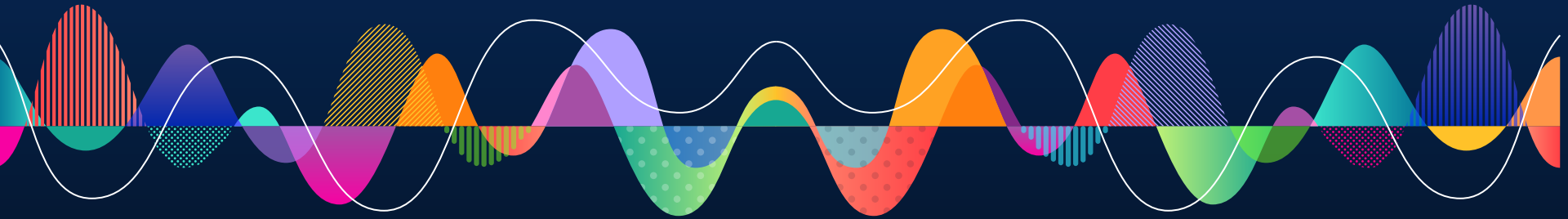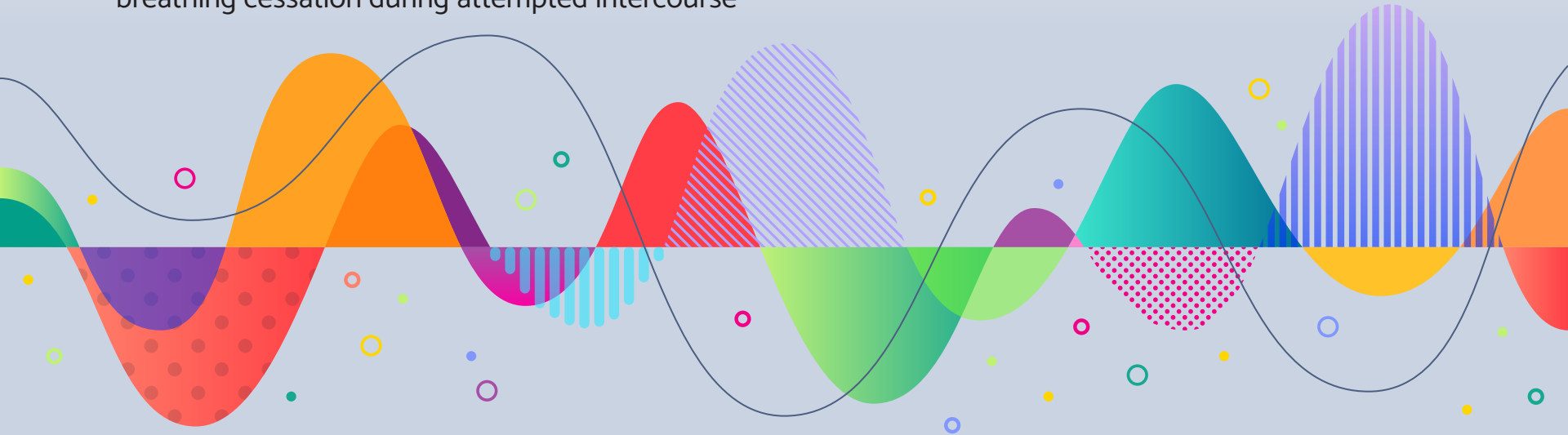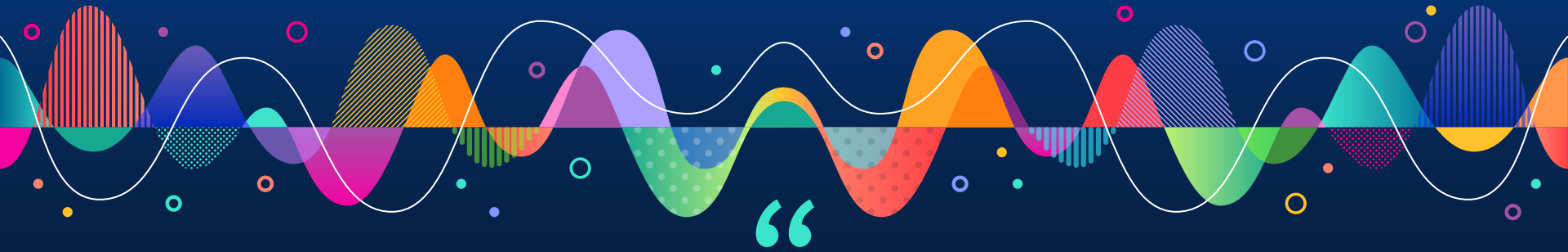# Why Talk About Pain During Sex?

Sexual pain can be distressing and traumatizing on its own. Knowing you experience pain during sex can make it challenging or scary to navigate hookups and dating. Learning to discuss one's own and other people's pain during sex helps survivors heal and helps us live in a safer sexual world.
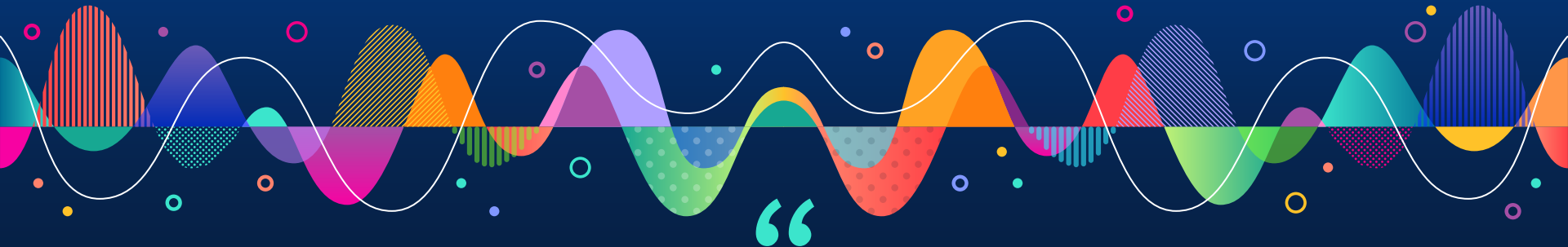
Vaginismus

Vaginismus is a condition involving a muscle spasm in the pelvic floor muscles. It can make it painful, difficult, or impossible to have sexual intercourse, to undergo a gynecological exam, and to insert a tampon. Symptoms: painful intercourse (dyspareunia), with tightness and pain that may be burning or stinging, penetration being difficult or impossible, long-term sexual pain with or without a known cause, pain during tampon insertion, pain during a gynecological examination, generalized muscle spasm or breathing cessation during attempted intercourse
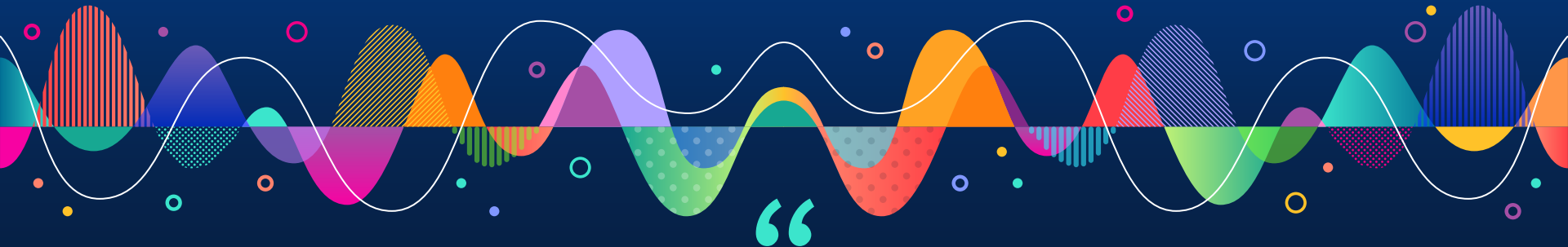
Primary Vaginismus: a lifetime condition in which the pain has always been present. It will be difficult to use a tampon and to undergo a gynecological exam. It is often experienced during one's first attempt at penetration into the vagina; the person doing the penetrating may describe the sensation as "hitting a wall" at the vaginal opening

Secondary Vaginismus: This develops after one has already experienced normal sexual function. It has not always been present. It can occur at any stage of life, and it may not have happened before. It usually stems from a specific event, such as an infection, menopause, a traumatic event, development of a medical condition, relationship issues, surgery, or childbirth. Even after any underlying medical condition is corrected, pain can continue if the body has become conditioned to respond in this way.

Global vaginismus: Vaginismus is always present, and any object will trigger it.

Situational Vaginismus: This occurs only in certain situations. It may happen during sex but not during gynecological exams or tampon insertion.

Causes

1. Emotional triggers: fear (of pregnancy, an unwanted sexual experience, etc), sexual trauma, relationship problems, childhood experiences including the portrayal of sex as painful
2. Physical triggers: yeast or urinary tract infection, health conditions, childbirth, menopause, pelvic surgery, not enough foreplay, not enough vaginal lubrication, medication side effects

People with vaginas may also experience vaginal pain due to:

- some intersex people are unable to have penetrative sex due to the way their genitals are set up or surgeries they have had
- an infection – thrush or a sexually transmitted infection (STI), such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea or genital herpes

- menopause – changing hormone levels can make your vagina dry
- lack of sexual arousal
- genital irritation or allergy caused by spermicides, latex condoms or products such as soap and shampoo

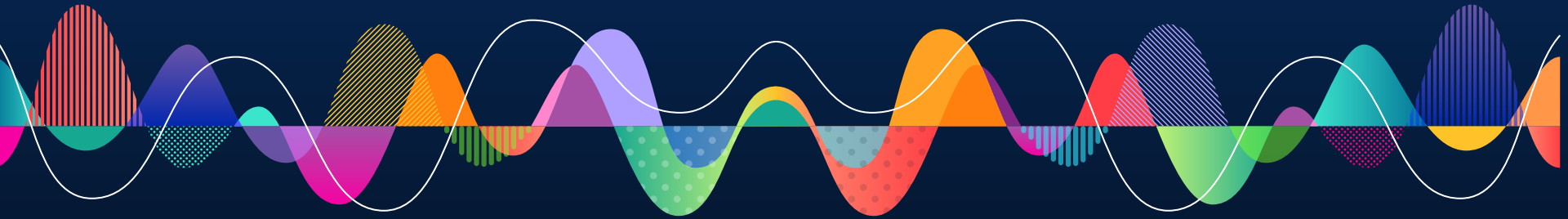# People with vaginas may also experience pelvic pain due to:

- pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Endometriosis

- fibroids growing near your vagina or cervix
- irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- constipation

People with penises may experience painful sex due to:

- infections like thrush, which can cause soreness and itching, and some STIs, such as herpes
- a tight foreskin, which can make penetration painful, as the foreskin is pushed back
- small tears in the foreskin that can't be seen but cause soreness and a sharp, stinging pain around the tear
- inflammation of the prostate gland (prostatitis)
- testicle pain and swelling can sometimes be caused by getting sexually aroused but not ejaculating (coming); it can also be a sign of an infection, such as chlamydia

Pain during anal sex

86% of people who have had anal sex report that it has been painful. 36% have enjoyed this pain. 64% of people who have anally penetrated a partner have been asked to stop because it was too painful.

Pain during anal sex may result from

Anus not producing lubrication for sex, sphincter muscles being tight, health issues such as hemorrhoids making it painful.