

This edition of Innovative Practices in Psychology features, Dr. Cory Hrushka, an AASECT certified Sex Therapist (Diplomate status)/ and Supervisor, an Associate in Sex Education, and a Clinical Sexologist. He tells us about some interesting developments in sex therapy in Alberta.

Dr. Hrushka, let's start with understanding the difference between a sexologist and a sex therapist.

A sexologist is someone who studies sexuality, which is different from a sex therapist who applies therapeutic skills in regard to sexuality issues. AASECT Certified sex therapists typically have extended knowledge in a focused area regarding sexuality. These areas could include specific understandings of sociocultural factors or issues related to gender or sexual orientation, couple relationships and intimacy skills (which can be quite different when they are explored), specialized knowledge of different sexual expressions and lifestyles (polyamory, swinging, BDSM, fetishes, phobias, etc.) They have specific knowledge regarding sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology with an understanding of how health and medical factors may influence sexuality and even sexual offending behaviour. Additionally, there is a strong focus on understanding specific information regarding sexual functioning issues, pleasure enhancement skills and the theory and method of approaches to medical interventions regarding sexuality issues, if applicable.

You have proposed a model for relational interaction patterns and dynamics. Can you tell me a little about that?

A few years ago, I wrote an article, the *Model of Action and Perceived Power*, which is the introductory understanding of a pattern/concept that I had seen in clients in therapy. It's developed and based on my therapeutic practice over the last twenty years, and interactions with those in the sexual community. It's a new model, looking at relationship dynamics and interaction patterns between partners in the bedroom and what the "dance roles" may look like for things to work better. To understand how sensual/sexual play interaction works, clients need to know where they fit on a spectrum. The spectrum is identified, based on both a perceived power and an action-based grid. By understanding how couples complement each other within the bedroom (which could be very different than their behaviour in their general day-to-day interactions in the relationship) clients can get a better understanding of how they can work together to enhance intimacy and sexuality, by effectively dancing in the bedroom better and more fluidly, due to an understanding of what works for each other. See attached online link.

<https://www.insightpsychological.ca/blog/model-of-action-and-perceived-power-mapp/>

I understand you have created Transformations, a gender transitions program. Can you briefly tell me what the therapeutic component of the program involves?

The Transformations program was initially developed to be a comprehensive package for individuals going through gender transition. We worked with psychiatrists, endocrinologists and other medical professionals to help facilitate healthy transitioning. We work with individuals during and prior to their meeting with psychiatrists, which historically could take two or more years. The intent was to speed up the process and help individuals work through any issues that might be stopping them from their transitioning, while also teaching them about the transition process, providing referrals, resources and information. <https://www.insightpsychological.ca/sexuality/transformation-gender-transitions-program/>

Finally, you mentioned the launch of a new program, AMARE, as well as a sex therapy podcast. This is very exciting! Please tell us more about these offerings.

The Amare program has been in the plans for a few years now and it is finally coming into fruition. We're crafting a highly qualified team of individuals working in the different areas of sexuality (and in the process of getting AASECT certified for which I am supervising them) so that we can provide a full-spectrum therapeutic team for all issues involving sexuality, intimacy, and gender. Currently there are only a few in Alberta (and it appears I have trained the majority of them so far!)

We're also excited to launch our new podcast, "Down the Rabbit Hole with a Sex Therapist" which will address the large number of questions coming to us related to sexuality and sexual functioning. We decided answering these through a podcast will help individuals get answers and provide as much information as we can in a simple, concise, and fun way that everyone can access. Currently, we have twelve topics that we are planning on exploring. Some of these topics include loss of intimacy, fetishes and phobias, pornography use, LGBTQ issues, and much more! We're expecting to unveil our first podcast this fall and there will be a new episode released monthly. The podcast will be available to listen to on all streaming platforms, but you can find the main link here <https://anchor.fm/insight-psychological>.