

# Laurie Betito: From talk show to private practice



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“Regular sexual activity does everything from improve memory to reduce cholesterol levels, increase circulation and raise energy levels,” Laurie Betito says in her new book.

Pierre Obendrauf / The Gazette

MONTREAL — Laurie Betito, a clinical psychologist with a specialty in sex therapy, has been a practising psychotherapist for more than 25 years. As host of the radio talk show *Passion*, which deals with sex and relationships, she has answered thousands of questions over the past 15 years. The show airs weeknights on CJAD 800.

Betito, 50, was born in Morocco and came to Montreal at age 31/2. The eldest of four children, she grew up in Côte-des-Neiges and Côte-St-Luc; a professor at Marianopolis, Jean Côté, inspired her to want to study psychology.

After completing a bachelor of arts in psychology from McGill, she entered the special one-year bachelor of social work program at McGill; during a placement she met Pierre Assalian, director of the human sexuality clinic at the Montreal General Hospital. “I said ‘I want to be you,’ ” she recalled.

As a social worker, Betito joined Jewish Family Services (now a part of the Ometz social service agency) and worked in youth protection services, on cases of sexual abuse and child pornography.

Two years later, she returned to school to do graduate work and study sexuality. As a student in the master of social work program at McGill, she began to train with Assalian.

During that time, a psychology professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal named Ellen Moss invited Betito to teach a class on sexual abuse. Moss urged Betito to continue her graduate work at UQAM.

Moss’s research interest is the effect of parent-child attachment relationships on children; Betito’s PhD dissertation was on female survivors of incest and their attachment relationships in adulthood: She found that women who had good relationships with their mothers fared better than those who did not.

She also studied at the University of California at Los Angeles with Gail Wyatt, whose research examines women's consensual and abusive sexual relationships.

In addition to her private practice – Betito has offices in Montreal and on the West Island – and radio work, she teaches and does public speaking engagements: She lectures medical and dental students, has addressed medical professionals at hospital grand rounds, and speaks at conferences and at the university and CEGEP level.

She is also president of the Sexual Health Network of Quebec, which advocates for sex education in schools.