



The
Handi
Book of

Love,
Lust &
Disability

Contents:

| | | |
|------------|--|--------|
| | Introduction | 4–5 |
| Chapter 1 | Coming Out (as Disabled) | 6–19 |
| Chapter 2 | Body Image | 20–39 |
| Chapter 3 | Society’s Perceptions | 40–57 |
| Chapter 4 | Pleasure & Pain | 58–79 |
| Chapter 5 | Best (Disabled) Sex Experience | 80–93 |
| Chapter 6 | Worst (Disabled) Sex Experience | 94–109 |
| | Our Contributors | |
| Chapter 7 | Masturbation | |
| Chapter 8 | Grief, Loss & Sexuality | |
| Chapter 9 | Sex Work | |
| Chapter 10 | Sexual Ableism | |
| Chapter 11 | Sexiest Thing About Your Disability | |
| Chapter 12 | Partner’s Point of View | |
| Chapter 13 | Parting Words | |
| | Conclusion | |
| | Acknowledgements | |
| | Handi | |
| | Handi Team | |
| | Further Reading` | |

Hello. Welcome to the Handi Book of Love, Lust & Disability.

When we started thinking about putting together a book on sex, love and disability, we knew that we wanted to do something different. We could have compiled a book of facts and figures, outlining the difficulties disabled people face accessing their sexuality but, as our team got to work, we began to realize that the conversations we were having went so much deeper. Very quickly, we were having big, juicy conversations about things like grief, loss, kink, pain, shame, pride, good sex, bad sex, empowerment, desire, and how disability is inextricably linked to all of that.

We want this book to be a conversation starter for people outside the disabled community to better understand what it is to love, lust and live inside a disabled body.

We want this book to be something that helps partners or friends to understand a little more of what their disabled loved ones live with.

But - most importantly - we want this book to be a place where disabled people can come to see themselves represented honestly.

The stories you'll read here are raw and real; they welcome you into a part of the disabled experience you may never have seen before, as every person's perspective is so unique. These stories lay bare what it means to be disabled and sexual, in a world where media representations of disabled people as complex, layered, loving and beautiful are few and far between. Can disabled people still be sexy? Fulfilled? Desirable? Worthy of love and commitment? HELL YES!... but this book will also allow people to explore the nuances of how disability plays a part in body image, identity, relationships and so much more.

To pull this together, we asked 50 people from around the world to share their stories. We cast a wide net, and attempted to show as broad a range of backgrounds, disabilities (visible and invisible), experiences, geographies, sexualities, ages, gender expressions and ethnicities as we could. But we are very aware that there is more work to do here, and we can always do better. We don't intend for this to be our last book however, so if you feel that you are not represented in these pages, please tell us your experiences here; thatshandi.co/tellyourstory. We'd love to hear them, and we really hope you are still able to take something from this volume regardless.

Finally, while you read this, please remember that all our contributors have given us access to their most vulnerable thoughts, feelings and encounters, and so a lot of what you will read is deeply personal. For many, this was the first time they had been asked to discuss these incredibly personal moments with anyone, and so we are grateful and humbled by their bravery and trust.

With this in mind, we ask you to be open.

We ask you to be gentle.

We ask you to be kind.

We created this book to show how powerful, sexy and brilliant we are because of our differences, in all our perfect 'imperfectness', so please use this as a lens, and cast no judgement.

More than anything, we really hope you enjoy it.

Love Team Handi xx



Pleasure & Pain

What did we ask?

- What do pleasure & pain mean to you, and how do they co-exist in your sex lives?
- Can you have pleasure without pain?
- How does your pain manifest?
- How does your pain impact your sex life?

What did we find?

As a lot of people we spoke to live with disability-related pain on a daily basis, there is a drive to adapt to accommodate this pain and work around it, so that sexual pleasure - in some form - is still possible. Even if this isn't 'full sex'.

A number of people also told us that they choose to create their own pain, in the form of BDSM* or kink, to supersede the pain from their disability, or from sexual trauma. This was often driven from a desire for control, and a need to reclaim their bodies and their sensations.

Another consistent theme is how vital sexual pleasure and, in particular, orgasm is, in temporarily holding off disability-related pain, or reminding people of a life without pain. For us, this reinforced the positive benefits of sexual relief and proved it truly is, as the World Health Organisation states, a necessary human right.

***BDSM** - Bondage, Domination, Sadism and Masochism, during or as part of sexual practice

Andrew

He/Him/His,
Cerebral Palsy,
Queer, Toronto,
Canada

I struggle with these two worlds of pleasure and pain when it comes to sex as a disabled person. If I want to have the pleasure that comes from sex, I have to be willing to put up with the pain that comes with it too, and that can be a shit decision to have to make. There was even a period of time where I didn't want to engage in sex with other people, because the pain was so overwhelming.

I felt like I was always having to weigh things up against pain; like, I can't do this / experience this / go there - all because of pain. It was like I was letting pain 'win' by choosing not to experience parts of my life because of it.

Eventually I decided to give sex another go, and I'm so glad I did.

The sensation of pleasure from sex comes so rarely for me that, when it does, I never want it to end. It helps take the pain away from my disabled body for a split second, and in that moment I feel free.

Kelly

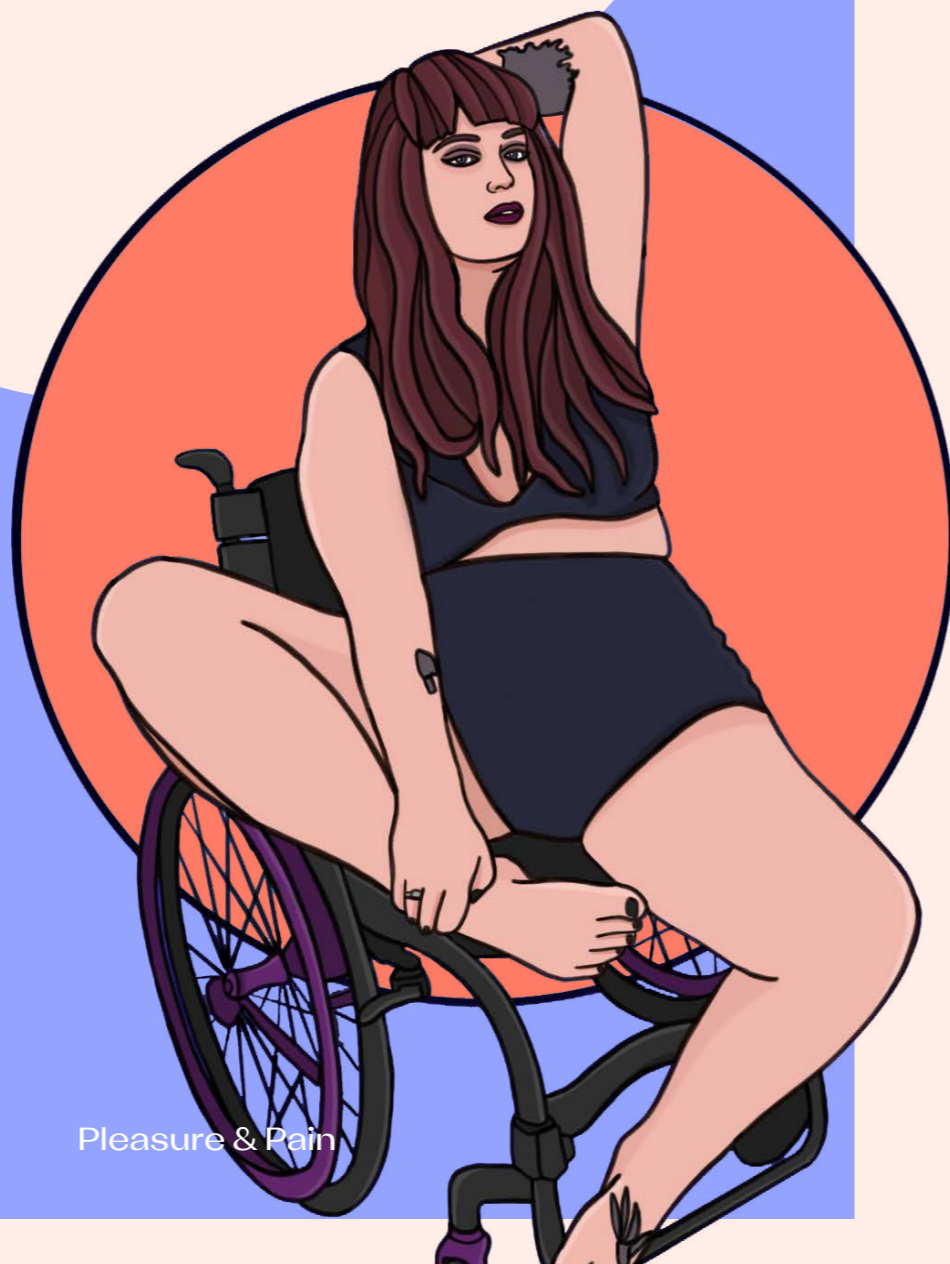
She/Her/Hers,
Spinal Muscular
Atrophy,
Pansexual,
Birmingham, UK

I am lucky that my particular disability doesn't cause me much pain yet, but it will likely cause me a lot of pain in the future, as a symptom of my disability is scoliosis and, in older age, it can lead to arthritis of the spine.

I often find that not being able to move myself around has caused me pain as, when I've been in the moment, and partners have lifted me into certain positions, I have twisted my arms, landed on my legs strangely or put too much effort/strain through my limbs trying to support myself.

Currently I can have pleasure without pain, but when I am experiencing disability-related pain during sex, I will distract from the pain by adding a pain element elsewhere that is not disability-related (biting, spanking etc). This helps me to keep 'in the moment'.

“When I come, my body feels like a thousand knives were pulled out at once, the barbed wire around my chest broken loose, the razor-sharp noose around my sciatic nerve let go, and the weight of living in a broken body gets lifted from me.”



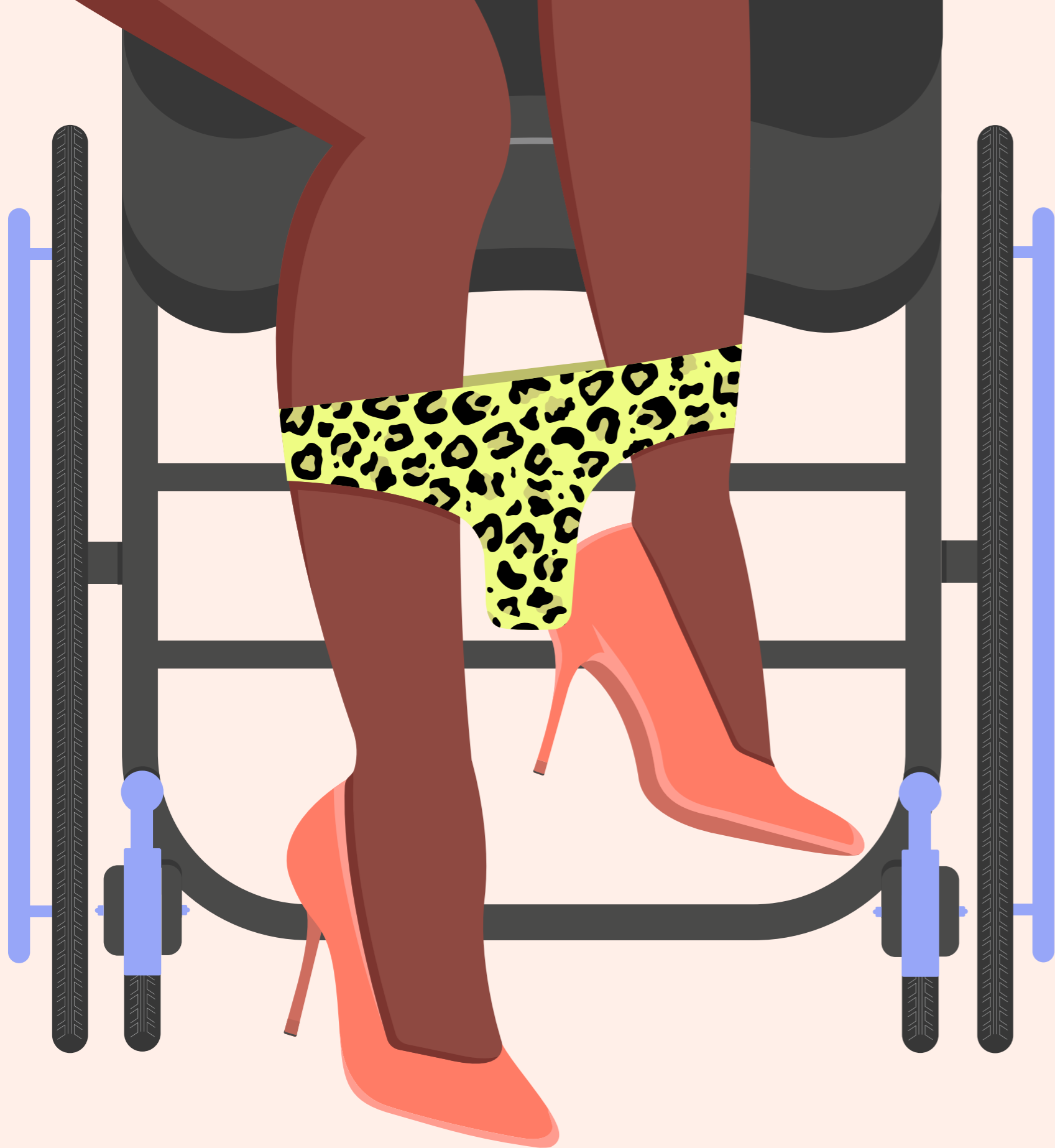
Katy

She/Her/Hers,
hEDS, Queer,
Worcestershire, UK

Chronic illness causes you to barter for pleasure with pain in virtually all areas of life. Opening a bottle of wine? That will cost two finger pains. Pouring a glass? One wrist dislocation please. I haven't even drunk the damn wine and I'm too fucked up to fuck myself!

But the thing about sexual pleasure, is that not only is it worth the pain, it can truly transcend it. Orgasms are great if you're able-bodied or not, obviously, but an orgasm not only gives me an incredible sensation, it takes away all the bad sensations. When I come, my body feels like a thousand knives were pulled out at once, the barbed wire around my chest broken loose, the razor-sharp noose around my sciatic nerve let go, and the weight of living in a broken body gets lifted from me. And not for the fleeting moments of orgasm but for, like, a while.

They work better than liquid morphine. And none of my able-bodied friends get to try that either.



Sarah.S

She/Her/They/Them,
Myalgic encephalomyelitis
(ME), Chronic Fatigue
Syndrome (CFS),
Fibromyalgia Pansexual,
Genderqueer,
Sydney, Australia

Pleasure and pain coexist in my life. Because of the way my body works, nerve signals quite often get crossed and misinterpreted by my brain. A feather touch can cause agony and a solid whack can feel like Heaven. Other times, the pressure of clothing is simply too much!

My pain is always present and often body-wide, though the level varies from minute to minute sometimes, so it can be hard to get in the mood when it feels like you're Satan's personal pinata.

For several years, my sex life basically didn't exist, because of the limitations of my body (nothing says 'fuck me harder' like dislocating a hip mid-act!), but exploring self-pleasure and kink changed the game for me.

Through exploration of things like sensation and impact play, I was able to work out how to make the often-confusing signals from my body work for me, and take control of pain in a way I hadn't been able to before. It was liberating. I was able to find new ways to achieve intimacy, even if penetration wasn't always the end goal, and it honestly changed my world.

Jodie

She/Her/Hers,
Chronic Pain/
illness, Brisbane,
Australia

Pleasure is an important part of my life and one that I have fought for, after medical procedures meant that my pleasure and my sex life changed. It was one area of my life that I was determined my health challenges were not going to take away from me; change is ok, but removing it is not.

Pain is exhausting. It's been my constant companion these last 20 years. There are bad days when I can't function, but I have learnt to be gentle on myself in those moments, because rest is important and there is always a new day. If I rest, then I will have the energy to keep moving forward (even if it's just baby steps) the next day.

In terms of my sex life, fatigue from pain probably has the biggest impact on my sex life. My sex life isn't as energetic as it once was, and there are times when it means sex is off the cards entirely, and other times when it means sex is in a supported position.



