

PENTHOUSE

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR MEN

MARCH 2005 

Inner **RACHEL PERRY!**

VH1 Hottie Opens
Up on Sex, Hockey,
and Fred Durst

Shut Up Already!

David Cross
Has Something to Say

Celibacy!

It's the New Casual Sex

Think You Got

Game?

Find Out Against the

Best Online

Lose!

(Weight)

Get!

(Ripped)

Stay!

(At Home)

WARNING: NOT TO BE
SOLD TO PERSONS
UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

\$7.99





Sexy, Single, and... Celibate

MEET THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE JUST SAYING NO TO SEX

Article by Ronnie Koenig

Fucking. Sucking. Licking. Kissing. Biting. Coming. To most of us, these are actions that we not only enjoy but can't imagine living without. But there are a growing number of people—young, attractive, and sane—who are just saying no to sex for a variety of compelling reasons. They are the new celibates, and they're doing the one thing that's bolder, racier, and more controversial than fucking. They are not doing it.

Delila is a good-looking 41-year-old brunette who works in retail. She has bright blue eyes, a cute smile, and an outgoing, vivacious personality. She has not slept with anyone for the past two years—a decision made not by circumstance but by choice.

"Until I meet a man who's compatible with me—and not porn-obsessed and oral sex-obsessed like 99.9 percent of all men seem to be—I'll remain celibate," she says.

Is she a religious freak? A sex-abuse victim? Closeted? Is she deformed? On drugs? The answer to all these is no.

A lack of datable guys, combined with the hurt from past experiences, makes abstaining from sex—at least for now—a sensible choice in her eyes.

"I had a fling a couple of years ago with a guy I found cute, but I felt used, even though I used him as much as he used me," she continues. "I broke it off and never looked back. Casual sex just isn't my thing."

These days, celibacy doesn't always

involve taking a formal vow or accepting Jesus Christ as your personal savior. Many women and men (yes, men) are simply "taking a break" from sex after the end of a serious relationship. Instead of encouraging each other to "fuck someone and feel better," friends are advising one another to spend time figuring out what it is they want. Rebound relationships are replaced by sessions of self-discovery that include cooking classes, meditation, and roller hockey. The one-night stand, an oft-used prescription for heartbreak, is phased out in favor of friendship, food, and feelings.

When Lenny went to see a therapist after the breakup of his first long-term relationship, he was not expecting to be told to keep his dick in his pants. But this is precisely what his therapist (and many friends) encouraged him to do.

"I was celibate for about two years back in my mid-twenties," says the 35-year-old. "Sex—relationships, really—made my life more faceted. I remember trying to simplify things in order to get a better idea of what I wanted. In hindsight, I recognize that abstinence itself really had little to do with anything. Rather, it was the act of being solitary which offered me much needed insight."

Is it really true that you can't love someone else until you love yourself? That jumping right back into sex allows you to avoid analyzing what went wrong?

Photograph by Robert Farber

ASEXUAL SEX "An Endless Medical Exam"

The other side of the nonsex coin is asexuality, which differs from celibacy in that asexuals apparently are born with no sexual desire. Or so its adherents would have it. According to a new study published in a recent issue of *The Journal of Sex Research*, based on an analysis of a 1994 general-population survey of 18,000 folks in Great Britain, about one percent of respondents had no interest in sex.

That's not to say asexuals aren't a loving bunch. "Trish," a 39-year-old homemaker in San Diego whom *Penthouse* found through a message board on an asexual organization's Website, has been married for seven years. She says that her lack of sexual desire has no bearing on her ability to love and form the bonds of a relationship. She claims to have zero sex drive, and has "tried masturbating a few times to see what physical reaction I could create; it's too boring and time-consuming for too little return to spend much time on." Is she happy with her lack of sex? "Absolutely," she says. "The crucial thing to understand is that asexuality means having no feelings of sexual attraction, and that's all it means. It does not mean being celibate... It does not mean not having relationships, including marriage. It does not mean never having kids, or not wanting kids. Every single other feeling that a human being has can and does exist in asexuals; the only thing different is that we don't feel sexual attraction." But what about the poor husband? Trish says he's happy to just masturbate every day, and that they "don't even cuddle or hug, or have any desire to."

"Imagine the most ridiculous thing you can, then imagine that it's all anyone talks about," says David, a 22-year-old asexual in St. Louis. That's his description of growing up as an asexual around friends with sex drives. "Some people get the impression that my life must be either miserable or simple; neither is true.... If you think life without sex is bland or unfulfilling, then you probably just need a good mind fuck." This is not to say that David has no sex at all—rather, as Bill Clinton might say, it depends on what your definition of sex is. "Those of us who do masturbate don't see it as related to partnered sexual activity," says David.

While one percent of the population may not be enough to start a new rainbow-colored movement, activists have been campaigning to promote awareness and acceptance of asexuality. Online sites of organizations such as the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (www.asexuality.org) provide support and information and even have online stores where you can buy T-shirts that scream: ASEXUALITY: IT'S NOT JUST FOR AMOEBAS ANYMORE.

And while asexuals may be garnering more attention, that doesn't mean it's easy existing outside of the evolutionary mainstream.

"I struggle for understanding in a world where sex is so prevalent, but I know I'm not alone," says Geraldine Levi, 23, of Arnhem, Holland, who's writing a book on asexuality entitled *Strangers in a Strange Land*. "Various crushes without feeling lust for either boys or girls made me aware that I was different from others. Others had fantasies and often lived out their fantasies. All I wanted from love was to be with someone. A hug, a kiss, a dance, sharing moments together."

This is not to say that asexuals never have desire or do the deed. But the physical act, as Trish told *Penthouse*, "feels like having intimate contact with someone you're not attracted to—icky. Like an endless medical exam."

While many asexuals believe it's something they're born with, others seem to choose it as a lifestyle based on their experiences. "Tracy," 24, became a high-priced escort in London at 19 and later took up with a man who turned her on to hardcore porn and threesomes. After a while she got burned out. "Sex became no big deal," she says. "It wasn't interesting, and I saw it as something that turns men into dithering idiots, turns good men into men who cheat on their wives. Sex became something not very nice, in the way that it controls people." So she's stopped having sex—at least for now.

Just as sexual practices like homosexuality have existed since mammals have been bumping uglies—but have only been defined semantically and culturally since the nineteenth century or so—*asexual* may soon become another label, like *gay* or *straight*. What's in a name?—Tom O'Connell

When we think of celibacy, the image of an unattractive, prudish religious zealot often leaps to mind. But celibates come in all shapes, sizes, and denominations these days. They are your friends, your coworkers, even the cute chick you see at Starbucks. They don't look sex-deprived, nor do they display any visible signs that say I DON'T FUCK. They're different from people who simply can't get laid in that they've made a decision to abstain from intercourse.

Most authorities on the subject say that true celibacy begins after an initial period of at least six months with no sex. So although P Diddy's two-week stretch without sex before running the New York City marathon spoke volumes about his restraint, dedication, and character, it didn't make him a celibate.

For sure, the new celibates I spoke with have many different characteristics and reasons for choosing to abstain, but they also have many things in common. For one, they are usually young, attractive men and women who, instead of embarking on celibacy as a lifelong journey, use it as a short-term method of self-discovery. Many have chosen it in reaction to a failed relationship, or just because they need time alone to figure things out. While penis-to-vagina penetration is a definite no-no, these abstainers may enjoy spending time with the opposite sex (or same sex in homosexual cases) and some even date. Most choose not to kiss or fool around, and are careful to set boundaries in potentially sexual situations lest they be tempted to give in to their human desires. They aren't trying to get away with doing everything but screwing; they are genuinely interested in exploring their own lives, and relationships in which romance is not part of the equation. Masturbation is often used as a welcome release for pent-up horniness.

Virgins aren't celibates. You can't know what you're missing if you've never had it to begin with. But when Britney Spears and Jessica Simpson declared themselves virgins, it suddenly became acceptable for young people to abstain from sex. The message heard around the world was "You can be pretty and popular and not have intercourse. You can wait for Mr. (or Ms.) Right—and it'll be worth the wait."

The reality is, abstaining from sex is quickly becoming the norm. The 40-hour work week has become obsolete. Many of us are too tired, overworked, or just plain stressed to have sex at the end of the day.

Although sex usually revitalizes, energizes, and improves one's outlook, more and more people aren't making the time to get intimate. The result is a new breed of successful celibate overachievers who seem to have it all. Though their

wealth and prestige are outwardly manifest, inside they have prematurely dried up, deriving more pleasure from a hard-won deal than from contact with another human being.

With the proliferation of antidepressants, and the accompanying warnings of sexual side effects, the quest for contentment in a bottle has led large numbers of people to trade the most primitive pleasure for an overall feeling of "wellness." Mood-enhancing drugs that squash the libido are a necessity for some, but a quick fix for many more. Your formerly glum best buddy may be smiling these days, but you can bet it isn't because of a boner in his pants.

This willingness to let sex be a casualty of modern living is a strong reminder that intimacy can be a scary thing. By taking yourself out of the game, you relieve yourself of the burden of dealing with relationship conflicts, dating disasters, and really bad sex—but at the same time, of really mind-blowing sex too.

"I'm trying to be heterosexual," says Jill, 24, who has been celibate for the past four years. Many gay men retreat into celibacy (and, often, the priesthood) as a way to escape dealing with their sexuality. Because of social pressures, inner turmoil, or diminished sex drives, many lesbian couples start off

hot and heavy but end up celibate, living together more as friends, sisters, or roommates than as lovers.

But straight girls are also abstaining. Sherrie is a friend who, at 28, has been celibate for eight years. She turns innocent smiles from men in her office into elaborate fantasies, but when I tell her to flirt with someone at happy hour, it's as if I've suggested she strip naked and use a dildo on herself in a store window. Granted, Sherrie is overweight, but she is by no means unattractive. When I tell her she reminds me of onetime beauty queen Delta Burke, she laughs and brushes it off as very kind.

The truth is, Sherrie and many others like her have stopped trying to get laid. Although they may voice a desire for love and sex, they have allowed what they perceive to be physical or mental handicaps to act as a chastity belt. Even celebrities aren't immune to this syndrome. Sex goddess Anna Nicole Smith admitted on her TV show that after gaining weight she didn't have sex for a long, long time.

Keira is a six-foot-tall, slender model-type with cocoa-brown skin, elegant features, and dark captivating eyes. Wherever she goes, she gets hit on, yet she tells me that she hasn't "technically" been with anyone in almost a year. Her

anorexia has caused her to stop menstruating. An added side effect is a plummeting sex drive, so much so that when she does take a man to bed, rarely does she get any pleasure from it.

There are certainly many celibate women who find the practice enlightening; however, it can make for an oppressive existence. Ironically, many of the earliest known female celibates used it as "a tool to emancipate themselves from the drudgery of marriage and childbearing," says Elizabeth Abbott, author of *A History of Celibacy*. The celibate life allowed them to travel as independent women, become educated, and undertake professions.

Women aren't the only ones closing up shop. When asked, most men are quick to say how essential sex is to their existence. But most men do experience dry spells. The social pressures for them to be virile and horny mask the fact that many aren't the sex-crazed studs they portray themselves as. What makes celibacy even more difficult for men who are drawn to it is the shit other people give them.

"I was a jock in college, and it was hard to refuse some advances," says Jim, a 23-year-old celibate. "My fraternity buddies would try to set me up and see if I would dive. To their disappoint-



"Actually, I found the sex rather anticlimactic after that ride home."

ment. I didn't... I got laughed at and teased often by friends, especially girls. They thought I was crazy or even religious. I am neither."

It's amazing how strong are the societal pressures to have sex. More surprising is how many women, supposedly the more emotional, understanding gender, react to learning that their services won't be required. "The part [about celibacy] that has surprised me most is how women I've dated have taken it," says Grant, a 31-year-old who has practiced abstinence at various points in his life. "Many of them get insulted. It's as if sex is their gift to give, and they're angry when it isn't accepted. In each case I told them in advance that I was not interested in a sexual relationship right away. They all thought it was a line."

Women may see a man's celibacy as a rejection of her charms, but rarely do celibates shun sex in rejection of another person. More likely, they have a spiritual or deeply personal reason for abstaining, or they enjoy the challenge of disciplining themselves. Resisting sex

the relationship, but to this day I have never had sexual chemistry that strong with anyone in my life."

Though she herself would never choose celibacy—and would probably not date a celibate man again—she can't help but acknowledge "how amazing love can be when it transcends the physical and is purely spiritual." But sometimes even those holier-than-thou types aren't as pure as they'd have you imagine. "Abstaining only worked for a couple of weeks," Pamela says, "and then we were making out all the time again."

Celibacy will always be inextricably tied to religion. As Elizabeth Abbott points out, Christianity is founded on the belief that Jesus was born to a virgin. While being married to God, waiting until marriage to have sex, and having intercourse only to procreate are standards far removed from much of the population, the spirituality and discipline that celibacy provides are not. Have you ever been away from a lover for months, only to sleep together again and have it

any "sexual triggers" that get them in the mood, "lest they accidentally end up in a man's apartment and his penis lands in her vagina." Triggers can be anything that sparks your interest in sex, like receiving a deep-tissue massage, eating a succulent piece of meat, or listening to smooth jazz.

At its worst, celibacy is used as a shield behind which insecure people hide from their fears of sex and intimacy, or even of their own bodies. Celibacy may provide discipline, but it also releases you from the pressure of relating to other human beings in a way you may not be adept at.

Abbott's *A History of Celibacy* explores the old belief that it's healthy for men to conserve their semen, which was once viewed as a precious commodity. For today's celibates, the opposite seems to be true. Many new male celibates have frequent and enthusiastic jerk-off sessions. Even the open-minded and sexually savvy readers of this magazine may choose fantasy over reality. And while enjoyment of porn obviously doesn't bring on celibacy, a rejection of real-life relationships in favor of cybersex often does. Simply put, many men shut women out because it's less scary. Your hand isn't going to cheat on you or laugh at you or leave you, but real people can and do.

"It's been nine months! Aren't I being good?" my friend Max says when we meet for drinks. In the gay community, the temptation to have casual sex is all around you. From online hookups to sex parties, New York City is a smorgasbord of bodily delights. So it makes sense that a hot young gay guy who gets hit on by both men and women wherever we go looks at abstinence as nothing less than a feat of wonder. Some gay men turn to celibacy out of shame, but many, like Max, do it in hope that by taking things slowly, they'll be more likely to forge a lasting relationship.

There are dozens of other healthy reasons to choose celibacy—none of which makes you a freak. It's understandable that sex addicts, those with STDs, and victims of sex crimes might want to either abstain or take sex at their own pace. Celibacy can give you that "just about to explode" feeling you can use in sports, or in just about any endeavor that requires you to be at the top of your game.

"Celibacy is not for everybody, just like vegetarianism," says Della. "People are different. Obviously if someone has a high libido, they shouldn't be celibate. They'd be frustrated and miserable. I have a low libido, so it's easy for me."

When I ask if there's anything she misses, she is quick to answer: "The feeling when intercourse first starts." That's something not even the most intense game of roller hockey can replace. **OH**

"Simply put, many **men shut women out** because it's **less scary**. Your **hand isn't** going to cheat on you or laugh at you **or leave** you, **but real people** can and do."

can be tough, and many do give in to temptation. Still, there are some couples ready to meet the challenge.

Emily, a dancer whose looks are often compared to Lara Flynn Boyle's, is engaged to Owen, a tall, blond, attractive man who's a waiter by day and an actor by night. He is also a recovering sex addict. Emily has accepted the fact that, for now, Owen chooses to be celibate. They share friendship, trust, even romance, but not each other's body. It's a situation that, granted, most people would run away from, but she embraces it and feels that it actually strengthens their connection.

A serious relationship or marriage is an extremely tough setting for abstinence. Unless both partners are on board, the result is unhappiness, adultery, often a breakup or divorce. This usually happens when one of the partners loses interest in sex, or attempts to lead the other into a life that is more religious than he or she is comfortable with.

Pamela, a 27-year-old administrative assistant, once dated a devout Roman Catholic who wouldn't have sex with her. "We did a lot of other stuff, but never intercourse," she says. "I don't know if it was because we never consummated

be better than ever? Holding off on intercourse can leave you burning with desire in the same way that a bare shoulder can sometimes be sexier than full-on nudity.

Shawn, a 25-year-old former seminarian, gave up his dream of becoming a priest after seeing happy high school friends marry and have children. The former prom king practiced celibacy for four years at the seminary. He is now a graduate student at Columbia University, and he believes there are three important elements a person considering celibacy as a lifestyle must have:

- a network of relationships/friends to combat loneliness;
- other ways to channel sexual energy so that it doesn't come out in anger, frustration, or possibly even violence;
- discipline (ways to check yourself).

Though he readily acknowledges that celibacy is not for everyone, himself included, Shawn knows there is much to be gained from the discipline and the added energy it gives you to focus on studies or a career. Not to mention the extra time and money you save by not dating.

Donna Marie Williams addresses the issue in her book *Sensual Celibacy*. Celibate women, she says, are well advised to keep themselves away from