



Art by Arialla Knight

THE COVER



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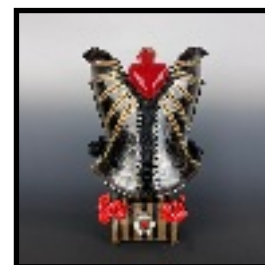
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25+ years' experience creating art, including wearable ceramic corsets, custom tile, 3-dimensional wall sculptures incorporating mixed media, innovative up-cycled display, and applications.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH




LYNETTE
DRACHENBLUT

Model @Lynette_Drachenblut | Fantasy Photography by @Moonspells.photo

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LYNETTE
DRACHENBLUT

Model @Lynette_Drachenblut | Fantasy Photography by @Moonspells.photo

WILDLIFE

ASEXUAL ANIMALS

Asexual reproduction requires only one parent organism and results in genetically identical offspring (like a clone). Since there is no mixing of genetic information required and organisms don't need to spend time finding a mate, populations can increase rapidly due to asexual reproduction.

The downside? If an organism reproduces asexually, its population is usually best suited for one specific habitat, giving all members the same vulnerabilities to disease or predators.

While asexual reproduction is typically reserved for unicellular organisms and plants, there are several members of the *Animalia* kingdom that reproduce asexually. Some can even combine or alternate between both sexual and asexual reproduction depending on the circumstances, a helpful tool to share advantages and disadvantages that come with the lack of genetic diversity.



1. Sea Stars (Star Fish): Sea stars have the ability to reproduce both sexually and asexually but with an interesting twist. Asexual reproduction in some starfish is achieved through fission, meaning the animal actually splits in two and produces two complete organisms. In some cases, starfish will voluntarily break off one of their arms and then regenerate the missing piece while the broken part grows into a whole other starfish. Of the approximate 1,800 extant species of starfish, just 24 species are known to reproduce asexually through fission.





2. Python Snakes: The first “virgin birth” by a Burmese python, the world’s longest snake, was recorded in 2012 at the Louisville Zoological Gardens in Kentucky. A 20-foot, 11-year-old python named Thelma, who lived full-time with another female snake (appropriately named Louise), produced a clutch of 61 eggs despite having had no exposure to a male in two years. The eggs contained a mixture of healthy and unhealthy embryos, eventually resulting in the birth of six healthy female babies. Their DNA has since been analyzed by scientists from the Biological Journal of the Linnean Society, who confirmed Thelma to be the sole parent.



3. Komodo Dragons: Typically, Komodo dragon males engage in aggressive combat with each other during mating season. Some males will even stay with the female for several days after mating to ensure that she doesn’t mate with anyone else. Similar to sharks, Komodo dragons were not thought to have the ability to reproduce asexually until recently, specifically in 2006 at England’s Chester Zoo. A Komodo dragon who had never had contact with a male in her life laid 11 eggs that tested for her DNA only. Seeing as Komodo dragons are listed as “Vulnerable” by the IUCN, the ability to reproduce without mating could come in handy for the conservation of the species.





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BEAUTY TALK



CULTURAL BEAUTY

Across cultures, the concept of beauty is redefined, revealing a profound commonality: each culture boasts its unique beauty standards, reflecting diverse ideals of attractiveness. Beauty culture encompasses the collective perception of physical beauty, often emphasizing facial symmetry and a healthy physique. However, beauty extends beyond the superficial, profoundly influencing our interactions with the world around us. As we navigate our surroundings, beauty inspires meaningful connections with nature, art, and each other. While the essence of beauty remains universal – to inspire desire and admiration – its interpretation varies greatly across cultures, influenced by factors such as geography, tradition, and socioeconomic status. Researchers suggest that our beauty preferences are shaped by an innate cognitive process, which begins early in life. Our cultural context plays a significant role in shaping our self-perception and body image, with various traditions contributing to our understanding of beauty and personal attractiveness. Ultimately, true beauty is characterized by self-acceptance, compassion, and a commitment to personal growth, embracing qualities such as kindness, resilience, and peacefulness.





Sex Education for Adults

What Can Adults Learn From Sex Education?

Whether you received sex education in school as an adolescent or you were never taught about sexuality and relationships, it is likely that you could still benefit from sex education as an adult.

Often, the information that teenagers and young adults receive about sex is limited, and it may tend to focus on topics such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned pregnancies, and bodily changes that occur during puberty. While STIs, reproductive information, and human development are certainly important when it comes to sexuality, comprehensive sex education extends beyond these subjects. In addition to the basics, the following are a few things you could learn from sex education as an adult.

The different parts of your sexual anatomy and how they work

Most adults are relatively well-informed about the reproductive function of their bodies, but even so, they may not have a firm grasp on their own sexual anatomy. Learning the different parts of your anatomy by name, (e.g., the vagina, vulva, clitoris, glans penis, testicles, scrotum, etc.), and learning the function of each part allows you to be more precise about your body and sexual health. It can also help you to accurately describe what you like or do not like in a sexual interaction, possibly improving the experience.

Healthy forms of sexual expression and their benefits

Sometimes, healthy sexual expression is overlooked during sex education. Adults can learn about the benefits of healthy sexual expression such as masturbation and consensual, safe sex with a partner. These forms of sexual expression are safe and pleasurable experiences that can improve one's mood, decrease stress, release tension, and/or strengthen a relationship.

Information about healthy relationships and how to maintain them

Learning skills that support healthy relationships can greatly improve a person's quality of life and may enhance a sexual connection between partners. When a person knows what a healthy relationship looks like and can communicate, listen, use empathy, resolve conflict, and set boundaries effectively, they are more likely to enjoy long-term relationships that contribute to their happiness.

The meaning of consent

Consent is a critical part of any sexual experience. Everyone can benefit from learning about or refreshing their knowledge about consent, as well as the circumstances in which a person can or cannot consent to sexual activity. For example, a person cannot give their consent if they are underage, asleep, or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol.

Personal skills and decision-making around sexuality

At its best, sex education can provide individuals with the information they need to make good decisions about their relationships and sexual health. The ability to voice these decisions and set boundaries is another important skill that adults could learn from sex education.

Information about sexual orientation and gender identity

Comprehensive sex education addresses topics that are relevant for individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Information about different gender identities and sexual orientations, along with sex health resources for these populations, is beneficial for LGBTQIA+ individuals and adults whose experience with sex education to date has been focused solely on cisgender, heterosexual sex.

Information about sexual enhancement tools

There are several tools available that can enhance partnered or solo sexual experiences such as vibrators, dildos, anal toys, penis rings, and so on. Adults may benefit from learning how to safely use these tools to enrich their sex lives.



ART CORNER



NICOLE MOAN

Environmentally conscious artist, repurposing materials and powering her studio with solar energy. Active, exhibiting artist as well as board and committee work, as well as teaching art to inner city kids. She seeks to show the world, through art, how we are all connected and have a unique beauty.

25+ years' experience creating art, including wearable ceramic corsets, custom tile, 3-dimensional wall sculptures incorporating mixed media, innovative up-cycled display, and applications. Specialist in wearable art in the form of ceramics and fabric. Used education in mechanics and welding to generate a unique creation process for both her art and in the mentoring of young artists and contemporaries.



MODEL MAGIC

PHOTOS BY DAVID BYRD



