

## Pelvis is lonesome tonight

By Ruth Ostrow

"IT'S time to connect with your pelvis," says Jo-Anne Baker as my husband and I lie on red, satin pillows on the floor, surrounded by candles, incense and music featuring whales moaning to a didgeridoo.

"Our pelvises get forgotten in the rush and bother of daily life," says Baker, a sex therapist, gyrating her own up and down to make the point. Too true -- pelvises get forgotten in the hubbub of chops and cooking and paying bills. Not to mention chickenpox outbreaks, snotty noses and work deadlines.

"Not often enough do we ask our partners, 'How is your pelvic region?'" she says with a straight face, encouraging me to turn to my husband and pop the question.

But I already know the answer. Neither of our pelvises has been very good lately, not since the school holidays began. In fact, we hardly remembered they were there until a frightful television show the other night reminded us and landed us in therapy.

We were watching an episode of Sex and the City. Try as I have to avoid this infamous show since taking down my shingle as a sex columnist, somehow it found us.

Before we knew it, we were confronted by a blonde bimbo thrusting her body against a blond himbo. I felt a sudden rush of adrenalin. "We've forgotten something," I said, in a panic. "Toaster off, door locked, oven off ..."

"Oh my god. Pelvises. We've forgotten about our pelvises!"

As pelvic bones collided on the telly, we sat there contorting our faces. Probably in much the same way married couples in every living room around the world were contorting their faces. It's the "Now I remember what genitals are used for" facial contortion followed by the "Why don't we have sex like that anymore?" Edvard Munch inner scream.

Ironically, the sex writer on the show was examining why married people hate singles. "It's because they fear single women will steal their husbands," she concludes.

Wrong. When I worked as a sex columnist, I asked exactly the same question and got a different answer.

It's because married people can't bear the fact that singles have that kind of sex. Sizzling sex. Sex that flares and sparkles with all the passion of unrequited love, insecurity and unfamiliarity.

Single people reek of champagne sex. Rare but bubbling. Married people have an air of hot-cocoa sex. Soothing, nurturing and familiar, with the narcoleptic effect of warm milk. And not even that after two weeks of school holidays. With the scraping of peanut-butter sandwiches off the walls and watching endless videos of Bananas in Pyjamas until the song burns deep into the psyche, the only flush of

excited cheeks in our bedroom is when we all sing the chorus.

Tucked in bed by 9pm, my husband and I aren't prepared for Sex and the City. We flick on a Bananas in Pyjamas video to calm our nerves.

The next day we go see Baker, my friend and author of SelfSexual Healing, and the just-released Sex Tips: Advice from Women Experts Around the World (Allen & Unwin, \$17.95).

Baker and I have been colleagues for years, since I assisted her in her sex shop for women, The Pleasure Spot, in Sydney. While she would sell sex toys and phallic substitutes to her female and male clients, I'd chat with them about their lives and relationships. This empirical "research" formed the basis of many of my columns. And my beliefs.

For what emerged was that most married couples were deeply disappointed with their sex lives, believing Hollywood hype that eros should easily survive alongside the wear and tear of domestic life.

When I conducted The Great Australian Sex and Relationships Survey for News Limited in 1996, I discovered that most people in long-term relationships had sex between twice a week and once a month, with the latter being more prevalent -- particularly among those married with children. Ten per cent of married couples had no sex at all.

But what Baker taught me is that couples in long-term relationships can have great sex. Frequently. It just takes work. Great sex isn't any more automatic than a 40-year-old woman looking 20 without hair colour, make-up and exercise.

So here we are, on the floor, being reminded how to connect with our pelvic energy.

"It's impossible after a day of kids, work, anger and worry to just slip into sex," says Baker before taking us through relaxation and breathing exercises that help energy "flow to the lower regions".

She encourages us to make eye contact while saying intimate and flattering things to each other. "Act like you've just met," she says before telling us that couples should make a date, go for a beautiful dinner or light candles to change the atmosphere from work to play.

Her main rule is to keep the bedroom sacred. To create a place that is erotic and intimate.

We go home and get to work. I wheel the dreaded TV out of the bedroom, and carry away all the children's toys and videos, while my husband lights candles. Across the room, we grin at each other in that way.

I'm tempted to ask: "How is your pelvic region?" But from the glint in his eye, I already know the answer.

From the heart

Dear Ruth,

Your story on Marie Gai sent shivers up my spine. We've all watched our children climb, scamper and play on tables, monkey bars and stairs, wondering how many times we can yell: "Get down off there!" before stymieing a child's natural love of

life.

But Marie's tragic story was a sharp reminder that you can never be too careful. Our son recently rode his new bicycle down our staircase and broke his arm. It was a lucky escape for him. For us, it was a lucky wake-up call and a lesson that we, as parents, have finally learned.

R. Fingret, Rose Bay, NSW

Dear Ruth,

Many thanks for your column (September 4) about Kimberly O'Sullivan. I'm using this text as a starting point for a discussion about love, tolerance and integrity with a group of teenaged boys I teach.

Tell O'Sullivan that soon 10 boys from a conservative single-sex school will be learning something about love, thanks to her!

J.M. Pavis, e-mail

Dear Ruth,

Your column on Jacob Kaplan gave me the chills, so I had to write to you. I am a former law professor from the University of Western Australia, working as a barrister. I am doing the final rewrites on my novel *The Journey of Adam Kadmon* (to be distributed by Penguin in Australia in March).

It is about a man who escapes from Warsaw in 1939, having to abandon his family because of a mistake. He goes to India but eventually meets up with his daughter who, in the first draft, was a cardiologist living in Uruguay. In the first draft his name was Jacob. Stranger than fiction.

Les Stein, e-mail

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