Godiva Is Love

There must be 50 ways to relieve your lover

February 1, 1997 By Dominic Hamilton-Little

As virtually all sexually active people can attest, sex in itself hardly need be an intimate exchange. Not just in bathhouses and boothstores but even in bedrooms, sex is all too frequently an act of mere copulation. And anyone who has ever been in therapy -- or anywhere near a self-improvement forum -- knows gushy intimacy can be achieved fully clad. But I do not wish to believe sex and affection meet only in the "marriage bed." To prove the point, I have lately collected three nonsexual acts of intimacy for the delectation of two. Needless to say, all of these dances are as safe as asparagus salad -- and just as good.

Eating in bed. The fun of a picnic is rarely the choice of food -- it's the transformation of the dining room. In years gone by, when I actually knew the joys of a primary relationship, the two of us would eat chocolates in bed. And not just a nibble. Such reticence would be most unbecoming and suggest a lack of investment in the project. For us, nothing less than a pound of Godiva's finest would be consumed. We would sit naked, wrapped around each other, alternately feeding ourselves or being fed by the other. These little chocolates are also perfect for placing on a part of the body and then being consumed off the plate that is one's paramour.

Naturally, if chocolates are not for you, roll in the granola or whatever munchies you like best. Of course, a good wine or suitable accompanying cordial is a pleasant addition. In my salad days, when Godiva and Pouilly-Fuissé were beyond my means, I was known to indulge in Oreos and Gallo Rhine.

Listening to music. As you lie next to the person you find attractive, play the music that has always brought you greatest happiness. As Noel Coward so astutely pointed out, the potency of cheap music is astounding. Whether it is Janis Ian or Jacques Brel, Tina Turner or Renata Tebaldi, Dinah Washington or Diana Krull, Mozart, Mahler or M People, sharing those sounds you adore can be a huge gift.

Switch off the lamp and open the curtains, letting the city lights cast their shadows across your bodies intertwined on a tumbled bed. With perhaps the mauve smoke of a cigarette as a shared halo, listen to the tunes that form the soundtrack of your life, or that of your lover. The resonance will deepen the actual moment and bring it rushing back to both of you in later hours or years.

Bathing together. Flowing water is one of the great palliatives of Mother Nature. If you are not

fortunate enough to have a bubbling freshwater brook running through your backyard, get into the shower with a friend. If your refurbished loft comes with a Jacuzzi made for two, you've been there, done that. But many of us lesser mortals cannot imagine our mundane bathroom holding such delights. Wrong! Get into the tub and play. Rub down an entire body with a loofah and soap, and see if all your latent Mary Magdalene tendencies don't come rushing to the fore. Indeed, being rubbed and soaped by another requires a strange release of control -- and particularly if your body is unattractive to you, nothing will make you feel better than the worship of being bathed.

Think Martha Stewart -- meets -- Marianne Williamson: Put on the Enya tapes, bring in the scented candles, and pour on the perfumed oils! Wash each other's hair. It sounds trite, but think back to the last time you were in the beauty parlor -- and the delight of those strong hands massaging your scalp. My dearly beloved Matt, of the long raven locks, tells me his current beau routinely plays Delilah to his Samson -- *before* the Philistines handed her a razor blade. Bald and buzz-cut men have long known the pleasures of the head. So whether your hair is short or long, curly, colored or clipped -- hand him the shampoo! Then bring these ingenuous water sports to a close with a rousing towel-off session. You'll catch a whiff of the fun being had in high school locker rooms across the land. Snap that towel, baby, and feel the flesh tingle!

It is frequently after sex that we are most desirous of receiving -- and able to give -- such intimacy. To be frank, I suppose I am merely seeking options beyond the ubiquitous postcoital cigarette. Smoking will always be part of the ritual for me, but with these new rites, I feel better equipped to make a moment last. As Tennessee Williams might have said: "An hour isn't just an hour, but a little piece of eternity dropped in your hand."

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