

## **Everything you wanted to know about sex but were afraid to ask**

Interview with Katarzyna Koczułap by Berenika Balcer

How to break a taboo? By educating about sex on social media. Katarzyna Koczułap touches upon the topics that have not yet been covered enough in Poland. She uses her blog and Instagram to pursue a project 'Co z tym seksem?' ('what's with that sex?') covering the broad topic of sex education and promoting the idea of sex-positivity.

Kasia is a psychologist by education, in the middle of a specialisation in sexology. She seeks sex to stop being a taboo in all possible, intersectional aspects, and this is what social media focuses on. 'I believe in the power of education,' she says. Instagram especially has become a valuable platform to share her knowledge supported by academic research, always open for discussion. Hence, we talked to her about, well, sex.

'Without taboo, without worrying, without shame'

'Talking about sex is a must,' Kasia claims enthusiastically. But how to actually do that? How to talk about sex while overcoming shame and all the harmful stereotypes? 'It would be good to begin by saying loud and clear that sex should be treated as any other topic because it is nothing different.' She understands that it can be difficult for many people, but we can learn it by, for example, getting used to the vocabulary while reading books or writing, with the latter being an excellent starting point. 'For many people, writing comes easier than talking, so I always recommend to begin with it,' she says and adds that this process of 'habituation' also requires time.

As it is rather difficult for many to pose questions regarding sex, as they are, for example, afraid to be laughed at, let's focus more on the aspect of 'shame.' Kasia almost excitedly says that such making fun of can be extremely harmful as sex is one of the particularly delicate spheres of life. For most people, it means to expose oneself along with vulnerability and the need for great trust. 'If someone uses this moment of vulnerability, they are doing that person colossal harm. It can have a great impact on the further sexual life of that person. They will never lower their guard, and trust anyone. There are not many things that are worse in sex than to be laughed at.'

The sexual life of Poles

Instagram, along with the blog, is then used as a platform to educate and to normalise sex-related topics. However, undoubtedly, a widely available education is also a must. Kasia cannot stress enough that the biggest problem here is that solid, fact-based sex education is practically nonexistent in Poland. The current educational situation is just 'second-best,' if not worse, that, in addition, is often so harmful that maybe it would be better if it was nonexistent. 'I am petrified with the fact that children and teenagers, so the group that needs such education the most, are not getting it. And sex education is, in fact, needed to help and protect them. And also so they would not have to come to my practice as adults.'

Everyone deserves a great sex life, Kasia believes, and because of the cultural taboo and the lack of proficient education, not everyone has a chance to get it. How would she describe

the sexuality and sex life of Poles? In short - Poles are way more sexually open than we tend to think. 'They just do not talk about it.' Because talking about sex in Poland is not welcome. Still, Poles have a lot of good sex. They experiment and explore more, but they leave it to themselves. 'And I do not blame them at all,' she says. 'Of course, this is just one group. There are also a lot of people who still believe that sex is a sin and serves only procreational purposes. Those people also usually did not have sex education at school.'

The journey of sex care and self-love

But sex is not only a physical act, as Kasia emphasises. So it is also important to talk about love. Self-love, love for (and with) others, for sex, and for our individual needs. On her Instagram, she says that 'sex begins with you.' That our sexuality is only ours. To embrace it is then the most important aspect. 'Without getting to know yourself and your needs, without accepting them, it is very difficult to build a good sex life or, in general, good relationships with others.' Hence, in order to create a great relationship with someone, first, you need to create a great relationship with yourself. Many people forget about it and then during the relationship, they give so much of themselves that they practically knit themselves together with that person. And this never ends up well.

However, considering everything we have said about shame, stereotypes and Polish culture - how to actually begin a journey of sex care and self-love? 'Follow me on Instagram,' Kasia laughs. But jokes aside, again, it is very useful to start with reading to soak up the useful content. We are not born with sex skills. We do not know what to do right away. We do not gain such knowledge once we turn 18. 'It is not like that at all! Sex is supposed to be learned! And it can be learned. Ideally, the path to both great and fun sexuality should start at school, in sex education classes, but unfortunately, this is not how it works.'

In this situation, we need to pay attention to our sexuality ourselves. Building one's sexual confidence is a process. Kasia has the knowledge to help along the way. 'That's why I am here.'

Follow Kasia on Instagram @kasia\_coztymseksem!