

I want to talk about sex today. David wrote to me that this issue is dedicated to humanistic psychology and education, but what I would really like to talk to you about today is sex. More specifically, sexual- language; and even more specifically, female genitalia. Perhaps we can also connect it to humanistic psychology – and who knows, maybe even education 😊

In the fifteen years of my clinical practice I've met many people. And sexuality usually becomes an important topic to discuss at some point. What do you call your genitals? Do you use the same name that your parents used as a child? If not, where did you learn this name? I am continuously shocked to discover how many people, but significantly more women, have no name for their genitals. I am not talking about nicknames - but actually – a noun that relates to their penis or vagina. Those nameless vaginas appear in my clinic all too often and leave me highly disturbed.

What does it mean if such an important organ remains nameless? What does it mean about our capacity to talk about it? To relate to it? "How do you communicate your sexual wants to your husband," I asked Sarah, who came to work through her intimate language with her husband. "I don't," she answered, "I take his hand and put it there." Sarah leaves me feeling sad, "what's there?" I ask, "There," she answers. "How did your parents call your vagina? How did your teachers?" Sarah stares at me blankly – "They didn't. With my daughter we call it a pee-hole."

Sarah is thirty. Judy has no name for her vagina either, and she is a fifty-year-old psychotherapist. Dana is a forty-eight-old artist and her vagina is nameless too. All these nameless vaginas are floating in my clinic, and I stare at these beautiful women, and wonder what happens to my penis when their vaginas are nameless? For me, naming is a ceremony of affirmation, a rite of passage of welcoming someone (or something), of bestowing human blessing, thus allowing for connection.

Zohar our daughter is learning the Alphabet now. She is nearly four and keeps asking about letters. All the letters are beautiful for her, and she loves them all but naturally (because this is how she is) she has a favourite letter. She takes a sticker of this letter everywhere with her. She loves words that have this letter inside them. I wonder how come some letters later become less beautiful, deserving of concealing. Would these letters continue to exist when they no longer have a name? When a little girl cannot pronounce them, hold their shape in her little hand and admire the connection between the thing and its name? And how can we bless each of her letters so that she may know they are all good, and beautiful, and worthy of being named, and touched, and loved?