

The background of the cover is a vibrant, abstract painting with swirling colors of blue, green, red, yellow, and purple. A large white circle is centered on the page, containing the author's name, title, and subtitle.

Silva Neves

# Sexology

the basics

ROUTLEDGE

The Routledge logo, which consists of a stylized white 'R' shape.

*Sexology: The Basics* is a wonderful introduction to what we know about sex from research, theory, and therapeutic practice. Packed full of interesting facts, thoughtful reflection, and real-world examples, Silva has done a brilliant job of gathering together current knowledge and presenting it in a super accessible and engaging form. Each chapter ends with helpful questions we can ask ourselves, and signposts for how we can find out more. An inclusive and entertaining read, that highlights the diversity of sexual identities, desires, practices, and more.

**Meg-John Barker**, *author of Sexuality: A Graphic Guide*

This book is a positive, normalising and informative contribution to us all learning more about sexology. Silva clearly explains the biopsychosocial approach to sexology with all of the moving parts that contribute to our sexual wellness. It offers context, both historical and current, explaining the current sexual and relationship landscape we live in today. Silva asks us to consider our own biases and position as a reader, in order to be more informed as professionals.

**Kate Moyle**, *EFS & ESSM Certified Psycho-Sexologist & Host of Podcast: The Sexual Wellness Sessions*

This book is an absolute triumph! Silva shares his clinical expertise in a way that feels so accessible, there's a rich array of information, all presented with kindness and enthusiasm. He covers a broad range of topics to provide foundational information about his field, as well as looking at the ways in which sex and relationships can play out in the wider context of our lives. A must read for everyone interested in the world of sexology.

**Ruby Rare**, *author of Sex Ed: A Guide for Adults*

Not to be pigeonholed into one area of clinical sexology (his book on compulsive sexual behaviour is a best seller and core text on many courses), but he has produced another fine book within a year of publication. I loved the breadth of content and the clarity and ease of approaching contemporary sexology. Still, most of all, I enjoyed the case vignettes which beautifully illustrate his key concepts.

**Dominic Davies**, *Psychotherapist, Sexologist and  
Founder of Pink Therapy*

# SEXOLOGY

*Sexology: The Basics* is the contemporary manual of human sexuality, eroticism, and intimate relationships. It takes you to every corner of the human erotic mind and physiological arousal response for a thorough understanding of all the functional parts of our sexualities, including how we bond, love, and have sex from a broad perspective of diversities in sex, gender, and relationships, from monogamy to polyamory, Vanilla to Kink. This book bridges the gaps in our knowledge of sex education.

It is the ultimate guide to answering all the questions you never dared to ask, whether you are a student or a professional, or want to make sense of our often confusing erotic world.

**Silva Neves** is a COSRT-accredited and UKCP-registered psychotherapist specialising in sexology and intimate relationships. He is a Course Director for the Contemporary Institute of Clinical Sexology (CICS), an international speaker, broadcaster, and an author.

# THE BASICS

*The Basics* is a highly successful series of accessible guidebooks which provide an overview of the fundamental principles of a subject area in a jargon-free and undaunting format.

Intended for students approaching a subject for the first time, the books both introduce the essentials of a subject and provide an ideal springboard for further study. With over 50 titles spanning subjects from artificial intelligence (AI) to women's studies, *The Basics* are an ideal starting point for students seeking to understand a subject area.

Each text comes with recommendations for further study and gradually introduces the complexities and nuances within a subject.

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# SEXOLOGY

# THE BASICS

**Silva Neves**

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# BIOGRAPHY

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Silva is Course Director for CICS (Contemporary Institute of Clinical Sexology), an international speaker, broadcaster, and an author.

Silva is a member of the editorial board for the leading international journal *Sex and Relationship Therapy*.

Silva is the author of *Compulsive Sexual Behaviours, A Psycho-Sexual Treatment Guide for Clinicians* (2021, Routledge).



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I started my professional journey as a specialist in sex and relationship therapy with The London Diploma in Psychosexual and Relationship Therapy (LDPRT). I warmly thank the directors Judi Keshet-Orr and Bernd Leygraf for being leading teachers in the field. Throughout the years, I have been fortunate to learn from many influential specialists in the field of sexology and intimate relationships: Douglas Braun-Harvey, David Schnarch, Harville Hendrix, Helen LaKelly Hunt, and Esther Perel, to name a few. I have also been lucky to connect with many wonderful clinicians

doing innovative work around the world, including Dr David Ley, Dr Nicole Prause, Cyndi Darnell, Babette Rothschild, Dr Joe Kort, Dr Markie Twist, Dr Francesca Tripoli, Dr Evie Kirana, Dr Filippo Nimbi, Dr Lori Beth Bisbey, and Dr Karen Gurney. I'm grateful for the ongoing support of colleagues and friends Kate Moyle, Dr Roberta Babb, Aoife Drury, Catriona Boffard, Remziye Kunelaki, Juliette Clancy, Lisa Etherson, Diana Moffat, Andrew Mirrlees, Julie Gaudion, David Piner, and Clare Staunton, as well as the wonderful CICS leadership team: Rima Hawkins, Lorraine McGinlay, Simon Wilson, and Kirstie McEwan. I thank you all so much.

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Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband, Dr James Rafferty, for his consistent love and support, and the joy he brings to my life.

## GLOSSARY

- Abstinence** the voluntary decision to abstain from sex, even if there is sexual desire.
- Agender** not identifying with a gender. It may be described as “gender neutral” or “genderless”.
- Agoraphilia** being aroused by outdoor sex.
- Agrexophilia** being aroused by having sex with the possibility to be overheard by others.
- Amaurophilia** being aroused by having sex with someone who can't see them (using a blindfold, for example).
- Anaclitism** being aroused by activities or objects associated with early childhood.
- Anal Intercourse** the sexual practice of penis-in-rectum penetration.
- Androphilia** being emotionally, sexually, and/or romantically attracted to masculinity.
- Anilingus** (also known as rimming) the sexual practice of oral sex in the anal area, stimulating the anus with lips and tongue.
- Asexuality** sexual orientation describing experiencing no sexual attraction but there may be a desire for a romantic relationship.
- Autoerotic Asphyxiation** the sexual practice of self-strangulation while masturbating, with a hand or sex toy.
- Autofellatio** the sexual practice of licking and sucking one's own penis.
- Autosexuality** experiencing a sexual attraction towards themselves.

- Barebacking** the sexual practice of having vaginal or anal intercourse without condoms.
- BDSM** stands for bondage, discipline, submission, and sadomasochism. It is a group of sexual practices usually involving “power play”, also known as “kink”.
- Bestiality** (also known as zoophilia) the act of sexually penetrating a living animal vaginally or anally by humans, or animals on humans. In England and Wales, it is a sexual offence.
- Bicurious** people identifying as heterosexual who are interested in having a sexual or romantic experience with someone of the same gender.
- Bigender** identifying as two genders. For example, male and female, or male and agender, or any other gender combination.
- Bisexuality** sexual orientation describing the emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to people of the same gender and different gender from their own.
- Body Rubbing** (also known as dry humping or frottage) the sexual practice of rubbing bodies together, especially around the genital areas, fully clothed.
- Candaulism** the sexual practice of watching a couple have sex.
- Cisgender** the gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth.
- CNM** stands for consensual non-monogamy (also called ENM: ethical non-monogamy) which are relationships that allow romantic and/or sexual contact with more than one person at a time.
- Coitus** the sexual practice of penis-in-vagina penetration, also known as copulation or vaginal intercourse.
- Coitus a mammilla** the sexual practice of stimulating the penis between a person’s breasts, often to the point of ejaculation.
- Compersion** the feeling of joy at seeing or hearing the sexual and/or romantic happiness that a partner has with other people.
- Coprophilia** (also known as scat play or scatology) the sexual practice involving the use of human faeces.
- Cuckolding** the sexual practice of being aroused by a partner having sex with someone else consensually. It is often related to the kink of Domination, submission, and humiliation.
- Cunnilingus** the sexual practice of stimulating the vulva and the clitoris with oral sex using lips and tongue.

- Cupiosexual** sexual orientation describing experiencing no sexual and/or romantic attraction but still desire to engage in sexual behaviours or have a sexual relationship.
- Cybersex** the sexual practice of accessing sexual arousal and pleasure through online platforms, which includes masturbating with someone else on webcam, or watching/being watched masturbating.
- Demisexual** sexual orientation describing feeling sexual attraction towards people with whom they have already established a strong emotional bond.
- Digisexuality** sexual orientation describing the emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to other people through devices and technology.
- Dogging** the sexual practice of people enjoying couples (or other people) having sex in their car in a car park.
- Erotic Massage** the sensual and sexual practice of a full body massage done by one or more people who are naked or partially naked, massaging the erogenous parts of the body and focusing on genitals for sexual pleasure until reaching an orgasm.
- Exhibitionism** the sexual practice and arousal of being watched, either undressing, naked, in intimate and private spaces, having sex with other people or masturbating in front of others.
- Felching** the sexual practice of licking semen out of the vagina or anus after intercourse that finished with ejaculation inside it.
- Fellatio** the sexual practice of oral sex stimulating a penis, by licking or sucking with the lips, mouth, and tongue.
- Fetishism** the sexual arousal in response to a specific object (shoes, food, silk, rubber, leather, etc.), a body part that is non-genital (breasts, feet, legs, armpits, hair, ears, etc.), or a practice (cross-dressing, role play, etc.).
- Findom** means financial Domination, the kink of Dominant people demanding money from submissive people.
- Fisting** the sexual practice of inserting a hand into the vagina or rectum of a sexual partner.
- Foot fetish** (also known as podophilia) the sexual arousal of looking at, touching, or involving feet in the sexual practice.
- Foreplay** the sexual practice in preparation for penetrative sex. For some people, “fore-play” is “main-play” or “core-play” as it’s the part of sex that generates the most pleasure and orgasm.

- Friends with benefits (FWB)** friendships that allow an opportunity for sexual contact with each other, either occasionally or frequently.
- Furries** people who enjoy wearing animal costumes, usually colourful and cartoon character-like animals while having sex.
- Gay** sexual orientation describing the emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to people of the same gender.
- Gender fluid** identifying with moving fluidly between genders with the identity shifting between male and female or neither.
- Genderqueer** identifying with being gender non-confirming, rejecting binary labels.
- Gerontophilia** the primary sexual attraction to the elderly.
- Grayromantic** experiencing romantic attraction rarely or not very strongly.
- Graysexual** experiencing sexual attraction either infrequently or not very intensely.
- Group sex** the sexual practice involving more than two partners at the same time. It is often known as an orgy.
- Gynephilia** the emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to femininity.
- Hebephilia** the primary attraction to pubescent children.
- Heteronormativity** the assumption that heterosexuality is the only “normal” and everything else is “strange”, “weird”, or “abnormal”.
- Heterosexuality** (also known as straight) sexual orientation describing the emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to their binary opposite sex or a different gender from their own.
- Hodophilia** the arousal from travelling or when in a new and unfamiliar place.
- Hotwifing** the sexual practice of people sharing their very attractive wife with others for sexual pleasure. It is usually done within heterosexual relationships.
- Incest** sexual contact between close family-related people. It is illegal in England and Wales.
- Intersex** Biological diversity of chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, additional reproductive anatomy.

- Lesbian** sexual orientation describing women who have emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction towards other women.
- Masturbation** the sexual practice of stimulating one's genitals with a hand, fingers, or masturbation toys.
- Monogamish** a monogamous relationship that allows occasional intimate/sexual contacts with others.
- Monogamy** a romantic and/or sexual relationship with one other person at any given time.
- Mononormativity** the assumption that monogamy is the "gold standard", or the "normal" and everything else is "weird" or "abnormal".
- Monosexuality** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction towards only one gender.
- Multisexuality** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to more than one gender.
- Mummification** the sexual practice when one's entire body is wrapped, making the person unable to move. There is sometimes an agreement that the genitals, nipples, or anus are left exposed for sexual play while in mummification.
- Necrophilia** the sexual practice of intercourse with a corpse. In England and Wales, the sexual penetration of a corpse is a sexual offence.
- Omnisexuality** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to people of all genders.
- Paedophilia** the primary attraction to pre-pubescent children.
- Pansexuality** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to people regardless of their gender. Pansexual people are "gender blind".
- Pegging** the sexual practice when a woman (usually cisgender) anally penetrates a man (usually cisgender) with fingers, sex toys, or using a strap-on.
- Phone sex** having sexually explicit conversations with other people on the phone. It is usually accompanied by masturbation to the point of reaching an orgasm.
- Polyamory** loving more than one person at any given time. Polyamory often includes sexual and romantic relationships with multiple partners but not always.
- Polyandry** one woman married to multiple husbands.

- Polyfidelity** a closed group of people who are in CNM relationships with each other only; they all know each other and the introduction of strangers or new people in the system is forbidden. In the case of three people, it is also known as a throuple or *ménage à trois*.
- Polygamy** being married to multiple spouses. It is illegal in the UK.
- Polygyny** one man married to multiple wives.
- Polysexuality** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to all genders.
- Pomosexuality** people who reject all labels that attempt to define sexuality and gender.
- Pup play** the kinky practice of dressing up as a dog, with a mask resembling a dog's face and the tail as a special butt plug. It is a practice predominantly popular with gay men in the leather fetish communities.
- Queer** people from the LGBTQ+ communities who reject heteronormativity.
- Relationship Anarchy (RA)** (also known as relationship queer) are relationships with the philosophy that each relationship is unique and equally important, whether sexual, romantic, or otherwise, and evolves organically into different dimensions.
- Role play** the sexual practice of acting out a fantasy, a story, or being a character that is different from everyday life.
- Safer Sex** the sexual practice of having sex in a way that prevents or limits the contraction of STIs.
- Sapiosexuality** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to intelligence.
- Shower** the sexual practice of pouring some liquid over a partner for sexual arousal.
- Sixty-nine** the sexual practice of mutual oral sex with a partner at the same time.
- Skoliosexual** an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to people who are nonbinary, transgender, or genderqueer.
- Swinging** the sexual practice of couples (usually ones that identify themselves as monogamous) who occasionally engage in sexual activities with other couples or single people.
- Teleophilia** the primary attraction to adults.

- Third gender** not identify with either man or woman but identifies with another gender, called third gender.
- Transgender** identifying as a gender that is different from the sex assigned at birth.
- Upskirting** the offending practice of using a device (mirror or phone with extension equipment) to look under someone's skirt or dress without their consent. It is an offence under the Voyeurism Offences Act 2019.
- Vanilla** the group of sex practices that are considered not kinky.
- Voyeurism** the sexual practice of gaining sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity.
- V relationships** one person in a relationship with two different partners that are not in relationships with each other, thus creating a V-shaped relationship.
- Watersports** (also known as urophilia or golden shower) the sexual practice of urinating on a partner, urinating on oneself, or watching someone else urinate.



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# INTRODUCTION

The last ten years have been an amazing time of growth for sexology. There have been many new interesting scientific studies conducted, helpful books published, more clinicians being drawn to the field, and more sex-positive conversations. There have been more people wanting specialist professional help to resolve sexual difficulties and their struggles in their relationships. Although there is so much more fantastic and accessible information about sex and relationships, there has also been an increase in misinformation on those topics. The demand for more content on sex and relationships created a tsunami of “products” and “programmes” soaked in myths and misinformation in order to monetise on the intimate struggles of people.

I decided to write this book because, over the years, I have become increasingly aware that people are being let down by misinformation. There has been a sharp increase in medical professionals, counsellors, and psychotherapists asking me to help them with their knowledge gap in sexology because their training/education did not cover it. When professionals are not trained in understanding the great diversity in gender, sexuality, and relationships, it allows too much room for assumptions and judgements.

I believe that the knowledge of contemporary sexology should not be reserved for professionals who work in healthcare. I think everybody should know more about it. In my experience, much of the distress that people feel about their sex lives and intimate relationships come from excruciatingly poor sex education. Unawareness in these areas become a fertile ground for myths to grow, causing greater problems in people’s intimate lives.

This book is not about sex therapy; it is not a self-help book either. As the title says, it is a book about the basic knowledge of sexology, which means the contemporary knowledge of all aspects that relate to our sexuality and intimate relationships. I wrote this book in jargon-free language, hoping it can be a helpful reference point for professionals and laypeople in understanding themselves better, and filling the gap of poor sex education.

In Chapter 1, you will read about the history of sex and sexology, where it comes from, and how it developed to be what it is today. In Chapter 2, I will explain the diversities of gender and biological sex. In Chapter 3, I write about diverse sexual orientations. In Chapter 4, I focus on eroticism and fantasies. In Chapter 5, I offer a brief overview of the physiological aspects of sex because it's a crucial part of the overall field of sexology. In Chapter 6, I look at some of the various sexual practices that people engage in. In Chapter 7, I thought it was important to discuss pornography thoroughly as it is often a subject matter that is misunderstood, provoking much debate. In Chapter 8, I turn my attention to the different types of intimate relationships, which are an important part of sexology. I discuss love, too. Chapter 9 is about sexual offending. It is often an uncomfortable topic but crucial knowledge. Chapter 10, the last chapter, is dedicated to the relationship between sex, intimate relationships, and overall health. I aim to demonstrate how the knowledge of sexology plays a big part in our general well-being.

## WORDS

In this book, you will read that words are important to me. Some people dislike labels and want to identify only as humans. For other people, words and labels are important because they can normalise experiences that are often unspoken in our society, thus reducing shame and a sense of defectiveness.

Words can also be a place of belonging and “home”. They can be associated with a sense of “family of choice”, peers, and being with people with a shared understanding of our specific culture, mindset, values, and philosophy.

Words can shape the way we think. Using the appropriate terms that are currently accepted can challenge prejudices and enhance