SOFTWARE & TECH

Sex Surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene

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Introduction

Sex surrogacy remains one of the most misunderstood and underdiscussed corners of human intimacy work. For decades, practitioners have quietly helped individuals overcome deep-seated blocks around physical connection—often with life-changing results. No name is more synonymous with this practice than **Sex Surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene**. Her groundbreaking work, most famously chronicled in the film *The Sessions*, brought the role of the surrogate partner into the public eye and sparked conversations about sexuality, disability, and healing that continue to evolve today. This article explores her life, philosophy, methods, and enduring legacy, offering an in-depth look at a woman who dedicated her career to the belief that every person deserves to experience intimacy.

Who Is Cheryl Cohen Greene? A Life Dedicated to Human Connection

Cheryl Cohen Greene was born in the mid-20th century and grew up in a world that rarely discussed sexuality openly. After raising a family and working in various fields, she discovered the field of sex therapy and surrogacy in the 1970s. Training under pioneering sexologists such as Masters and Johnson, she learned the delicate art of helping clients navigate physical and emotional barriers. Her early work focused on couples and individuals struggling with performance anxiety, trauma, or lack of experience. Over time, she developed a unique, holistic approach that prioritized emotional safety, communication, and incremental trust-building.

Unlike a traditional sex therapist who works only through talk, a surrogate partner like Cohen Greene works directly with clients in a safe, structured setting to practice physical intimacy. This often includes exercises in touch, communication, and gradual exposure to sensual and sexual situations. Her goal was never pleasure for its own sake but rather the empowerment of the client to connect authentically with another person.

The Role of a Sex Surrogate: What It Is and Isn't

To understand Cheryl Cohen Greene's significance, it is essential to understand the profession she championed. A sex surrogate, sometimes called a surrogate partner, is a trained professional who works under the supervision of a licensed therapist. The surrogate helps clients—often those with physical disabilities, social anxiety, past sexual trauma, or intimacy deficits—practice the skills of touch and connection. This is not the same as a sex worker, because the surrogate does not perform for a client's gratification. Instead, the sessions are therapeutic, goal-oriented, and always guided by a treatment plan developed with the referring therapist.

Cohen Greene defines the surrogate's role as an "educator, coach, and companion" who models healthy intimacy. The work progresses through stages: from conversation and hand-holding to exploring the sensations of skin contact, and eventually to sexual touch if appropriate. Every step is carefully reviewed for the client's emotional readiness. The relationship is temporary and terminates once the client is able to transfer these skills to a romantic partner in their own life.

Cheryl Cohen Greene's Approach: Intimacy as a Learned Skill

What set **Sex Surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene**apart was her patient, non-judgmental ethos. She believed that intimacy was like any other skill—it could be taught, practiced, and improved. Her sessions were not about achieving orgasm but about building awareness and comfort. For clients with physical disabilities, such as polio or spinal cord injury, she taught them how to give and receive pleasure using the capacities they did have. For those with severe anxiety, she used slowing-down techniques, guided breathing, and "sensate focus" exercises that encourage partners to simply notice sensations without performance pressure.

In her memoir, *An Intimate Life: Sex, Love, and My Journey as a Surrogate Partner*, Cohen Greene recounts how she tailored each session to the individual. She often began with pillow talk—sitting beside a client, holding hands, and asking them to describe what they liked in a partner. This verbal intimacy helped clients overcome shame and articulate their needs. She emphasized the importance of consent at every stage, even for the smallest touch, and created an atmosphere where clients could laugh, cry, or stop without judgment. Her work was a blend of educational modeling, emotional support, and compassionate touch.

Notable Clients and Cultural Impact: The Story Behind "The Sessions"

Cheryl Cohen Greene may have remained an obscure figure if not for one remarkable client: Mark O'Brien, a poet and journalist who had been paralyzed from the neck down since childhood due to polio. O'Brien spent most of his life in an iron lung and longed to experience intimacy before he died. He sought the help of a therapist who referred him to Cohen Greene. Their work together was unusual because O'Brien had no sensation below the neck, so the sessions focused on the sensations of the face, mouth, and chest. She taught him how to receive touch and how to give it verbally.

The story became the basis of the 2012 film *The Sessions*, starring Helen Hunt as Cohen Greene and John Hawkes as O'Brien. Hunt won critical acclaim for her portrayal, and the film introduced millions to the concept of sex surrogacy. It also forced a public reckoning: is it ethical to provide sexual touch to a disabled person who cannot otherwise access it? Cohen Greene's answer was always yes. She argued that every human being, regardless of ability, has a right to explore their sexuality. The film humanized her work and showed the world a woman of deep empathy and professionalism.

Contributions to the Field: Books, Training, and Advocacy

Beyond her practice, Cheryl Cohen Greene worked tirelessly to professionalize sex surrogacy. She co-founded the first training programs for surrogate partners and advocated for state licensing and ethical standards. Her 2012 memoir, *An Intimate Life*, remains a definitive text on the subject, detailing her personal journey, her clinical methods, and the philosophical underpinnings of her work. She also wrote extensively about the importance of surrogacy in treating sexual shame, especially in sexually conservative cultures.

In addition to writing, she lectured at universities and conferences, trying to destigmatize the profession. She was a frequent commentator on disability and sexuality, arguing that society often infantilizes people with physical limitations. Through her advocacy, she helped found the **International Association of Surrogate Partners (IASP)**, an organization that sets training guidelines and ethical standards for practitioners around the world. Her influence can be seen in the growing acceptance of surrogate therapy as an adjunct to traditional sex therapy.

Ethical Considerations and Criticisms

No discussion of **Sex Surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene**would be complete without acknowledging the ethical debates surrounding her work. Critics have long raised concerns about the potential for exploitation, unclear

boundaries, and the difficulty of distinguishing surrogacy from prostitution. Cohen Greene addressed these head-on by insisting that surrogacy is a form of therapy that must be practiced under the guidance of a licensed therapist. She emphasized that surrogates do not perform for clients' gratification; they teach clients to have reciprocal, respectful intimate experiences.

She also faced criticism from some religious and conservative groups who view all paid sexual touch as immoral. In response, Cohen Greene argued that sexuality is a basic human need and that denying it to people who are isolated or disabled is a form of oppression. Her stance was rooted in the ethics of care and human dignity. She also noted that her clients often reported profound emotional healing, reduced depression, and greater confidence that helped them form lasting relationships. For her, the proof was in the outcomes.

Legacy and Continuing Influence

Cheryl Cohen Greene passed away in 2021, but her legacy endures. She transformed the way therapists, disability advocates, and the general public think about sexual healing. Her work opened doors for thousands of people who had been marginalized—those with spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, severe anxiety, or a history of sexual abuse. Today, the field of surrogate partner therapy continues to grow, with more practitioners being trained each year, partly because of the foundation she laid.

She also helped shift the conversation from simply "fixing" a sexual problem to nurturing emotional connection as the core of intimacy. Her approach integrated mindfulness, communication, and respect for the client's pace. Many modern sex therapists incorporate elements of her method, even if they do not call themselves surrogates. In a world increasingly aware of the need for trauma-informed, inclusive care, her work feels more relevant than ever.

Conclusion

Sex Surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greenewas more than a practitioner; she was a pioneer who dared to treat intimacy as a fundamental human right. Through her work with clients like Mark O'Brien and her tireless advocacy, she revealed the healing power of consensual, compassionate touch. Her methods—patient, ethical, and profoundly human—have left an indelible mark on the fields of sex therapy and disability rights. For anyone seeking to understand the intersection of sexuality, vulnerability, and healing, her story offers a masterclass in courage and empathy. Her life's message remains timeless: that no body, no story, no person is beyond the reach of meaningful connection.

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