

COVER STORY

Emily Morse calls sex "something that's always on everybody's mind. It runs our world."

Emily Morse

How-to's and what if's

NO SUBJECT IS OFF-LIMITS TO SEXOLOGIST EMILY MORSE

By GEORGEA KOVANIS
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Emily Morse — loyal friend, political campaign staffer, documentary filmmaker — was always popular. ("She always had 20 best friends," her mother says.)

Then, the former Farmington Hills resident started a talk show about sex. And complete strangers started asking her about everything from the etiquette of threesomes to penis size. ("Nothing embarrasses me," says Morse, 41, who lives in San Francisco.) Fetishists befriended her; folks from a dungeon invited her to stop by. Sex toy companies began sending her presents that she admits to re-gifting to friends.

Now, she is about to hit the real big time. Morse's illustrated book on sex — "Hot Sex: 200 Things You Can Try Tonight" (Weldon Press, \$19.95), due out Tuesday — is informative and blunt. (Her cowriter is sex educator Jamye Waxman who, until 2009, wrote a column for Playgirl.)

And Morse said she is about to start filming a reality show slated to air next year on the Bravo network.

"I love what I do," says Morse. "Unless you're asexual, most people have this need for sex and this desire for sex. ... It's something that's always on everybody's mind. It runs our world."

A POLITICAL BEGINNING

After graduating from the University of Michigan in 1992, Morse packed up and moved to California to work on political campaigns.

She had an internship with Barbara Boxer's successful run for the U.S. Senate. After that, Morse worked on campaigns for San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown and Carol Migden, a former member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and state legislator.

She made a documentary film — "See How They Run" — about San Francisco's 1999 mayoral race; it made the film festival circuit and eventually aired on PBS. The best part of the project, Morse decided, was interviewing people. "That is really what excites me — interviews, talking to people, getting their

opinions."

In many ways, politics and public service suited Morse. As a child she spent hours playing City, a game she made up. She pretended that neighbors called her with complaints about barking dogs or other issues and it was her job to come up with a way to fix their problems and address their concerns. Her friends say they always appreciate her willingness to listen to their problems and offer unbiased advice.

Yet dating and relationships also intrigued her. (For the record, she never thought Barbie and Ken made a good couple; when she played with her dolls, her Barbie dated her brother's G.I. Joe because "he always seemed like a man.")

Her parents divorced when she was 8 and remarried four times between them.

As an adult, Morse — who says none of her relationships with men have lasted for more than 2½ years — kept wondering:

How do relationships work?

KEGEL CAMP, AND MORE

In 2005, Morse began inviting people to her apartment so she could talk to them about sex and romantic relationships.

"I was just asking the questions that most people would want to ask a phone sex operator or a dominatrix or a swinger or a happily married couple."

She began airing those interviews in a podcast and, in May, turned that into a webcast that gets about 10,000 viewers a day on emilymorse.com.

On Friday, her iTunes app on how to do kegel

exercises — Kegel Camp — was the 36th most popular paid app in the health category. Her sex tips app on Sirius XM's Stars Too station. She is pursuing a doctorate in human sexuality from the San Francisco-based Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality.

Her tone is nonjudgmental. When she interviewed one of her interns about attending a sex party where couples go to meet other partners or have sex in public, she could have as easily been talking about a sorority dance.

Sometimes she shares her own experiences;

recently, she told her audience about the last time a man really surprised her sexually. Another time she talked about the last time she performed a sex act in a car. She told a woman who had just gotten out of a four-year relationship that it is fine to take things slowly.

Other things viewers know about Morse: She doesn't advocate cheating, she thinks men should take good care of their pregnant partners, and she's all about sex toys.

"She's made talking about sex and a little bit about relationships ... part of the human vernacular," says Julie Costanzo, 47, of San Francisco, a longtime friend. "Emily is such a rare hybrid of intelligence and thoughtful and funny and insightful."

"We'll sit down. Something's going on with me and Emily's so cute, she'll just sit down, she'll just kind of shove her hair behind her ears and say, 'OK, tell me.'"

A PROUD FAMILY

Morse's family is proud of her accomplishments — "It's no different. I have a son who is an attorney and a daughter who is a sex expert," says Susan Morse, 68, of Beverly Hills.

Emily Morse says her mother, who has appeared on her program, approaches her daughter's job "with intellect and curiosity, and I think that she's going about it the right way."

Yet being a sex expert comes with its own set of issues.

"I don't listen to all of her shows," says her brother, Michael Morse, 44, a Southfield attorney. "Every once in awhile, she'll really sprinkle things in about herself. I'm her older brother, she's my only sister. I don't want to tell her about my sex life, and I quite frankly don't want to hear about hers."

Then there was the time Michael Morse's daughters spent the night at their aunt's apartment.

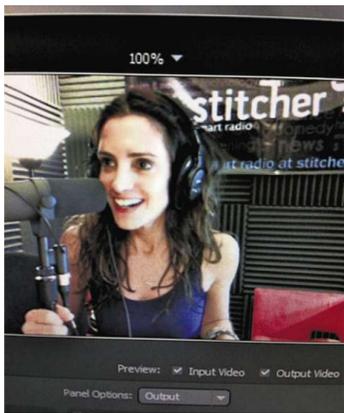
"My 11-year-old and 9-year-old ... came back asking all sorts of questions: 'What is a lesbian? What is sex? What is an orgasm?' Those type of questions. I think we did our best to deflect the answers for a more appropriate time."

Once, a man Emily Morse dated told her that her job made him nervous.

He got over it. "If someone fixes me up, I don't want them to lead with 'She has a sex talk show.' I'd rather explain it, but it happens all the time," Morse says.

"I was at a party a few months ago. I was talking to this guy. He was cute. His friend comes up and says, 'Do you know who you're talking to? This is Sex with Emily!'"

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Morse also hosts "Sex with Emily," a webcast that airs programs four days a week.

LOOK WHO'S TALKING ABOUT SEX

Of course Emily Morse isn't the first person to talk about sex publicly. Take a look at some of her predecessors.

1947: Alfred Kinsey founds the Institute for Sex Research (often called the Kinsey Institute) at Indiana University.

1966: Sex researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson publish the book, "Human Sexual Response" Ishi Press, (\$29.95).

1976: Shere Hite publishes "The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality" Seven Stories Press, (\$17.95).



1980: Dr. Ruth Westheimer begins a talk show on WYNY-FM in New York.



1984: Drew Pinsky begins hosting the radio call-in show "Loveline" on KROQ-FM in Los Angeles. He will later host "Sex Rehab with Dr. Drew" on VH1.

1993: "NYPD Blue," a drama about New York cops, debuts on ABC-TV. It becomes famous, in part, for its steamy sex scenes and showing of bare backsides.



1998: News of the sex scandal involving President Bill Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky hits the press.



1998: "Sex and the City" premieres on HBO. Viewers continue watching the dating and sex adventures of Carrie Bradshaw and her three girlfriends until the show ends in 2004.



2007: Patti Stanger's "Millionaire Matchmaker" debuts on Bravo. Her mantra: No sex until monogamy.

2011: Claire and Phil Dunphy's kids walk in on them having sex on ABC's "Modern Family." Phil's explanation for sex: "It's like you're shaking hands, but you're not using your hands. At all."

— GEORGEA KOVANIS