

# We need to figure out how to have sex in space for human survival and well-being

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Houston, we have a problem! Love and sex need to happen in space if we hope to travel long distances and become an interplanetary species, but space organizations are not ready.

National agencies and [private space companies](#)—such as [NASA](#) and [SpaceX](#)—aim to colonize Mars and send humans into [space](#) for long-

term missions, but they have yet to address the [intimate and sexual needs of astronauts or future space inhabitants](#).

This situation is untenable and needs to change if we hope to settle new worlds and continue our expansion in the cosmos—we'll need to learn how to safely reproduce and build pleasurable intimate lives in space. To succeed, however, we also need space organizations to adopt a new perspective on space exploration: one that considers humans as whole beings with needs and desires.

As researchers exploring the psychology of human sexuality and studying the psychosocial aspects of human factors in space, we propose that it is [high time](#) for space programs to embrace a new discipline: *space sexology*, the comprehensive scientific study of extraterrestrial intimacy and sexuality.

## **The final, intimate frontier**

Love and sex are central to human life. Despite this, national and private space organizations are moving forward with long-term missions to the [International Space Station \(ISS\), the moon and Mars](#) without any concrete research and plans to address human eroticism in space. It's one thing to [land rovers on another planet](#) or [launch billionaires into orbit](#)—it's another to send humans to live in space for extended periods of time.

In practice, rocket science may take us to outer space, but it will be human relations that determine if we survive and thrive as a spacefaring civilization. In that regard, we argue that limiting intimacy in space could jeopardize the mental and sexual health of astronauts, along with crew performance and mission success. On the other hand, enabling space eroticism could help humans adapt to spacelife and enhance the well-being of future space inhabitants.

After all, space remains a hostile environment, and life aboard spacecrafts, stations or settlements poses significant challenges for human intimacy. These include [radiation exposure, gravitational changes, social isolation and the stress of living in remote, confined habitats](#). In the near future, life in space may also limit access to intimate partners, restrict privacy and augment tensions between crew members in hazardous conditions [where co-operation is essential](#).

To date, however, space programs have almost completely omitted the subject of sex in space. The few studies that relate to this topic mostly focus on the impacts of radiation and micro- or hyper-gravity on [animal reproduction \(rodents, amphibians and insects\)](#).

## **Pleasure and taboo**

But human sexuality is about more than just reproduction. It includes complex psychological, emotional and relational dynamics. Love and sex are also pursued for fun and pleasure. As such, [space exploration](#) requires the courage to address the intimate needs of humans honestly and holistically.

Abstinence is not a viable option. On the contrary, facilitating masturbation or partnered sex could actually help astronauts [relax, sleep and alleviate pain](#). It could also help them [build and maintain romantic or sexual relationships](#) and adapt to spacelife.

Importantly, addressing the sexological issues of human life in space could also help combat sexism, discrimination and sexual violence or harassment, which are unfortunately still pervasive in science and the military—two pillars of space programs.

Due to [taboos and conservative sexual views](#), some organizations may choose to ignore the realities of space intimacy and sexuality. They may

also think that this is a non-issue or that there are more [pressing matters to attend to](#). But this attitude lacks foresight, since producing quality science takes time and resources, and sexual health—including pleasure—is increasingly [recognized as a human right](#).

More and more, this means that space agencies and private companies may be held accountable for the sexual and reproductive well-being of those that they take into space.

Thus, space organizations who submit to their conservative funders will likely pay the price of their inaction in a very public and media-fueled way when disaster strikes. The hammer may fall particularly hard on the organizations who have not even tried addressing human eroticism in space, or when the world learns that they knowingly failed to conduct the proper research and [take the necessary precautions that scientists have been requesting for more than 30 years](#).

## **Intimacy beyond Earth**

To move forward, space organizations must stop avoiding sexual topics and fully recognize the importance of love, sex and intimate relationships in human life.

Accordingly, we encourage them to develop space sexology as a scientific field and research program: one that not only aims to study sex in space, but also design systems, habitats and training programs that allow intimacy to take place beyond our home planet, Earth.

We further propose that, given its expertise and the sociopolitical climate of Canada, the [Canadian Space Agency](#) is ideally positioned to become a world leader in space sexology. We have what it takes to pave the way for an ethical and pleasurable space journey, as we continue [to boldly go where no one has gone before](#).

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