Your sexual landscape

Time: one to two hours for the picture, plus time to reflect · You need: a large sheet of paper, colours, pens

What attracts you sexually, what you like doing and what you only fantasise about together form a kind of landscape. In this exercise you draw it as a map. Afterwards you look at it like a traveller seeing it for the first time.

Part 1: Drawing the map

Let your feelings guide you as you draw. You can use colours, shapes, symbols or words, whatever suits you. Take your time and sense carefully how the different areas differ from one another.

- What does the map of your sexual territories look like?
- Which areas lie bright and right in the middle?
- Where are the darker or more remote parts?
- How far away do certain areas feel?
- Which images or symbols fit which area?
- If certain sexual practices were a landscape, which would they be? Are there deserts, high mountains, narrow straits? How high are the mountains?
- Where are the borders clear, and where do they blur?
- Which colours belong to which zones, so that the picture matches what you sense inside?
- Where is it busy, where is it public?
- Where are the lonely regions that are hard to reach?

Part 2: Exploring the map

Put the picture in front of you and look at it as if you hadn't painted it yourself.

- What do you notice? Which areas stand out?
- Which regions are easy to reach and enjoyable to visit? Which are more like impenetrable jungle?
- What makes these areas what they are? What do you experience there?

Then bring in your relationship:

- Which regions do you visit easily and gladly with your partner? Which are more or less taboo between you? Why is that?
- What would happen if you set off into a hard-to-reach area? What if you took the other person up the mountain with you? What are you afraid of, what holds you back?
- Imagine you spend a weekend in this mountain region with your partner. What are you risking?
- Suppose the trip goes well and is good for your relationship: what do you experience there? What changes between you?
- What is the worst the other person could find out about you?

Look, too, at which regions belong together. Where there are dirty zones, there are often bright, sunlit ones as well. What connects the two? This is often where the taboo subject lies. One example: someone who cares a great deal about both partners having an equal say may have banished the area of dominance. Behind that there may be a fear of their own anger, even of their own violence.

- Where have you come across this subject in your relationships before? In which situations?
- What happens in your body when you think of this region?
- Who do you become when you live out this practice?
- How does it feel to think about yourself this way?
- What exactly happens inside you when the shame comes?

What you take away

- What could you do to keep developing, on your own and in your relationship?
- Where would your partner see you grow?
- Where is something missing? Which subjects keep coming back to you?
- Play it through once: suppose you tell your partner about your passion for bondage, and you try it together. What would that do to you? What would change inside you?
- Or: suppose you get past your fear and watch your favourite porn film with your partner. How would you feel?

Finally, write down what you concretely intend to do.

If it gets hard

Drawing and reflecting can bring up shame or old feelings. You can take a break at any time or skip a question. Some things are easier to look at with someone else, in a session, at your own pace.

And then

If you like, bring your map along to a session. We can explore it together.

Wiebke Bergermann · Heilpraktikerin for psychotherapy (German state-licensed alternative practitioner) · sex, couples and body-oriented therapist
paar-sexualtherapie.de · info@paar-sexualtherapie.de