

Let's Talk About Sex

DR TLALENG MOFOKENG
answers your intimate questions



I am approaching menopause and am anxious about what changes to expect in my sexual life

Changes in the menstrual cycle after the age of 40 into the 50s is well understood from the perspective of menopause. The time leading to menopause, referred to as perimenopause, is a time of hormonal shifts and this is the hallmark of this period.

When the ovaries produce less oestrogen, the decrease affects fertility and one may notice other symptoms such as sleep disturbances, unpredictable menstrual flow, acne, night sweats, hot flushes.

Gynaecological conditions

The decrease in libido is not solely attributed to peri-menopause as other medical, psychological, relationship and social factors can all impact the ability to be sexually satisfied.

Fibroids, endometriosis, pelvic inflammatory disease are just some examples of gynaecological conditions which may lead to chronic pelvic pain and pain during penetrative sex.

Despite all the physical changes and medical conditions that may need managing, the 40s still represent a time that many people experience some of the best sex, coupled with better communication, knowing and being confident in what one wants regarding pleasure, there is more good to look forward to.

I recommend that you continue with routine screening and annual medicals including self-breast examination, pap smears, STI screening and managing chronic illness optimally.

To ensure longevity and sexual pleasure, one may include sex toys in sexual play, self-play can be affirming, and an open mind to experiment is encouraged. **15**



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E-mail your questions to lifestyle@sundaytimes.co.za with SEX TALK as the subject. Anonymity is assured.

I GO WHEREVER I AM NEEDED

Zimbabwean Mandaza Kandemwa brings his message of peace to SA



'Build relationships with Mother Nature, become an offering yourself. Go sit by that mountain; she enjoys your company. Sit by the river; she is your teacher." This was the message of Mandaza

Kandemwa, a Zimbabwean peacemaker and healer, who led a retreat at the Dharmagiri, a Buddhist retreat centre on sacred land once inhabited by the San people, in the Southern Drakensberg on the border of Lesotho.

Dharmagiri, with its majestic mountain views, waterfalls and rivers, was the ideal location for this retreat. The hermitage was founded by Thanissara and Kittisaro Weinberg, monastics in the lineage of the Buddhist teacher Ajahn Chah, founder of the Thai Forest tradition. The couple came to SA in 1994 as resident teachers at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo before being mysteriously led to this sacred ground which was offered to them as a gift.

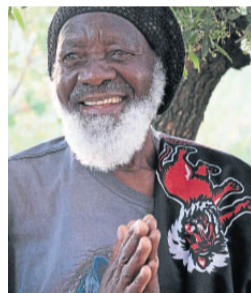
Thanissara met Mandaza at a conference in Botswana. "I realised that he brought a knowledge and wisdom that is very, very rare," she says. "You only hear somebody like that once or twice and you know you have to follow. I asked: how can we learn from you? And he said, 'I go wherever I am needed'."

Mandaza has been invited by organisations around the world to heal ancestral and current conflicts: Canada, the US, Germany – and most recently Russia. "The oppressor and the oppressed carry the same wound from different angles," he tells me.

I was guided into a mysterious interface between the world of spirit and the world of human experience in which sleeping and waking visions and dreams are anticipated and interpreted as messages from the spirit world.

A passage from Ben Okri's *Songs of Enchantment* comes to mind. "We didn't see the seven mountains ahead of us. We didn't see how they were always ahead, always calling us, always reminding us that there are more things to be done, more dreams to be realised, joys to be rediscovered, promises made before birth to be fulfilled, beauty to be incarnated, and love to be embodied."

I learned that every living thing –



Mandaza Kandemwa, who is guided by water and lion spirits.

human, animal, plant – exists between two worlds: the first world is the silent, spiritual world encountered before birth and the second is the world we live in. In both worlds there are codes to be observed. Our work is to bring the wisdom of the spiritual world of interconnectedness with Mother Earth into our journey.

Mandaza believes displacement from the natural world is central to humankind's confusion and suffering. "How can a peacemaker be free when Mother Earth is being abused? How can we be free and at peace when the waters of the world are being polluted? The movement of the earth, the movements of the clouds happens within the body of a peacemaker. My body is my connector with everything."

'The oppressor and the oppressed carry the same wound from different angles'

He is guided by water and lion spirits. His presence is gentle, loving, inclusive and compassionate but his teachings are challenging and rigorous.

Mandaza's visit to SA began with a conference convened by the Institute for Mindfulness in SA at Maropeng in the Cradle of Humankind last month, where he was one of the keynote speakers. He described his impressions: "I was looking at the statues during the Mindfulness conference," he says, statues of freedom fighters – men and women.

"Not a single one of those people died a natural death. They were murdered. The bones and skulls in that museum are those of people who died in conflict – conflict in the takeover of lands everywhere in this world."

Commenting on the land debate, Mandaza is emphatic that "Mother Earth holds the title deeds" and that the human world belongs to the land, not the other way around. He asks if those who receive land through repossession or redistribution will honour and reverence it and the elemental spirits that live there.

Patriarchal oppression and control are responsible for what Mandaza refers to as the "gender monster" – the war between the sexes, which he traces back to the biblical tale of Adam and Eve. "Let us get rid of the taproot that is supporting this big tree," he says. "It has overgrown and it is still growing." His message to women is to unite across boundaries.

The younger generation has been wronged, he says. They are owed an apology by their elders who have handed down a world that is "chaotic, ill and bleeding".

Born and raised in the Anglican Church, Mandaza wrestled with his calling for 15 years. When he finally succumbed, he went into the forest to try to make sense of what was happening to him and received an answer from nature: "I Am Who I Am."

This is what the biblical prophet Moses was told when God spoke to him from the burning bush.

A peacemaker has no permanent home, Mandaza says, and he/she does not go to places where there is peace. The journey never ends.

Like Moses, Mandaza leads people towards a vision of a world in which humanity lives in peace with one another and with the natural world. Moses only ever saw the Promised Land from a distance. Mandaza may never arrive at the destination he envisions, but he points the way for us.

"The spirits are saying there is no time for us to talk about the beauty of oneness, to write about the beauty of peace. That time is over. Become the story yourself. Miracles will happen. We live in a world of mysteries." **15**

Pulse

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15-MINUTE READ