How much of your sexual history is it wise to disclose in a relationship?

Dorothy Horton, PsyD, answers your questions in her latest Ask Doctor Dee column.

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Q: How much of your sexual history is it wise to disclose in a relationship?

A: With the rise of sexually transmitted infections, it's smart for individuals to reveal any sexual history that's relevant to the health of their partners. However, romantic partners need to determine how much personal information they feel comfortable sharing with each other. But how people set those limits for themselves can be shaped by a variety of different reasons.

Often, individuals find it difficult to talk about their past sex life because they fear being judged by a partner. If this is the case, it might make sense for couples to wait until they are better acquainted and trust that they have a healthy relationship.

A good test is to offer details about something nonsexual—for example, an embarrassing story about yourself—to see how a significant other responds. Then, check your comfort level with whatever your partner's reaction is.

If he or she is uncritical and supportive, you'll probably feel safe to divulge more. But it takes time to build trust.

Although good relationships require honesty, full disclosure isn't always necessary when sharing your sexual history. Simply discuss what's essential for yours and your partner's overall good health.

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