

Podcast available at: [www.em-dash-podcast.com](http://www.em-dash-podcast.com)

## Show Notes

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### (00:00) Show Opener

*[Intro Music]*

Welcome to em dash, the healthcare podcast that gives you pause. My name's Kim Acquaviva and I'm your host. This season, we're exploring people's lived experiences of diversity and difference in the healthcare arena. We're on this journey together so let us know where you're tuning in from today. Take a selfie and tweet it using the hashtag #emdashpodcast. We'll do the same!

*[Fade out Intro Music]*

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### (00:26) Introduction to Show

Today we're speaking with Dr. Mitchell Tepper, an internationally-recognized sexuality educator, disability expert, and pioneer in the application of telemedicine to sexual health. Welcome to em dash.

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**(01:03)** Mitch tells us the words he uses to describe himself in terms of his identity.

- "The Prophet of Pleasure"
- "sexual entrepreneur by default"
- "husband"
- "father"
- "person with a disability"
- "man of faith"
- "lifeguard"

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**(1:29)** Mitch explains the origins of his identities as "The Prophet of Pleasure" and "sexual entrepreneur by default."

**(05:00)** How have your lived experiences with a spinal cord injury influenced the way you approach your work with clients as a sexuality counselor?

(04:40) Mitch explains how his lived experiences with a spinal cord injury have influenced the way he approaches his work with clients.

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(09:11) Mitch shares insights he's gleaned from his experiences as a person with a spinal cord injury.

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(19:50) Mitch shares his thoughts about what he wishes healthcare professionals knew about patients with spinal cord injuries when it comes to sex and sexual health.

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## (30:41) Show Outro

*[Fade in Outro Music]*

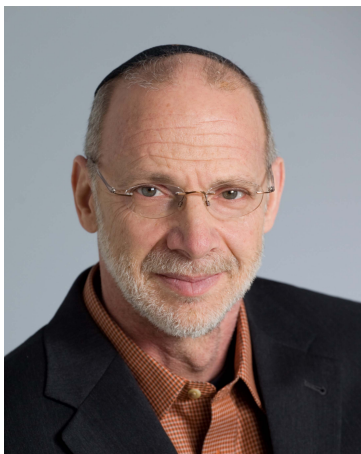
You've been listening to em dash, the healthcare podcast that gives you pause. Tweet your questions, comments, and suggestions to @em\_dash\_podcast. Music used in this episode of em dash came from Jon Wright, who provided both the intro and outro music. Titles and links to songs used are available in the notes for this show.

*[Fade out Outro Music]*

## Songs Used:

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- Intro & Outro Songs: "Unbeatable Epic Trailer" by Jon Wright. Used with permission under Melody Loops License #23653623875 [www.melodyloops.com/tracks/unbeatable--epic-trailer/](http://www.melodyloops.com/tracks/unbeatable--epic-trailer/),



### Guest Bio: Dr. Mitch Tepper

"Dr. Mitchell Tepper brings a lifetime of first-hand experience with chronic conditions and disability to his work. After growing up with Crohn's Disease (IBD), Mitch was baptized into disability at age 20 after breaking his neck. In September 1981, he lost his father to suicide. In April 1982 he needed to withdraw from his junior year of college for an emergency hemicolectomy when his disease was no longer manageable with diet and drug therapy. Before discharge he suffered from peritonitis that resulted in a second surgery and a temporary ileostomy. The doctor told him that the ileostomy shouldn't keep him from doing anything he wanted. So after getting medical clearance in July 1982,

Mitch went back to his summer job as a lifeguard. On July 27, 1982 he dove into the water to go fix a buoy with a wrench in his left hand and placing his right hand over

his ostomy bag to prevent it from coming off. The water was not as deep as expected and he head planted firmly into the bottom of the lake resulting in a spinal cord injury with paralysis from the neck down. After eight months of physical rehabilitation, Mitch was hospitalized again in April 1983 to reverse the ileostomy and reconnect the remaining parts of his intestines. In the summer of 1983 Mitch headed back to school to finish coursework from his junior year. He graduated summa cum laude from Bryant College in May 1984 with a degree in business administration and a new romance, which lead to marriage in April 1986.

After a short career in banking, Mitch was disenchanted with the industry and realigned his priorities with his new interest in helping others navigate their way through difficult life transitions. In addition to volunteering for disability related organizations, including serving as President of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (NSCIA) Connecticut Chapter and SVP of NSCIA he pursued a Master of Public Health from Yale University and then a Ph.D. in Human Sexuality Education from the University of Pennsylvania. It was through his research at Yale focusing on sexuality education and counseling in rehabilitation programs where he found his true calling as the "prophet of pleasure."

Since then, Dr. Tepper has become an internationally recognized sexuality educator, disability expert, and pioneer in the application of telemedicine to sexual health. With no clear career paths to accomplish his mission in ending the silence around sexuality and disability related issues, Dr. Tepper used his business background and became a sexual entrepreneur by default. While working on his doctorate, he founded [The Sexual Health Network, Inc.](#) in 1996 and launched the first website devoted exclusively to sexual health, SexualHealth.com, which he sold in November 2010 to Analyte Health in order to facilitate the development of online clinics and greater ease and access to care.

On the academic front, Dr. Tepper headed up the Satcher Health Leadership Institute's Center of Excellence for Sexual Health Disabilities, Chronic Conditions and Sexual Health Program at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM). He also was an Adjunct Research Assistant Professor of Community Health and Preventive Medicine at MSM and Co-Director of MSM's Disability Partnership with Georgia State University. At MSM, Dr. Tepper launched the [Wounded Troops and Partners: Supporting Intimate Relationship](#) initiative in May 2008 and subsequently worked with the VA to develop their Chaplains Best Practice Award Marriage Enrichment Retreats.

Dr. Tepper is an American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) Certified Sexuality Educator and AASECT Certified Sexuality Counselor, and a tireless advocate. His years of research have served as the basis for hundreds of professional, academic, and public presentations, articles, and chapters. His publications include the critically acclaimed **Sexual Health: Four Volumes** by Praeger." – Bio from Dr. Mitch Tepper's website

Dr. Tepper currently serves as Chair of AASECT's Sexuality Counselor Certification Committee, on the editorial board of the journal Sexuality and Disability, and on the board of directors of the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health and the Institute for the Study of Disadvantage and Disability. In the past, he has served as Board Member of AASECT, President of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of Connecticut, and on the Board of Directors of The Sexuality

Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) and The Women's Sexual Health Foundation.

Dr. Tepper is called on regularly by the media and has been featured on CNN, Discovery, PBS and in popular press, including The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, USA Today, Good Housekeeping, Cosmopolitan, GQ, and AARP.

## Links

Dr. Mitch Tepper's website: <http://www.drmitcheltepper.com>

Film: Making Love After Making War: <http://www.loveafterwar.org/>

Book: Regain That Feeling: Secrets to Sexual Self-Discovery

[https://www.amazon.com/Regain-That-Feeling-Self-Discovery-Relationships/dp/1505444993/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1421673235&sr=1-1&keywords=sexuality+and+disability+tepper](https://www.amazon.com/Regain-That-Feeling-Self-Discovery-Relationships/dp/1505444993/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1421673235&sr=1-1&keywords=sexuality+and+disability+tepper)

**Tags:** Mitch Tepper, spinal cord injury, sexuality, pleasure, diversity, difference, healthcare, LGBTQ