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Furry handcuffs and multicolored vibrators: All in a day's work for one Israeli sex educator

Beverly Damelin, a 42-year-old mom, teaches secular and ultra-Orthodox Israelis of all ages to enjoy sex - and talk about it without blushing.

By Judy Maltz | Dec. 17, 2013 | 11:58 AM

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Red furry handcuffs: Just one of the items in Beverly Damelin's sex ed stash. Photo by Dreamstime

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As a certified sex educator who runs a side business out of her home selling dilators and vibrators to the ultra-Orthodox and secular alike, Beverley Damelin was certain she had seen and heard it all.

That includes the case of an elderly ultra-Orthodox woman who recently summoned Damelin to Bnei Brak so she could choose and purchase a vibrator in the privacy of her own home, the Ethiopian woman who disclosed to her that female genital mutilation was not uncommon where she came from, and the very sexually active religious Muslim and Jewish women who have been increasingly seeking her out for information and advice on hymen reconstruction surgery.

So Damelin, the 42-year-old mother of two, was surprised to find herself taken aback during a recent visit to an Israeli high school where she had come to present a sex-ed class. The discussion, not surprisingly, veered to the national scandal involving allegations that pop music sensation [Eyal Golan](#) had slept with underage groupies.

“One of the girls raised her hand and said, “Those girls who were having sex with him, they’re a different generation from us,” recalls Damelin. “And I’m thinking to myself, But those girls were 15, and you’re all of 17. What do you mean a different generation? What shocked me was how judgmental these girls were about the behavior of others.”

Working as a sexual educator in a place like Israel, where behavior and attitudes span the spectrum, presents unique challenges, acknowledges Damelin, but it also makes life quite interesting. “I guess Israel is similar in that respect to other places where you have east meeting west, but it is definitely a collection of extremes,” she said.

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So, for example, when Damelin is not advising hypersexualized Israeli school kids on how to stay out of trouble, she is increasingly helping married women, [overwhelmingly Orthodox](#), learn to enjoy intercourse.

“Many women who come to me for help these days seek me out because they find penetration painful,” she said. “Secular women who experience pain during sex tend to leave their relationships and move on. They decide they’re just going to focus on other things in their lives. But for Orthodox women, who tend to get married early on, that simply isn’t an option, so increasingly they’re consulting with psychotherapists, and many of these psychotherapists are referring them to me. The Internet is where they’re finding out how to get themselves help.”

So what exactly does this help entail? A collection of dilators, ranging in size from the teeny-tiny to the grotesquely large, all proudly displayed on Damelin's living room coffee table. “I know that many women cringe when they see these things,” she said, noticing the look on a visitor’s face, “but they really do the job.”

'Adults need to be educated about sex as much as kids do'

Damelin, who moved to Israel at age 18, earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Tel Aviv University and a master’s degree in public health from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She began her career counseling rape victims and focusing on AIDS education, but eventually discovered that most people just wanted to talk about plain old sex. “Is it wrong to do this? Is it safe to do that? Am I okay? Those were the sort of questions I was constantly getting,” she said. It made her start thinking she should take her expertise in a new direction.

That’s when Damelin began importing her sex toys and paraphernalia to Israel. Not only does she sell them to clients from her home, but she also does presentations (not demonstrations – it’s important for her to note) for groups of women around the country who invite her to deliver “adult education” sessions. “That’s right, adults need to be educated about sex as much as kids do, because there’s this big misunderstanding out there that once you’ve had sex, you don’t need to learn anything,” she said.

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When she arrives at these sessions, people are often shocked to see what she looks like. "They usually expect someone who looks like a porn queen," said Damelin, who wears absolutely no makeup and favors loose, comfortable clothing.

At her Kiryat Ono apartment, Damelin pulls a red furry gadget, still in its original packaging, out of a drawer in the large storage room where she keeps her merchandise. "These are very popular these days," she said. "They're very soft handcuffs." Another drawer contains a diverse selection of lubricants, and beneath that, a collection of erotic literature.

Stacked in boxes on shelves lining the opposite wall are vibrators of every size and color imaginable. "Companies send them to me to review," she said. "I don't use them. I just check them out to make sure they're made of safe materials, smell okay and have a nice feel, and then I give them to my friends as hand-me-downs."

Her business, whatever it says about the sexuality of Israeli men and women, is growing nicely. "This year, I'm doing three times the volume in dilators that I did last," she said. Pressed for more detail, she simply said: "dozens of units a month."

Damelin is not easily embarrassed, which, as she points out, is an absolute requirement for anyone in this line of business. But she's often surprised to discover how easily others go red in the face, even those you wouldn't suspect, when conversation turns to the birds and the bees.

"I recently visited a boarding school with lots of very difficult kids, and the principal there, oh, was she a tough one," said Damelin. "She didn't notice I was there when she began ripping into one of the kids. After he'd gone and she noticed me, she seemed so incredibly relieved. 'I'm so happy you're here,' she told me. 'Last week, I had to talk to them about sex, and I just couldn't handle it.' This tough, tough woman – I couldn't believe it."

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