviews provide more in-depth exploration of the topic; featured interviewees include a young lesbian optimistically discussing her sexual awareness and experiences, and a series of couples assessing the transformation of their love lives.

## **DVD CHAPTERS/SECTION TITLES:**

1. Do It Again
2. Let's Misbehave
3. Nature Abhors a Virgin
4. Linda's Story (extended profile)
5. Three's a Crowd
6. Lousy Lovers
7. Simone's Story (extended profile)
8. Getting Off
9. Me and My Body
10. How Many Notches?
11. Amanda and Casey (extended profile)
12. Mr. Big Stuff
13. Four Couples (extended profiles)
14. Can't Live Without It
15. Credits

## **PRE-VIEWING DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES**

*Here are some questions that can be discussed prior to viewing of the film. It can be useful to compare responses to these questions with students' responses after they've watched.*

- How do Americans as a society view sexual behavior?
- How is our society taught to think about sex?
- Are these views and perspectives gender specific?
- Do we impose a certain social status/reputation on a person based on sexual behavior? How does this differ for individuals based on gender and/or whether they are gay?
- What things in our environment cause us to think this way?

## **POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION**

*Sex: Female can be viewed in its entirety or in modules. Certain sections are self-explanatory, while others bring up a variety of important questions about our social attitudes towards female sexuality.*

### SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SEX

- What beliefs does our society hold about sexual behavior? Are they gender related?
- Are there contradictions and double standards in opinions about sex based on people involved in a relationship? How does this impact those in the relationship? Is the dynamic the same in gay and straight relationships?
- How do these double standards and contradictions impact male and female sexual activity and expression? Do the women in the film discuss and take part in sexual activity in a traditionally acceptable manner? Has it become the “norm” for women to talk so freely about sex in a society where these discussions were once considered taboo?
- What societal boundaries do people in the U.S. have about sex? What sexual conventions exist here?

### SEX AS MISBEHAVIOR

- Why is sex seen as misbehavior? Is this cultural or universal? Are the games that Cynthia speaks of “rebellious” in nature or are they part of a natural childhood exploration? Why are they perceived as they are? Are these perceptions constant or have they changed over time?

- What role can sex education play in this? At what age should sex be talked about? Who should be responsible for the talks? Should it happen at home? Should sex be an open topic of discussion from early on or is there a certain “level of maturity” that should be reached first? How can this affect perceptions of sex? How do you think this relates to the mother and daughter in the video? Do you think the daughter ever thought sex was misbehaving? How do you think the mom’s take on sex affected her daughter’s relationship with sex?
- Why are there certain social stigmas attached to sex? Are they gender specific? Do you think they exist everywhere?

## SEX AND YOUTH

- What do people in the U.S. think about sex and youth? What part does the media and fashion industry play? When Casey and Amanda go shopping, they talk about the sexiness of the clothing. How might their clothing choices affect how they are treated? Could you see it changing what adults expect from them (emotionally/physically)? Does it promote sex at a young age? What is the right age to have sex for the first time?
- In general, are people in the U.S. prepared for their first sexual experience? Physically and/or emotionally? Should they be? Do you think there’s a way to make firsts more natural than they seem for most of the females on the video? When the young woman talks about the music of the ice cream truck playing during her first time, what do you think about her involvement in the experience?
- What are first sexual experiences usually driven by? Sexual desire, peer pressure, the sense of rebellion? Are there physical and emotional expectations that exist ahead of time? What do you gather from Casey’s comment about the penis being gross and her decision to not go any further? Was it a question of readiness?
- Is sexual awareness and readiness inherent or learned? Is it cultural or biological and does it happen at the same age for people everywhere? Are we physically and mentally ready for sex at the same time?

## THE ROLE OF SEX IN A RELATIONSHIP

- Is sex a need or a desire? Can people live without it?
- Is sex important in a relationship? Why? How do guilty feelings come into play? Do these feelings impede or induce sexual behavior? Is it the same for gay and straight people? How do gender dynamics affect this?

- Cynthia talks about the power that she has over her mom when leading children in sex games that come to symbolize “rebellion.” How does the idea of power and sex come into adult relationships? Is it there because of similar childhood experiences?
- Linda feels that her role in sex is to satisfy her husband? In male-female relationships, do women often think this way? Do they seek pleasure from the act of sex or from pleasing their partner? Why? (Do societal standards play a part in this?)

## PLEASURE AND DISPLEASURE

- How do we learn to be good at sex? Does good sex have more to do with physical or emotional feelings? Does “being good in bed” mean we have a lot of experience? To be good, do we need to explore with one partner or many? Do you think the women in the video who talk about having sex hundreds of times would be the best in bed? How many partners is too many?
- Could something be repulsive to one person and pleasurable to someone else? Do you think these turn offs are repulsive because of preconceived notions, prudishness, lack of experience, or are they really displeasing?
- How important is orgasm? Is it purely physical or does it play an emotional role? Can a relationship be intimate without it? How does pride play into this?
- Is masturbation important? Does this change depending on whether you are involved with someone? Some women talk about the freedom it gives them. Can this liberating feeling happen with a partner?

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- Is sexual orientation a matter of nature, nurture, or both? When do people know if they are gay? Are there always signs at a young age like there were for Simone?
- What societal biases might impact sexual orientation? Is there a potential comfort zone found in sharing sexual experiences with someone of the same gender?

## APPEARANCES

- How do physical appearances affect a person’s sex life? Do you think that beautiful people are sexier and therefore have better sex lives? Does our physical well-being or how we look affect our sex drive or is sexiness a state of mind?

- How can self-image affect a person's sex life? One woman talks about her lack of enjoyment during sex because she can only imagine how she looks while having sex. Does she need to change the way she looks or find the right partner?
- Does a change in someone's physical appearance affect a partner's desire to be with her or does it affect her own desire to have sex (as in the case of the woman who no longer had sex after gaining pregnancy weight)?
- Should women show off their bodies? Does it empower them or make them into sexual objects?

## INFIDELITY

- How does infidelity affect a sexual relationship? Do you think it happens because the cheater is sexually unsatisfied? Can a relationship ever be the same after one person cheats?
- What social stigmas does cheating carry? Is it the same for men and women?
- Who is at fault when a partner cheats? Many of the women in the video speak negatively of the woman with whom their partner has cheated. What makes them side with the male?

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## IN CLOSING

- Has the video changed the way you look at sex? Do you think the women in the video represent the "norm"?
- What do you think a film called "Sex:Male" would be like? Do you think men would talk as openly, and would their discussions be based on the same topics?

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