

# HEALING

## From Loss & Abuse

LOVING SOLUTIONS TO LIVE YOUR LIFE  
TO THE FULLEST FOR VICTIMS OF  
GRIEF, TRAUMA, ASSAULT &  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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## Contents

Introduction

Goals of this E-Book

What is Healing?

Note From The Author, Dr. Ava Cadell

Inspirational Celebrity Stories

If you are a coach: Importance of Referrals & Disclaimers

CHAPTER 1 - Healing from Loss

CHAPTER 2 - Healing From Pain

CHAPTER 3 - Healing From Disease or Disability

CHAPTER 4 - Healing from Accidents

CHAPTER 5 - Healing From Sexual Dysfunction

CHAPTER 6 - Healing From Toxic Relationships

CHAPTER 7 - Healing From Addictions

CHAPTER 8 - Healing From Sexual Abuse

Resources: Books & Articles

Resources: Websites / Hotlines Further Reading & Resources

## Introduction

Welcome to Healing From Loss & Abuse: Loving Solutions to Live Your Life to the Fullest for Victims of Grief, Trauma, Assault & Sexual Harassment. This e-book was created by me, Dr. Ava Cadell, founder of Loveology University, clinical sexologist and AASECT certified sex counselor. I hope it will help you understand the impact and effects of loss and suffering, and give you some necessary tools to facilitate healing, whether you're helping a client or progressing on your own journey. In this e-book, and like all of Loveology University's content, we've done our very best to ensure the information is complete and accurate. However, this information is not meant to be a substitute for therapy or consulting with your physician. The following pages have been compiled and designed to help you learn about the different kinds of grief, trauma, assault and sexual harassment, and what healing methods are available and effective. This comprehensive course deals with Loss, Pain, Disease, Disability, Accidents, Sexual Dysfunction, Toxic Relationships, Addiction and Sexual Abuse. There are suggested exercises for healing in each chapter, but I want to be clear that any of the exercises in the book can be useful for any type of healing. For example, the "Emotional Barometer" exercise in the Healing From Addiction chapter can be very useful for sexual abuse survivors, and likewise many of the exercises in the Healing from Sexual Abuse chapter can be helpful for loss or pain.

## Goals of this E-Book

To share personal, positive information on how to heal from the loss of a loved one, pain, disease, accidents, addictions and disabilities in order to enjoy healthy intimate relationships.

To share personal, positive information on how to heal from sexual harassment, trauma or abuse.

To share exercises and tools that have enabled my clients to enjoy love, relationships and intimacy again.

To share tools that have enabled my clients to experience self-love, self-compassion and intimate relationships after difficult circumstances.

To get positive results for yourself and clients.

This e-book is not a substitute for grief therapy, mental health therapy or medical advice, so I urge you to seek professional help and guidance if you are recovering from emotional or physical trauma. If you are working with a client who is recovering from trauma, you must refer them to a mental health specialist.

## What is Healing?

For the purposes of this e-book, I define healing as a positive surrendering to one's limitations in order to love yourself unconditionally and enjoy healthy intimate relationships. When you accept your limitations or see them through different eyes, you can enable yourself to experience pleasure instead of pain and let love in again. Healing is less about fixing yourself than it is a practice of letting go and when you experience healing, it feels deeply nurturing.

Healing doesn't mean that we completely overcome our painful physical, mental and emotional obstacles (though that is possible in some cases), but that we replace negative thoughts with positive ones, and move forward past the place of 'victim' where we use our suffering to stay trapped and unhappy.

Healing is not about punishing ourselves; it's about loving ourselves unconditionally. And forgiving ourselves as well as others who have caused us pain.

## Note From The Author, Dr. Ava Cadell

Whether you have lost a loved one, endure chronic pain and suffering or have been a victim of abuse, you have the power to overcome your own painful experiences so that you can enjoy self-love and intimate relationships again. I want to begin with a personal note about my own history, and let you know that everyone has suffered from some kind of pain, whether it's mental, physical or emotional, so you are not alone.

I personally suffer from chronic physical pain identified as Trigeminal Neuralgia. It manifests in frequent sharp pain in the right side of my face, which can be debilitating. My Trigeminal Neuralgia began shortly after a traumatic experience where I found my husband almost bleeding to death from a home invasion robbery, leaving him with knife wounds from ear to ear that barely missed the carotid arteries in his neck. He was also stabbed in the chest, thankfully missing his heart. That was 20 years ago, and since then my husband has passed away from cancer, so I'm still healing from the loss of my soul mate as well as my chronic pain. I am also a rape survivor and was sold into sex trafficking as a teenager, which put me on a life-long path of recovery. It's victim of harassment or assault because I believe that every human being deserves a safe and healthy space to enjoy love, peace and happiness, and that includes the ability for healthy intimate relationships. What's important is that we find a way to transform that pain to self-love and self-compassion instead of self-punishment so that we can reconnect with ourselves and experience healthy intimacy with others.

## Inspirational Celebrity Stories

Learning about famous people who have overcome abuse and adversity can be a cathartic experience that makes you feel less isolated.

Oprah Winfrey has spoken openly about the sexual abuse that she suffered as a child.

Author Maya Angelou wrote her 1969 classic *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* about her personal history that includes childhood rape.

Charlize Theron grew up with an abusive father and her mother shot him in self-defense after he came home drunk.

Rihanna was the victim of domestic abuse at the hand of her high-profile boyfriend Chris Brown.

Drew Barrymore was neglected by her father and grew up abusing drugs and alcohol.

Tyler Perry suffered physical abuse by his father and sexual abuse from several adults during his childhood.

Ozzy Osbourn was sexually molested as a child and has battled drug and alcohol addiction for much of his adult life.

Ludwig Van Beethoven lost his hearing from the physical abuse he endured from his father.

Eve Ensler, the creator of *The Vagina Monologues* was a victim of incest.

When famous people reveal their past abuse, it helps others to seek help and to know that they're not alone.

## The Importance of Referrals & Disclaimers

Dealing with the loss of a loved one, childhood abuse, chronic pain, disease, tragic accidents or other traumatic events may result in depression, anxiety and other unhealthy behavior that must be treated by a medical or mental health professional.

Sexual trauma can also result in many forms of self-destructive behavior that require mental health treatment from a medical professional, who can help victims to navigate their past trauma through psychotherapy or other medical means. Consequently, it can be a long-term process to help resolve self-destructive habits and heal hurt relationships.

The information in this book is not meant to supplement medical mental health therapy, not replace it.

This book does not qualify you to diagnose or treat people.

If you are a coach, you can guide your clients to work on their future goals, but under no circumstances are you to mislead them with regards to your qualifications or skills to help them.

By having prospective clients sign a disclaimer form, you are confirming their knowledge of this fact, as well as protecting yourself against any claims that you misrepresented yourself.

Always have resources and referrals for your clients available, some of which can be found at the end of this book.

Here's an example of a disclaimer form which you should request your clients to sign prior to working with them.

I understand that the information I receive from a Love Coach is not a substitute for medical advice, medical treatments, mental health therapy or counseling.

Put your name \_\_\_\_\_ is not a medical doctor nor does she/he have a therapist license.

This visit should NOT be a substitute for a medical or psychological consultation with a qualified health professional.

If you have any concerns, please consult your physician or therapist.

In no event shall \_\_\_\_\_ be liable for any compensatory, special, incidental, consequential, punitive, direct or indirect damages, or any other damages of any kind, whether in an action in contract or tort, or otherwise, arising out of or in any way connected with your Love Coaching session.

Please sign and date below that you have read and understand the above conditions and terms.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 1 - Healing from Loss

“The root of suffering is attachment.” – Buddha The reason loss is so painful is because of the attachment we bring to it. Whether you’re dealing with the death of a loved one, rejection from a friend or the loss of something material, the grief you experience is from being suddenly cut off from the feel-good emotions that person or possession brought to your life. The Buddhist solution to grief, then, is mindfulness. Becoming aware of your own mind-body connection and ‘surrendering’ to the present moment takes us out of our longing for the past or future, and allows us to just “be,” which has a calming effect that can alleviate emotional pain. “The root of suffering is attachment” is one of the Buddha’s most renowned quotes. One of the Buddhist definitions for love is compassion, so it's no wonder that the key to self-love is self-compassion.

### Healing from Loss of Family, Friend or Partner

It’s important to understand that we all grieve differently, and grief does not have a deadline or an expiration date. Even when you are expecting someone to die because of a long illness, when it happens, you are still not ready. I should know because my husband died 5 years ago and he suffered for 2 years battling cancer, so I thought I was prepared, but I wasn’t, and I still have a hole in my heart. Losing a loved one is an all-consuming grief that can take control of your life if you let it.

Remember that: Blaming yourself will make the pain worse and it will halt your healing.

Only you can reclaim your life after you have lost a loved one, whether it’s a family member, friend, partner or even a pet who was part of your family.

Forgive your loved one for leaving you, forgive yourself for feeling guilty and choose acceptance with an open heart.

## Healing from Loss of a Significant Other

Some people might be ready to date after six months, while others are ready after five years or more. There are no dating rules for widows or widowers.

Some people can't live alone, so they date with the intention of finding someone to live with them and even marry them right away. Other people prefer to live alone and have clear dating boundaries, like not bringing anyone home to spend the night, not introducing them to close family and not making any commitment to be monogamous.

Before you start dating, ask yourself:

1. Am I ready for a new companion, partner, lover or spouse?
2. When I tap into my emotions, do I feel guilty about dating?
3. Can I be with someone new without comparing a new person to my beloved who passed away?
4. Am I dating because I'm afraid to be alone?

After my husband died, I created a shrine to him with lots of photos of us on our wedding day, honeymoon and many other treasured memories. I knew that I couldn't date until I put all of our photos away.

I had a client who lost his wife and he couldn't empty her closet of all her clothes for two years. After which, he was ready to date.

If you're dating a widow or widower, be sensitive when they talk about their late spouse and be patient as they may still be in the grieving process.

If you're joining the online dating scene, I recommend that you use caution. Google your date to make sure that they are who they say they are, then have a FaceTime session first before meeting them in person. This way, you can see what they look like, how they speak and their body language. You may also get a sense of how they live or work by the background they choose for the conversation. This can also take the pressure off, reducing the anxiety of the "blind date" first impression.

### Healing from Loss of Home or Possessions

Losing your home is devastating because it's not just a construction, it's your place of safety and security. I personally know people who lost their homes in the wildfires in Southern California, and some have relied upon their faith to make sense of it, while others have found their strength through their community in which they live with the help of fellow neighbors.

Losing your home can cause terrifying emotional distress. Try writing a "gratitude list" of all the things you can be grateful for, such as your life and the lives of your family.

Losing precious objects such as your photos, passport & other legal documents can be overwhelming. Focus on doing one task at a time and then celebrate your accomplishments, big and small with simple rewards like taking an afternoon nap or going to the movies.

Picking up the pieces of a shattered life can feel paralyzing. Do something completely different to take your mind off that feeling, like attending a book club, yoga or mediation.

Join a support group for people who have lost their homes. Listening to the stories of others can help you not feel so alone and provide comfort.

Healing from Loss of Job or Money How do you start again after you lose your job, your money, your property, even some of your friends?

Not by feeling sorry for yourself, not by panicking or hibernating. It's natural to slip into self-pity after you lose your job and paycheck, but it's actually the best time to practice gratitude for your life and cultivate a positive attitude. It may feel counter-intuitive, but it's the quickest path to recovery. Once you accept that your financial loss is not the end of the world, and you realize that if you made money once, you can make it again, you are on your way to healing from your loss.

Some people panic about not being able to pay their bills, which blocks clear thinking. It can be helpful to reflect on positive outcomes in your past to buoy your spirits and allow you to see path to a solution.

You may be embarrassed or too proud to ask for help but asking for help is a wonderful exercise in self-growth. You will find a support system if you let your guard down and simply reach out.

Eventually, you may be able to see unexpected positive outcomes. I suggest creating a vision board that includes the job you really want. Find a picture that represents it and paste it to your board. Write an affirmation about money such as "I am abundant," and repeat it daily. While waiting for your manifestations, practice self-compassion by taking a more positive approach to negative feeling.

### Healing from Feeling Overwhelmed

Loss can leave you feeling overwhelmed and experiencing a range of emotions from sadness, anger, disbelief, confusion to shock or depression.

All of these emotions are part of the healing process. Share your emotions with your family and friends so they understand and hopefully empathize with what you are going through.

When you are overwhelmed by the stresses of life and burdens of others, treat yourself kindly by setting boundaries and saying ‘No’ to things that you will resent. Say “Yes” to things that will make you feel safe, happy and valued.

Resist the urge to numb your emotions with drugs or alcohol or to punish yourself for your feelings of overwhelm. Practice self-care instead, focusing on your health and wellbeing.

Mindfulness can be a powerful non-judgmental state of mind in which you can help heal the feelings of being overwhelmed.

### 5 Stages of Grief by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s

In her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross proposed the five stages of grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. She writes, first we refuse to believe our loss is happening, then we’re angry about it and want to blame someone or something, then we bargain and try to control the situation, then we get depressed and finally move into acceptance. These are widely referenced stages that can be helpful in processing your own grief, even if just to realize that it’s a natural process that needs to play out in order for you to find peace again.

1. Denial - We refuse to believe the loss is going to happen and don’t want to acknowledge reality.
2. Anger - We blame others for the loss, for example a doctor who couldn’t save our loved one’s life.

3. Bargaining - We seek to gain control of the loss, by making a 'deal' with our higher power or reviewing all the ways in which we could mitigate the pain.
4. Depression - We experience the profound sadness of our loss.
5. Acceptance - We ultimately find calm and peace with our loss.

### What Does Recovery from Grief Mean?

Grief recovery coach Eileen Joyce defines recovery with these simple statements that I'm including here to give you a working definition for yourself and your clients. We're looking for progress, not perfection. The goal is not to quickly "get over it" and be on top of the world instantly. The goal is to feel better, to gain control of your own happiness, to find new meaning in your life without the fear of being hurt, to enjoy memories without regret, to be okay with occasional sadness, to forgive others if they act insensitively, and to realize that talking about loss is normal and healthy. From [www.eileenjoyce.com](http://www.eileenjoyce.com) Recovery means feeling better. Recovery means claiming your circumstances instead of your circumstances claiming you and your happiness. Recovery is finding new meaning for living, without {being stopped by} the fear of being hurt again. Recovery is being able to enjoy fond memories without having them precipitate painful feelings of regret or remorse. Recovery is acknowledging that it is perfectly all right to feel sad from time to time and to talk about those feelings no matter how those around you react. Recovery is being able to forgive others when they say or do things you know are based on their lack of knowledge about grief. Recovery is one day realizing that your ability to talk about the loss you have experienced is indeed normal and healthy.

## Healing from Loss Exercises

I want to share some of the healing exercises that have worked for myself, my clients and my friends, but warn you that not all exercises work for everyone. It's up to you to decide if any of these are right for you and/or your clients.

- Breathing
- Chest Breathing vs. Belly Breathing
- Center for Mind-Body Medicine
- Breathe Consciously
- Kapalabhati Breath
- Orgasmic Breathing
- A Meditation on Grief
- Talk to the Person you Lost
- 10 Years Later Exercise

### Breathing

Breathing is our basic life force, and a shorthand method to connect our mind and body. When you're experiencing grief and the feelings of sadness are overwhelming you, take a moment to just sit and breathe allowing your mind to clear of any thoughts. When your mind wanders, bring it back to the sound of your breath.

### Chest Breathing vs. Belly Breathing

Breathing consciously instantly brings a calmer state to your body, and in turn, influences your mind to calm down, alleviating anxiety and making you feel more peaceful and positive.

Difficult feelings manifest as anxiety in our body that can lead us into a downward spiral of emotions. This negative state of fear keeps us

preoccupied with worry and unease, causing us to breath shallower, into our chest, rather than our abdomen. This shallower breath doesn't nourish our body and mind with oxygen in the same way as deep breathing does, and in fact causes more anxiety. I learned several new breathing techniques and healing exercises when I attended a week-long training by The Center for Mind-Body Medicine, like this one where you visualize breathing in love and light, followed by breathing out fear and negativity. I highly recommend their program for healing psychological trauma and stress, and their professional training programs to practice wellness, inspire hope and restore health.

### Breathe Consciously

Breathing consciously can alleviate the anxiety of grief. Try this exercise to teach yourself how to breathe consciously. Lie down facing up and take notice of the path your breath takes in your body. Is your chest rising and falling, or your belly? You can put your hand on your belly to ensure that it is rising with each inhale and falling with each exhale. Take long slow breaths and gently allow your belly to rise and fall with each breath. Slow down your breathing as much as you can to maintain the relaxation. Check in with yourself periodically during the day and notice when you might be breathing the shallow way. Notice how your breathing changes when you're frightened or upset or anxious or happy.

### Kapalabhati Breath

The name of this breathing exercise comes from the Sanskrit words “kapala” (skull) and “bhati” (light), and it is intended to bring energy to the brain. However, people with heart conditions or pregnant women should not perform this exercise. Sit with your knees bent and your spine straight, either in a chair or on the floor. Expel all the air from your chest

and abdomen. Breathe in forcefully through your nostrils, filling up your abdomen and chest. Exhale forcefully in short bursts through both nostrils, imagining that your brain is receiving the breath. You can press on your lower abdomen to feel the forceful contractions. Contract the belly as many times as you can within one breath. Allow your inhale to happen naturally before the next round. And focus on the exhale.

### Orgasmic Breath

When you're working through the anxiety or depression of loss, orgasms might be the last thing on your mind, but this course is intended to make the connections between healing and enjoying intimacy again, so I want to offer this exercise as a bridge from healing breaths into allowing yourself to feel sexy again. Using your Pubococcygeus Muscles (PC muscles) strengthens your pelvic floor and can also awaken your sensuality. This simple exercise works for men and women by exercising the same muscles you use to cut off the flow of urine. Sit comfortably with your spine straight. Inhale slowly through pursed lips as if you are drinking through a straw. As you inhale, contract your PC muscles, as if you are stopping the flow of urine. Keep your PC muscles engaged and also engage your abdominal muscles as you fill up your whole body with oxygen. Release the breath and allow your entire body to relax, the PC muscles last. Allow yourself to feel the movement of energy throughout your body and the concentrated awareness of your sexual organs.

### A Meditation on Grief

When after heavy rain the storm clouds disperse, is it not that they've wept themselves clear to the end? —Ghalib Jack Kornfield is a trained Buddhist monk who founded the Insight Meditation Society and he says, "It takes courage to grieve, to honor the pain we carry. We can grieve in tears or in

meditative silence, in prayer or in song.” You can listen to his meditations on his website at [JackKornfield.com](http://JackKornfield.com). Grief is one of the heart’s natural responses to loss. When we grieve, we allow ourselves to feel the truth of our pain, the measure of betrayal or tragedy in our life. By our willingness to mourn, we slowly acknowledge, integrate, and accept the truth of our losses. Sometimes the best way to let go is to grieve.

## Life After Loss

There is life after loss, but only you or your client can determine when you or they are ready.

If you are having trouble grieving and it is interfering with your daily activities, causing relationship problems, making it hard to go on with your own life, or causing intense guilt or depression. I highly recommend going to a Grief Counselor, as they are qualified with a Bachelors, Masters and often a Doctorate Degree to help you through your bereavement.

### Different Kinds of Loss:

- Loss of a close friend
- Death of a partner
- Death by suicide
- Death by crime
- Serious illness
- Relationship breakup
- Death of a family member
- Illness/loss of health
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a job
- Loss of a physical ability
- Loss of financial security

## Ten Ways to Cope with Grief:

1. Be compassionate to yourself
2. Talk to family or friends
3. Seek grief counseling or a support group
4. Listen to music
5. Read uplifting books
6. Engage in social activities
7. Exercise your mind and body
8. Walk outside to fill your lungs with fresh air
9. Watch entertaining TV shows and movies
10. Eat healthy foods and avoid alcohol

## Supporting Others Who Are Grieving

Well-meaning friends may avoid discussing the subject due to their own discomfort with grief or their fear of making a grieving person feel bad.

As a result, people grieving often feel more isolated and neglected.

People who are grieving are likely to fluctuate between wanting some time to themselves and wanting closeness with others. They may want someone to talk to about their feelings.

Here are ten ways that you can help someone experiencing loss:

1. Be a good listener
2. Ask about their feelings
3. Ask if you can hug them or hold their hand
4. Call them often to see how they're doing
5. Acknowledge their pain and suffering
6. Let them show their emotions
7. Be available and supportive
8. Never minimize their grief

9. Talk about your own losses if appropriate
10. Don't try to compare their loss to others

### Talk With The Person You Lost

Expressing your feelings to the person you lost is an emotional exercise and you may want to do it in front of a therapist, family member or close friend for support. It can be very powerful to articulate all the things you wish you would have said, or even the things you're glad you did say, and to imagine their response. This exercise helps you process the loss of your one-on-one engagement with that person.

Talk to the person you lost as if he or she were right there with you and imagine what they would say back to you. You can also write down questions for them and answer them with the first thing that pops into your head. Say or write everything you wished you had said while he or she was still alive. Be sure to forgive them.

### 10 Years Later Exercise

When you're suffering from loss, you might be fearful that you will forget your loved one, or that thinking about the future is scary or disloyal since they won't be there. But this exercise isn't about "getting over it" and moving on, it's about visualizing your own future and how you will honor that person going forward. After all, even though the person is gone, your love for them will never die. So ask yourself, in ten years how do you see yourself? Who are you with? What are you doing? Where are you living? Write down the answers or create a vision board with pictures of the kind of life you want to live in a decade.

Ask yourself:

1. In ten years, how do I see myself?
2. Who am I with?
3. What am I doing?
4. Where am I living?
5. What have I accomplished?
6. What have I let go of?
7. What is most important to me?
8. What do I love doing?



## CHAPTER 2 - Healing from Pain

It was only after I started seeing my chronic pain as a gift that my life changed for the better. I literally, woke up one day and said, “No matter what the Universe throws at me I’m going to be happy, even with this agonizing pain, which I will now perceive as a gift.” This was after two brain surgeries and many prescriptions that did not help.

Shortly thereafter, I was contacted by a pharmaceutical company to do a nationwide city tour as a speaker to help people suffering from psoriasis. Even though I didn’t have psoriasis, I could relate to what suffering they were going through.

Everyone experiences pain, and each individual deals with managing it in their own way. Pain is an obstacle to intimacy because it can feel isolating, but ironically sometimes intimacy and sex can help to heal pain by creating positive feelings that translate into a mind-body connection. Looking at pain from a different prospective is one of life’s challenges that can make you stronger.

### Letting Love In

The talk I created for people living with psoriasis started off with the importance of human interaction and relationships-- whether with family, friends or a partner. I emphasized the value of using humor, even for a serious disease like psoriasis because many people don’t know that the skin condition is not contagious. But the best feedback I got, was when I told the audience to ask people they cared about for a hug. This list of ten suggestions can help chronic pain sufferers to communicate with others, so that they can develop relationships.

1. Explain the cause of your condition
2. Share the triggers that can make it worse
3. Describe what makes you feel better
4. Try to use humor during your conversation
5. Ask if they have any questions?
6. Be prepared to answer any questions
7. Be open and candid with your responses
8. Talk about how your condition affects you emotionally
9. Ask if they have ever known anyone else with something similar
10. Give yourself time to get comfortable discussing your condition

## Chronic Pain

Some of the top causes of pain is:

- Back pain
- Neck pain
- Knee pain
- Arthritis / osteoarthritis
- Headaches
- Multiple sclerosis
- Fibromyalgia
- Shingles
- Nerve damage (neuropathy)
- TMJ and jaw pain

But sometimes even when the source of the pain has been eradicated, the brain will continue sending pain signals, and these brain functions along with psychological factors can contribute to what's commonly known as "chronic pain."

## Relationships & Living with Chronic Pain

When you're in a relationship as a chronic pain sufferer, these are some of the emotional symptoms you may be dealing with:

- You may not want to be touched because physical touch is painful
- Pain can become the reason to stop having sex and intimacy
- A partner can feel helpless because they can't relieve their partner's pain
- Pain can make you short-tempered, so you regret what you say
- Pain can make you feel like you are disabled
- Pain can stop you from socializing
- Pain can make you want to sleep more often
- Pain can prevent you from wanting to exercise

If you have any of these symptoms, try to express them to your loved one as communication is essential because people are not mind readers, so if you are grieving or in pain and you don't want to be touched, express yourself without hurting anybody's feelings. You can say, not now, but maybe later when I'm feeling better. Good communication can unleash strong creative energy between you and your partner and with good communication you can talk about anything. Not only does it enhance your partnership, it takes a big chunk out of everyday stress.

I also encourage cuddling, even if it's platonic cuddling to release oxytocin and other endorphins that are potentially stronger than morphine!

## Physical Nurturing

Did you know that 90% of all health problems are related to stress? Love combined with healing have dynamic effects on the heart rhythms, overall health and vitality. So touch can be healing when one person is the giver

and the other the receiver. A healing touch can be a scalp massage, a foot rub or any unilateral touch.

There are many kinds of touch ranging from friendly, intimate, playful, romantic, sensual, sexual or erotic. Human's crave touch from the moment we are born to the day that we die.

Even when a partner doesn't want sex, they may want a nurturing hug. Research suggests that hugs may help reduce pain. In a study by the Journal of Holistic Nursing, people with fibromyalgia had six therapeutic touch treatments. Each treatment involved light touching on the skin. The participants reported an increase in quality of life and reduced pain. Hugging is an intimate touch where your two hearts feel like one. Remember to verbalize your emotions as your partner wants to hear you express your loving feelings. For intimacy, be 100% present.

#### Ten Types of Touch:

1. Friendly
2. Healing
3. Platonic
4. Playful
5. Romantic
6. Sensual
7. Intimate
8. Passionate
9. Sexual
10. Erotic

### Healing from Pain Exercises

Many of these exercises coming up have benefits from boosting your mood to diminishing your pain, and healing from the damaging effects of stress. See which ones resonate for you or your client as different exercises and different ways of doing things are appropriate for different people. I'm a great believer in offering options. Here's ten healing exercises that have worked for many of my clients and I hope that at least one of them can help you.

1. Humor Therapy
2. Water Therapy
3. Animal Therapy
4. Hug Therapy
5. Music Therapy
6. Moving exercise for individuals
7. Toni Bernhard J.D. pain techniques
8. Sex for Pain Relief
9. Charity for Pain Therapy
10. Pain & Gratitude journal

### Humor Therapy

Laughter really is the best medicine! Here's a list of ways in which laughter can instantly heal you, by lowering your blood pressure, boosting your immune system, improving brain function and protecting your heart. Studies show that it also increases natural killer cells which destroy tumors and viruses and improves oxygen levels in the bloodstream.

In one study, an 88-year-old woman with gastric cancer refused radiation treatment and instead went on a steady diet of comedy and laughter. Her cancer went into remission and she lived another 5 years.

According to the Zur Institute, laughter:

1. Fosters instant relaxation and lowers blood pressure
2. Boosts immune system.
3. Improves brain functioning and protects the heart.
4. When we laugh, natural killer cells, which destroy tumors and viruses, increase along with Gamma-interferon (a disease-fighting protein), T-cells (important for our immune system) and B-cells (which make disease-fighting antibodies).
5. Laughter increases oxygen in the blood, which also encourages healing.

It's true: laughter is strong medicine. Just look at the list of benefits it has on mental health from reducing stress, depression, anxiety, fear and anger. Laughter draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. It's also one of the fastest way to bring your mind and body back into balance. In my practice, I've noticed that couples who laugh together regularly have a better chance of staying together.

As a coach, you can also use humor to enhance your client relationship. It helps increase trust and bonding and can help us get through situations of loss and grief. You can also learn a lot about your clients by finding out what they find funny. Humor therapy can help you help your clients to gain new perspectives on their lives, inspire hope while lightening their burdens through humor and laughter.

Mental health benefits of laughter from the [Zur institute](#):

1. Reduces stress, depression, anxiety and fear.
2. Elevates mood.
3. Increases energy and can help us perform activities that we might otherwise avoid.
4. Can be a safe way to introduce ourselves to others.

5. Laughter, like a smile, is the shortest distance between two people. It makes people feel closer to each other.
6. When we experience humor, we talk more, make more eye contact with others, touch others, etc.
7. Marriages and relationships can tremendously benefit from humor and laughter.
8. When people laugh together, they feel bonded and can better go through hardship together.

A healthy sense of humor is related to being able to laugh at oneself and a way of accepting oneself.

Benefits of humor in therapy from the [Zur Institute](#):

1. Enhances therapeutic alliance and increases trust between therapists and clients.
2. Helps clients feel good about themselves.
3. Helps clients gain perspective.
4. Humor can help clients' thought processes by helping them to get unstuck.
5. Helps clients cope with difficult situations, such as death and illness.
6. Helps clients accept themselves. ("The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight, because by then your body and your fat are really good friends." – Bob Hope)
7. Activates the chemistry of the will to live and increases our capacity to fight disease.
8. Humor can be used diagnostically. Goethe said: "People show their characters in nothing more clearly than in what they think laughable." The kind of humor people use often shows the kind of people they are.

## Water Therapy

In 1891, health pioneer Sebastian Kneipp founded his principles of health – water, plants, exercise, nutrition and inner balance. His family has upheld his legacy and promotes hydrotherapy, which is described here as having excellent health benefits. He said, “With brief applications of cold water (one second to one minute), temperature stimuli are conveyed via the skin which trigger positive reactions in the body: The temporary narrowing of the blood vessels with subsequent vascular expansion promotes circulation throughout the body. This strengthens immune defenses, stimulates the circulatory and nervous system as well as metabolism and invigorates the body.”

Here’s an exercise you can do every time you take a shower. Imagine the water washing out your self-destructive or self-critical thoughts and let them go right down the drain. Then imagine the clean water bringing you positivity, as you say affirmations out loud.

I noticed that when I swim, I don’t feel the pain from my Trigeminal Neuralgia. Also, when I’m taking a warm bath, I experience no pain and feel relaxed. One theory could be that it’s analogous to being in the womb where everything was safe and calm. But whether that’s true or not, while I’m in the bath with my eyes closed, I can enjoy some pain-free moments. To boost this experience, I take the opportunity to list all the things I’m grateful for, so that when I emerge from the bath, I feel good about myself and the world.

## Shower Meditation

When you get into the shower, imagine that the water is washing away all your negative, self-critical and self-destructive thoughts, and letting them disappear down the drain. Then imagine that the fresh water pouring down

on you is filling you up with positivity. Say an affirmation out loud as you imagine being filled up with joy and success.

### Bath Gratitude

Take a relaxing bath, and as you soak and feel the tension draining from your body, begin to list all the things you're grateful for.

### Animal Therapy

I adopted my Pomeranian, Romeo from Perfect Pet Rescue, when a pain specialist recommended, I get a pet to help me heal from my debilitating facial pain. He definitely distracted me from my pain, especially walking him 3 times a day, and taking him to doggie obedience training.



Many people can benefit for animal therapy including:

- People receiving cancer treatment
- People with cardiovascular diseases
- People with dementia
- And Veterans with PTSD

It's become very popular to have designated "therapy pets" that come along on journeys or even into restaurants to assist in mental health conditions such as anxiety and fear. Stroking the fur of an innocent animal can soothe and distract from pain. Animals are lovable, and they remind us to give and receive love, unconditionally.

### Equine Therapy

I have been a volunteer for the charity Ahead With Horses in LA since 1997 and seen the remarkable healing effects on children with disabilities, suffering from:

- Autism
- Down syndrome
- Cerebral Palsy
- Spina Bifida
- Paraplegia
- Quadriplegia
- Seizure Disorders
- Blind/Visual Disabilities
- Muscular Dystrophy
- and many more disabilities and limitations

For more information on [Ahead with Horses](http://awhla.org), go to their website at awhla.org.

Two unique aspects of equine therapy offered at AWH are the immediacy of its effectiveness.

### Physically

AWH takes children with disabilities through a complex series of movements while the horse rhythmically moves the body in a manner similar to the human gait. This improves the children's posture, balance and muscle control.

### Mentally

AWH increases concentration, improves sequential thoughts and helps children learn to speak and develop spatial awareness.

## Emotionally

AWH provides the opportunity for children to bond with the horse, instructors and volunteers, building confidence and trust.

## Hug Therapy

Hugs are vital to our wellbeing, and even scientists have confirmed this. It can help someone going through the grieving process by soothing emotional pain and calming the mind, body and soul. Clothed, non-sexual touch like hugging has been proven to release feel-good brain chemicals like oxytocin that in turn increases levels of dopamine and serotonin, which have a calming, soothing effect on the body and emotions. Hugging also lowers blood pressure and cortisol (the stress hormone) levels.

Hugging has become so popular now as a benefit to wellbeing that a whole industry has sprung up around it. There are professional cuddlers who charge by the hour to spoon and cuddle and there are cuddle centers where you can attend snuggle parties. Amma, the “hugging saint” is a Hindu spiritual leader who travels the world hugging millions of people with a goal to ease pain, uplift and transform the world with her embrace.

Hugging benefits:

- Increases oxytocin—this hormone is great for our heart and makes us feel connected to the world around us.
- Drops cortisol—the stress hormone which makes us feel anxious and decreases our cognitive function.
- Triggers dopamine—the pleasure hormone which makes us feel really, really good.
- Strengthens our immune system
- Activates our Solar Plexus Chakra, which stimulates the thymus gland to regulate the body’s production of white blood cells.

## Pain Journaling

**Purpose:** To write and keep a journal that explores thoughts and feelings about your pain

**Why it works:** Because it helps people to accurately describe their pain and clarify their thoughts and feelings about it, which can be cathartic and provide new insight.

Keeping a pain journal is a powerful exercise to help people understand their feelings and experiences around their pain or trauma.

If you're a coach, tell your client to buy a blank journal and to record their feelings, actions and treatments if any surrounding their pain. It's a great way to remind yourself of the journey, and it's also a place find creative ideas when you need them - two great benefits of this exercise.

When I first started my pain journal, I would rate my pain from 1 to 10 with 10 being excruciating on a daily basis 3 times a day. I noticed that my pain was above level 5 when I was tired, hungry or stressed and below 5 when I was exercising, socializing and teaching, so I realized that when my adrenalin was high, my pain was low. It's amazing what epiphanies you can get from journaling.

## Gratitude Journal

**Purpose:** To acknowledge and appreciate all the positive things in your life and to focus on what you have as opposed to what you do not have.

Why it works: Because when you acknowledge gratitude, the law of attraction will bring you more of what you focus upon. It also works because a grateful person is more attractive to everyone.

What are the benefits: The benefits are physiological because when a person feels gratitude, they release feel-good endorphins that flood the body, resulting in positive energy and wellbeing. Other benefits include that gratitude rubs off on other people — attracting more potential partners — or taking your relationship to the next level.

The gratitude journal acknowledges and appreciates all the positive in our lives and focuses on what we have as opposed to what we do not have. When you acknowledge gratitude, the law of attraction will bring you more of what you focus upon. It also works because a grateful person is more attractive to everyone. For example: When a person says “Thank you,” it can inspire you to do more for them because they appreciate you. If you’re a coach, tell your client to buy a journal and to take a moment each day to list at least 5 things that they are grateful for. For example: their health, the food on the table, the sun shining, their job, friends, family, pets etc. The benefits are physiological because when a person feels gratitude, they release feel-good endorphins that flood the body, resulting in positive energy and wellbeing.

## Music Therapy

“One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.” -Bob Marley

According to a new study titled, Music Makes it Home, couples who listen to music together saw a huge spike in their sex lives. Findings also indicated that music enhanced pain tolerance over no music. Happy and relaxing music increased pain tolerance and altered time perception to a greater extent than sad music. Happy and relaxing music facilitated distraction from pain and enhanced perceived pain control. Relaxing music additionally had anxiety reducing properties and reduced pain intensity. This study examined the role of self-selected emotion-inducing music used for pain management (pain tolerance, intensity, perceived control, distraction, and anxiety reduction). Listen to music that makes you feel relaxed and happy to experience a reduction in pain.

## Charity for Therapy

Psychologically, feeling good about the world helps to reduce pain, or at least distract from pain. That's why getting involved in a charity – whether it's helping at a soup kitchen or food bank, working with the blind, with disadvantaged children or animal rescues can actually be therapeutic for pain relief. I certainly have found that helping people less fortunate is good for one's overall health, so I look for charities where I can make the biggest impact. As an abuse survivor, I've volunteered with abused children at MacLaren Hall and women's domestic violence charity called Safe Passage.

Find a charity that feeds your passion, as it can be a healing experience focusing on other people's needs.

## Moving Exercises for Individuals

My favorite way to start the day is with a Yoga stretching exercise called Child's Pose, which is a resting position that most beginners can do in yoga class. The physical benefits include stretching the hips and thighs, while relaxing the muscles in the front and back of your upper body.



Sexologist, Yoga Instructor and Nurse Practitioner, Dr. Nancy Sutton Pierce is demonstrating a perfect Child's Pose on the beach, which is even better than doing it in bed.

Child's Pose calms the mind, so it's a perfect time to set your intention for the day and manifest it while breathing for a few minutes.

However, this pose is not recommended for women who are pregnant or people who have knee or back injuries. So, check with your doctor before trying any new physical practice and always listen to your body.

There are many other exercise options that you can incorporate into your time-management for your good health.

These exercises can help to get your mind and body ready for whatever the universe has to throw at you.

1. Yoga can stretch your body and sharpen your concentration.
2. Walk or hike to fill your lungs with fresh air.
3. Trade elevator for stairs to burn calories.
4. Ride a bike for cardio exercise.
5. Do sit-ups for strong core workout.
6. Swimming provides resistance to strengthen all your muscles.
7. Dancing for balance, coordination and improved memory.
8. Tai Chi combines concentration with movement
9. Squats can help strengthen your core and leg muscles
10. Pilates improves flexibility, tone and strength of whole body.

### Techniques to Help with Pain

Toni Bernhard is a retired law professor and author of the award-winning book *How to Be Sick: A Buddhist-Inspired Guide for the Chronically Ill and Their Caregivers*. She offers these four techniques to living with pain that I believe can help people to reconnect with themselves, and get on the path to intimate reconnection.

In an article in *Psychology Today*, she outlines four excellent techniques you can use to reduce pain through focus:

- Focus on the sensations that make up the pain and separate them out – is there burning? Throbbing? Heat? Cold? Intense waves? This is called “sensory splitting” and can help you perceive of your pain as many different impermanent parts rather than one unmanageable block.
- Switch your attention to a part of the body that’s pain-free – Is there a spot on your body that is not experiencing pain? Focus on it and enjoy it.

- Look for pleasant sense data in the present moment – Focus on sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings all around you at the smallest level. A wisp of hair on your cheek, the sunshine on your face – notice them all.
- Imagine a pain-free place – Focus on remembering a pain-free place in your life. “Using imagery to take your mind off your pain relaxes the body, including the muscles around the pain site. This can reduce your overall pain load.”

### Sex for Pain Relief

I am an ardent admirer of Dr. Beverly Whipple of Rutgers University in NJ identified, who has researched the correlation between G-spot arousal and its ability to dull pain. Using fMRI to view the brain, Dr. Whipple found the body’s pain-killing center in the midbrain is activated during peak arousal. Signals instruct the body to release endorphins and corticosteroids, which numb the raw nerve endings responsible for pain. Immediately before orgasm, hormone levels of oxytocin surge to five times their normal level & releases endorphins, which alleviate pain.

The pain-killing center in the midbrain is activated during peak arousal. Immediately before orgasm, levels of the hormone oxytocin surge to five times their normal level. This, in turn, releases endorphins and corticosteroids, (morphine like substances) which numb the raw nerve endings responsible for pain.



## CHAPTER 3 - Healing from Disease or Disability

The next section is about Healing from Disease or Disability, a topic I'm personally very passionate about and I have given seminars and created courses on this important subject.

You see, I believe that we will all have some disabilities in our lives, so we better learn as much as we can about them as soon as we can.

There's a myth that people who suffer from chronic illness or have a disability from a medical condition or disorder cannot be intimate or have robust sex lives. This couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, navigating physical intimacy with a disability can be a valuable opportunity to become an excellent communicator, and to discover the desires and needs of others.

### Ten Myths About the Sexuality of People with Disabilities

The myth that sex with disabilities is “not worth it” affects everyone, because it also assumes that just because you are an able-bodied human being, you intrinsically know how to perform sexual acts and therefore don't require any education or guidance on the subject. It assumes that if you can't figure it out, you should be left to do without it. Even though everyone knows the mechanics of sex, not everyone knows how to give and receive sexual pleasure.

All people have the right to opportunities for sexual expression, sexuality education, contraception and sexual abuse prevention and treatment. These rights are often challenged or ignored because of myths. Here are ten pervasive myths about the sexuality of people with disabilities, in the voice of a disabled person:

1. We are asexual
2. Our genitals don't work
3. Only certain kinds of people hook up with us
4. The disability is more important than sexuality
5. Sex with disabilities is “a hassle” or “not worth it”
6. People naturally know how to have sex, and if we don't, we shouldn't be having it
7. It is better not to risk reproduction
8. Sexuality is not part of healthcare for disabled people
9. We are helpless victims, unable to have good sex
10. People with disabilities aren't at risk for sexual abuse

## 7 Keys to Intimacy After Illness

It is not uncommon to feel helpless after any kind of surgery or sickness and its human nature to push away the person you love the most. That's why it's so important to take steps to make sure you're nurturing your intimate partner relationship.

### Key 1 – Reconnect with Yourself

The first step is to reconnect with yourself. Fall in love with yourself again by listing the things you love about yourself, giving yourself rewards and finding a new perspective by spending time doing what you love to recharge your self-confidence and energy.

- Find a new perspective
- List things you love about yourself
- Reward yourself

### Key 2 - Reconnect with your Partner

Next, you can begin to reconnect with your partner. The good news is that you have survived a terrible ordeal and there's more good news. Most couples that really love each other discover that their love grows stronger and their passion deeper after trauma because they no longer take each other for granted. They fall back in love and want to treasure every moment. This is the time to start creating romantic memories together, to say and do all the things you ever wanted to do. Start by asking for help from your partner when you need it, show appreciation and laugh together!

- Ask for help when you need it
- Show appreciation
- Have a sense of humor

### Key 3 – Creative Visualization

Use creative visualization to further your conversation within yourself. Speak to your body and locate your passion and desire through meditation, relaxation and breathing. Imagine yourself as being perfect by saying “I am perfect” silently to yourself with your hand on your heart, and then imagine yourself being intimate with your partner, feeling good about yourself, and excited about reconnection.

- Meditation, relaxation, breathing
- Speak to your body
- Imagine you are exactly as you want to be

### Key 4 – Communication

Communication is the bedrock of a good relationship, and the more ways you can do it, the better. Talk to each other about your turn ons and turn offs. Check in about the day's events and make a point of listening actively to each other. Connect kinesthetically by kissing often, by hugging for at least 6 seconds at a time to activate the bonding chemical oxytocin. And

engage visually too, by dressing up for each other to look your best even if you are in pajamas.

- Communicate aurally
- Communicate kinesthetically
- Communicate visually

### Key 5 – The Opportunity to Enhance Intimacy

Share your most significant romantic memories and write a list of all the things you love about each other, to fall back in love again. Rekindle passion by creating a passion wheel of your favorite passionate activities. Expand your horizon by learning something new together, such as Tantric Sex or Sensual BDSM. Both available at Loveology University.

- Fall back in love again
- Rekindle passion
- Expand your horizon

### Key 6 – Balance Your Life

Balance your mind, body and spirit together. Learn something new that stimulates you both mentally like a new language or a cooking class. Do physical activities together like hiking or swimming. Then explore things that make you heart sing and your spirit soar, like music or meditation.

- Mind – Knowledge is power, so learn something new together that's mentally stimulating.
- Body – Do physical activities together
- Spirit – Explore things that make your heart sing and your spirit soar.

## Key 7 – Be Grateful

Praise all the things your partner does for you to improve the quality of your life. Whenever you have a negative thought, replace with a gratitude moment. Actions can be louder than words, so be sure to show others how much you appreciate them with a hug or a gift.

I used these 7 keys with my late husband and even though he was suffering from cancer, we never neglected our intimacy. In fact, we even renewed our wedding vows two weeks before he died.

- Praise ordinary things
- Take a gratitude moment everyday
- Show gratitude to others

## Sex & Cardiovascular Disease

There are cardiovascular conditions such as abnormally high blood pressure, chest pains related to heart disease and heart attacks. These cardio-vascular system conditions are the #1 killer in the U.S. For those who survive, the recovery process may be as soon as when the patient feels up to it, or as far away as eight weeks when the incision is healed, and the person can conquer a flight or two of stairs. “Why?” you might ask. Because sexual activity takes about as much effort and strain as climbing a flight of stairs! Sometimes a healing heart patient might have fears about becoming intimate again, so there is a psychological component involved too, where it may be necessary to wait a little longer before shaking that feeling that sex will induce another heart attack.

These Recovery Guidelines Must Be Authorized by a Medical Doctor.

1. When your incision heals
2. 4-8 weeks out
3. When you can climb a flight of stairs

4. When you can enjoy sexual activity
5. When you don't have fears of having another heart attack.

### Sex & Stroke

A stroke can cause physical and emotional problems that have an impact on your sex life. The American Stroke Association stipulates, however that the sooner you resume sex the better, but many patients are afraid they will have another stroke during sex. While it's true that your blood pressure can rise when you orgasm, you're no more likely to have a stroke during sex than at any other time.

Speak to one of your health care providers about all your questions because these are the experts:

1. Neurologist
2. Physical therapist
3. Occupational therapist
4. Speech pathologist
5. Neurophysiologist
6. Physician
7. Urologist (specializes in male urinary and reproductive/sexual health)
8. Gynecologist (specializes in female reproductive and sexual health)

The areas of the brain affected by stroke are:

1. Frontal lobe – Executive functions, thinking, planning, organizing and problem solving, emotions and behavioral control, personality
2. Motor Cortex – Movement
3. Temporal Lobe – Memory, language, understanding

4. Sensory Cortex – Sensation
5. Parietal Lobe – Perception, making sense of the world, arithmetic, spelling
6. Occipital Lobe – Vision

## Sex & Cancer

You can't expect your sex life to stay the same if you or your partner have cancer. And if you are a Love Coach helping a client with cancer, you need to be empathetic and knowledgeable about the side-effects of cancer treatment on relationships. I know first-hand because my husband died of cancer and it changed our lives, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. I can assure you that hugging, touching, holding, caressing and kissing is more important than sexual intercourse. We heightened our Intimacy through touching, eye-contact and words of love to each other. We even renewed our wedding vows before he passed away.

Cancer treatment can cause:

1. Fatigue
2. Nausea
3. Pain
4. Lack of sexual desire
5. Erectile dysfunction
6. Lack of lubrication
7. Poor body image
8. Emotional fear

## Sex & Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer causes several physical changes that can affect a person's sexual confidence. These may include:

1. bowel problems and urine leakage
2. difficulty getting an erection
3. reduced semen production
4. reduced fertility

There are many options available for you to discuss with your physician, including the use of pumps, pills, injections and all kinds of creams. Open communication is always the key before, during and after prostate cancer. I'm urging people to help nudge the men in their lives to learn about prostate cancer risk factors and undergo cancer-detecting PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood tests.

Prostate cancer or obstructive enlargement of the prostate requires a prostatectomy where the prostate is surgically removed. This used to consistently involve clipping nerves needed for erection but now techniques go around them. It may still be necessary to insert an indwelling catheter to remove urine for people who are incontinent. A tip for handling the tiny tube coming out of the penis during sex, is to fold it down so it runs the length of the penis and hold it in place with a condom. When dealing with any erectile difficulties it is best to discuss options with your medical provider and a clinical sexologist.

## Sex & Hysterectomies

Hysterectomies are the second most frequently performed surgery for women in the US causing mood, hormone, and other body changes, like less vaginal lubrication. It's advised not to have sex for 4 to 6 weeks after surgery. Some women feel less feminine, which can diminish sex drive. A woman may have a hysterectomy for many reasons:

1. Uterine fibroids that cause pain.
2. Uterine prolapse, when the uterus slides from its normal position into the vaginal canal.
3. Endometriosis, where tissue grows outside the uterus, causing extreme pain.
4. Andenomyosis, when uterus lining grows into muscle of uterus causing pain and bleeding.
5. Cancer of the uterus, cervix, or ovaries.

In a subtotal hysterectomy, a surgeon removes only the upper part of the uterus, keeping the cervix in place. In a total hysterectomy, a surgeon removes the whole uterus and cervix. Ovaries may also be removed in a procedure called an oophorectomy.

You don't have to feel any less of a woman just because you had a hysterectomy as that does not identify you or your sexuality. In most cases, a woman can resume a healthy, satisfying sex life after she heals, in about a month or two.

Typically, removing the uterus and cervix does not affect the sensation in the vagina or a woman's ability to reach orgasms, however some women do have less sexual desire after a hysterectomy. Be sure to use lubricant before having sex, as some patients feel drier than they used to before the surgery. And you may be advised to do pelvic floor exercises to help your recovery. You can relax the pelvic floor muscles through deep breathing.

Try Woman on Top sex position so you can be in control of insertion when getting back to sexual activity.

Possible Side Effects:

1. Hormonal changes
2. Body perception
3. Infertility
4. Lack of lubrication
5. Decreased libido
6. Hot flashes
7. Painful intercourse

## Sex & Diabetes

You can have great sex with diabetes – either type 1 or type 2, but you need to know how to navigate your body in order to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with blood glucose level issues. Men may suffer from erectile dysfunction, reduced sperm quality and delayed ejaculation, while women's side effects from diabetes can include vaginal dryness or irritation and difficulty with orgasms. I recommend women spend extra time on foreplay and use plenty of water-based lubricant during sex. Men should consult their doctors to find out what they can do for ED or fertility issues.

Side Effects may include:

1. Difficulty with erections
2. Vaginitis
3. Yeast infections
4. Vaginal lubrication low
5. Loss of desire
6. Lubrication low
7. Decreased blood flow to genitals
8. Orgasmic difficulty

Reminder:

Type 1 Diabetes – pancreas produces little or no insulin.

Type 2 Diabetes – high blood sugar levels overwork pancreas and cannot make enough insulin to process sugar

### Impotence & Diabetes

Diabetes related impotence is highest amongst men between the ages of 35 and 50 on insulin or using agents who have had long-standing diabetes for more than 10 years. Impotence symptoms for these men are usually slow and gradual, but the impotence is progressive and persistent. In a Milsted and Slowinski study, it was found that sufferers of diabetes related impotence possessed an absence of morning erections. “Diabetes interferes with both the neurological and vascular systems to cause erectile insufficiency,” was one of their general conclusions. With diabetes related impotence, the sex drive is not affected, although sexuality is. Testosterone is normal. And the onset seems to start with a noted inability to ejaculate.

Diabetes-related impotence possesses these characteristics:

1. any age but most commonly between the ages of 35 and 50
2. patients who are on insulin
3. diabetic for more than 10 years
4. impotence symptoms are slow and gradual - prior to onset of impotence patients may have noted an inability to ejaculate
5. impotence progressive and persistent
6. absence of morning erections
7. sex drive is not directly affected
8. testosterone is normal

### Sex & Multiple Sclerosis

MS is a disease in which the immune system attacks and strips away the protective covering of nerves and damages communications between nerve

cells. Of the many symptoms caused by MS, sexual dysfunction is a big one, but the MS International Federation has a positive spin on their website that says, “Having MS doesn’t mean giving up a satisfying sex life, but it’s important to be open and talk about the challenges.” MS does not affect the basic fertility of either men or women, although sexual problems may interfere with the ability of a man with MS to father a baby. But, this can be successfully treated with medication or through techniques to harvest sperm for insemination. So, men who are concerned about fertility issues should consult a urologist experienced in this area.

Symptoms of MS include:

1. Dizziness, weakness, blurred vision, muscle spasms, loss of limb control
2. Loss of bladder and bowel functions
3. Anorgasmia, inability to orgasm
4. Hypersensitivity
5. Chronic fatigue

## Sex & HIV / AIDS

R. Morgan Griffin on WebMD says, “You can have good sex and a healthy relationship with your partner, even if one of you has HIV. You'll have to use protection when you're physically intimate, whether you're in a mixed-status couple (one person has HIV and the other doesn't) or you're both HIV-positive. But HIV doesn't have to get between you. Most kissing is safe, since HIV isn't in saliva. There is a risk that if either of you has a mouth sore or cut, French kissing could spread HIV.”

Contact like cuddling and hugging is safe. Unprotected sex is the most common way of spreading the virus. Male and female condoms dramatically lower the chances of passing HIV to your partner. If both of you have HIV, you still need to use protection. You could catch a

different type of HIV from your partner, which could make your disease worse or mean that you need to change medicines.

HIV Prevention Medicine Summary (info from WebMD)

PEP and PrEP. Sometimes, it makes sense for the person without HIV to take HIV drugs, too.

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) is like a "morning-after pill" for HIV. If you think you've been in contact with HIV (if a condom broke, for example), see a doctor right away. You may be able to take antiretroviral drugs for 28 days to prevent the virus from taking hold. It's generally effective, but you have to start within 72 hours -- the sooner the better.

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is antiretroviral treatment you take before you might be exposed to protect you from HIV in case you come in contact with the virus. You could schedule a visit to a doctor together to talk about what having HIV means for the two of you. Look for support groups in your area.

## Sex & Health

The Kinsey Institute in Indiana continues to do research on the healthy benefits of sex. In summary, medical discoveries by the American Heart Association and American Association of Urologists have confirmed that sex is good for your overall health including:

1. Cardiovascular system
2. Respiratory system
3. Immune system
4. Bladder control
5. Reduces Pain
6. Burns calories
7. Anti-Depressant

8. Mild sedative
9. Reduces Stress
10. Live longer

### Synchronized Energy Exchange

I've worked with many clients dealing with intimacy after illness, and there are so many valuable exercises you can do to connect with yourself and others. I always begin with re-defining SEX as a Synchronized Energy Exchange. Shifting the focus from orgasms to intimacy and letting your partner know they are still desirable to you.

- Focus on your partner's strengths rather than weaknesses.
- Maintain intimacy by hugging, kissing and touching each other.
- Let your partner know they are still desirable & that what you are going through is temporary.

### Erotic by Nature

Erotic by Nature and This Thing We Call Sex by David Steinberg are collections of photos featuring people with various disabilities, complimented by erotica poses. These books are dedicated to the celebration of sex, joy, wonder, intimacy, and self-awareness. Directed towards women and men of all ages and lifestyles, these books are an affirmation of the importance, complexity, and subtlety of sexual feelings, a new genre of erotic imagery that invites us to move beyond disabilities.

### Communication with your Partner

"Lack of communication in a relationship is like a car without gas." -Dr. Ava

For couples dealing with illness, communication patterns are vital, and it is important for partners to tell one another what is working and what isn't. If there are mobility or sensation impairments, couples have to rely on verbal or auditory cues, or sign language to maintain arousal.

For new or more casual sexual encounters, consider that sometimes awkwardness can be used to your advantage. A disabled person can take an active role and highlight their personality with a willingness to talk things out. Gut level honesty and courage can be a turn-on. After all, your partner is not just meeting a person behind a walker, in a wheelchair, on crutches, or with braces - they are meeting a whole person. So, tell them and show them, “This is who I am, and this is what I like to do.” Communication, especially about things that don’t feel immediately comfortable is where the intimacy increases, and passion comes alive.

Action steps:

1. State your desires
2. Show your humor during awkward moments
3. Share your wants, wills & wants



## CHAPTER 4 - Healing from Accidents

In this category, I'm including spinal cord injuries and missing limbs associated with accidents and injuries or suffered in combat. Sex with a physical disability such as the ones in this section is more than just possible, it can be deeply fulfilling and improve the quality of your life. Sex with Someone with a Disability Maybe the Best Sex You Have.

### Sex & Spinal Cord Injuries

How sex works with spinal cord injuries is very misunderstood. If the gas didn't get to the engine what would happen to the car? Parts of it wouldn't run, right? You might be able to turn on the lights, the parking brake and roll down the windows, but you wouldn't be able to gear up and drive to the store, would you? The spinal cord is like the tube that carries gas to the engine. If there is an injury everything that is supposed to operate from that point down doesn't. Relative to the degree and location of the injury this may be paraplegia or quadriplegia, lower body paralysis, and paralysis of all four limbs, respectively.

For men, the higher the injured vertebra the more likely they are to get an erection, the less likely they are to feel it. The lower the injured vertebra the less likely they are to get an erection but the more likely they are to feel genital sensations. Either way the erection does not equate to ejaculation. If the sexual organs are no longer functional, the feeling of arousal is often transferred to other places on the body that become erogenous zones, such as the neck or the scalp, adapted to respond to different stimuli.

Possible Effects:

1. Loss of genital sensations

2. Bowel or bladder accidents
3. Loss of ejaculation or lubrication
4. Loss of fertility
5. Loss of erections

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Many veterans of war develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD, which according to the Mayo clinic, is “a mental health condition that’s triggered by a terrifying event, whether experiencing it or witnessing it.” PTSD results in acute anxiety and must be treated in order to live a normal, fulfilling life.

The symptoms can be grouped into four main categories:

1. Intrusive memories
2. Avoidance
3. Negative thoughts and mood
4. Changes in physical and emotional reactions

## Body Image Is...

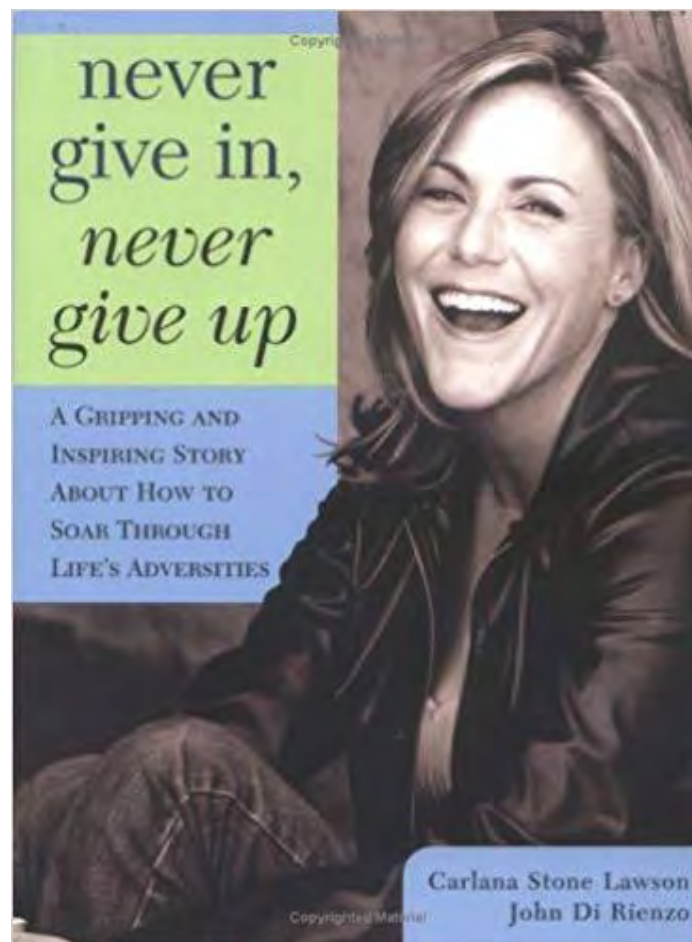
Our body image and whether or not we feel “sexy” is a concept that accumulates meaning through many influencing sources.

1. Patterns of thinking and behaviors that we have inherited
2. The sexual education we receive from family, peers, teachers, clergy, partners, therapists and other health care professionals, whether it’s adequate or not
3. Historical and environmental factors, cultural differences, sex-negative societies

4. Mass media with its mixed-messages, stereotypes, misinformation and the sexual idealization of body types and images.

These mitigating influences suggest to us what is normal and create fear around anything different. That's why it's often an uphill battle to remain confident and sexy in the face of a disability.

### Carlana's Story



In the blink of an eye, Carlana went from cheerleader and gymnast to paraplegic. Not adhering to the stigma and physical restraints of her injury, Carlana forged ahead. She has chosen to embrace her wheelchair as a force,

rather than a hindrance. In stark contrast to the stereotypes placed on the physically disabled, since her accident Carlana has become a certified scuba diver, learned to pilot airplanes, and enjoys sky diving, sailing and skiing.

Carlana Stone was a client of mine who was very open about talking about her sexuality after an accident left her paralyzed. We made a documentary together in which she shares a lot of the insights from her acclaimed book, “Never Give In, Never Give Up,” Carlana speaks about her sexuality as a disabled person, and what she’s learned about pleasure and the misconceptions about the disabled.

### Sex After Accidents

Sex and sexuality are a state of mind. All are natural; all are multifaceted, fluid and expansive. It is the integration of physical, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of an individual’s personality that begin in the brain, also known as the primary sex organ. Yes, you can have mind-blowing sex after an accident and there are plenty of resources to enhance your sex life. The Intimate Rider Sex Chair, for example, was designed specifically for sex after spinal cord injury and allows you to achieve a broad range of motion with little effort. The sexual mobility chair features precision bearings that provide a natural gliding motion achieved by producing slight back-and-forth motion with your torso. Liberator bedroom adventure gear also offers a plethora of sex furniture, bondage sex benches and adult toys.

There are e-learning and online resources such as a video project that was created through a grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation to provide more educational resources about sex, sexuality and intimacy after spinal cord injury. They consist of personal interviews, as well as some positioning devices and techniques to try if you are someone living with a spinal cord injury or the partner of someone living with a spinal cord injury at

[www.sexualitysci.org](http://www.sexualitysci.org). You can also visit [www.therosecentre.ca](http://www.therosecentre.ca) and [www.disabilitypositive.com](http://www.disabilitypositive.com)

### The Intimate Rider Romance Set

Designed specifically for sex after spinal cord injury and allows you to achieve a broad range of motion with little effort. [www.intimaterider.com](http://www.intimaterider.com)

### Liberator Bedroom Adventure Gear

The ergonomic angles put you and your partner's bodies in comfortable and stable positions to lose yourself in passion and sensation without having to worry about putting pressure on your knees, wrists, or back. [www.liberator.com](http://www.liberator.com)



## CHAPTER 5 - Healing from Sexual Dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction manifests in many ways for men and women. There can be medical issues like diabetes, hormonal deficiency low testosterone, medication incompatibilities, chronic pain from arthritis and emotional issues like depression that affect sexual performance.

I've helped men recover from erectile dysfunction by repairing their communication with their partners, and I've also seen women with vaginismus find relief through a combination of talk therapy and pelvic floor therapy.

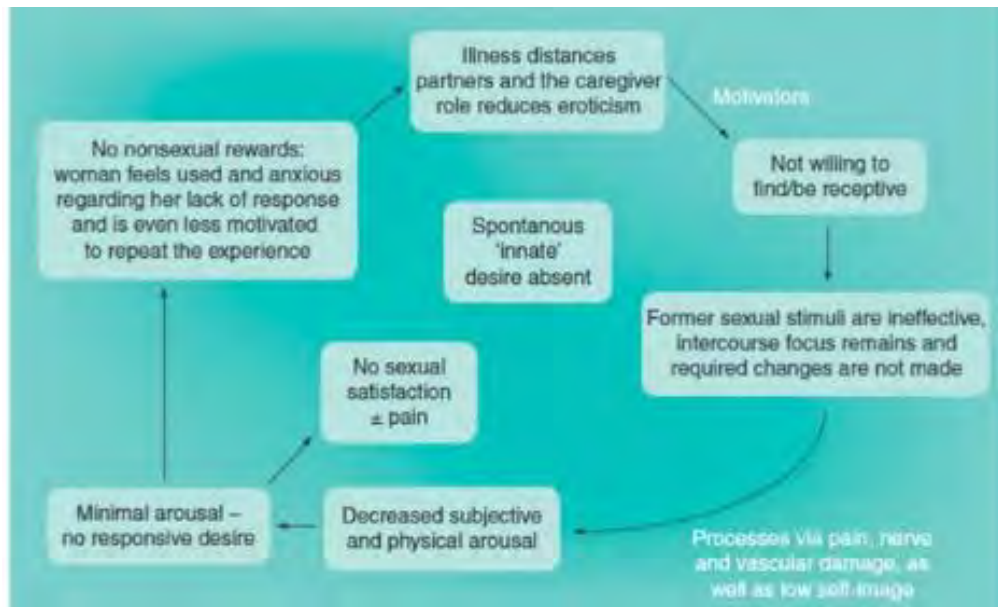
As a coach, it's vital to refer to a medical doctor first to discover any medical conditions. Love coaching can work alongside treatment, as you'll see in a few case studies included here.

### Female Sexual Dysfunction

Women can suffer from a variety of sexual dysfunctions including lack of desire, sexual fear, difficulty with orgasm, arousal difficulties or sexual pain and vaginismus, which is a condition where the vaginal muscles won't open to enjoy sexual activity, making intercourse painful. If you or your client have a continued lack of sexual desire that's causing you distress, you may be diagnosed with HSDD, or hypoactive sexual desire disorder.

### Common Symptoms:

- Lack of desire
- Sexual fear
- Difficulty with orgasm
- Arousal difficulties
- Sexual pain and vaginismus
- Hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD)



Here's a chart that shows how some women can get into an unhealthy cycle with their partner around sexuality. Illness can put distance between a couple, and the partner taking on the role of caregiver might start to feel unsexy, like a nurse or a parent rather than a lover.

If sexual intercourse remains the focus as the definition of sex, and no changes are made to the types of sexual stimuli, there's a risk that arousal will continue to decrease resulting in unsatisfying sex. Then when the ill person experiences no nonsexual rewards either, she feels used and anxious, even less motivated to try sex again.

## Sexual Fears

Are you afraid of losing control, or being vulnerable, sexually dependent, disappointing someone, being disappointed, rejection, abandonment, or ridicule? Maybe you're afraid of hurting someone, or having your heart broken? These are fears that can rob us of having confident sexuality.

Summary of Fears:

1. Losing control
2. Being vulnerable
3. Sexually dependent
4. Disappointing someone
5. Being disappointed
6. Rejection
7. Abandonment
8. Ridicule
9. Hurting someone
10. Heartbreak

## Healing from Sexual Dysfunction Solutions & Exercises

I'd like to outline some solutions and exercises for sexual dysfunction:

1. First Steps to Healing
2. Strategies to Overcome Sexual Dysfunction
3. Case History: Painful Intercourse
4. Bio-feedback, Kegel exercises, vaginal stretching, pelvic massage
5. Tantric Exercises: Breath, Movement, Sound, Muscle Lock, Intention, Attention
6. Case History: Premature Ejaculation
7. Male PC muscle lock

## Steps to Healing

How does one still live a full and meaningful life as a person with a disability and/or chronic illness? First, it is important to forgive the trauma. This adjustment process is a deep, integrated experience. One's attitude can change from negative to more positive through the understanding of where the dark emotions come from, and how they really don't define you anymore — if they ever did to begin with.

Look for ways to find strength and courage. Sometimes when things are painful, we want to lie down and retreat. Life can then contract into a very narrow space. A body/mind, connection can react to visualizations of oneself as strong, healthy person. It is said that “when you change the way you look at things – the things you look at change.

In the emotional limbic system of the brain, unpleasant sensations engage with thoughts and feelings that impact our interpretations and responses. For example, factors such as anger, stress, shame, and worry can intensify pain, illness or disability. Conversely, focusing on calming mental imagery like erotic sexual fantasies, may, for some people, serve as a release from tension and pain.

#### Action Steps:

- Forgive the trauma by opening up your heart
- Look for ways to find strength and courage for good health mentally, physically, emotionally and sexually
- Manifest and meditate upon a mind/body connection to achieve peace of your mind

#### Strategies to Overcome Sexual Dysfunction:

- Sometimes talking the problem out with your partner is enough. Women who learn to tell their partners about their sexual needs have a better chance of having a satisfying sex life.

- Try to make the solution fun--think of ways to inject a little romance and excitement into your sexual routine.

Some strategies women use to overcome sexual problems:

1. Set aside time to be alone or alone with your partner, without children and other distractions
2. Use erotic videos or books to increase stimulation
3. Masturbate to learn about what increases your arousal
4. Fantasize about what arouses you sexually; if appropriate, tell your partner about these fantasies
5. Use sensual massage and other forms of touch
6. Try new sexual positions or scenarios
7. Use relaxation techniques meditation or a bath before sex
8. Use a lubricant to relieve vaginal dryness

### Case History: Painful Intercourse

I'd like to share a case history of one of my clients who contacted me and asked if I could help her with her painful intercourse symptoms. I told her to make an appointment with her gynecologist first and have tests to make sure she had no hormonal issues, infections, cysts or any other medical condition contributing to her problem. The examination showed no traces of Vaginitis, Vaginismus, Vagina Agenesis, or Cysts. Her issues were diagnosed as psychological, but it was recommended that she see a physical pelvic therapist as her next step before seeking counseling. So, she worked with a pelvic floor specialist who used bio feedback, Kegel exercises, pelvic massage and dilators to help alleviate her pain during intercourse. But after six months of Bio-Feedback, Kegel Exercises, Pelvic Massage, & Muscle Stretching, the vaginal pain still occurs.

## Breakdown of Medical Solutions

Bio feedback uses electrodes to stimulate the pelvic floor muscles with external sensors and an internal perineometer that monitor muscle contraction. The idea is that by stimulating these muscles, you become more aware of how to exercise them on your own, without relying on your stomach and butt muscles to compensate. A strong pelvic floor is key for continence issues and of course great sex.

Kegel exercises squeeze and contract the pubococcygeus muscles. You can perform this by just squeezing as if you're cutting off the flow of urine. There are also Kegel balls and Ben Wa balls that you can insert before doing the exercise so that your muscles squeeze around the weight of the ball, giving more resistance. I always recommend buying Ben Wa balls that have a retrieval loop so that you don't have any trouble removing them. For a pelvic massage, the musculoskeletal system of the pelvic floor is accessed from the outside (abdominal wall, hip girdle) and the inside (hip rotator and pubococcygeus muscles). The massage targets both, with a goal of relaxing and stimulating the muscles into functioning properly. With vaginal muscle stretching, dilators or cones are used to gently stretch out the muscles to expand and become more responsive.

## Counseling

After these steps, she contacted my office again to make an appointment for counseling. I suggested that she bring her husband to the session because I find it helpful to observe the verbal interaction and body language of couples I am counseling. Besides, her problem did affect their relationship and he should be part of the solution process.

What we discovered was that they were not being open and honest with each other when it came to sex. Their sex drives were mismatched so she felt that he was always initiating sex when she didn't want it, which cause her to clamp up, emotionally and physically. The good news was that they were willing to work on the issue and find a solution. I suggested my couples Tantra course, and they began on a journey to intentionally shift their focus to positive emotions using all their senses and the six elements of Tantra – Breath, Movement, Sound, Muscle Lock, Intention and Attention.

## Tantra Benefits

Tantra dates all the way back to the ancient language of Sanskrit which is originally from India and offers sensual and enlightening terminology. The beginnings go back as far as 1500 BC; its writings concentrated on philosophical issues and ritualistic teachings such as the well-known Kama Sutra, a sexual manual from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is a powerful way to heal wounded sexuality and give you back your body and the quality of your life.

Tantra opens up energy centers in the body known as Chakras and can move sexual energy through them, culminating in bringing blocked love, sex and intimacy back into the mind and body connection.

- For women, Tantra can fulfill their sensual needs
- For men, Tantra can open up a new world to intimacy
- For couples, Tantra can give them the tools to become multi-orgasmic

## Healing Through Chakras

DR. AVA'S Chakra Chart	GLAND	ACTIVATES	EMPOWERS	AFFIRMATIONS
<b>CROWN</b>	Pineal	Right brain, central nervous system & right eye	Enlightenment & Wisdom	I feel connected with the Universe.
<b>THIRD EYE</b>	Pituitary	Left brain, nose, ears & left eye	Intuition & Vision	I am inspired and intuitive.
<b>THROAT</b>	Thyroid	Throat, jaw, neck, upper lungs & arms	Communication & Self Expression	I am heard and understood.
<b>HEART</b>	Thymus	Heart, lower lungs, upper back, hands, skin & blood	Compassion & Love	I love myself and I am loved.
<b>SOLAR PLEXUS</b>	Pancreas	Digestive system & lower back	Courage & Power	I am strong, confident and worthy.
<b>SACRAL</b>	Reproductive	Sexual organs, kidneys & bladder	Sexually Open & Creative	I am desirable and sexually uninhibited.
<b>ROOT</b>	Adrenal	Anus, prostate, testes, colon, & solid spinal column parts	Grounded & Secure	I am secure, safe and grounded.

We can sense some of the emotions from our chakras when we get a sudden lump in our throat or butterflies in our stomach from nerves or when we feel a warm stirring in our loins from being sexually aroused.

- There are 7 of these energy fields created by our body's endocrine glands.
- These are energy centers that correspond to nerve pathways in our body.
- They receive and absorb energy. When all the chakras are open, you feel inner peace and balance.

The crown chakra is our entire connection to the universe. When this is open, things happen instantly.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> eye is our intuition so when we know that we are going to find the perfect parking space or we see something ahead of time, it comes from our 3<sup>rd</sup> eye.

The heart chakra is responsible for our feeling of love and heartbreak.

The sacral chakra is our sexual center and here's another example of early programming that results in closure of this area. When a child is touching him or herself and the parent yells, "Stop that. You should be ashamed of yourself." that child will grow up with shame and guilt because the parent and authority figure that he or she loved made him feel bad about his or her sexuality.

The root chakra is connected to our feelings of security and comfort. If you don't feel like you fit in at a party or you have feelings of fear about money, the root chakra is lightly to be closed. Most fears come from the root chakra and they go back to our childhood, so they are imbedded in our subconscious mind. My personal experience is proof of that. I was raised in poverty, so I often had nightmares as a child about not having anywhere to live. Every now and then, I still have nightmares about being homeless.

### Healing Through Tantric Breath

There are 6 elements to Tantra, beginning with breath.

- Breath is the essence of life and there is no better way to energize the body than to increase your intake of oxygen.
- Breath regulates and relaxes the body so that it can heal.
- Breath can lower blood pressure. Breathing into the area of dysfunction can increase blood circulation.
- Breath elevates the immune and refreshes the lymphatic system.

- Breathing in unison with your partner can create a deeper form of unity.

Our lungs can hold 6 pints of oxygen, but most people only inhale 2 pints or less. In Tantra the word Prana mean energy and in Taoism, Chi means the same thing. Breathing is about energizing your mind, body and soul. Breathing in through the mouth produces an energy charge and breathing out of the mouth releases emotions. When a person cries, they have to breathe through their mouth. When you are sexually excited your breathing increases, so if you want to delay your climax, you must slow down your normal breathing pattern.

Exercise:

Synchronized breathing with your lover gives you the opportunity to connect on a conscious level, a respiratory level and breath to breath level resulting in a harmonious bonding experience. Put your thumbs in your ears and just listen to your own breath. You can't think about anything else.

I suggested to my client that she make a commitment to take long deep breaths while doing everyday activities, such as driving, while watching TV, reading, taking a bath and so on. Then I asked she and her husband to try synchronized breathing when they were together in bed and to imagine that their two sets of lungs become one.

### Healing Through Tantric Movement

The next Tantric element to explore was Movement. Lack of movement can leave your body feeling tight and it can restrict energy flow, blocking your emotions. So, I began by asking my clients to rub their hands together and feel the warm energy as they slowly brought them apart, then I asked them to put their hands against each other's to feel their energetic heat

nurture each other. I next introduced the couple to do some Sensate Focus which is non-sexual sensory touching. I asked them to place their hands on each other's hands and face, so that they could experience what it was like to touch each other without any sexual agenda.

You can show your partner how you want to be touched on his/her hands and arms. Then your partner can emulate that same touching style on you. Try touching each other's face in slow motion and communicate only through your eyes. Take turns receiving loving caresses and kisses from your active partner. When you are really truly giving you are also receiving the feeling.

#### Exercises:

- Rub your hands together and feel the warm energy as you slowly bring them apart, put your hands against your partner's hand and feel their heat.
- Practice Sensate Focus non-sexual touching
- Take turns receiving loving caresses and kisses from your active partner. When you are really truly giving you are also receiving the feeling.

#### Healing Through Tantric Sound

- Sound is like an inner massage; cells in your body respond to vibrations and release energy. Sound Vibration Heals The Body, Mind, Spirit.
- Music and words have power to decrease pain. Laughter helps blood vessels expand in order to increase blood flow.
- You can breakthrough inhibitions by releasing sounds and words.
- Sound releases energy and during lovemaking sounds release sexual energy. If you hold back the sounds you feel inside, it will manifest in resentment, anger and eventually pain. So for your own good

health, give yourself permission to express yourself through words and sounds and sigh, cry, shout or laugh when you need to.

I asked my clients to do some Entraining- which is when two people make the same sounds at the same time. For example, start by humming with your partner and emulate each other, then make up your own melody and let your partner follow. Feel how much of your body resonates. The deeper the humming, the more vibration you will feel.

When it comes to making love, sounds let your partner know that you are having a great time. Encourage your lover through words of praise, exhale sounds of ecstasy when you feel them and let the sounds of sex express your lovemaking.

### Healing Through Tantric Intention

Where intention goes, energy flows. And without intention there can be no follow through. Intention is about enjoying the journey as much as the destination, to relax the mind and body reducing your stress hormones in the process.

Exercises:

- Verbalize your intention for yourself to your partner. Let him/her know what your intentions are for your relationship.
- Then put your hand on his/her heart chakra and tell them how you propose to have a deeper heart connection with them. As you do this, maintain eye contact.

I asked the couple to share their intentions and state their desires to each other. You can also write down your intentions and give them to your partner so they can remind you of your intentions when you are not keeping them. It's healthy to make each other accountable for relationship promises.

## Healing Through Tantric Attention

Attention is the follow through to Intention. Attention is being 100% present for your partner. The eyes are the mirrors of your soul. Look into your partner's soul for a deeper heart connection. Create emotional support so you can create trust, soothe nerves and enhance relaxation. Where the attention goes, energy flows.

Exercises:

- Decide who will be the receiver and who will be the giver. The giver asks permission to look into his/her eyes by saying, "May I come in?" The receiver replies, "Yes" and allows the giver to look deeply into his/her soul. The receiver must open up the door and allow his/her partner to look inside and see the real you. Then the receiver becomes the giver. Discuss what you saw and how it felt when looking into each other's soul.
- Finish this sentence, "I want you to pay more attention to my..." Then show your lover how you want them to pay more attention to that part of your body.

## Healing Through Muscle Lock

Since my client had already worked with a professional pelvic floor therapist, I just asked her to continue exercising her PC muscles while doing everyday activities, when no one would know what she was doing but her.

The couple returned to my office once a week for 6 weeks to report on how they were doing practicing the 6 elements of Tantra.

Exercises:

- Identify your pubococcygeus or PC muscle which is the support muscle in the genitals. It's the muscle you use to stop the flow of

urination. It can be as thin as a pencil (when weak) or as thick as 3 fingers (when strong). PC muscle control enhances blood flow to the genitals, tightens the vagina, prevents incontinence, maintains prostate health, strengthens endurance and increases orgasmic intensity and control. Just like working out your pectorals and gluts, the PC muscle needs a daily workout so that it will be strong and toned.

- Do the following Kegel exercises 3 times a day 20 times each and within 3 to 6 weeks you'll notice greater sexual energy and stronger orgasms. Slow Kegels: tighten PC and hold for 6 seconds, Quick Kegels: tighten and relax PC rapidly

### Healing Emotional & Physical Pain Through Tantra

At their last session, my client told me that their relationship was more romantic and sensual. During sexual intercourse, she did not experience the kind of pain that she had before. On a scale of 1 to 10, her discomfort level was now between a 1 and a 2 instead of an 8 or higher.

- Tantra can help heal anorgasmia, painful intercourse and even erectile dysfunctions.
- Tantra is about expansion of ourselves and beyond.
- What if we believe that we can heal with the ability of the elements of Tantra. Our mind is our reality. And we manifest what we believe.
- Conceive it, Believe it and you will Achieve it.

### Male Sexual Dysfunction

Now let's talk about Male Sexual Dysfunction. These are some basic male sexual dysfunctions that prevent men from satisfying sexuality.

- Erectile dysfunction
- Impotence
- Premature ejaculation

## ➤ Delayed ejaculation

Mayo Clinic urologist Dr. Landon Trost thinks that the penis is a barometer of health issues – that if there are issues with the penis, there might also be heart, kidney or even brain health issues to watch out for. So pursuing treatment for these dysfunctions is not only good for your sex life, but could be vital in the maintenance of your overall health.

## Erectile Dysfunction

Erectile difficulty or disorder (ED) is defined by Fink in a systematic review of erectile dysfunction as: “the persistent inability to obtain or maintain an erection sufficient for satisfactory sexual performance” (Carroll, 2006).

Typically, when a male becomes aroused, the sponge-like caverns in the shaft of his penis fill with blood and cause an erection or hardening. When this physiological reaction does not occur, the person may be afflicted with erectile difficulty.

ED diagnosis rises with age reaching 30% of men after the age of 69 who experience the problem. Other studies report numbers as high as 75% of men who experience erectile difficulty or impotence at some point in their lives (Spark, 1991).

ED is often caused by psychological factors, as has been the case with many of my clients. Consulting a urologist, sex therapist, counselor or sexologist can be helpful to work out the issues underlying the triggers that lead up to the dysfunction. As a Love Coach you can't make a diagnosis, but you can help a man with ED by giving him permission to modify his beliefs and attitudes, allowing him to find his confidence again and de-stress about the pressure of the situation.

## Is Impotence Emotional

How do you determine if impotence is emotional and therefore treatable without medication? Try answering the questions on this slide:

- Do you get an erection while masturbating?
- Do you get an erection while sleeping?
- Do you get an erection first thing in the morning?
- Do you get erections with one lover and not another?
- Do you get an erection before penetration?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, then the problem is likely in your head. I often suggest visualization exercises to guide men through a process that stops stressful thoughts about love making. There are also sexual breathing exercises that have been proven to dramatically improve sexual performance.

## What Are the Emotional Causes?

The three most common causes of impotence are:

1. Stress
2. Unhappiness with your partner
3. Performance anxiety

Most of the time it is a combination of these factors, as the inability to perform can be stressful and bad for a relationship.

## Premature Ejaculation

Premature ejaculation occurs when a man ejaculates sooner than he or his partner would like, generally within one minute of penetration. It's accompanied by the inability to voluntarily delay ejaculation. PE can be very stressful for a man and even cause him to avoid sex altogether for fear

of failure. The way to determine if it's time to consult a doctor is when unsatisfying sexual experiences have become routine.

### Primary Premature Ejaculation

Primary premature ejaculation is when a man has never been able to hold an erection throughout his life, including early sexual encounters.

### Secondary Premature Ejaculation

Sometimes called “Acquired PE,” secondary premature ejaculation means that it's a new problem that's occurring after a lifetime of normal sexual function.

### Causes & Solutions to PE

There can be multiple reasons for premature ejaculation, and there are several solutions. Sometimes teenage masturbation practices can ‘train’ a young man to ejaculate quickly if they might be trying to “get it over with” quickly before their parents walk in, or simply rushing through the process because they haven't been told the benefits of taking their time.

But often there will be anxiety about sex that comes along with PE. Sometimes it can relate to a traumatic experience in the past such as sexual assault or family incest, or a misguided belief about sex that causes them to feel shame and not worthy of prolonged pleasure.

The first thing to do is some penis exercises! The squeeze technique and the stop / start technique are tried and true methods for good penis health, and you'll see how to do them in upcoming slides. Also, consult a primary care physician who will likely refer to a urologist and or a psychologist, psychiatrist or sex therapist.

There may be deep seated emotional trauma from past events, and these must get out into the open for healing to occur. I have received many referrals from doctors and helped many men with premature ejaculation. I've heard men explain away their PE by saying things like, "Honey, you excited me so much I just could not hold back," which might sound like flattery, but is ultimately not comforting to the partner who is unsatisfied. And of course, it's a form of denial by the man as well whereby he's justifying his behavior by making an excuse for climaxing so quickly.

I've also witnessed psychological damage from the partner's side where she will imply that her partner isn't "man enough" because he doesn't stay hard long enough. Then there's the added stress that many women can't climax from penetration alone and don't communicate this to their partner out of their own feelings of sexual inadequacies. This sets the couples up for failure as he will always fail to provide coital satisfaction for her.

There are temporary solutions like desensitizing creams which work well for some people, though they are a temporary solution. I recommend trying them while working out the deeper underlying issues. I've also recommended penis rings, which hold a condom on and trap the blood from the base of the penis, but it must be erect before putting it on.

### Delayed Ejaculation

Delayed ejaculation happens when men take an extended amount of time to ejaculate. This can result in frustration and anxiety around sexual encounters and may occur all the time (generalized) or just under certain circumstances. Primary delayed ejaculation means that the problem has been lifelong, while secondary delayed ejaculation means the problem was acquired after years of normal sexual function. Some men are not able to ejaculate at all.

## Causes

1. Excessive alcohol or drug use
2. Prostate surgery or issues
3. Urinary tract infections
4. Other medical issues
5. Lack of stimulation needed
6. Psychological issues like shame, depression, anxiety or intrusive thoughts

## Solutions

1. Consult a primary care physician
2. Consult a urologist
3. Consult a psychologist or psychiatrist
4. Consult a sex therapist, sex counselor or sexologist

Just a note that “lack of stimulation” could be that he’s not getting enough friction due to too much lubrication, or he can only ejaculate in a certain position or from oral sex, so communication is key.

## Other Sexual Dysfunctions for All Genders

There are many sexual dysfunctions that we’re not going into detail about in this book because they are covered in other e-books and courses at Loveology University®. You’ll find information on healing from sexual trauma in the Sexual Healing course, treatments for STDs in the Safer Adult Play course and desire discrepancy and power struggle solutions in many courses including Couples Enrichment and Pleasing A Man and Pleasing A Woman.

There are new discoveries and solutions for sexual health and dysfunctions, so I encourage you to research the latest articles by the Mayo Clinic and

Web MD, the Kinsey Institute and Psychology Today. But I want to list these here so that you can explore on our own with personal research.

### Special sexual difficulties

1. Sexual trauma
2. Fetishes
3. Sexual addiction and compulsion
4. Adult children of alcoholics issues
5. Dysphoria (confusion over gender identity)
6. Upset feelings over STDs
7. Poor sexual self-image
8. Sexual problems stemming from medical problems
9. Infertility

### Sexual problems within relationships

1. Desire discrepancies
2. Sexual conflicts
3. Power struggles
4. Ungratifying sexual experiences
5. Low Libido
6. Performance Anxiety
7. Orgasm Disorders
8. Peyronie's disease (which causes a bent penis)

### Case History: Premature Ejaculation

Now here's case history of a man who is suffering from premature ejaculation. Looks up PE online and is linked to Boston Medical Group. He takes the biothesiometry vibratory test which shows no hypersensitivity.

His ultra sound shows no vascular insufficiency. He is diagnosed as psychological.

He was treated with natural supplements for slightly low testosterone, along with a prescription for plenty of exercise including PC muscle excises. He talked to his partner about his fear of not satisfying her and she suggested they try Tantra as a solution they could work on together.

Techniques to Help Treat Premature Ejaculation:

1. Visualization
2. Squeeze technique
3. Stop-Start Technique
4. Penis Lifts

### Visualization Technique for PE

For men who want to last longer or overcome premature ejaculation, visualization accompanied by breathing techniques can help to calm the mind and gain control of the body. Take a deep breath in. Hold. Deep breath out. As you do this imagine the sexual energy of your body moving away from your genitals. Breath in. Hold. Breath out. Change the rate and depth of your normal breathing to long, slow exhalations. Deep breath in, hold, now slowly exhale like a push, spreading your sexual energy out to other parts of your body and away from your penis. You can also practice while you masturbate, changing your rhythm to 6 shallow thrusts and one deep thrust. Six shallow. One deep. Open your eyes and look at your body. Pay attention to where you are, how you're breathing and the new pattern of your movements. Interrupting old patterns can be a powerful way to start new ones!

Summary:

1. Visualize your breath and sexual energy moving away from the genitals.
2. Change the rate and depth of your normal breathing with long, slow exhalations.
3. Change your rhythm to 6 shallow thrusts for each deep thrust with eyes open.

### Squeeze Technique

The squeeze technique is another or complimentary exercise for the same effect—slowing down your orgasm. Masters and Johnson, two well-known sexologists, originally called it the pinch technique but ...'ouch'. I like to use gentle squeezing instead. Before ejaculation is imminent, squeeze the end of the penis where the glans joins the shaft just below the corona.

Hold the squeeze for several seconds. After squeezing, stop the stimulation for about 30 seconds then resume masturbation or intercourse again. This will help extend your erection. You may squeeze the base of the penis, stop stimulation for 30 seconds and then resume too. Base or neck, the choice is yours. Try both and see which one is best for your body.

1. This technique (also called the “Pinch” Technique) was developed by Masters and Johnson.
2. Before ejaculation is imminent, squeeze the end of the penis where the glans joins the shaft.
3. Hold the squeeze for several seconds. After squeezing, stop the stimulation for 30 seconds or so and then resume masturbation or intercourse again. This will help extend your erection.
4. You may also squeeze the base of the penis, stop the stimulation for 30 seconds or so, and then resume.

## Stop-Start Technique

The stop-start technique is a third option for lengthening the time before orgasm. To prolong masturbation and or intercourse you do just as it indicates. You stop and then start again. The trick is to stop stimulation before the point of inevitability, when your body says, “too late, I’m already set to come.” And then comes. Before ejaculation is imminent, stop moving your body, open up your eyes and if you are with a partner, ask your partner to stop moving too. After several seconds, you can resume masturbation or intercourse. With practice, you can learn to keep yourself at a high level of arousal, and when orgasm does finally occur, it will be much more intense.

1. You can prolong masturbation and intercourse using the Stop-Start Technique.
2. Before ejaculation is imminent, stop moving your body, open up your eyes and if you are with a partner, ask your partner to stop moving too.
3. After several seconds, you can resume masturbation or intercourse.
4. With practice, you can learn to keep yourself at a high level of arousal, so when orgasm does occur, it will be much more intense.

## Penis Lifts

For any man who wants an advanced workout, consider penis lifts to help last longer. Start by placing a light scarf, handkerchief, or tissue on your erect penis; then raise it up and down like a weight for as long as you can. Place a hand towel over the base of the penis and use your PC muscle to lift it up and down. Move the hand towel to the head of the penis and raise it up and down as many times as you can. Please note that working out any muscle group strenuously causes aches. It is best to work up to these lifts through Kegels and to choose less sets and reps at the beginning.

1. Place a light scarf, handkerchief or tissue on your erect penis; then raise it up and down like a weight for as long as you can.
2. Place a hand towel over the base of the penis and use your PC muscle to lift it up and down.
3. Move the hand towel to the head of the penis and raise it up and down as many times as you can.

### Hands-Free Orgasm

Since the brain is the most erotic organ in the body, it should be no surprise that you can think your way to orgasm. Sexual thoughts can activate the brain just like sexual touching does (If you've ever enjoyed looking at porn, then you already know the benefits)

Visuals of people having sex can automatically trigger your body into a state of arousal, making women wet and giving men erections. If you continued to watch erotica without touching yourself, you could still experience a full-blown orgasm. Visuals like porn and audio like dirty talk can enhance orgasms for couples. Even if you're not into porn, you can achieve a mind over body orgasm by attending to all of your five senses.

To begin your hands-free orgasm, use only your imagination to think about what your partner's tongue would feel like between your legs and what he or she smells like when fully aroused. Visualize what they look like naked. Imagine touching, kissing, licking and tasting his or her body. Hear your partner moaning with pleasure. Become aware of your own feelings as you let your excitement build. The trick here is not to touch yourself, but to let the ebb and flow of your orgasm take you on a mental journey to sexual ecstasy. This can also be fun to do with a partner as a safe sex activity.

Giving ourselves permission to have sexual pleasure is one of the most rewarding stages of healing and recovery. We take back what's ours, we reclaim our bodies, our desires, ourselves. Taking control of our bodies through self-pleasure helps us to complete the exorcism of the aggressor over our sexual thoughts and natural desires.



## CHAPTER 6 - Healing from Toxic Relationships

Toxic relationships damage our ability to thrive and allow ourselves the full spectrum of joy and pleasure. Whether it's a domestic abuse situation that's held us back or a co-dependent relationship that went on way too long, we feel trapped and paralyzed to move forward in the way that would benefit us the most.

### Healing from Abuse from a Narcissist or Psychopath

Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental condition that manifests as an over-inflated sense of self-importance and extreme lack of empathy for other people. They take advantage of others and believe that they are superior, using manipulative tactics to belittle others. They often dominate conversations and behave arrogantly, exaggerating their accomplishments or achievements. Unsurprisingly, narcissists often cannot sustain personal relationships, or have deep conflicts within them. For the partners of narcissists, this can be a painful experience.

Narcissist expert Shahida Arabi has written bestselling books on the subject of healing from a narcissist or psychopath. In her article called 7 Gaslighting Phrases Malignant Narcissists, Sociopaths and Psychopaths Use To Silence You, Translated on psychcentral.com, she outlines these key phrases that can act as a warning sign for partners of narcissists. If you've heard these phrases before and have been tempted to blame yourself to "people please" your partner, this could be a wake-up call.

All the phrases on this list are projections about how the narcissist actually feels about him or herself. When they say, "You have mental health issues," they understand that it's they themselves who have mental health issues, but they need to deflect that truth and keep you insecure instead.

When they say "It was just a joke, you're too sensitive" they are disguising their own abusive behavior and invalidating your experience of abuse. Arabi

“translates” each one of these phrases in the article, explaining how this abusive scenario takes place.

Seven Phrases Narcissists use to manipulate their partners  
(from Shahida Arabi, author of *Becoming the Narcissist's Nightmare*)

1. You're crazy/you have mental health issues
2. You need help
3. You're just insecure and jealous.
4. You're too sensitive/you're overreacting.
5. It was just a joke. You have no sense of humor.
6. You need to let it go. Why are you bringing this up?
7. You're the problem here, not me.
8. I never said or did that. You're imagining things.

### Mistakes Therapists Make Treating Victims of Narcissists

Many partners of narcissistic abusers get out of their relationships and seek healing from a therapist, but as Arabi points out, therapists can sometimes compound the problem by misunderstanding the unique healing process of these victims. Here are her 5 ways that therapists can “miss the mark” when treating victims of narcissistic behavior. As a love or relationship coach, it's important that you are armed with this knowledge. Though you may not be a mental health professional, you may be working with a client who is in therapy alongside your coaching, so you want to be aware of these issues.

Number one in Arabi's list is that treating a breakup with a narcissist as if it's a normal break up is a big mistake. This minimizes the abusive behavior and invalidates the victim who is then led to believe that all the painful manipulation was par for the course in an ordinary relationship. This is not true. Narcissistic personality disorder is a known mental health issue and is not compatible with “normal” behavior.

Next, therapists should not attempt to heal the survivor quickly. It takes time for the victim to reconcile the two sides of the abuser they've been dealing with during the relationship: the person they fell in love with who was charming and flattering, and that same person undermining their happiness with manipulative tactics. There's a cognitive dissonance that is created when a person is tasked with reconciling two realities at once, and they need to talk about it and discuss it at length. This process shouldn't be rushed.

It's a natural tendency for therapists to focus on their client, rather than the person their client has broken up with, but again, the victim of a narcissist needs to process the abuser's bad behavior much more in depth than in the case of an ordinary break up. Focusing too much on the client's role in the relationship can border on 'victim-blaming,'

Finally, some therapists can be charmed by the abuser themselves and side with them against the victim. This is why couples therapy is not recommended for abusive relationships. Couples therapy is useful when both parties can take responsibility, but when one person is abusive, that changes the dynamic. I have counseled perpetrators of domestic violence in my practice and found that it was much more helpful to see them alone, without their partner who had suffered the abuse. Abusive relationships are simply not a level playing field, and the couples therapy dynamic depends on an equal footing.

### “Fawning” or “People-Pleasing”

I came across a blog by the queer writer and mental health advocate Sam Dylan Finch that spoke to me so loudly, I needed to include his information in this course! He had an epiphany in his own life about why he kept getting trapped in toxic relationships. He discovered that his

‘people-pleasing’ tendencies were interfering with his own happiness as he sought to recreate the abusive formative relationships of his childhood.

“Fawning” is the behavior of obsessively pursuing the affection of someone who is emotionally unavailable in order to fulfil a toxic need to ‘earn’ love or validation. This ‘people pleaser’ individual has internalized “the idea that if they were perfectly good or well-behaved, they could minimize conflict and secure love and attachment. It’s an excessive relinquishing of personal power, driven by fear and a desire for validation.” The fawn doesn’t feel fulfilled unless he or she is “earning” their love or validation, which sets them up on a hamster wheel of neediness that manifests as obsessively putting the needs of others first. The fawn will ignore loving, emotionally available friends or lovers in favor of abusive types because he or she is playing out a dynamic that is ingrained deeply.

#### Symptoms:

1. Excessively nice & overly concerned with happiness of others
2. Overextending and saying ‘yes’ to everything asked of you
3. Ignoring your own boundaries, intuition or needs
4. Tendency to restrict emotionally with abusive person (not share too much) and then purge emotionally (unload resentments) on a trusted person when bottled up emotions become too much

#### People-Pleasing Checklist

Use this list of signs to determine whether you or your client might be in a “people-pleasing” situation.

#### Psychology Today: 10 Signs You’re a People Pleaser by Amy Morin

1. You pretend to agree with everyone.
2. You feel responsible for how other people feel.

3. You apologize often.
4. You feel burdened by the things you have to do.
5. You can't say no.
6. You feel uncomfortable if someone is angry at you.
7. You act like the people around you.
8. You need praise to feel good.
9. You go to great lengths to avoid conflict.
10. You don't admit when your feelings are hurt.

### Healing from Divorce

Some people think that divorce is more traumatic than the death of a spouse because your ex-partner is still around to make you suffer! It can be so painful to untangle yourself from a union that may involve children, pets, property and more, but even if there aren't any tangible elements to divide, it takes a profound toll on the emotions of both parties.

Relationships break up for many different reasons, and each healing process is unique. But one thing that's the same for everyone across the board, is that you must reach out and talk about what happened in order to heal.

Not every relationship is meant to last. Divorce is a painful process, but it can be a steppingstone to finding someone more worthy of your love. But if you don't process the grief that you are experiencing, you might experience a slower recovery than necessary, so you don't repeat patterns.

### 10 Ways to Heal More Quickly

1. Talk to a friend about your grief
2. Hire a therapist or coach to guide you through this painful time
3. Focus on what makes you happy
4. Remember why you broke up

5. Do an inventory of the good and bad in the marriage, so that you break the pattern next time
6. Get away – take a vacation to get a different perspective.
7. Make some personal changes – like new haircut or clothes
8. Put away your wedding photos, you can deal with them later
9. Don't make any rash decisions – give yourself time
10. Remember that even though it hurts now, you will be happy again!

### Healing from Toxic Relationships Exercise

The following exercises are excellent for healing from a toxic relationship but can also be used for many types of healing:

1. Turn down the negativity volume
2. Palm of your hand forgiveness Exercise
3. Role-playing
4. Practice empathy
5. Kensho / Satori growth
6. Identify Your Pleasure
7. Surrender to Your Pleasures
8. Unleash Your Power
9. Pattern Tree / Sample
10. Positive Self-Talk / Example
11. Art Therapy / Vision Board

### Turn Down the Negativity Volume

Toxic relationships are so compelling because they keep you in a constant state of drama. If you find yourself saying things like, “I can't believe she said that to me!” or “I've thought of a great come-back for next time!” then you know you're in a negative feedback loop where no one wins. To rise above the temptation to “win” or be “right,” try simply turning down the volume in your head when these thoughts overtake you. There are many

more productive thoughts with which to replace negative ones, and it's a choice to give that toxic person more of your time by allowing them to occupy your brain. So, TURN DOWN THE VOLUME!

### Palm of Your Hand Forgiveness Exercise

Imagine that the toxic person in your life is suddenly very tiny in stature and standing on the palm of your hand. Speak your forgiveness to them out loud, and then blow them away with your breath. Diminishing their size helps you visualize diminishing their impact on your emotions and blowing them away sends them out of your life metaphorically, so you can imagine them out of your life for good in reality.

### Role-Playing

Purpose: To reach a new level of closure and understanding of the victim's feelings & emotions.

Why it works: Because it brings the abuse back into the present and allows victims to experience closure while talking to their abuser.

How to facilitate it: Designate the 'proxy' for the abuser, whether it's an empty chair or a puppet, and ask the victim to begin a conversation. Encourage them to tell their perpetrator exactly how they experienced their abuse and all the ways there were hurt and are still hurting. This is their chance to say all the things they've had pent up inside them since the abuse took place.

What the benefits are: It helps victims express themselves and discover their deepest resentments and fears about their abusers, which allows them to heal and move on because they've identified the pain more accurately and understand themselves more clearly.

Role-playing can be a very effective method for sexual healing. One way to do it is through the Gestalt “empty chair” technique where the victim sits across from an empty chair and imagines their abuser sitting in it and listening to what they have to say. Beginning a dialogue with your abuser can lead to a greater understanding of feelings and communication because it brings the victim into the present moment of their abuse. They may also be able to experience different aspects of their abusive event which can give them new insight into how they’ve been processing their pain. It can be a wonderful collaboration between the coach and client, and a way to move from just talking about it to gaining in-the-moment awareness of what happened in the past.

You don’t have to use an empty chair - you can use a puppet or a stuffed animal or a photo of the person – just not a living thing.

### Practice Empathy

We must learn to treat ourselves with the same kindness that we offer to the ones we love. We have to be understanding and allow for errors because it is in these mistakes that personal growth happens. Self-love is the basis for finding love.

- Have empathetic conversations by listening carefully to others and responding with your supportive emotions for mutual understanding.
- Practice empathy with people whose beliefs are different than yours and try to step into their shoes to understand their thinking.
- Create empathy with your partner by fully accepting his or her emotions and perceptions and validate them with a nurturing hug.

### Kensho / Satori Growth (Dr. Michael Beckwith)

The founder of the Agape International Spiritual Centre, Dr. Michael Bernard Beckwith talks about two paths to growth, Kensho and Satori.

These are Buddhist concepts that both can be translated as enlightenment or growth, but each by different means. Kensho is growth by pain, and Satori is growth by insight.

When you have toxic people in your life, instead of letting them drag you down, learn from the negativity by asking yourself how this experience can help you grow? For example, when you break up with someone, it's very painful at first, but then you can move from pain to pleasure once you realize that you are better off without that person. Your self-growth in this example is identifying a negative pattern in the partners you choose, and making a shift to choose partners who are more worthy.

Kensho is a slow growth from temporary pain, whereas Satori is an instant, sudden insight. An example of a Satori moment for me was the moment of my husband's death. He had cancer for two years so it wasn't unexpected. I watched him take his final breath, and the expression on his face was the most fearful I have ever seen in my entire life. So my epiphany was the realization that I want to die peacefully with a smile on my face, without any fear. This became my new challenge, my new reason for living, which I believe took me to a new level of enlightenment.

Exercise:

Kensho – Growth by pain. Painful experiences and suffering slowly push you to learn and grow toward enlightenment.

Ask yourself: What can I learn from this pain, how will it help me grow?

Satori - Growth by insight. An epiphany or enlightening experience that shifts your way of seeing the world in a more enlightened way.

Ask yourself: What new challenges can I take on with this new insight?

Identify Your Pleasure

Get to know your body inside out and discover what gives you pleasure, and what turns you off. Doing this allows you to not only understand your own pleasure, but to help future partners give you pleasure the way you enjoy it.

1. Identify areas of your own body that turn you on and turn you off.
2. Communicate your erogenous zones to your partner.
3. Use the Gingerbread graphic to illustrate the areas you enjoy to be touched & don't like to be touched.

✓ for Yes

✗ for No

## Surrender to Your Pleasure

Masturbation is the epitome of pleasure. It's a creative process—an exploration of what makes you feel best. Masturbation is a freedom of expression that allows you to pleasure yourself on your own terms. It allows you to explore your sexual fantasies & is an acceptable selfish act. It is a gift you have just for yourself. Giving this precious gift of self-love and self-acceptance is key to living a healthy sexual life. Mindful Masturbation is when you clear your mind of distractions and focus purely on self-pleasure.

Benefits to masturbation:

- Masturbation is a perfect form of self-love & exploration.
- Is associated with improved cardiovascular health & lower risk of type-2 diabetes.
- Helps relieve pain & flushes the old bacteria from the cervix. It's the body's way of getting the bacteria out.
- Mutual masturbation is a safe & erotic way to show your partner how you want to be touched.

## Unleash Your Power

Think of an adjective that describes how you want to be perceived by someone you are attracted to and use your body language to communicate that perception. When you communicate with someone, your behavior divides up this way:

- 50% Body Language
- 40% Sound & Projection
- 10% Action

## Questions for the Universe

Instead of just affirmations, ask the universe aspirational questions like:

- Why am I so successful?

- Why am I so loved?
- Why am I so blessed?
- Why am I so healthy?

We've focused a lot on writing down and repeating positive words and sayings, which is very helpful. But in this twist on the same idea, you ask aspirational questions to the universe that take for granted you've already achieved all the success that you're striving for. For example, you can ask, "Why am I so successful? Why am I so loved? Why am I so blessed? Why am I so healthy? With this affirmation, you're confirming that you've reached the goals you were aiming for. And asking why takes your mind to the next level because it's a more thought-provoking.

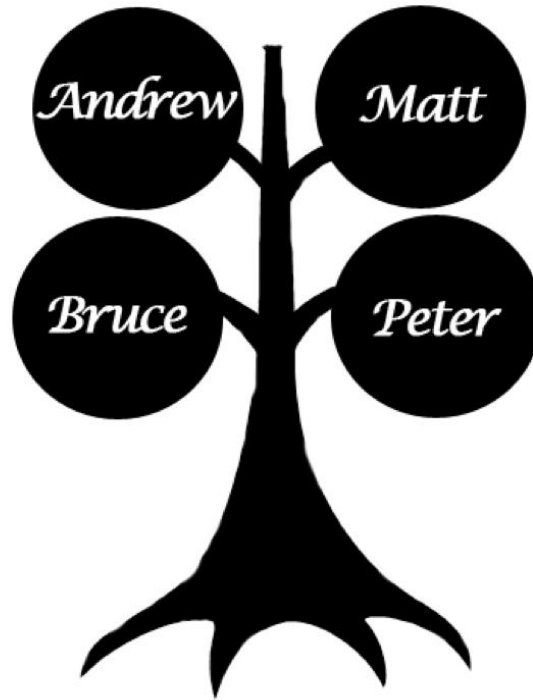
### Pattern Tree

**Purpose:** Use a Pattern Tree as a visual aid that shows you or your client's repetitive choices in dating partners and their behaviors in relationships.

**Why it works:** Because it identifies negative patterns that may be repetitive and unproductive when ignored and gives the client the opportunity to break them.

**How to facilitate it:** If you are a Love Coach, tell your client to draw a tree with circles for leaves. In chronological order, have them put the name of each person they have had significant relationships with inside the circles. Use a Pattern Tree as a visual aid that shows your or your client's repetitive choices in dating partners and their behaviors in relationships. For example, always choosing an aggressive partner or choosing them based primarily on physical attraction, never initiating intimacy or asking for what you want. This works because it identifies negative patterns that may be repetitive and unproductive when ignored and gives the client the opportunity to break them. To facilitate this, tell your client to draw a tree with circles for leaves.

In chronological order, have them put the name of each person they have had significant relationships with inside the circles.



Here's a sample of a Pattern Tree. Ask yourself or client to give you a brief overview of which relationships were good, and which were bad, if any. Discuss any possible negative patterns you or they can see and share at least one thing that you or they would now change from a negative into a positive pattern. Find out if your client wants to break their patterns and validate whatever they choose to do. Then, share the benefits and consequences of their pattern behavior. For example, always choosing someone based on their looks is okay, but they may not have all of the other qualities you want in an ideal partner. Is there any room for compromise?

What the benefits are: to learn how to change negative patterns into positive ones and to break them when necessary. When repetitive patterns are ignored, they may result in unproductive and often unhealthy relationships. You may have to refer the client to a therapist if their negative patterns are destructive or dangerous.

### Positive Self-Talk

Purpose: To empower yourself or your client through positive self-talk and eliminate negative self-talk

Why it works: Because what you think and feel will ultimately manifest into your reality, so staying focused on positive self-talk will create positive experiences

How to facilitate it: Ask your client to write a list of all the negative things people have ever said to them or about them. Then ask them to write a list on a separate piece of paper of all the positive things people have said to them or about them. Finally, tell the client to add their own self negative and positive talk onto the two lists. Once they have finished writing, tell them to take one last look at the list of negative talk, read it out loud and then tear it up into little pieces, never to be seen again. Finally, ask them to read the positive list to you and share the emotions that come up for them

What the benefits are: Claiming power over negative self-talk and replacing it with positive, grateful, successful talk improves mental, physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual wellbeing.

## Positive Self-Talk Example

### Undesired Situation

I am trapped in an elevator with a physically powerful man who could easily attack me and rape me. I'm suffocated by feelings of fear and want to flee, but there is nowhere to run in the tiny elevator as we move between floors. I feel helpless, powerless and foolish for putting myself in this situation.

### Positive Ideal Situation

I take the opportunity to remind myself that I am a black belt in Shotokan Karate and have many skills, including communication at my disposal to use against this man, who likely is not a rapist who will attack me. I can easily keep my fears under control by knowing that I'm not powerless or helpless. I am in control of my body and my life.

## Art Therapy – Vision Board

Vision boards are a wonderful way to project positivity onto your future and open yourself to new vistas and options. To do this exercise, you will need a poster board, magazines, scissors, glue, pen and paper. Use the pen and paper to make a list of things you'd like to see in your future, and then create them visually with cut out images from magazines. This could be anything from a happy family sitting down together for a meal, or a safe workplace that you would love to go to everyday. You don't have to limit yourself in any way. Have you always wanted a house by the beach? Go ahead and put that on there! This is the time to imagine yourself in the future doing exactly what you want to do to, resulting in maximum joy. There are no limits to the blissful fulfillment that you can imagine for yourself and eventually experience in your life.

Exercise:

Create a collage of pictures or series of written goals with pictures that helps your client to envision getting what they want.



## CHAPTER 7 - Healing from Addictions

Alcohol and drug abuse are common reactions to abuse of any kind, trauma or tragedy. It's a natural reaction to want to numb the pain whether it's physical, emotional or mental. The problem with self-medication is that it masks the root of the problem. Rather than dealing with core issues, an addict will mask them instead, pushing them down where they inevitably bubble up in inappropriate ways.

According to the Addiction Center, over 20 million Americans over the age of 12 have an addiction (not including cigarettes) and 100 people die every day from drug overdoses. This rate has tripled in the past 20 years as the opioid crisis has risen steadily with over-prescription of painkillers and unethical drug companies exploiting their market and lying about the addictive nature of opioids.

Many celebrities have died from overuse of pain killers and mismanaged prescriptions, including Prince and Michael Jackson.

### Addiction Statistics:

- Over 20 million Americans over the age of 12 have an addiction (excluding tobacco).
- 100 people die every day from drug overdoses. This rate has tripled in the past 20 years.
- Over 5 million emergency room visits in 2011 were drug related.
- 2.6 million people with addictions have a dependence on both alcohol and illicit drugs.
- 9.4 million people in 2011 reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs.
- 6.8 million people with an addiction have a mental illness.
- Rates of illicit drug use is highest among those aged 18 to 25.

- Over 90% of those with an addiction began drinking, smoking or using illicit drugs before the age of 18.

### Impact of Addictions on Relationships

In addition to the obvious health risks for the substance abuser, addiction also has a negative effect on intimate relationships. According to the AAMFT (American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy), these are the common danger signals:

- Continual arguing about drinking or drug use and the effect on home life eg. Staying out late, money problems, avoiding responsibilities
- ‘Covering’ or making excuses for a partner who is abusing alcohol or drugs eg. Calling their workplace to report that they’re ‘sick’
- A partner reporting that they are drinking or doing drugs to reduce stress of being accused of drinking or drug use
- Drinking and/or drug use is the only thing the couple does together, or needing to be drunk or high to become intimate
- Domestic violence or “angry touching” by one partner to another
- Isolation from family and friends

### Solutions & Exercises

These exercises offer a few solutions to healing from addictions.

1. 5-Minute Emotional Tune-up
2. Emotional Barometer / List of Emotions
3. Finish This Sentence
4. Winning Formula for Handling Emotions
5. Banish self-defeating words & phrases
6. Repeat positive words & phrases

### 5-Minute Emotional Tune-up

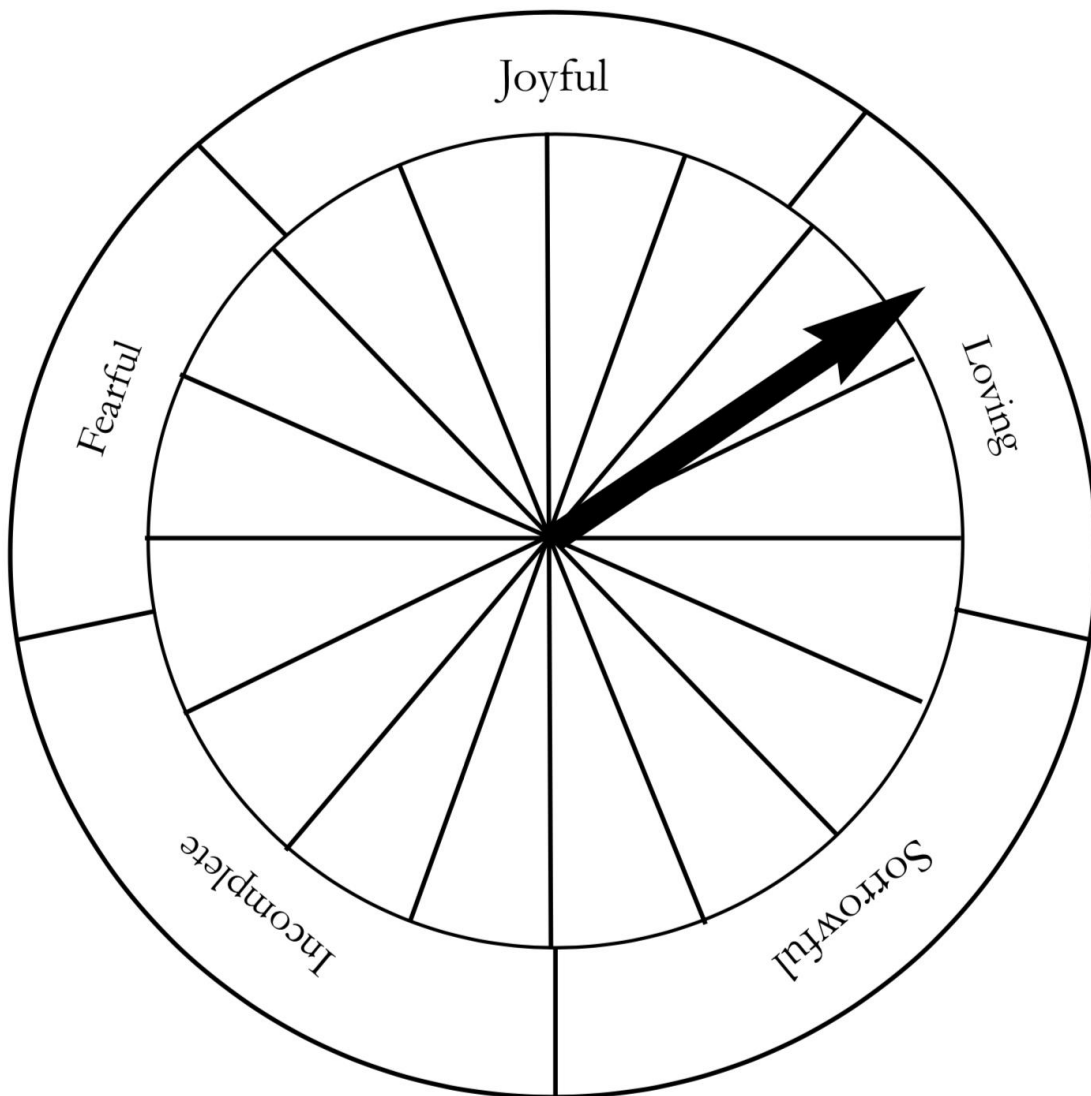
Dr. Brenda Wade, a clinical psychologist and author of *Love Lessons: A Guide to Transforming Relationships*, uses a practical, everyday analogy to explain the interaction between emotion and energy. “When you take the time to experience and express your emotions, energy is released. On the other hand, unexpressed emotion becomes blocked, stuck energy. This is kind of like a car that needs a tune-up to be fuel-efficient and to run smoothly.”

#### Exercises:

1. Take a deep breath.
2. Place your hand on your heart.
3. Ask yourself, “What am I feeling today?”
4. Let yourself say the emotions aloud or write them down. The key is to experience and express your feelings.
5. Ask yourself, “What do you need to do, to be or have in order to feel emotionally supported and connected to yourself and those in your life?”

## Emotional Barometer

One way to identify the impact of abuse is to keep a running tab on your own emotions. I've noticed that many people allow their feelings and emotions to go unnoticed until there's something wrong, or until a trigger hits and they fall apart all over again. One way I combat this is something I created called "Your Emotional Barometer."



## EMOTION BAROMETER

### Joyful

accepted	fine	optimistic
aglow	free	orgasmic
alive	fulfilled	overjoyed
amused	glad	passionate
beautiful	glowing	playful
brave	good	pleasant
capable	gratified	pleased
cheerful	great	relieved
competent	happy	riding high
confident	high	satisfied
contented	hopeful	sensational
courageous	humorous	sensual
curious	in high spirits	serene
delighted	jazzed	sexy
eager	jovial	silly
ecstatic	light-hearted	strong
elated	loving	terrific
elevated	lustful	thankful
enthusiastic	marvelous	thrilled
euphoric	neat	turned on
excited	on cloud nine	up
exhilarated	on top of the world	witty
fantastic		wonderful

## EMOTION BAROMETER

### Loving

admiration	hold dear	respectful
adoration	hopeful	safe
affection for	idolize	satisfied
affectionate	infatuated	secure
attached to	like	self-reliant
calm	lovable	sentimental
captivated by	loved	special
caring	loyal	supportive
cherish	needed	sympathetic
close	passionate	taken with
comfortable	peaceful	tender
compassionate	positive toward	tenderness toward
concerned	prize	trust
desirable	protective	trusted
devoted to	proud	turned on
enamored	quiet	understanding
fond of	regard	understood
forgiving	relaxed	valuable
friendly	relieved	warm
generous	respected	worship
grateful		worthwhile

## EMOTION BAROMETER

### Sorrowful

alienated	empty	remorseful
ashamed	foolish	rotten
awful	frustrated	sad
bad	gloomy	shy
barren	glum	sorry
bashful	grief	subdued
blah	grim	tearful
bleak	hopeless	terrible
blue	horrible	tired
bored	humiliated	troubled
defeated	hurt	unappreciated
dejected	ignored	unattractive
demoralized	in despair	uncomfortable
dependent	isolated	uneasy
depressed	lonely	unfulfilled
desolate	lost	unhappy
despair	low	upset
devastated	melancholy	uptight
disappointed	miserable	vulnerable
discouraged	nostalgic	weary
dismal	pessimistic	weepy
distressed	regretful	wishy-washy
downcast	rejected	worn-out
embarrassed		worried

## EMOTION BAROMETER

### Incomplete

anxious	impotent	powerless
apprehensive	inadequate	preoccupied
ashamed	incapable	pressured
awkward	indecisive	puzzled
bewildered	ineffective	rejected
confused	inefficient	restless
crippled	inept	self-conscious
defeated	inferior	shaky
defensive	inhibited	small
deficient	insecure	stubborn
detached	insignificant	stupid
emasculated	intense	touchy
embarrassed	irritated	ugly
exasperated	lacking	unable
finished	lacking confidence	uncertain
foolish	like a failure	unfit
frantic	misunderstood	unimportant
good for nothing	muddled	unsure of yourself
guilty	needed	useless
helpless	neglected	vulnerable
hopeless	no good	washed up
humiliated	numb	weak
immobilized	overwhelmed	whipped
impatient		worthless

## EMOTION BAROMETER

### Fearful

afraid	frightened	resentful
alarmed	furious	risky
angry	hateful	scared
annoyed	hesitant	self-conscious
anxious	horrified	shaky
apprehensive	hostile	shy
awkward	ill at ease	stage fright
bashful	intimidated	tense
bitter	irritable	terrified
butterflies	jealous	terror-stricken
claustrophobic	jittery	threatened
contemptuous	jumpy	tight
defensive	mean	timid
desperate	nervous	trapped
disgusted	on edge	uncomfortable
distrustful	pained	uneasy
disturbed	panicky	unlovable
doubtful	paralyzed	unsure
dread	petrified	victimized
edgy	phony	violated
embarrassed	prejudiced	vulnerable
envious	pressured	worried
	provoked	

## Finish This Sentence

It's healthy when emotions change, but getting stuck in anger, fear or anxiety is unhealthy. Be aware of and validate your emotions. You can do this by writing them down, drawing pictures of them, and expressing them to yourself out loud.

Finding the right word to describe how you're feeling can be liberating.

Exercise: Finish this sentence, claiming three adjectives

"I feel..." Examples: Lonely, insecure, unloved, stupid, sad

Exercise: Finish this sentence with three positive qualities about yourself "I am..."

Examples: passionate, hopeful, loving, compassionate, perfect

## Winning Formula for Handling Emotions

By checking in with your emotional barometer, you can track your progress to finding love, peace, and happiness. Then you can employ the Winning Formula for Handling Emotions – Awareness, Expression, Action.

You may not always be able to think your way out of a bad mood, and that's okay. But it's important to be aware that you are in control of your emotions. And remember what Eleanor Roosevelt once said: "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

Handling emotions is also key for perpetrators who might be able to control their violent impulses by rationally defusing out of control emotions that lead to bad deeds.

How should you handle emotions? Here is a three-step winning formula: Awareness, Expression, Action.

### Awareness (your mind)

Take time to figure out what you're feeling and identify it. Is there more than one emotion you're feeling? Which ones are positive and which ones are negative? Can you replace the negative and focus on the positive, using meditation or writing a gratitude list of things that you are grateful for in your life?

### Expression (your action)

How are you expressing your emotions? Be aware of your current attitude and whom it might be affecting and how they are perceiving you. Are you creating a positive impression that's resulting in a soothing cocktail of feel-good hormones, or are you a raging ball of stress, letting your cortisol shoot through the roof? If the latter, can you take a deep breath and find a way to calm yourself? Then choose a different emotion to express by asking yourself, how do I want to be perceived by this person (my friend, my partner, my children or my business colleague)? For example, if you want to be perceived as an empathetic and caring person, then make eye contact and be prepared to listen more than talk.

### Action (physical consequence)

How do your emotions manifest in your life's current situation? Can you relax your mind and body with a warm bath, or connect with your partner and have an intimate conversation after a long hug? Allow yourself to make the connection between your emotional state and what happens in your daily life.



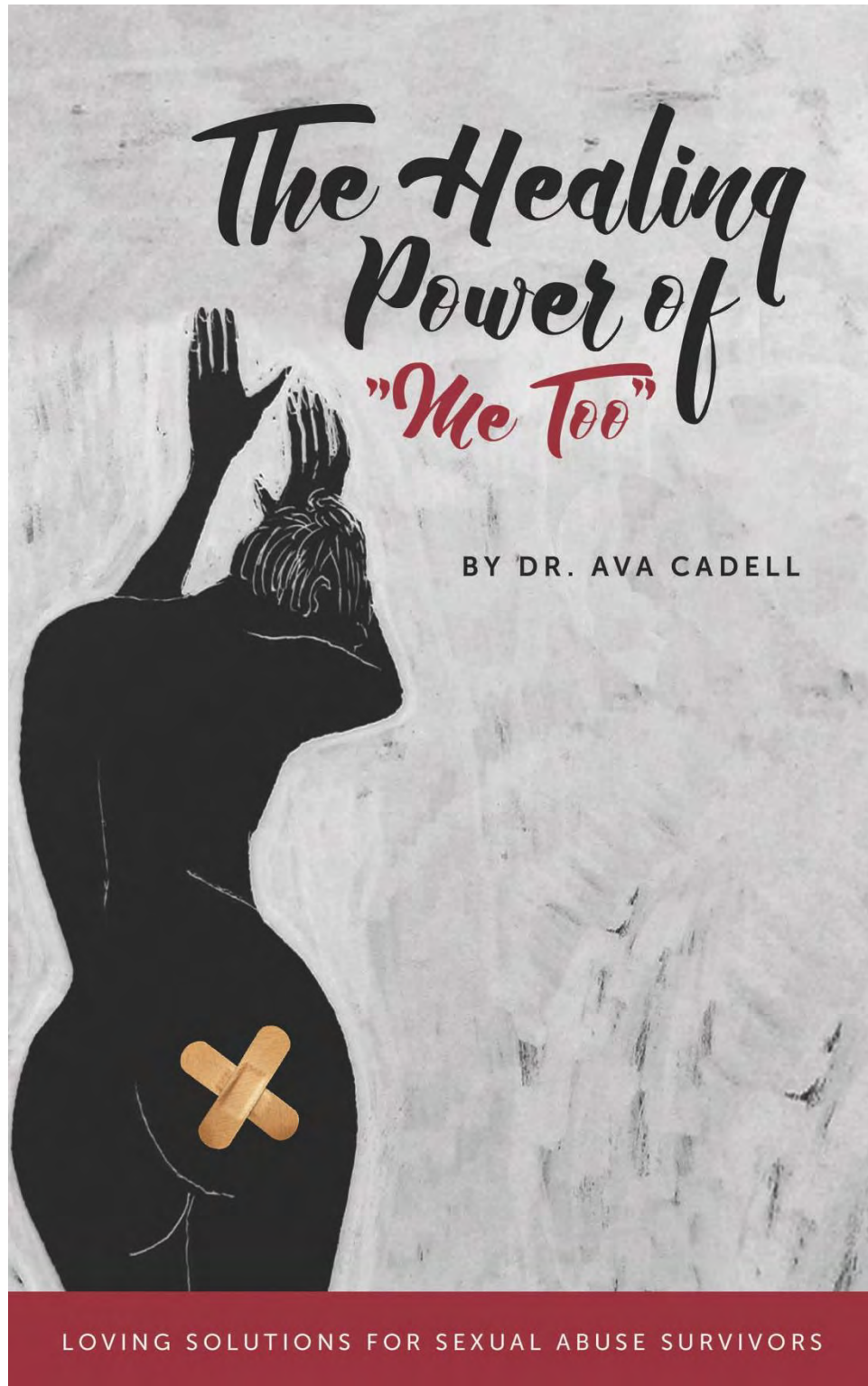
## Banishing Self-Defeating Words & Phrases

Repeating negative phrases about yourself is counter-productive to healing. For example, if you're someone who says things like, "I always do things wrong," or "No one would want me to help," consider what message you're putting out in the world about yourself. The first step is to become aware that you are engaging in self-flagellating behavior. Then, catch yourself when you do it and stop.

## Repeat Positive Words & Phrases

Now that you've banished all your negative words, find positive ones to replace them with! Repeat uplifting phrases daily to fill your soul with joy and boost your self-esteem. Vow to daily repeat phrases like, "I am loved, I am beautiful inside and out."





(Cover Art by Pablo Solomon)

## CHAPTER 8 - Healing from Past Sexual Abuse

Domestic violence has negative consequences for victims who not only suffer from the physical and / or mental pain inflicted upon them, but also experience shame and self-blame that they “let” the abuse happen to them. This can create a downward spiral that requires a new mindset to overcome.

Let’s begin with some basic information about sexual abuse. The statistics from the RAINN organization are overwhelming. Every 92 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted, and every 9 minutes, that victim is a child. Only 5 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison, yet 1 out of 6 American women and 1 in 33 men have been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime.

Most child victims are between the ages of 12-17 at 66%, with 34% of rape and assault victims being under the age of 12.

The good news is that the rate of sexual assault and rape has fallen 63% since 1993, from a rate of 4.3 assaults per 1,000 people in 1993 to 1.2 per 1,000 in 2016. This is attributed to a variety of factors including an overall drop in crime since the mid-90s, and the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act.

According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

- Every 92 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted.
- And every 9 minutes, that victim is a child.
- 5 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison.
- 1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.
- 1 out of every 33 American men have experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime.

- From 2009-2013, Child Protective Services agencies found strong evidence to indicate that about 63,000 children per year were victims of sexual abuse.
- A majority of child victims are 12-17.
- Of victims under the age of 18, 34% of victims of sexual assault and rape are under age 12, and 66% of victims of sexual assault and rape are age 12-17.
- Some good news: the rate of sexual assault and rape has fallen 63% since 1993, from a rate of 4.3 assaults per 1,000 people in 1993, to 1.2 per 1,000 in 2016.

### Laws Prohibiting Violence Against Women

Domestic violence is the most common killer of women around the world. A U.N. report revealed that 87,000 women were murdered last year, and over half were killed by intimate partners or family members. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released the “Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls” to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The report analyzed the violence perpetrated against women worldwide in 2017, looking at intimate partner violence and family-related killings such as dowry- and honor-related murders. The study suggested that violence against women has increased in the last five years, drawing on data from 2012 in which 48,000 (47 percent) of female homicides were perpetrated by intimate partners or family members.

The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 helped to bring sexual abuse to the forefront of American discourse, creating awareness and new resources to fight the crisis of violent crimes against women. Women became much more likely to report rapes and assaults because the punishments were more severe and less likely to be dismissed. At the same time the United Nations declared the elimination of violence against women which was a

complement to the existing Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. I urge you to visit these websites and read the full texts to discover how thoughts around sexual violence were changing in the early 1990s.

#### Violence Against Women Act of 1994

- A United States Federal law signed by president Bill Clinton on September 13, 1994 which allocated \$1.6 billion dollars toward the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women.
- A new Office on Violence Against Women was created in the Department of Justice.
- In 2000, the provision allowing women to sue their perpetrators in federal court was struck down.
- In April 2019, a new version of the bill was passed by the House of Representatives to include trans people, but it has yet to pass the Senate as of this writing.
- Read the full text at [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)

#### Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

- Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993
- Considered to complement and strengthen the U.N.'s existing Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- Urges countries around the world to adopt legal measures to ensure women's safety and freedom from violence
- Definition of violence includes physical, sexual and psychological
- Read the full text at [www.un.org](https://www.un.org)

#### History of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of children has been going on for centuries, but it wasn't until the end of the twentieth century that awareness began in the medical

community. In the 1960s, Kempe identified the “battered child syndrome” which he deemed a “hidden pediatric problem” and then The Kinsey Report in the 1970s discovered through interviews with subjects that childhood sexual abuse was much more common than most people thought. A Finkelhor study in 1979 interviewed college students and found that about 20% of women and 10% of men had experienced abuse in childhood.

- Childhood sexual abuse has been going on for centuries, but it only began to be examined in the second half of the twentieth century.
- Kempe, who is credited identifying "the battered child syndrome" in the 1960s, identified the child sexual abuse as a "hidden pediatric problem" (Helfer & Kempe, 1977)
- The Kinsey Report in the 1970s identified that adult experiences with sex during childhood, many of them abusive, were much more common than most people thought: thus, child sexual abuse was professionally recognized by social scientists.
- Finkelhor (1979) studied adult experiences of childhood sexual abuse by interviewing college students and found that about 20% of the women and 10% of the men had experienced abuse in childhood.

### The #MeToo Revolution

The “Me Too” movement was founded in the 1990s by Tarana Burke, who began to speak out against violence against women. It gained worldwide attention in 2017 when film producer Harvey Weinstein began to field dozens of allegations from women who endured his sexual abuse. Women’s frustration and anger hit a tipping point and the hashtag #MeToo began to trend around the world, used by women to indicate that they too had been sexually harassed or abused. The sheer number of stories was shocking and overwhelming for men, but most women were not surprised.

In response to the Hollywood sexual violence epidemic, The Time's Up movement was founded which is now a worldwide organization that uplifts women in any and every workplace.

#### Quick History:

- 1990s – Tarana Burke starts the Me Too movement, speaking out about violence against women
- 2016 – A 2005 tape is revealed of presidential candidate Trump speaking about women in a demeaning and violent manner saying “When you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the pussy,” two days before his second debate with Hillary Clinton during the election. This did not derail his campaign as many predicted.
- 2017 – Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein is accused of sexual harassment and assault by dozens of women, representing decades of abusive behavior. Women’s frustration and anger hits a tipping point and women share their stories publicly.
- 2017 – Thousands of women around the world using the hashtag #metoo (catalyzed by actress Alyssa Milano) voiced their stories of abuse and began a global phenomenon of awareness raising for sexual violence.
- 2018 – The ‘Time’s Up’ movement is founded, which “insists on safe, fair and dignified work for women of all kinds.”  
[www.timesupnow.com](http://www.timesupnow.com)

### Categories of Sexual Abuse

The following is a glossary of basic working definitions for the various types of sexual abuse:

#### Sexual Abuse of Children

Any sexual contact involving one or more children under the age of 18 is considered child sexual abuse. Children who have not been taught to come

to an adult immediately after any sexual contact may be suffering, so here are some signs to watch out for:

- Signs of abuse in young children may include sleep disturbances such as nightmares and sleepwalking, excessive bed wetting, masturbation, withdrawal, clinging, loss of appetite, aggression, gagging, irritability, and using language beyond the norms for their age, especially if the vocabulary includes sexual words.
- Signs of abuse in older children may include depression, anxiety, substance abuse, running away from home or school, eating disorders, attention-seeking behavior, cutting, burning, truancy, abdominal pains, severe headaches, infections, suicidal thoughts, promiscuity, inappropriate flirtatious or seductive behavior, and withdrawal into a very limited social life.

### Date Rape and Acquaintance Rape

Date rape is a sexual assault committed by a person whom the victim knows, whether a friend, relative, employer or new acquaintance. Date rape crimes represent the least reported sexual abuse because often the victims are not sure whether they have been assaulted or not because of manipulation and coercion by the perpetrator. Bottom line: If you did not give consent, then it's assault.

### Intimate Partner Sexual Assault

This category includes marital rape and assault by anyone who is considered to be your partner in an intimate relationship. Intimate partner assault can be extremely confusing because the perpetrator is someone with whom you may have had a healthy sexual relationship in the past, and now there is an expectation of sex which makes you wonder if nonconsensual

sex is possible in that circumstance. It is definitely possible. You have a right to refuse intercourse with your partner, no matter what.

- Marital rape is illegal in all 50 states in the United States, but remains legal in many countries around the world.
- Historically, rape of women has been considered a crime of “honor” against the family rather than a crime against humanity. It was not until the 1990s that the International Criminal Court (ICC) recognized sexual crimes against women as crimes against a person.

### Same Gender Assault

Same gender assault happens when the victim and the perpetrator are the same gender. Sometimes the predators or victims in these crimes are part of the LGBT community and sometimes they are not. Discriminatory beliefs about LGBT people sometimes complicate the reporting of these crimes when the victim is afraid that their story will mean they have to “come out” unwillingly.

### Stalking

Stalking is behavior that puts the victim’s personal safety at risk. The perpetrator may wait outside the victim’s home or workplace, harass them by e-mail, text or phone call, or other kinds of unwanted communication.

### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is when someone makes unwanted sexual advances, touches you or asks to touch intimate areas of your body, even if the contact is over your clothing. This definition also includes showing someone sexual pictures or sexual objects that make them uncomfortable, talking about sex inappropriately, asking for sexual favors, telling dirty jokes and other unwanted sex-related behavior.

## Stranger Assault

This is an act of sexual violence by someone unknown to the victim. Stranger assault almost always involves some level of physical violence.

## Incest

Incest is sexual contact between closely related members of the same family, for example parents and children, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews.

## Indecent exposure

Exposing your genitals to someone, acting as a Peeping Tom, installing hidden cameras in change rooms or restrooms or hotel rooms – these are all forms of sexual abuse that are illegal.

## Gang Rape

Gang rape is sexual violence by more than one perpetrator. The legal consequences of gang rape can be severe because of the compound nature of multiple predators.

## Child Pornography

Any material whether print or filmed media that portrays naked children being exploited in any sexually suggestive way, whether it involves sex explicitly or not, is considered child pornography.

## Reactions to Sexual Abuse

Everyone reacts to assault differently, but there are common reactions in people that are discussed in these two slides. This information is provided by Rape Crisis England & Wales which you can find at [rapecrisis.org.uk](http://rapecrisis.org.uk)

Our bodies respond to danger with an automatic, fearful reaction that includes a sped-up heart rate and breathing, tightened muscles, deactivation of unnecessary body functions like digestion, sweating, release of adrenaline for energy and cortisol to relieve pain. These hormones can also give us the feeling of a 'cloudy brain' that can't concentrate very well.

### How our bodies respond to danger

- We usually experience fear when we sense we are in danger. When our brains alert our bodies to the presence of danger, our bodies respond automatically. For example, to prepare us to deal with immediate danger, our bodies often:
  - Speed up our heart rate and breathing, to increase the oxygen and blood going to our muscles.
  - Tighten our muscles, ready for use if needed.
  - Deactivate bodily functions that aren't immediately important, like digestion.
  - Sweat, so we don't get too hot.
  - Release adrenaline, to give us energy.
  - Release cortisol, to relieve pain. This can also have the effect of blocking rational thinking, which is why in times of extreme stress and fear, we sometimes feel our heads are cloudy or that we can't concentrate.

## Fight, Flight, Freeze, Flop & Friend

(from Rape Crisis England & Wales at [rapecrisis.org.uk](http://rapecrisis.org.uk))

- Fight: physically fighting, pushing, struggling, and fighting verbally e.g. saying 'no'.
- Flight: putting distance between you and danger, including running, hiding or backing away.
- Freeze: going tense, still and silent. This is a common reaction to rape and sexual violence. Freezing is not giving consent; it is an instinctive survival response. Animals often freeze to avoid fights and potential further harm, or to 'play dead' and so avoid being seen and eaten by predators.
- Flop: similar to freezing, except your muscles become loose and your body goes floppy. This is an automatic reaction that can reduce the physical pain of what's happening to you. Your mind can also shut down to protect itself.
- Friend: calling for a 'friend' or bystander for help, for example by shouting or screaming, and/or 'befriending' the person who is dangerous, for example by placating, negotiating, bribing or pleading with them. Again, this is not you giving your attacker consent, it is an instinctive survival mechanism.

## Why Sexual Abuse Victims Don't Come Forward

The #MeToo movement brought to light all the reasons why victims of assault and harassment don't come forward. One of the most common threads in sexual abuse cases is victim-blaming. Why didn't she come forward sooner? As if that might be evidence that she's lying about the whole thing. With the spotlight on how these situations evolve, all the valid reasons why women don't come forward came to light and have become more accepted.

For starters, victims fear they will be attacked all over again when they come forward. They fear they'll have to answer questions about their role in the attack, what they were wearing etc. and have to defend themselves, right when they're already feeling defensive and vulnerable.

Secondly, their perpetrators can be scary! Think of the death threats that one of Donald Trump's accusers received. Or Harvey Weinstein's ubiquitous threat to countless starlets that they would never work in showbusiness again if they didn't acquiesce to his sexual desires.

Many sexual abuse survivors remain friends with their perpetrators, which can make them less likely to speak about the incident, or even identify it as assault to themselves or their group of friends.

They also fear the perception of being "damaged" to others. Nobody wants to appear broken, whether it's to family or in public, and admitting that you've been assaulted can feel scary, like you'll be forever changing people's perception of you.

### Reasons Victims Stay Silent

Victims are attacked again after they come forward. The second attack that victims fear is usually about their character. What was she wearing? How did she act? Why did he put himself in that situation in the first place? She should have spoken up at the time. Why didn't he fight back since he was a teenager? Why would he put up with that when he has all that money? The accusations can feel unbearable when you're the target, and you're already feeling vulnerable and afraid.

## Predators are Formidable

Many victims don't pursue legal action because their predators are powerful, or hold specific power over them, like an employer. Powerful predators have been known to issue death threats and use other intimidation tactics like threats of bodily harm, or harm to a family member. Harvey Weinstein threatened his victims with "never working again" in the entertainment business, a credible warning, since he was known for making or breaking careers. Non-celebrity predators use this tactic too, with office and factory workers facing the threat of losing their job if they don't submit to their abuser. Abusers can often successfully manufacture a 'good person' façade in the face of allegations by getting community members to vouch for them publicly, and by simply dismissing the accuser's claims as false.

Another reason that victims don't come forward to report their abuse is that they've suppressed the memory. Our brains are capable of blacking out certain memories, and this happens most often with traumatic events. I suffer from this issue with the timeline of my abuse and have needed to write things out many times in order to remember how and when things happened.

Some people don't come forward because they don't know who to tell, and others keep quiet because it's their second time reporting and the first time failed to result in a positive outcome. Victims who come forward later on because their perpetrator is announcing a career in public office or being considered to a judicial appointment are almost always accused of "convenient timing" and not taken seriously because they did not report the crime right away.

Sexual abuse victims sometimes fear that if they report their abuse, they will simultaneously be “outing” themselves crimes they themselves have committed. For example, a woman may be assaulted while doing cocaine in the bathroom, but she doesn’t want to reveal that she was doing illegal drugs, so she stays quiet about the abuse.

Finally, self-protection is a general reason that victims don’t speak up about their abuse. Whether you’ve been threatened by your perpetrator or not, there is a comfort in just keeping the status quo and not rocking the boat or making waves in your workplace, community or family.

### Appearance of friendship with predator

Many victims of sexual abuse remain friends with their predators. The “rape by a stranger in a dark alley” scenario is quite rare. Much more often abuse is perpetrated by someone you know, like a colleague at work or a family member. This grey area makes many women and men feel that they’re not bringing forth a valid claim, that they don’t have a good case because they didn’t completely denounce this person, quit their job or make a dramatic announcement at a family or business gathering. Because the victim tolerated the abuse and kept quiet about it, he or she often feel they have now relinquished their right to speak up at all.

### A Perception of Damage

Nobody wants to appear broken or damaged, whether it’s to his or her family, or in the eyes of the public at large. A sexual abuse survivor who has not named the predator may be a successful person in their community, someone with a great job and an enviable life. If they go forward with allegations, the survivor often fears that this façade will shatter, and people will view her or him differently. The survivor will feel exposed to criticism,

gossip and pity. No thriving, popular person wants to suddenly be perceived as damaged. There's often a very strong impulse to just sweep it under the rug. The irony here, of course, is that it takes an extremely strong individual to speak out against a predator, and most people would view that as an admirable characteristic.

### Memory Suppression

Many victims simply don't remember the events of their sexual assault. Our brains are capable of blacking out certain memories, and this happens most often with traumatic events. It's a form of denial that can be treated with hypnosis and other therapies to help a victim remember the events and the identity of their perpetrator. Our minds can also work against us to cloud the sequence of traumatic events. The timeline might be so disrupted that it's impossible to remember exact dates and times. This works against victims who bring claims because the defendant can use their lack of clarity against them.

### Not Knowing Who To Tell

For many victims, it's not clear to whom they should go with their story. The ability of the victim to trust in others has been eroded by the predator, and there are other layers of mistrust when it comes to community authority figures. For example, going to the police might feel frightening if you are an undocumented worker or a person of color who has witnessed violence perpetrated by the police against your community. With no clear idea of who to tell, it might just seem easier to keep quiet and move on.

## Second Time Reporting

Quite often a victim sexual abuse will file a report and be told that pressing criminal charges is an arduous process that does not often lead to justice. Later, when the victim decides that he or she does want to go through with pressing charges, (for example, when the predator is running for public office), the victim may be attacked for 'convenient' timing and not having pressed charges earlier, closer to the time of the crime.

## Revealing Your Own Crimes

Some victims are breaking the law themselves when a crime of sexual assault is inflicted upon them, making them reluctant about reporting the incident. For example, a woman doing cocaine in the bathroom with a man who suddenly becomes violent may not feel comfortable coming out against him because it will also be revealed that she was doing illegal drugs. This is also true for underage drinkers who don't want to be punished for breaking the law by reporting a crime.

## Self-protection

Keeping your secret is a form of maintaining safety. Whether you've been threatened by your perpetrator or not, there is a comfort in just keeping the status quo and not rocking the boat or making waves in your workplace, community or family. After all, it's going to shake things up no matter what, and not everyone wants to change their current comfort zone, since it's likely to be painful. Naming the specific act of sexual violence gives it a legitimacy that it's never had before, which is scary. Confronting such a fearful situation requires courage. Sexual abuse affects us in many ways, but it doesn't usually make us feel brave or courageous.

## How to Reach Out & Release the Pain

The first step toward healing from a sexual assault is to tell someone. Reaching out is the start of releasing the pain. How can you determine if you've chosen the right person? Ask yourself these crucial four questions:

Is he or she an empathetic person?

A survivor needs the understanding of a fellow human being, someone who can respond compassionately and with complete lack of judgement.

Is he or she a trustworthy person?

Survivors need a safe space to tell their story in private, with confidentiality and full respect while sharing details of their suffering. A trusted member of the community (teacher, pastor) or a crisis hotline are good options for someone who may not have a friend or family member to reach out to.

Is he or she a judgmental person?

Victims often blame themselves, so it's important to choose someone who will not judge and perpetuate self-blame.

Has this person supported you before?

An individual who has shown support in the past is likely to be supportive again, so a relationship already founded on dependability and compassion is a good choice.

What to say to someone who reaches out

Do you know what to say if someone reaches out with a story of abuse? These guidelines can help to make sure you listen attentively, tell them it wasn't their fault, possibly share your coping strategies and refer them to a mental health professional or sex therapist.

What to say & do:

1. Listen attentively

2. After they finish their story, first tell them it wasn't their fault
3. You can ask them if they would like a hug. This sometimes gives the client permission to cry.
4. If you are also a survivor, you can tell them you understand how they're feeling.
5. Ask them if they want you to share your coping strategies.
6. Refer them to a mental health professional or sex therapist
7. Refer them to resources like RAINN.org or AdultChildren.org where they can find support groups and emergency help.

### What NOT to say to someone who reaches out

There are also things you should NOT to do when someone reaches out. Don't interrupt when they are sharing, don't judge the way they behaved during the abusive event, avoid victim-blaming and don't ask for more details than they're comfortable with sharing. If you yourself are also a survivor, make sure you don't "overshare" with intimate details of the abuse that could come out as traumatizing, and certainly don't break down emotionally in front of your friend or client.

### What not to say & do:

1. Don't interrupt while they are sharing.
2. Don't judge the way they behaved during the abusive event.
3. Avoid victim-blaming questions such as "Why were you wearing that short dress?" or "What would you have done differently to avoid the abuse?"
4. Don't ask for more details than they're comfortable with sharing.
5. If you are also a survivor and share your story, don't share the intimate details of your abuse or break down emotionally.

## Identifying the Impact of Abuse

How can we measure the impact of abuse? Once the abusive event is over, it begins to fade into the past, but the legacy continues on for years to come. No one wants to relive the traumatic moment but doing so gives clues to your recovery. Your negative memories are part of you, and will demand your attention one way or another, often manifesting in negative ways such as anxiety and depression.

Identifying your personal symptoms and talking them through has been proven to dilute the intensity of these impacts. In the next few pages we will identify the physical and psychological impacts of abuse.

Sexual abuse results in many negative symptoms - physical, emotional, psychological & sexual. Identifying the ways in which your trauma is manifesting is the key to recovery.

### Impact of Abuse – Physical

#### Aversion to Intimate Touch

An aversion to physical touch is one common reaction to abuse. Many victims don't want to be touched at all because it might remind them of the abusive event, and the range of physical responses is large, from flushing red all over or at the point of contact to something more serious like vaginismus, a muscle spasm in the vagina that makes intercourse painful.

#### Eating disorders, weight gain or weight loss

Eating disorders of all kinds are common with sexual abuse victims of any gender. This kind of disorder is related to self-image and variations of self-punishment, comfort, protection and control. People turn to food to soothe a wide range of underlying tensions. Eating is something we all need

to do a number of times each day, so it's an obvious target for self-manipulation.

## Sleep disorders

Quality sleep happens in a safe environment, and many sex abuse survivors have had their sense of safety compromised, so it's no wonder that their sleep would be affected.

A recent medical study reports that “Research on adult sexual assault survivors has shown that upward of 77% of survivors report insomnia, nightmares, sleep-disordered breathing, and/or sleep-related movement disorders and that suffering from sleep problems likely persists for many years after the initial trauma (Krakow et al., Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 2002), but long-term studies have not been done to date. Studies of children and adolescents who have been sexually abused report sleep disturbances being among the varied symptoms of childhood abuse (Goldston, Turnquist, & Knutson, journal of Abnormal Psychology, 1989)

\*Sleep Disturbances and Childhood Sexual Abuse Jennie G. Noll, PhD Penelope K. Trickett, PhD Elizabeth J. Susman, PhD Frank W. Putnam, MD Journal of Pediatric Psychology, Volume 31, Issue 5, 1 June 2006 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpepsy/jsj040>

## Substance Abuse

Most people are familiar with the term “self-medication” when it comes to abusing alcohol and drugs, but what it means for sexual abuse survivors is that when negative thoughts and trauma triggers come along, they numb the psychic pain with anything that will obliterate their thoughts. The problem with self-medicating is that when you use substances to numb

pain, you're also numbing the rest of your feelings too, leaving no room for positivity, or in some cases, basic functionality.

Alcohol and drugs numb the brain, so if your brain is driving you crazy reenacting trauma, you're more likely to reach for a glass of Chardonnay to dampen the psychic pain. In an article, entitled, "Childhood Sexual Abuse and Adult Addiction" from the Journal of Substance Abuse and Alcoholism, the authors cite a study\* that suggests, "The most frequently offered explanation regarding the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and substance abuse is the self-medication hypothesis which ventures that substances are utilized to relieve strain created by the interpersonal trauma." The paper goes on to confirm that survivors of sexual abuse use drugs and alcohol to cope or tamp down powerful emotions.

\*Chu DC. The links between religiosity, childhood sexual abuse, and subsequent marijuana use: an empirical inquiry of a sample of female college students. *Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol.* 2012; 56: 937-954.

## Self-Harm

Self-harm is deliberate, direct destruction of body tissue" whether it's "cutting" where an individual will cut into his or her own skin repeatedly or burning in the same manner. It stems from feelings of self-doubt and shame and is a common reaction to PTSD.

The National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome describes self-harm as "the deliberate, direct destruction of body tissue." This refers to behaviors like "cutting," where an individual will cut into his or her own skin repeatedly without the intention of suicide.

In one study of individuals who self-harmed, 93% reported a history of childhood sexual abuse.\* Self-harm is a clear way to exert control over your own body; which is an understandable behavior in light of posttraumatic feelings of self-doubt and shame.

\*Briere, J., & Gil, E. (1998). Self-mutilation in clinical and general population samples: Prevalence, correlates, and functions. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 68(4), 609-620.

### Compulsive repetitive obsession (excoriation)

Compulsive behavior is a common result of abuse because it's a way to seemingly exercise control over your life. This includes hoarding (not being able to let material things go), checking (compulsively double-checking daily duties like locking doors, setting alarm systems, etc.), washing (obsessive hand washing to quell fears of 'contamination'), counting, tapping, obsessively praying (stemming from a religious belief that your abuse made you a sinner) – all behaviors that seem senseless to others, but reduce anxiety in the victim and offer some peace of mind in the face of vulnerability.

### Suicidal Thoughts

It is not uncommon for men and women who have been sexually abused to have suicidal thoughts. Left untreated, the posttraumatic stress of an assault or ongoing abuse can feel unbearable, so taking one's own life becomes an available escape route.

Believe me, I've experienced nearly all of these and consider myself lucky that I survived from depression and attempted suicide at age eighteen, to having recurring nightmares and hating my body so much that I let an unqualified doctor give me silicone injections in my breasts that turned out badly. If you are having suicidal thoughts, reach out to a friend or a suicide hotline immediately.

## Feelings of Hopelessness and Depression

Hopelessness is a despondent state of mind where you are focused on negative thoughts. When individuals lose their sense of independence through intimate violation, they can become despondent. Feelings of hopelessness can range from fleeting to debilitating and may lead to clinical depression. Many victims report that they just don't "feel the same" as they used to, because the abuse has robbed them of their positive outlook on the world. How can the world seem like a sunny, safe place when such terrible things can happen?

## Painful flashbacks

Reliving sexual trauma is something that no one wants, but sometimes the brain doesn't cooperate with our desire to move on from a painful event.

Flashbacks are moments where your mind gets caught up in a past scene of assault or abuse, replaying the events so viscerally that often you feel the initial pain all over again.

## Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome recognizes both childhood and adult sexual abuse as traumatic events. They divide PTSD symptoms into four groups:

- 1) Re-living the event through nightmares and flashbacks;
- 2) Avoiding situations that remind you of the event, which disrupts your daily life;
- 3) Negative changes in beliefs and feelings, such as believing the world is a dangerous place and that no one is trustworthy; and

- 4) Feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal) where you may have a difficult time sleeping or concentrating, and you behave in a tense, mildly paranoid manner.

PTSD is commonly associated with wartime experiences, trauma that stays with soldiers who witness violence on the battlefield, but sexual trauma produces the same effect. I still experience PTSD triggers from my teenage years. I had to walk out of the movie *Sold* (a film about sex trafficking) because it flooded my brain with unwanted memories and filled me with anxiety.

### Unexplained Crying

After sexual abuse, your emotions can run wild. You may not even be thinking of the traumatic event, but you find that your feelings bubble over into a crying jag, seemingly out of nowhere. This is common after abuse, and a strong signal that a course of therapy is needed.

### Dissociation

Dissociation from sexual abuse usually means that you're brain switches off to the engagement of others, and separates normally related mental functions. One part of your brain can be functioning independently from other parts, which in extreme cases can even lead to multiple personalities. It is commonly believed in the psychiatric community that traumatic abusive events create this situation as a protection device, so that the psyche can maintain functions while dealing with extreme trauma in another area of the brain.

A person suffering from dissociation may not being able to focus or feel present in everyday situations or may not respond when people talk to them, or act in a way that's accepted as normal. They may appear preoccupied and difficult to engage.

### Inability to Trust Others

Sexual abuse makes it difficult for survivors to trust other people to the same degree as before the abuse occurred. For example, a date rape victim might never want to go on another date again because she now believes her dates can't be trusted. There may also be a general distrust of others, stemming from a core disruption of the victim's sense of safety.

### Hating Your Body

When we're sexually assaulted or abused, our bodies are the physical vehicle for the crime, so it only makes sense that some victims come to hate their own bodies. They're angry that their bodies were violated and that they had no control over that unwanted action. They need to place blame somewhere and hating one's physical self is an available choice that many people make. I've worked with dozens of clients who hate their bodies after sexual trauma. The logic goes that if it was their body that got abused, there must be something wrong with it, or something they should be ashamed of.

## Control Issues

Control is an ongoing source of anxiety for survivors of sexual abuse. Whether it's anorexic tendencies to exercise control of your body, or a fight with your spouse over who should set the kids' activities schedules, an unhealthy attitude about control can rear its ugly head and make you feel out of control or unsure about where you stand on any given issue.

## Unwanted Thoughts & Repetitive Behaviors

Many sexual abuse survivors suffer tremendously from intrusive thoughts that repeat again and again in their minds like fear of losing control, fear they will never be loved, or fear that they are somehow contaminated and are capable of contaminating others with what they see as their shameful past. Superstitions come into play here as well, unfounded beliefs that some things are lucky or unlucky.

## Negative Attitudes Toward Relationships

The long-term consequences of sexual abuse are different from reactions to the event itself. Abuse can result in a lifetime of negative attitudes toward relationships. Survivors of abuse often develop an expectation that relationships will cause suffering, or that potential partners have hidden agendas. It's common to feel uncertain about your effect on others in a sexual context, to be distrustful in general or fearful of intimacy and losing control in a relationship.

## Negative Impacts on Relationships

- An expectation that men (or women) will cause pain and suffering

- Distrust of men (or women) in general
- An expectation that men or women have hidden agendas
- A fear of intimacy and letting love in
- Uncertainty about your effect on men or women
- Fear of losing control in a relationship

### Impact of Abuse – Sexual

#### Negative Attitudes Towards Sex

Sexual abuse can create an overwhelming sense of shame about initiating sex and fears about intimacy and losing control during sex:

- An overwhelming sense of shame about initiating sex
- A fear of physical intimacy
- Fear of losing control during sex

### Intersectionality

No person is one-dimensional. It's vital to take into account all of the ways in which we are perceived in the world, so that we can better understand any biases against us and be prepared to ask for respect and safety in every social context. For example, a woman of color may be experiencing trauma from sexual abuse, and also feel marginalized in her community for the color of her skin. Or a gay man might be overcoming a sexually abusive incident, and also be experiencing stress about anti-LGBT discrimination in the workplace. We can't separate all the factors that make up our humanity.

I once worked with a teenager who had been molested by his camp counselor during the time that his parents were getting a divorce. Because of these multiple layers of stress, it took different types of therapy to solve his issues. His psychiatrist referred him to me to tackle areas of sexual healing that David was reluctant to discuss in depth during his sessions of

analysis. I discovered that because his abuser was a man, the boy was questioning whether or not the counselor was influencing his gayness, and he became profoundly confused, shy and anxious when it came to just about every aspect of his life. We discussed his desires prior to the abuse to help him regain his confidence about his own sexual identity.

### Memory Triggers

A memory trigger is a personal reaction to a particular stimulation of one of the five senses (touch, smell, sight, sound & taste) that sets off a flashback to a traumatic experience.

The memory trigger causes the person to “re-live” the trauma, often accompanied by fear, anxiety and overwhelming emotions or thoughts. There are as many traumatic memory triggers as there are individuals. They are different for everyone and can be specific to the abusive event.

### Dealing with Memory Triggers

Memories get triggered through one or more of the five senses. During the abusive event, specific elements might have been present, such as a certain cocktail or food, or the smell of a wood fire burning. By identifying your memory triggers, you can prepare yourself for the emotions that may come to the surface.

Sight:

- Seeing someone who looks like the abuser
- Watching someone else experiencing abuse
- Seeing an object associated with the abuse
- Revisiting the location of the abuse

Sound:

- Raised voices, shouting, loud noises

- Crying, whispering, screaming
- Sounds associated with the abuse (eg. nightclub sounds, crickets, car doors)
- Words that the abuser used

Touch:

- Witnessing a type of touch that reminds the victim of the abuse (eg. Invading personal space or touching a certain part of the body)

Taste:

- Specific foods or drinks associated with the abuse

Smell:

- Smells associated with abuser (eg. Cigarette smoke, perfume)
- Smells associated with the location of the abuse (cut grass, fireplace)

### Healing from Abuse Exercises:

- Control Chart
- Dialogue with your Body
- Dialogue with your Emotions
- Role-Playing
- Counseling session with Plastic Martyr
- Overcoming Shame
- Checklist to know if you're ready for Sex After Abuse
- Art Therapy – Self Portrait
- Body Image
- Overcoming Self-Sabotage
- Forgiveness Letter
- Journaling / Gratitude Journal
- Questions to the Universe
- Talk to your Inner Child
- Self-Love exercises

- Yes/No Exercise
- Positive Turnaround
- Boundaries
- Sexual Consent

## Control Chart

This exercise helps demonstrate that what they have control over motivates them to be successful, whereas what they believe they don't have control over is neglected and limits their potential.

Purpose: To write down and identify things in your life or your client's life that they believe they have control over versus the things they have no control over.

Why it works: Because it reveals where you or your clients feel empowered as opposed to where they feel disempowered and need help in taking control of their lives.

How to facilitate it: Ask your client to rate how well they are achieving the list they have control over from 1 (poorest) to 10 (most effective). Then go through the list they think they have no control over and brainstorm some creative ways that the client can take control.

What the benefits are: Because you can demonstrate that what they have control over motivates them to be successful, whereas what they believe they don't have control over is neglected and limits their potential.

## Control Chart Sample

This is a sample of a control chart as an example. Your client may be surprised at what little effort they put into their control list once they rate

it. They may be even more surprised at how much control they have over things they thought they didn't have.

Have Control Over	Have NO Control Over
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Choosing to be positive</i></li><li>2. <i>My eating habits</i></li><li>3. <i>Rewarding myself</i></li><li>4. <i>Accepting dates</i></li><li>5. <i>Having fun</i></li><li>6. <i>Having or not having sex</i></li><li>7. <i>Giving love</i></li><li>8. <i>Receiving love</i></li><li>9. <i>How I communicate my boundaries</i></li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>That I was violated</i></li><li>2. <i>That violence is still a threat</i></li><li>3. <i>Other people's perceptions</i></li><li>4. <i>How I might feel the first time I have sex again</i></li><li>5. <i>Having things in common with others</i></li><li>6. <i>Other people's baggage</i></li></ol>

### Dialogue with Your Body

To begin this exercise, come up with an identity for the part of your body where you feel pain or discomfort. You might think of it as another entity by identifying it with a character, such as a cranky teenager. Describe all the feelings you have about that character in your dialog, such as “I hate it when you show up uninvited in the pit of my stomach, causing me such pain that I can't function. I command you to leave me alone so that I can heal and love myself again.” Write down the dialogue and read it back to yourself, then share it with your psychiatrist, therapist counselor or close confidant.

This exercise can help you to identify why your body is feeling pain or discomfort so that you can make the necessary changes for your wellbeing by seeking psychological or medical help.

One of my clients said that she had an epiphany when she did this exercise. She had pain in her breasts whenever her boyfriend fondled them, so one day she had a dialog, with her twins Babette and Barbi and their response

to her question about what caused the pain during sex took her by surprise. “We don’t like your lover” they said “And you deserve someone better who makes beautiful love to you, not just bangs you.” My client suddenly realized that the guy she was dating was not improving the quality of her life but causing her to self-sabotage and it had to stop, so she broke up with him.

### Dialogue with Your Emotions

Renowned psychologist Albert Bandura characterized a person’s belief in their ability to succeed in a situation as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is closely linked to how perseverant you are: If you don’t believe you can actually manage a relationship or improve yourself, then what’s the point in trying? If you want to succeed in feeling better about yourself, turn on an internal dialogue that tells you that you can do this. Use Hopefulness to overcome Anxiety with positive affirmations such as, “I believe in myself,” or “I can make things better for myself.”

To begin this exercise, choose two opposing emotions to talk to each other, such as Happiness and Sadness or Hopefulness and Anxiety. Then begin writing down a dialog between them.

Dialogue with Your Emotions example:

Hopefulness says to Anxiety “Do you remember when I was falling apart after my rape? I couldn’t even function at work and I got fired. It was your fault Anxiety for making me feel worthless, but now I’m going to have a positive attitude because there’s nothing I can do about what happened to me in the past and I know that I’m worthy of being loved and respected, so don’t you dare attack me again.”

Anxiety replies, “You sound like you don’t need me anymore now that you’ve got a more positive outlook on your future. I’ve never seen you be so sure of yourself.”

## Role-Playing

Role-playing can be a very effective method for sexual healing. One way to do it is through the Gestalt “empty chair” technique where the victim sits across from an empty chair and imagines their abuser sitting in it and listening to what they have to say. Beginning a dialogue with your abuser can lead to a greater understanding of feelings and communication because it brings the victim into the present moment of their abuse. They may also be able to experience different aspects of their abusive event which can give them new insight into how they’ve been processing their pain. It can be a wonderful collaboration between the coach and client, and a way to move from just talking about it to gaining in-the-moment awareness of what happened in the past.

You don’t have to use an empty chair - you can use a puppet or a stuffed animal or a photo of the person – just not a living thing.

Purpose: To reach a new level of closure and understanding of the victim’s feelings & emotions.

Why it works: Because it brings the abuse back into the present and allows the victim to experience a sense of closure while talking to their abuser.

How to facilitate it: Designate the ‘proxy’ for the abuser, whether it’s an empty chair or a puppet, and ask the victim to begin a conversation.

Encourage them to tell their perpetrator exactly how they experienced their abuse and all the ways there were hurt and are still hurting. This is their chance to say all the things they’ve had pent up inside them since the abuse took place.

What the benefits are: It helps victims express themselves and discover their deepest resentments and fears about their abusers, which allows them to

heal and move on because they've identified the pain more accurately and understand themselves more clearly.

## Overcoming Shame

I was so overwhelmed by my accumulated layers of shame as a young person it's a wonder that I was able to pull myself out of it. Now I teach people ways to do just that for themselves. A behavioral researcher and authority on the subject of shame, Brené Brown, PhD, is author of numerous books including *The Gifts of Imperfections*, in which she tells her story of attaining authenticity in life. She writes, "If we share our shame story with the wrong person, they can easily become one more piece of flying debris in an already dangerous storm...If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive." I often share Brown's three steps to overcoming shame which are very simple and powerful:

### Brené Browns 3 Steps to Overcoming Shame

Talk to yourself like you talk to someone you love.

1. Next time you put yourself down and make yourself feel awful for something insignificant, ask yourself if you would talk to a loved one that way. Brown offers the example of saying, "God, you're so stupid, Brené," and then checks herself by asking, "Would I talk to my kids that way?"

2. Reach out to someone you trust.

Find someone who loves you and ask him or her to listen to your story.

3. Tell your story.

“Shame cannot survive being spoken,” Brown says. It’s like sunshine on mold – the mold can’t survive. Shame will not withstand being met with empathy. If you’re feeling silenced by your shame, I challenge you to work through these simple steps and liberate yourself.

Our sexual harassers and predators need our silence to survive.  
They thrive when society is complicit,

### Checklist to Know If You’re Ready for Sex After Abuse

How do you know if you’re ready for sex after abuse? Many survivors worry that if they jump in too soon, they might re-live their trauma, perhaps freezing up or breaking down, or experiencing any number of unwanted responses. This following list gives you a detailed checklist to reflect on before you become intimate again.

1. You really, truly want sex  
This will become easier to determine as you examine your own reactive behaviors. You are not going to have sex simply to please your partner or because you feel guilty, which will lead to resentments and negative feelings. Rather, you’re doing it because it appeals to you as a joyful expression of your sexual desires.
2. You feel like you are in control  
Healthy sexual relationships involve great intimate communication. Ask for what you want, ask your partner what he or she wants, and make sure you are 100% comfortable with everything happening in between. If you experience a trigger or a flashback to past abuse, tell your partner. Your partner should not want you to ‘grin and bear it’ when it comes to sex. He or she should want you to be engaged and loving every minute of it. Honor your partner by letting them know when you’ve hit a wall and aren’t ‘feeling it’ anymore. Deeper

intimacy and connection will be possible when you feel free to change your mind. If you initiate sex, you're allowed to change your mind and stop. You don't owe your partner anything. Your partner should never want to have sex with you without your consent.

3. You will have no regrets

You feel good about engaging in sex and know that afterwards you will feel relaxed and happy with yourself, not fearful or full of regret. Unfortunately, with this one, sometimes we don't know how we will feel until we get there, but with time you'll learn how you react after sexual situations, and you'll be able to predict your emotional outcome.

4. You are getting your needs met

Unlike with sexually abusive situations, healthy sexual experiences are a two-way street. One way to make sure both of you (or all of you) are enjoying yourselves is to check in with your partner(s) and make sure everyone is on the same page. Don't forgo your own pleasure to please others, unless that's what you truly want to do for your own satisfaction.

5. You are emotionally ready

If you're concerned that you're "jumping in" and your emotions are going crazy, that could be a sign to pull back and wait. Sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between the warning bells of anxiety and the butterflies-in-the-belly excitement of having sex with a new person, so check in with yourself. One easy test is to imagine yourself walking out the door. Does that make you feel relief or disappointment?

6. When you know the reason why you want to have sex

Good reasons to have sex are, “for your own pleasure.” Or, “because it will feel great.” Good reasons not to have sex include, “Because he won’t leave me alone until I do,” Or, “Because I really should.” Or, “It’s our date number three and he (or she) will be expecting sex.”

7. When you understand your body

If you’re recovering from sexual trauma and have not fully worked through your personal issues, you might not know how your body will react to certain experiences. My advice is to take it slow and see what comes up for you. Some victims report an overall body flush when they are touched, or a freezing up, or nothing at all. Make sure you’ve explored your reactions before you engage in sex. Ideally, you will find a partner who can help explore your reactions with you and be supportive every step of the way.

8. When you can control your emotions

If you’re having severe mood swings or disruptive emotions as you go through your recovery, you might want to delay sex to make sure that you’re fully in control when it happens. It’s not the end of the world to freak out during sex and have a breakdown, especially if your partner is there to support you and it’s part of the process of recovery. But be aware that it can feel heavy in the moment if you’re not ready emotionally. Time will heal!

9. When you can talk about sex before having sex

As I have emphasized, communication is key. If you’re feeling pressured into being silent, or if you feel that you won’t be able to speak your mind and ask for what you need, it might not be the right situation or the right time.

10. When you can talk about your feelings before and after having sex

Communication after sex is also very important. As abuse survivors, our post-trauma experience was ignored by our assailant, and our feelings about what happened were completely denied. That's why it's especially important to have post-sex check-ins with your partner so that you can talk about your feelings and grow and learn, deepening the overall experience and impact of healthy sex.

11. When you know the other person's sexual history

This one is just common sense. Don't engage in dangerous sexual situations where you are having sex with someone you don't know. Find out beforehand if they have any STDs that you should be aware of and take precautions.

12. When you have FDA approved condoms on hand

Practice safe sex at all times, whether that means you're in a long-term relationship using appropriate solutions to pregnancy or existing STDs, or dating new people using condoms to prevent any of the above. Respect yourself by respecting your body, period.

If you're able to discuss and successfully check off the items on this list, that will give you a good indication if you're ready for sex.

### Art Therapy – Self-Portrait

Self-portraits are often helpful in putting a physical manifestation to your thoughts and feelings and can help you work through your reaction to trauma. As a coach, it's a great exercise to get to know how your client is feeling about themselves. It gives you a jumping off point to discuss the path forward.

## How to Facilitate a Self-Portrait

### Body Image Exercise

What would you like your body image to express to others? Healthy? Sophisticated? Strong? Beautiful? Look at yourself from your feet to the top of your head, preferably naked. Don't move upward until you can say something positive about each part. For example, "My toes are perfectly shaped." or "My legs are strong and help me get around."

When I was teaching a body image exercise for a group of women at a Feminine Healing Retreat in Thailand, I asked them all to draw an outline of a body and then I gave them each two colored crayons – red for parts of their body they hate, and green for the parts they love. Then they came up individually and described which part of their body they hated and why. For example, one of them said that she hated her stomach because it was too big and flabby, so I asked her to do a Positive Turnaround exercise by sharing the beneficial qualities associated with her stomach, such as the way it digests food and nourishes her, and how it was instrumental in the birth of her beautiful kids. She had tears in her eyes as she was thinking about the positive attributes her stomach had, and we created a space for healing.

### Self-Sabotage Behavior

Self-sabotage is so common among sexual abuse survivors. Our sense of self-worth has been robbed from us, so we don't feel worthy of success or happiness, and begin to exhibit negative behaviors. The following list describes these behaviors.

### Procrastination

We've all put things off at one time or another, but are you procrastinating to the point of impeding the basic progress of your life? Are you moving

your overall goals forward, or are you finding reasons to fail? Some sexual abuse victims shoot themselves in the foot right at the brink of success because they feel that deep down, they are not worthy. You may not think that avoiding your work or a difficult phone call or even cleaning out the garage is behavior stemming from abuse, but often it is. You're not allowing yourself to be the best you can be. Instead, you're finding excuses to put off success, even if it's just the good feeling you get by getting a small task done.

### Jealousy

Jealousy is a green-eyed monster. Focusing on other people's success is a sure-fire way to sabotage your own. So what if your colleague got a promotion? You are on a different path. You are sure to never follow in their footsteps if you dwell on how much better and more successful they are than you. Jealousy serves absolutely no positive purpose to focus on the success of others while berating yourself. The healthy response to feeling envious of someone is to ask yourself what qualities does that person have that I want, and what steps can I take to be like that myself?

### Negative self-talk

Negative self-talk is a soul-destroyer. "I would screw that up for sure." Or, "No one would ever hire me." Or, "I'm such an idiot." These are all examples of negative self-talk. Do you really believe these statements, or are you letting the abuse stand in your way of high self-esteem? Other examples include putting down your appearance when you look in the mirror, making fun of yourself in front of others, and holding yourself to an impossible standard. I've worked with many clients who benefit almost immediately from banishing negative self-talk. In fact, they're usually surprised how often they were putting themselves down.

## Lack of commitment

For many sex abuse survivors, there is a belief that other people's opinions, experiences and even future plans are more important than our own, which can manifest in a lack of interest in our own commitments. Whether it's a lukewarm attitude toward a chosen career path, or an inability to answer a marriage proposal, lack of commitment is a very common form of self-sabotage.

## Perfectionism

Doing your best is an admirable trait, but demanding perfection of yourself at every moment is unhealthy. It's a combination of obsessive behavior and beating yourself up, a self-sabotage disguised as success. Many sexual abuse survivors become perfectionists who demand too much of themselves and fall into a spiral of other self-sabotage behavior like beating themselves up and engaging in negative self-talk. Let's be clear: being perfect doesn't make you happy, but trying too hard to be perfect will certainly drive you crazy!

## Retail Therapy

If you are shopping to fill the empty hole in your soul, you need real therapy, not the mall. Many women turn to consumerism as a comfort behavior, thinking that if they get the perfect outfit or the right shoes, they will magically transform into a happy person. Unfortunately for sex abuse survivors, there is some hard-personal work on healing that needs to be done first. Then by all means, go shopping to celebrate.

## Overcoming Self-Sabotage

The first step to overcoming self-sabotage is to recognize the ways in which you're sabotaging yourself. Do you recognize any familiar behavior in the previous list?

Exercise: Get out a notebook and write down all the things you are doing to sabotage yourself, no matter how big or small. It's time to face your sabotage behavior head on so that you can eliminate it. Stop punishing yourself and become the person you're meant to be without giving any more power to your abuser. Count all the ways that you have been punishing yourself, numbering them from one to a hundred if necessary and prioritize them. So, if pushing people away is at the top of your list, let's start breaking that self-sabotaging pattern first. Most people who push others away are afraid of being hurt and abandoned, which goes back to our earliest life experiences. But just know that you do have plenty of love to give and you deserve to get love back from someone who is worthy of being with you.

## Forgiveness Letter

Writing a letter to your abuser is a very powerful way to turn your anger into pity. Address your abuser and describe the suffering that you experienced. Explain why you have been so angry and resentful all this time. Then, let that anger and resentment go because you don't want to hold it inside and have it do harm to you. Remember you don't have to forget; you just have to forgive.

Purpose: To let go of anger and resentments that cause you pain and suffering.

Why it works: Because it expresses your feelings to the exact person who caused you harm, without any danger of being harmed again.

How to facilitate it: Tell your client to write a letter to their abuser, including details about their grievances and suffering. Then ask them to include forgiveness for their perpetrator, allowing them to let go of all the negative feelings that have been bottled up inside.

What the benefits are: A feeling of freedom and independence from one's abuser.

### Conversation with your Inner Child

For survivors of childhood sexual abuse, it can be beneficial to go back and initiate a conversation with yourself as a young person. Sometimes experiences or beliefs surface that you had forgotten and getting them out into the open can have a cleansing effect. Inner child conversations can also help you reconnect with yourself more deeply, gaining insights and empathy for yourself. You can begin to gain empathy for yourself and open up about vulnerabilities you may have forgotten about – it can have a cleansing effect. I've included a dialogue with my own inner child so that you can get an idea for how it can play out. It's a conversation between my adult self and the little girl I used to be in Hungary many decades ago. Ultimately, you want to be the protector of your inner child and make sure he or she feels safe and taken care of.

Conversation with your Inner Child Example:

Ava: Hello, what's your name?

Ildiko: Ildiko

Ava: How old are you?

Ildiko: Seven

Ava: Why are you hiding?

Ildiko: I like to be by myself where my father can't get me. I hate him. But don't tell him or he'll beat me and make me kneel on rice.

Ava: I'm not going to tell him. I want you to feel safe. I want to protect you.

Ildiko: No you don't. No one protects me. Everyone is mean, and everyone wants something from me.

Ava: I don't want anything from you. I just want to love you.

Ildiko: They want me to do chores and serve them, and then I have to do that disgusting thing that I hate the most.

Ava: I'm going to protect you from that. You don't have to do that anymore.

Ildiko: You can't stop him. You're weak and you only care about your own life.

Ava: That's not true. I care about you deeply, and I'm very concerned that you're so unhappy. I wasn't able to help you then, but now I'm very strong, because of you. You fought and survived so that I could be strong.

Ildiko: Why does he hate me so much?

Ava: Your father is a deeply troubled, deeply twisted, angry person. Only a bad person would do the things that he did, and you are doing the best you can do.

Ildiko: No I'm not. I'm stupid and ugly and my skin is covered in a rash. All the kids at school make fun of me and I'm so hungry. Why don't they feed me?

Ava: I will feed you, and take care of your skin, and protect you from bullies. You are beautiful and smart.

Ildiko: He says my eyes are the color of dirt.

Ava: Your eyes are the color of delicious chocolate.

Ildiko: He says my mother was a whore. What is a whore?

Ava: That's a grown-up word that you don't need to know. I will teach you better words.

Ildiko: Why doesn't my mother want me? Maybe she could still come for me?

Ava: I don't know, and I'm so sorry that there has been no one to protect you. But I'm here now, and together we will stand up to your father, your stepmother, and the bullies at school.

Ildiko: What about Stewart? He says he'll smash my head in with a rock if I tell that he does the thing I hate most too. I don't want to die!

Ava: I won't let you die! You will live! And you will thrive. You will become a successful person, I promise you that. You are safe now. What do you need from me?

Ildiko: Please stay. And don't let me down.

### Self-Love Exercise

I've had wonderful success with this exercise with my clients who are often very uplifted by listing their lovable qualities. It's a gentle exercise that just makes you feel good about yourself. Take the time to write down all the things that make you lovable. For example, your ability to connect with animals, your famous chicken pot pie recipe, your curly hair, your ability to listen to friends when they have a problem. Name all the things that make you special, lovable, and unique. You may even want to share these revelations with your inner child.

### Yes / No Exercise

The words Yes and NO are very powerful. That's why this exercise works to raise energy and bring awareness around concepts or authority and control.

Exercise:

- Find a space where you and a partner can verbally exchange loudly with each other while not disturbing others and prepare yourself for an emotional release.

- Stand facing one another. One person shouts, “Yes!” and the other shouts, “No!” Keep shouting “yes” and “no” at each other until you feel the release. Then switch words and continue.
- This simple energy-raising exercise brings up powerful feelings for people who have been sexually abused. Because their boundaries have been violated, their emotions around authority, influence and control are volatile. The emphatic shouting uses the physical body as an instrument for release and healing, helping the individual to process those deep-seated feelings as they’re forcefully emerging from the body.

### Positive Turnaround Exercise

I believe that as victims, we can reduce the power of our triggers by employing the “Positive Turnaround” exercise. It has always been very helpful for me. With Positive Turnaround, you actively search for your triggers and defuse them, one at a time by turning them into something positive. It works because focusing on positive aspects of life helps attract positive people and situations. And it helps you identify the negative possibilities so you can avoid them.

Start by expressing a fear that you have. For example, you are afraid to travel alone on an upcoming trip for fear that you will be attacked. Ask yourself, how likely is this situation to happen on a scale of 1 to 10? Then ask yourself, “What can I do to change this thought pattern?” How about focusing on the new experiences you will enjoy on this trip, and the wonderful people you will meet or get to know. Go over your travel arrangements to evaluate your safety so that you are living in reality and facts instead of imagined fear. Take responsibility for turning your fear of an undesired situation into a desired, positive one.

Purpose: To turn something negative into something positive by looking for all the good possibilities in bad situations.

Why it works: Because focusing on positive aspects in life will attract positive people and situations. However, it is also helpful to be aware of negative possibilities so that you can avoid them before they happen.

How to do it: Express the fearful situation. Evaluate whether the fear is realistic and likely to actually happen on a scale of 1 to 10. Ask yourself, “What can I do to change this thought pattern?” Take responsibility for turning the fear of an undesired situation into a desired one can be a powerful and positive skill.

### Establishing Boundaries

Establishing physical, emotional and sexual boundaries is a powerful exercise to take control of your own desires and sexuality. How can you communicate your boundaries if you don't know what they are yourself? The next few slides list some physical, emotional and sexual boundaries that you can impose in your relationship in order to gain more confidence and control.

Purpose: To be aware of and share physical, emotional and sexual boundaries with your partner.

Why it works: Because if you don't know what your boundaries are, then you cannot express them or blame people for overstepping them.

Here are some examples of boundaries you might adopt to articulate your own personal needs.

## Establishing Physical Boundaries

Let's start with establishing physical boundaries. You have the right to determine when, where, how and who is going to touch your physical body. Here are a few examples of physical boundaries you are allowed to set:

“I have the right to determine when, where, how, and who is going to touch me. I have the right to determine how close someone is going to stand next to me.”

- Don't touch my butt in public
- I won't hug people I don't know
- Don't make out with me at the movies
- Brush your teeth before you kiss me in the morning
- I will leave you if you raise your hand to me
- I won't kiss people I just met, even on the cheek
- I won't dance with anyone I don't intend to have sex with

## Establishing Emotional Boundaries

Set your emotional boundaries. You have the right to follow your instincts about what feels joyful, safe or unsafe emotionally. You are within your rights to command respect from your partner. Here are a few examples of ways you can set boundaries:

“I have the right to go with my gut instinct about what feels joyful, safe or unsafe to me, and command respect from my partner for my emotions.”

- Don't talk about our sex life in public
- Don't compare me to other lovers
- Don't talk about past relationships
- Don't tell strangers hello or goodbye
- Don't flirt with other people
- Introduce me when we see someone, I don't know

- I'll leave you if I discover you've been unfaithful

## Establishing Sexual Boundaries

Set your emotional boundaries. You have the right to follow your instincts about what feels joyful, safe or unsafe emotionally. You are within your rights to command respect from your partner. Here are a few examples of ways you can set boundaries:

“I have the right to determine with whom, where, when and how I am going to be sexual with someone.”

- No anal sex
- I won't swallow semen from ejaculation
- I don't want to kiss you after you've given me oral sex
- I don't want to have a threesome or group sex
- Don't go right for my breasts or between my legs
- I won't have sex with you when you are watching porn
- I won't wait until you have your orgasm to have mine

## Sexual Consent

Now let's talk about sexual consent. The idea of consent is so simple, yet somehow, it's one of the most manipulated concepts in the sexual abuse discussion. How do you know a woman doesn't want to have sex if she's too drunk to tell you? For decent people, the answer is that if she's too drunk to tell you she doesn't want sex, then she's too drunk to have sex.

In 2014, in the wake of President Obama's declaration that college campus rape had become a national crisis, California Governor Jerry Brown signed the first “Yes Means Yes” sexual consent law requiring “affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement” before sex acts can legally occur. ‘No means no’ had been an anti-rape slogan since the 1990s, but suddenly new online memes proliferated:

- “Stop” means no
- Turning away means no
- “I don’t want to” means no
- Shoving you away means no
- “Leave me alone” means no
- Passed out means no
- “I’m not ready” means no
- Pushing you away means no
- “I don’t feel like it” means no
- Drunk or drugged means no
- “Get away from me” means no
- Screaming means no
- “Don’t” means no
- Crying means no

### Sexual Consent Form

Sexual consent from both (or all) parties is absolutely necessary. You don’t have to have a signed form to prove it, but if you want to use one, here is an example that I give to my clients. The advantage of a consent form is that it slows down sexual activity and gives both (or all) parties a moment to consider what they’re about to do. Sometimes it even gives people time to voice their concerns about certain sexual acts, and how they feel in general. The bottom line is that Sexual Consent Forms introduce communication, and communication is key to the success of any sexual encounter. So for those people who think that consent forms take the “fun” out of sex, I have to ask why the “fun” could be so easily deflated? Maybe that’s a sign that slowing down isn’t such a bad idea.

## Sexual Consent Form Sample

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby declare under penalty of perjury that I am over 18 years old. I further declare that this agreement is of my own free will and that neither I nor anyone near or dear to me has been threatened with harm or embarrassment. Both parties agree that this is a private agreement not to be disclosed to third parties except in case of accusation of sexual misconduct by the agreeing party. If he/she shows or makes public this agreement without accusation of sexual misconduct, it is agreed that he/she will be liable for damages for invasion of privacy. By initialing, \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to engage in all or some of the following consensual acts. Sexual fondling and kissing Oral copulation (mutual) Oral copulation (unilateral) by \_\_\_\_\_ only Sexual intercourse with an FDA approved condom at all times Other consensual sexual conduct to be specified:

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\_\_\_\_\_ I further declare that I am at this time not under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication and agree to engage in consensual sex with: \_\_\_\_\_ At this time I do not intend to change my mind before the sex act or acts are over. However, if I do, it is further understood that when I say the words "CODE RED" my partner agrees to STOP INSTANTLY!

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sexual Harassment

The Time's Up and Me-Too movements bagged major wins in New York when state lawmakers passed bills empowering survivors of rape and victims of workplace sexual harassment to seek justice. This bill protects victims of second- and third-degree rape, assault and harassment.

The state Assembly and Senate passed two bills that address the statute of limitations on rape, workplace harassment and nondisclosure agreements. The state Assembly and state Senate passed a bill extending the statute of limitations for rape in the second and third degree to 20 and 10 years, respectively. The bill also bans employers from using nondisclosure agreements to prevent employees from reporting discrimination and extends the statute of limitations for complaints to three years.

## Confronting Sexual Harassment

In her book, *Back Off! How To Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers*, author Martha Langelan recommends taking these steps:

1. Do the unexpected: Name the behavior. Whatever he's [or she's] just done, say it, and be specific.
2. Hold the harasser accountable for his [or her] actions. Don't make excuses for him [or her]; don't pretend it didn't really happen. Take charge of the encounter and let people know what he [or she] did. Privacy protects harassers, but visibility undermines them.
3. Make honest, direct statements. Speak the truth (no threats, no insults, no obscenities, no appeasing verbal fluff and padding). Be serious, straightforward, and blunt.
4. Demand that the harassment stops.
5. Make it clear that everyone has the right to be free from sexual harassment. Objecting to harassment is a matter of principle.

6. Stick to your own agenda. Don't respond to the harasser's excuses or diversionary tactics.
7. His [or her] behavior is the issue. Say what you have to say and repeat it if he [or she] persists.
8. Reinforce your statements with strong, self-respecting body language: eye contact, head up, shoulders back, a strong, serious stance.
9. Don't smile. Timid, submissive body language will undermine your message.
10. Respond at the appropriate level. Use a combined verbal and physical response to physical harassment.

### Healing Ground Rules for Couples

I've counseled many couples through healing from a sexually abusive event, whether that trauma happened years before the relationship or during. I've come to rely on certain ground rules to keep misunderstandings at bay for couples.

### Let The Survivor Take The Lead

This isn't always easy, because sometimes victims of sexual assault will feel like they're drifting aimlessly, unsure of what their relationship goals should be. But that doesn't mean it makes sense for the partner to say, "You should be over it within a month and we'll get back to our regular relationship." It just doesn't work that way. You can only go as quickly as the survivor's healing process will allow. So as the partner, you can take their cue, and reach out for your own therapy if necessary. Standing by a partner who's going through sexual abuse recovery sometimes brings up things from your own past that need to be examined and will help to make the partnership stronger.

It can be exhausting to second-guess your partner and struggle to figure out what they want from your relationship, even when there are no issues at all. Abuse or no abuse, you need to establish a foundation of trust that can't be toppled. For couples healing from abuse of one partner or both partners, this is even more important. For the survivor, trust has been broken in a fundamental, existential sense. That is, the basic human contract with the world wherein we believe we're safe and valued, has been violated. So getting that trust back requires an enormous outpouring of love and support, which in most cases, comes from those nearest and dearest. Your partner is the centerpiece of your life and you'll need that cherished person to have your back, no matter what.

### Mutual Love Agreement (MLA)

A mutual love agreement is creating your own Love Contract with your own terms. It's for any situation in which people in a relationship, dating or living together. To create and agree upon a mutual understanding of relationship boundaries

Purpose: For any situation in which people in a relationship, dating or living together. To create and agree upon a mutual understanding of relationship boundaries.

Why it works: Because both parties are able to express and negotiate their personal needs in a written format and hold each other accountable.

How to facilitate it:

1. Have your clients draw up their own definition of a relationship agreement using simply your guidelines
2. Tell them to include and list as many categories as they want
3. After all of the categories have been filled in by both parties, read and accepted without any uncertainty, both sign and date it

What are the benefits: It is a commitment that your clients have created together that has nothing to do with the government or church. It can be used as an alternative to a prenuptial agreement or marriage certificate, for all sexual orientations to help avoid conflict during the relationship. However, should the relationship break down, it can be used to determine property ownership, debt obligations, support obligations, etc.

## Sample MLA

Here is a sample Mutual Love Agreement that you could suggest to clients as an example to follow. You can also help to customize your clients Mutual Love Agreement based upon their boundaries and deal-breakers. Sexual Agreements can open up intimate communication for couples and negotiation for activities. Also include a list of boundaries and deal breakers.

Dated: MM/DD/YY

By: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

The party of the first part (herein referred to as ‘name’) being of sound mind agrees to the following with the party of the second part “name”

**FULL DISCLOSURE:** At the commencement of the Mutual Love Agreement each party agrees to fully disclose any current resentments, health issues, financial problems or relationship concerns.

**DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP:** Both parties mutually agree to use the following terminology in describing their relationship; committed, cohabitating and monogamous.

**GOALS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP:** Total honesty, trust, respect and open communication.

**SOCIAL:** One night a week is designated to each party to go out separately with friends, business colleagues or family

**FINANCIAL:** Parties will share a joint bank account plus maintain their own individual bank accounts. They will deposit their salary checks into

the joint account and pay for living expenses including, but not limited to; rent, groceries, household items, utility bills, dining and vacations. Each party will keep the money they have accumulated before this agreement in their separate individual bank accounts. There will be no financial reimbursement from either party if agreement is terminated.

SEXUAL: Parties will engage in sexual intercourse at least three (3) times a week, mutual oral sex at least four (4) times a week, anal sex at least one (1) time a month. Give each other an erotic massage one (1) time a week. Watch porn only on weekends, but no more than two movies per weekend, taking turns to choose the movies. Mutual masturbation at least one (1) time on weekends. Unilateral masturbation, anytime.

BOUNDARIES: No hitting, no spitting, no breaking things, no cheating, no bringing up old lovers, no shouting, no offensive name calling

SPIRITUAL: Each party respects the others spiritual beliefs and does not attempt to persuade the other to change their faith

PARENTING: When and if the parties do have children, they will be raised with no particular religion, but educated about all of them. Discipline will be mutually administered by both parties. The child or children will have both their mother and fathers last name hyphenated with the mother's name first

GROUNDS FOR TERMINATION: Any of the following will be grounds for immediate termination and final dissolution of said relationship: Physical violence, cheating with a man or woman and/or withholding sex for more than a month (unless for a medical reason)

Agreed & Accepted

Dated: MM/DD/YY

By: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

### Caution

The following exercises are for people who are already physically active and do not have medical restrictions that could harm them in any way. Do not practice any poses if you suffer from any physical, mental or emotional limitations without checking with your primary healthcare or medical professional first.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples & Individuals

To go deeper into realigning yourself with serenity, you might try working with the energy centers of your body, what are called the chakras. The word “chakra” means “wheel” in the ancient Hindu language, Sanskrit, and according to beliefs that go back over 5000 years, there are seven energy wheels that run down the center of our body, which energy flows through. These are the chakras, and they are all interconnected to light, sound and color. Understanding the chakras allows us to more fully comprehend the relationship between our consciousness and our physical body, because blocked energy in our chakras can lead to illness, while open chakras can lead us to wellbeing.

Working with chakras or energy centers can help in the search for serenity. The following are useful healing exercises for couples and individuals for each of the seven chakras:

#### Root Chakra – Red

This chakra is located in the base of the spine and coccygeal area that supports the anus. When our Root Chakra is blocked, we may feel insecure, guilty or ashamed and have a sense of not belonging.

## Chakra Exercises for Couples – Root Chakra

- Sit opposite your partner with legs crossed at the ankles, hold hands and look at each other as you tell your partner what makes you feel safe, grounded and confident.
- Hip circles will open up your Solar plexus, Sacral and Root Chakras. Stand up and face each other or do it alone. With your knees bent slightly, push your pelvis forward, still keeping the knees bent. Now rotate your pelvis in large circles clockwise, 10 times and then anti-clockwise 10 times. Keep your head and feet still while only moving your pelvis area. Focus on opening up your sensuality.
- Put your hand on your Root Chakra. Face your partner and finish this sentence “I feel secure when you ...”

## Chakra Exercises for Individuals – Root Chakra

- Stomping can be fun to do outside as you stomp your feet on the ground until you feel more grounded.
- Root squeezing can be done while sitting, lying down or standing with your knees slightly apart. Then tighten and pull up your sphincter muscles as tightly as you can. Hold tightened for at least five seconds, then relax for at least ten seconds and repeat five times to strengthen the anal sphincter muscles.

## Sacral Chakra – Orange

Located in the ovaries and testes that produce various sex hormones, this chakra is connected to our reproductive capacity and sexual desire.

When our Sacral Chakra is open, we feel creative, free of guilt and shame, and emotionally and sexually fulfilled with a sense of abundance. When the

Sacral Chakra is blocked, it can result in feelings of frustration, especially in relationships, lack of sexual energy or desire, and blocked creativity.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples – Sacral Chakra

- Sit opposite your partner with legs crossed at the ankles, lean in, hold hands and look at each other. Take turns speaking and listening as you share the following. When do you feel most creative, sexually open and uninhibited?
- Put your hand on your Sacral Chakra and tell your partner what he or she does to turn you on the most.

### Chakra Exercises for Individuals – Sacral Chakra

- Belly dancing is one of the best physical activities to open up the Sacral Chakra, but if belly dancing is not your style, try some pelvic thrusting movements to get the blood flowing to your pelvic regions.
- The Cobra Pose is an ancient yoga pose that is excellent for the mind, body and energy experience, but especially opening up the sacral chakra. Lie face down on the floor with palms flat and fingers spread beneath your shoulders. Then push your upper body off the floor as you tilt your head toward the ceiling, arching your back while your lower body remains against the floor. Once your arms are fully extended, close your eyes, hold the position for three full breaths, then release and open your eyes. Repeat five times. A little time spent in cobra pose can go a long way towards alleviating anxiety and stress.

### Solar Plexus Chakra - Yellow

Located in the upper abdomen in the stomach area, this chakra is related to the digestive system and is also known as our “Seat of Emotions.” It is our energy center for power, which includes anger and laughter. When our

Solar Plexus Chakra is open, we feel powerful, confident and self-assured, like we have control of our lives. When it is blocked, we feel insecure and introverted, which often leads to anxiety and depression.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples – Solar Plexus Chakra

- Practice forgiveness. The word “forgive” literally means “to give up,” “to give away.” Forgiveness is a form of unburdening, removing emotional clutter that can keep you blocked from fully experiencing, giving and receiving love. You can start a weekly forgiveness ritual by forgiving yourself for things you did that you wish you hadn’t done. If you are in a relationship, you can write a forgiveness letter by letting your partner know what he or she did to hurt you. You can even forgive someone silently by saying to yourself inwardly, “I forgive you for what you have done to me knowingly or unknowingly to hurt me.”
- Share your personal power with your partner by letting him or her know your strengths and your weaknesses. Then work together to help each other transform the weaknesses into strengths.

### Chakra Exercises for Individuals – Solar Plexus Chakra

- Use a hula-hoop to open up your Solar Plexus Chakra by pushing your stomach forward as the hoop moves across it. Then push the hoop back when it moves across your back. Keep moving your waist in circular motions to release your solar plexus energy until the hoop falls. Then try spinning it in the opposite direction.
- Dancing the twist to oldies music from the 1960s can also open up the Solar Plexus Chakra without needing any props. Just put one foot in front of the other so that you can shift your body weight from the front to the back leg. Bend your elbows at your side slightly and

start to twist from your waist from left to right leaning slightly forward with weight on your front leg, then lean slightly backwards, as you continue to twist with weight on your back leg. For those readers who may be too young to remember the twist, you can find film clips on YouTube by searching under Twist Dance 1960.

### Heart Chakra – Green

Located in the center of the chest and just above the heart, this energy center is related to the immune system as well as being part of the endocrine system. Key issues involving the Heart Chakra involve compassion, love and spirituality. When your Heart Chakra is open, you love yourself and others without judgment. You are compassionate and feel balanced. When your Heart Chakra is blocked, you feel unable to give and receive love; you lack peace of mind and find it hard to trust anyone.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples – Heart Chakra

- Become your Heart Chakra and express to your partner how you want to be loved. Ask your partner to tell you how he/she wants you to love them back.
- Place your prominent hand on each other's heart, close your eyes and tune into your partner's heartbeat. Breathe in and out in a slow steady rhythm together and feel the connection between your life force energies expand your heart to let more love into to your life.

### Chakra Exercises for Individuals – Heart Chakra

- Practice hugging people who you care about, regularly.
- Do the breaststroke in a pool or even as part of your exercise regimen out of water to open up your Heart Chakra.

- Give yourself at least three positive affirmations every day. They can be for love, health, success, abundance or any other goal you may have. Always start with “I am ...” and then fill in the blank as if it has already happened. For example, “I am loved” or “I am in great health” or “I am a confident and positive person worthy of the success that I have achieved.”

### Throat Chakra – Sky Blue

The Throat Chakra is located in the neck, throat and thyroid gland, which is responsible for our body's metabolism. This energy center influences our communication and how we express ourselves so that we are heard in the way that we want to be perceived. When your Throat Chakra is open, you have the ability to express yourself honestly and creatively so that people hear and understand what you have to say. You are also good at listening and are able to give constructive advice. When your Throat Chakra is blocked, you feel insecure about communicating your thoughts for fear of rejection, or fear that people may misunderstand what you say and have a negative perception of you.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples – Throat Chakra

- Put your hand on your Throat Chakra and tell your partner how you feel about your relationship: what is perfect and what would you like to improve.
- Tell your partner a story about a couple that lived happily ever after and make sure that the characters have your names.

### Chakra Exercises for Individuals – Throat Chakra

- Singing or chanting can open up your Throat Chakra and release the energy that can allow you to better express yourself.

- Panting like a puppy may sound silly, but it can actually be good for your respiratory system and your Throat Chakra. You don't have to let your tongue fall out of your mouth, but you do have to move your stomach while your throat and chest are relaxed. You can change your exhale to do slow panting or fast panting for a couple of minutes a day, even when you are driving or waiting for traffic lights to change.

### Third Eye Chakra – Indigo

Located in the center of the forehead between the eyes and linked to the pineal gland that regulates our sleep and waking up, this energy center is connected to our intuition, imagination and ability to think and make decisions. When our Third Eye Chakra is open we feel intuitive and have the ability to visualize what we want, then execute and reach our goals successfully. When our Third Eye Chakra is blocked, it's hard to imagine anything going right or to follow through on projects, and life can be confusing with lots of issues and conflicts.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples – Third Eye Chakra

- Face your partner, put your hand on your Third Eye Chakra and finish this sentence: "You don't know that I ..." Then it's your partner's turn to do the same. Be sure to thank each other for sharing.
- Share a time when you listened to your intuition and it worked, and describe a time when you didn't follow your intuition and you wish that you had.

### Chakra Exercises for Individuals – Third Eye Chakra

- Guided imagery through all of your senses can result in deep emotions. Make your imagery as vivid as possible because our bodies do not discriminate between sensory images in our mind and reality.

If you imagine that you are happy and satisfied, your brain will automatically believe it and your body will respond.

- You can also use the vision board exercise from earlier in the chapter to create your dreams in a more tangible way and put it on display where you can see it every day.
- The “Child’s Pose” can be a wonderful way to stretch your body and open up your Third Eye Chakra every day. Get into a kneeling position on the floor with your buttocks resting on your heels. Then lean your upper body forward with your arms stretched out in front of you so that your stomach is resting on top of your thighs and your head is on the floor. Even if you only do this pose a few times a day, the benefits will be noticeable for your neck, shoulders, back and hips as your body releases strain and tension from these areas. This exercise also flexes the body’s internal organs, stretches the spine and calms the mind.

### Crown Chakra – Violet

Located at the crown of the head, the Crown Chakra is considered to be the chakra of pure consciousness and wisdom. It is attached to the central nervous system via the hypothalamus.

When your Crown Chakra is open, you feel like you have found your mission in life and taken the right path, and that your journey will have a significant impact on the world. When your Crown Chakra is blocked, you question your knowledge and fear the unknown. You are skeptical. Your life’s mission is unclear, and your personal growth is stunted.

### Chakra Exercises for Couples – Crown Chakra

- Put your hand on your Crown Chakra and tell your partner where you would like to see your relationship in the future, one to five years in time to come.

- Share what you can do together to feel more spiritually alive.

### Chakra Exercises for individuals – Crown Chakra

- This stretching exercise will open up your Crown, Third Eye and Throat Chakras. Lie down flat on your back on a hard surface like the floor with your feet touching. Then raise your head, shoulders and back to a seated position. Place your hands on your hips or on the floor if you need support and tip your head back looking up to the sky. Breathe deeply through your nose and exhale through your mouth five times. Focus on opening up your mind.
- Create a movie in your mind where you are the star, writer, director and producer, constantly editing and rewriting your script and deciding how you want it to end. Choose which characters play lead, supporting and extra roles in your movie. Creative visualization is a performance-enhancement technique that can be a confidence booster, natural antidepressant, stress reliever, motivator and inspiration that will open up your highest chakra and enable you to reach your goals.

### Breathing

We all take breathing for granted until it becomes compromised. Honestly, how often do you think about the fact that you're breathing? And are you aware of how you breathe? Here's a simple breathing exercise that can help clear the mind. Like a lot of things that are good for the body, it's incredibly simple but possibly something you have never considered.

#### Synchronized Breathing

- You can breathe together while standing and hugging, laying down and cuddling, with one person's head in the other's lap, sitting or lying back to back.

- As long as your bodies are touching, you can breathe in synchronicity inhaling and exhaling together and sharing your life force energy. By taking the time to match your breathing, you are creating a deeper connection while relaxing that will result in bringing you both into the present. The other great thing about this exercise is that it's physical without being sexual. There are no demands on either of you to perform a certain way, yet it's a profound connection that really brings you together.

### Tantric Hug

A tantric hug is when your heart chakras are touching, and two hearts become one. You can also join your crown and third eye chakras and your sacral chakra, but of course the throat chakras and root chakras are harder to align. The idea is that you are uniting and exchanging energy.

### Tantric Kissing

I don't always suggest this exercise for couples dealing with sexual abuse histories, but in certain circumstances it's the perfect thing. Synchronized kissing: Embrace each other in your favorite lovemaking position with Lingam (penis) and Yoni (vulva) touching, but not inserted. With your lips slightly open and touching, inhale together gently and exhale together, sharing and synchronizing the same breath.

- Orgasmic kissing: In a loving, face-to-face Maithuna intercourse position with Lingam inserted into Yoni, lock lips, eye-gaze and take turns inhaling and exhaling alternately. Share the deep level of intimacy and feel your lover's sexual breath enter your body and spirit.
- More Kissing: Build sexual anticipation by kissing all around your lover's face with soft, baby kisses and use your hands to caress the face, hair and body.

- Use your nose to nuzzle and your lips to caress your lover.
- Tease your lover by tracing the outline of his or her lips with the tip of your tongue.
- Now put your heart and body into a slow kiss, alternating the pressure from gentle to deep with mouth slightly open.
- Take your lover's bottom lip between yours and suck gently. Vocalize some sounds of pleasure.
- Take turns licking your lover's upper and lower teeth with your tongue. Then alternate.
- Wrap your lips around your lover's tongue and suck passionately, alternating your speed from slow to quick. Explore the inside of your lover's mouth with your tongue by running it in small and large circles. Alternate.
- Dart your tongue in and out of your lover's mouth rapidly and then slowly. Remember to use your entire body and make all those wonderful sounds of love.
- Use hot or cold liquids to create new kissing sensations and sensibilities.

## Chanting

Sound releases energy, including sexual energy during lovemaking. Sound will also amplify sensation, as the sound waves vibrate throughout the body. If you hold back the sounds you feel inside, it will manifest as inhibitions, resentments and anger. Chanting is a great way to utilize sound to open chakras: “OHM” for the Crown Chakra, “AH” for the Heart Chakra, and “HOM” for the Sacral Chakra to open. Combining the three will unite these physical areas. If singing in the shower is more your style, that works too.

## Dialogue with Your Sex Organs

Sometimes it's useful to talk to your sexual organs, opening up a dialogue to begin healing. I've used this technique myself, and with clients. It's not the perfect solution for everyone, but it can be part of a process that connects victims with their body again.

- Create an identity for the sexual organ that you feel is betraying you, or making you feel ashamed or fearful.
- Find a safe space to have a discussion out loud with that sexual organ to begin a healing conversation.

### Example of Dialogue with Sexual Organs

Here is an example of this exercise by a woman named Shauna. She suffered from vaginismus, a condition that makes the vagina involuntarily spasm when something is inserted into it – a penis or even a tampon. Medically, this condition is serious because it prevents pelvic exams, but it's also devastating for one's sex life.

She named her vagina 'Friend' and started a conversation:

"Hi, Friend. Are you listening to me? I'm very worried that you're not listening to me while I'm talking. I really need cooperation, and I feel like you're abandoning me when I need you most. If you are still upset about the incident, I completely understand, and I'm willing to go back into therapy to work things out. Is that what you need? I really want to have a fulfilling sex life. Don't you want that too?"

## Sounds of Love Exercise for Couples

Making sounds during lovemaking helps to move and magnify sexual energy, so your assignment if you choose to accept it is to make passionate love as loudly as possible using sounds to express how you are feeling. Of course, you can be verbal as well as vocal by telling your lover how to please you. If you are too self-conscious about how you sound, then do your best to praise your partner in and out of the bedroom.

## Movement for Individuals

Moving your body is also important to keep up your positivity. Lack of movement can leave your body feeling tight and tired, restricting energy flow and blocking emotions, especially sexual ones. Even when you visualize parts of your body moving, you're creating physiological sensations. Many survivors describe feeling numb and out of touch with their bodies, so movement is a way to counteract that loss of autonomy.

### Ways to Move:

- After you wake up, do some simple stretching exercises to feel more energetic. Add some squats, lunges, push-ups and sit ups to get your body ready for whatever the universe has to throw at you.
- Park a little further from your destination so that you get a good walk and some fresh air into your lungs.
- Ride a bike to work or go for a ride on the weekends.
- Trade the elevator for the stairs.

## 7 Solo Yoga Poses for Healing

1. Child's Pose
2. Goddess Pose
3. Warrior 1 and 2
4. Bridge Pose
5. Boat Pose
6. Cat Cow
7. Plow Pose

### Caution

Do not practice any poses if you suffer from any physical, mental or emotional limitations without checking with your primary healthcare or medical professional first. These poses are for people who are already physically active and do not have medical restrictions that could harm them in any way.

### Child's Pose, or BALASANA

This is the most healing pose aptly named Child's Pose because it has the shape of a baby and the curvature of the spine also resembles a fetus. Dr. Nancy Sutton Pierce demonstrates the pose and she is part of the Sexycises by Sexperts project due to her experience as a yoga instructor, nurse practitioner and Sexologist.



- Child's pose is a restorative pose that is often used as a counter pose to more challenging yoga poses. It's very relaxing and restorative and has value whether you hold it for one minute or ten minutes.
- Inhale as you kneel on the floor and touch your big toes together. Then sit back on your heels, laying your torso between your thighs as you exhale. Feel your spine lengthening from your tailbone all the way to the back of your neck.
- When you come out of the pose, lengthen your torso as you lift from the tailbone on an inhale.
- Child's pose helps you relax while stretching the hips and thighs. It's known to reduce stress and fatigue to make you feel refreshed.

### Goddess pose or UTKATA KONASANA

Posing here are two of the sexperts in my Sexycises by Sexperts video. Dr. Amie Harwick with the dark hair is a licensed Marriage & Family Therapist as well as a Sexologist, and the Author of The New Sex Bible for Women. Christina Engelhardt is a Certified Loveologist and Love Coach, Astrologer and Psychic Intuitive.



Goddess pose is used to harness the power of your inner goddess, getting in touch with powerful feminine energy. It activates the root and sacral chakras by working out your lower body.

- Inhale as you create a 45-degree angle with your feet and exhale as you turn your heels in and toes out.
- Bend your knees as your thighs are parallel to the ground.
- Take a deep breath and spread your arms out and bend your elbows with your palms facing away from you.

Goddess pose has so many benefits. It warms up your body and gives you energy, elongating the spine and stretching your hips, chest and thighs and strengthening your thighs and butt!

## Warrior Pose or VIRABHADRASANA



As a yoga teacher, Kayvon Afsarifard is also a Therapist.



Warrior pose is beneficial for opening up your hips and chest and stretching the arms and legs. Warrior helps with focus and concentration, balance and feeling more grounded, which is so important as a survivor of abuse. You can also expect improved circulation and respiratory function and an overall feeling of energizing the body.

Warrior Pose has three stages, but I find these first two to be most empowering and healing. Just adopting these powerful stances for a few moments can bring out your spiritual warrior and give you emotional energy to heal.

- For Warrior One, stand at the top of your mat, take a deep breath in, and on the exhale, step your feet wide apart, about 3-4 feet and bend your front leg.
- Turn your back foot in about 45 degrees and align the inside of that foot with the heel of your front foot.
- Raise your arms together toward the sky and feel the energy shooting out of your fingertips as your shoulder blades melt down your back.
- To move into Warrior Two, reach your arms wide apart while looking forward over your front arm and centering your body in this powerful stance as you exhale in and out.

### Bridge Pose or SETUBANDHA

Bridge pose calms the mind and helps to alleviate mild depression by reducing anxiety and stress.

Dr. Hernando Chaves demonstrates the bridge pose in this photo below. He's a licensed Marriage & Family Therapist and sex therapist who helps clients heal from sexual trauma. He's part of my Sexycises video created to introduce yin yang yoga to couples.



- Start your bridge pose by laying on your back and inhaling.
- Then exhale as you place your arms by your sides.
- As you exhale, lift your buttocks up off the floor to a height that is comfortable for you.
- Inhale while pressing your feet into the ground and keep your knees directly over your heels.

### Plow Pose or HALASANA

Plow pose can be healing for mild headaches, insomnia and infertility. However, it can cause a headache if you have high blood pressure or any other malady, so never ever do any poses that can compromise your wellbeing.



You can transition from Bridge Pose to Plow Pose as shown by Dr. Hernando Chaves.

- Lie on your back and press your hands firmly into the ground on either side of your body.
- Lift your legs up and over your torso, forming an arc with your back as your feet ideally rest on the floor.
- If this pose is not comfortable for your body, you can just lift your legs up as far as is comfortable for you and you can bend your knees for a modification.
- To release the pose, be sure to support your back by using your hands and rolling down slowly one vertebra at a time.

### Boat Pose, or NAVASANA

This pose is demonstrated by Certified Love Coach and Fitness expert Erika Jordan who was also part of the Sexycises by Sexperts video.

Boat pose can strengthen the hip flexors and abdominal muscles, which is its primary physical benefit, but it can also be tremendously empowering for sexual recovery. I have worked with a few women in my practice who had trouble opening their legs after being sexually assaulted or raped. This was a pose that enabled them to slowly move past that stage, first starting out with their legs together, as in these photos of classic boat pose, and then adding the variation of splitting the legs, and holding their feet.



- To begin boat pose, take a deep breath as you sit on the floor with your legs out in front of you.
- Then take another deep breath as you lean back and lift your legs off the floor.
- Straighten your legs if you have the flexibility so that your thighs are angled about 45-50 degrees relative to the floor.
- Stretch your arms out beside your legs, and balance on your sitting bones of you can. If stretching your arms out is uncomfortable, then leave your hands planted just behind your hips.

In the photo on the left here is Dr. Kayna Cassard and her partner Dominic Cole demonstrating the couple's version of this pose, which is featured in my Sexycises video. Kayna is an acro-yoga expert, and a licenced Marriage and Family Therapist with a specialty in sexual difficulties, sexually compulsive behaviors, and gender or sexual identity issues. Dominick is a renowned Acroyoga expert and teacher with therapeutic workshops that focus on healing through movement as well as play & intimacy skills.



### Cat / Cow Pose or MARJARYASANA and BITILASANA

Dr. Anne Ridley is demonstrating Cat / Cow in these two pictures. On the left is the arched back of the cat, and on the left is the concave cow. Anne is a clinical sexologist, psychotherapist and intimacy and relationship specialist based in Santa Fe, and she's part of the Sexycises project as well.



This can be a gentle flow between two poses or an energetic one that brings flexibility to the spine and spirit. It stretches the neck, back and torso, activating the abdominal muscles as well.

- Start in Tabletop position on your hands and knees with your wrists directly under your shoulders and your knees directly under your hips.
- Inhale and drop your belly toward the floor, gazing upward and lifting your chin and chest toward the sky. This is Cow Pose.



- Exhale and move into cat pose by rounding your spine up toward the ceiling like a frightened cat.
- Lower the top of your head toward the floor.
- Continue to Inhale into Cow Pose and exhale into Cat Pose as slowly or vigorously as is comfortable for your body.

### Movement Exercises for Couples

For couples it's important to maintain non-sexual intimacy – and this is for all couples, whether you're a sexual abuse survivor or not! But for survivors in particular it's important to maintain a physical relationship that's not all about sex. However, only engage in movement exercises that feel comfortable for your body and please contact a medical professional if you are not sure of any physical activity described in this book may be harmful to your wellbeing.

- Dance whenever possible with your partner, even if it's just a short sway to the radio in the middle of making dinner.
- Hold each other's hands while you do ten lunges together.
- Do five push-ups on top of your partner and be sure to give them a kiss on the way down.
- Go hiking or biking together on the weekends.

### Sexycises – Yin Yang Yoga for Intimacy

My inspiration for creating Yin Yang Yoga is the success couples achieve connecting emotionally through physical touch, so I wanted to create a practice that blends three popular keys to wellbeing: yoga, intimacy and fitness. I've found that couples who need increased intimacy get the quickest results through touch. Connecting physically releases oxytocin which manifests in romance and a better love life.

Sexycises offers a playful new way for couples to connect physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually.

Based on the belief that synchronizing energy eXchange (SEX) create a sensual bond that can take a relationship to higher levels of intimacy, my Yin Yang Yoga contains elements from various styles including Anusara, Kundlini, Vinyasa, Acroyoga and Tantra yoga for couples. For more information on Sexycises, check out <https://sexycises.com/>

## Fountain Pose



Dr. Anne Ridley & her partner Nick

- Begin standing facing each other as you place your hands on each other's hearts for a deep connection that brings you closer mentally, emotionally and physically.
- Press your pelvises together to charge your sacral chakras.
- Put your weight evenly on your feet as you spread them 45% apart touching each other's feet.
- Lean your crown chakra back up towards the heavens as you look through your third-eye chakra.

## Steeple Pose



Steeple Pose connects your yin and yang energies, while opening up the heart chakra for more sensitivity and trust.

- Press soles into the ground while keeping your torso facing forward.
- Raise your arms up palm to palm with your arms extended, above your crown chakras.
- Look into each other's soul through eye-contact.

## Couple's Child's Pose with Backbend

With Sex Therapist Dr. Cat Meyer and Intimacy Expert Miyoko  
(both are also Acroyoga teachers)



- Begin with the weightier partner getting into Child's Pose.
- Then the other partner can gently lay back and align their sit bones over their partner into a backbend, but only do this pose if your body is flexible enough and you are comfortable. This should not be painful, so if it is you need to stop and check with your doctor if doing yoga exercises like these are good for your body.
- See if you can both coordinate your breathing, so the inhales and the exhales match up.

## Yoga, Intimacy & Fitness

Partner yoga combines sensuality and playfulness with yoga poses and breathwork designed to bring partners together in greater trust and communication.

## Healing Through Sex Toys

We hold trauma through tension in our very cells and muscles. In fact, there is a direct correlation between pelvic pain and sexual trauma, so it's very important to explore physical healing techniques along with mental and emotional therapies. Sex toys play a vital role in this type of healing, helping women and men connect with themselves again.

There are also medical devices similar to sex toys which we discuss in a case history of painful intercourse in Part One of this book:

Vibrators:

Eggs & Bullets, Massagers, Clitoral, G, U, A-Spot & Multifunction.

Dildos:

Vaginal, Anal, Double-Ended.

Nipple Toys:

Clamps & Suction Cups.

Exercisers:

Ben Wa Balls & other Kegel Exercisers.

BDSM:

Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, Sadism & Masochism paraphernalia.

## Orgasm Barriers

If you have never experienced an orgasm you may be suffering from gynecological, hormonal or even neurological disorders, but more commonly you could have a psychological block such as emotional trauma, shame & guilt or reactions to physical abuse.

In addition, excessive amounts of alcohol, recreational drugs, medications such as antidepressants, beta blockers and opioids can delay or impede orgasm.

Pelvic Floor Prolapse is a condition that occurs when the muscles that support your pelvic organs weaken and loosen. This can negatively affect your ability to orgasm.

Surgery can also inhibit your libido temporarily, whether you're recovering from a heart operation, back surgery or a hip replacement. Even plastic surgery can impact your sexual drive and orgasms.

If you have a low libido, it could be a hormonal issue like low testosterone or lower estrogen and progesterone, you should get examined to find out if there's a way to balance it.

As we've discussed extensively in this course, there are many psychological reasons that an individual may have trouble having an orgasm- a fear of intimacy or relationship resentments.

Finally, lack of stimulation can be the ultimate barrier to orgasm. You have to learn what turns you on and makes you orgasm, and also learn how to communicate your sexual desires.

You simply can't talk about orgasm without mentioning sexual techniques.

Due to a variety of reasons—cultural, religious and personal—some women are uncomfortable discussing and exploring the sexual techniques that might bring on or intensify an orgasm.

### Take Responsibility for your Pleasure & Orgasms

Tap into a positive peak moment when you had memorable passion. Who would like to share a positive peak pleasure? It's okay to fake it until you make it. Your brain doesn't know the difference between whether you are thinking of a sexy moment or experiencing one and will release feel-good hormones.

Answer the question:

How do I express my sexuality?

Describe what makes you feel most sexy & why.

Express how you want to be made love to, by who, when & why.

When you feel sexy, you become sexy!

### The Sexual Response System & Phases

Men and women experience difference phases of physiological change while becoming aroused, being aroused, and after arousal. Masters & Johnson originally postulated a four-stage model, and I've added a fifth stage called Foreplay.

#### 1. Foreplay Phase

Most men and women need to be prepared for sex with some foreplay. Stimulation of the senses contribute to that “turned on” feeling, with men more heavily influenced by visual cues. Foreplay acts can include whispering your partner's name in their ear and then kissing them to release pleasure endorphins that flood the brain with feel-good hormones like serotonin and dopamine. In this phase, blood flow increases to the genitals and the body become sensitive all over.

## 2. Excitement Phase

At this stage, the body is preparing for intercourse with kissing, petting and even oral sex. Heart rate, breathing rates and blood pressure increase, and nipples become erect in both men and women. For men, the penis, prostate and perineum harden and for women their breasts become slightly enlarged and the labia majora become flatter and thinner while the labia minora increase slightly in size. The vagina becomes lubricated and the inner two-thirds of the vagina expands.

## 3. Plateau Phase- General

This is the third stage of the sexual response cycle, and it's considered a period of sexual excitement before orgasm. The muscles begin to tense more and circulation and heart rate continue to increase as sexual pleasure increases. In women, areolas and labia increase in size, the clitoris withdraws slightly, the pubococcygeus (PC) muscle tightens. In men, the head of penis swells with blood, there is secretion of pre-ejaculatory fluids and for uncircumcised men, the head of the penis will push out of the foreskin. Masters and Johnson refers to this as the orgasm platform.

## 4. Orgasmic Phase

Orgasm is the finale of the Plateau Phase, and the fourth stage of the sexual response cycle. It is accompanied by rapid cycles of muscle contractions in the lower pelvic muscles, which surround both the anus and the primary sexual organs. For women, as orgasm approaches, the outer third of the vagina tightens and narrows, while overall the vagina lengthens and dilates, engorged with soft tissue. Uterine and vaginal contractions occur, sometimes associated with 'squirting' if the G-spot has been stimulated. For men, testicles draw closer to the body, the prostate gland fills with fluid, and pelvic muscular contractions begin. The orgasm has arrived and typically lasts about seven seconds.

## 5. Resolution Phase

In this final phase, muscles begin to relax and blood pressure declines. Some men and women can return to the Plateau Phase here by continuing stimulation, and experience multiple orgasms, but some may find continued stimulation to be painful. Genitals return to original size within about ten minutes, and in men the testicles descend, and the penis becomes soft again.

### Dr. Ava's Tantra Meditation

You can record this meditation and listen to your own voice for about 20 minutes of relaxation as you enjoy this body scan for your Chakras. Alternatively, I have narrated it in my course for Loveology University, where you can enroll and take the whole course.

Lie down on your back with your hands and feet as wide as is comfortable for you, place your palms up so that you can receive loving energy. Relax and become aware of the rise and fall of your breath from your head to your toes as we open up all 7 of your chakra energies centers to balance your mind, body & spirit.

- Begin by breathing slowly & deeply, visualizing your breath going down into your root chakra at the base of your spine, taking in your life force energy with every breath you take. Now envision a light of red glowing love energy grounding you, as it moves around your root chakra, so that you always feel safe & secure.
- Now allow your awareness to move up your body, between your pelvis & your navel, to your sacral chakra where your creativity & pleasure are centered. Feel yourself breath into this area as you

envision a glowing orange light of love empowering your creative powers & igniting your passions.

- Continue to move your awareness up your body, above your navel to the pit of your stomach to the solar plexus chakra also known as your seat of emotion, where you store anger & laughter, so breathe into this area as you invite the color yellow bathed with sunshine & loving light to nurture & replenish you with courage & confidence.
- Focus now on your heart chakra, as you breathe life force energy into your heart center & welcome loving green colored light that bathes you with unconditional love & compassion so that you can open up your heart, give & receive love to yourself & others worthy of your love.
- Move your attention up to your neck, to your throat chakra where your communication & self-expression resides. As you breathe deeply, envision a blue glowing energy of love freeing your personal will so that you are heard & understood whenever you express yourself.
- Now focus your energy up to the center of your forehead, between your eyebrows to your third eye chakra, where your power of intuition comes from. Invite the velvety color indigo to bring you more clarity & loving energy to open up your third eye so that you may be more perceptive & intuitive.
- Moving up now to the top of your head to your crown chakra, as you breathe deeply, visualize a purple light of loving energy surrounding your crown center, filling it with wisdom & enlightenment, so that

you know your life's purpose & have peace of mind as you become one with the universe.

- Now take a long deep breath & visualize all of your chakras cleared, balanced and super charged from loving, healing life force energy. When you are ready to bring gentle movement & awareness back to your body, wiggle your fingers & toes. Stretch out your arms & legs. Roll over to your right side & rest for a moment. With an inhalation, press yourself into comfortable seated position. Bring your hands to your heart chakra, in prayer pose, close your eyes & bow to honor yourself.



#### Resources: Books, Articles, Website and Hotlines

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Websites / Hotlines Healing From Loss National Mental Health Services

MentalHealth.gov: <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help>.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <https://afsp.org/find-support>.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>.

Crisis Text Line (for all forms of grief or trauma):  
<https://www.crisistextline.org> or text TALK to 741741.

American Cancer Society: 800-ACS-2345 <https://www.cancer.org/>

First Candle (grief support for death)

The Compassionate Friends (grief support after the death of a child): 877-969-0010 <https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

Grief Source Network: <https://griefsourcenenetwork.com>

Pet Loss & Grief Resource: <https://www.lapoflove.com>

Project Transitions (serving people with HIV and AIDS): 877-969-0010  
<https://www.projecttransitions.org/>

Our House Grief Support Center: <https://www.ourhouse-grief.org> 1-888-417-1444.

Sudden: Supporting People After Sudden Death:  
<https://www.suddendeath.org>

Home Foreclosure Help: <https://www.usa.gov/foreclosure>

Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help>

WebMD.com: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

National Institute of Health (NIH): [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

Center for Disease Control & Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The Institute of Medicine / Healthcare Improvement: <http://www.ihl.org>

Zür Institute: [www.zurinstitute.com](http://www.zurinstitute.com)

Sebastien Kneipp: [www.kneipp.com](http://www.kneipp.com)

Ahead with Horses Equine Therapy: [www.awhla.org](http://www.awhla.org)

Amma the “Hugging saint”: [www.amma.org](http://www.amma.org)

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Eileen Joyce Grief Recovery: [www.griefandlosscoaching.com](http://www.griefandlosscoaching.com)

Center for Mind Body Medicine: [www.cmbm.org](http://www.cmbm.org)

Jack Kornfield: [www.jackkornfield.com/meditation-grief/](http://www.jackkornfield.com/meditation-grief/)

Michael Stokes Photography: [www.michaelstokes.net](http://www.michaelstokes.net)

Mayo Clinic: [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)

Sex Furniture resources: [www.intimaterider.com](http://www.intimaterider.com)

Liberator Furniture: [www.liberator.com](http://www.liberator.com)

Sexuality After Spinal Cord Injuries: [www.sexualitysci.org](http://www.sexualitysci.org)

Disability Advocacy Groups: [www.therosecentre.ca](http://www.therosecentre.ca)

Disability Positive: [www.disabilitypositive.com](http://www.disabilitypositive.com)

Disabilities R Us: [www.disabilities-r-us.com](http://www.disabilities-r-us.com)

Enabled Love dating site: [www.enabledlove.com](http://www.enabledlove.com)

Disabled Dealer buy & sell resource: [www.disableddealer.com](http://www.disableddealer.com)

The Riot: [www.theriotrocks.org](http://www.theriotrocks.org)

Center for Disability Rights, Inc.: [www.cdrnys.org](http://www.cdrnys.org)

Wounded Warrior Project: [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

A Video series about sexuality and intimacy after spinal cord injury is for mature audiences: [www.sexualitysci.org](http://www.sexualitysci.org)

The Rose Centre: [www.therosecentre.ca](http://www.therosecentre.ca)

Disability Positive: [www.disabilitypositive.com](http://www.disabilitypositive.com)

Spinal Cord Injury Support Groups: [www.spinalcord.com](http://www.spinalcord.com)

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation: [www.christopherreeve.org](http://www.christopherreeve.org)

Wings for Life research resource: [www.wingsforlife.com](http://www.wingsforlife.com)

Let's Queer Things Up: [www.letsqueerthingsup.com](http://www.letsqueerthingsup.com)

Psychology Today: [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

Agape International Spiritual Center: [www.agapelive.com](http://www.agapelive.com)

Center on Addiction: [www.centeronaddiction.org](http://www.centeronaddiction.org)

American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy: [www.aamft.org](http://www.aamft.org)

RAINN (Rape, Assault, Incest National Network): 800.656.HOPE (4673)  
[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV): [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

United States Congress – Legislative Activities: [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov)

United Nations: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

History of Child Abuse & Neglect:  
[http://www.iupui.edu/~childwel/Sexual/Unit\\_1/history.htm](http://www.iupui.edu/~childwel/Sexual/Unit_1/history.htm)

Me Too Movement [www.metoomvmt.org](http://www.metoomvmt.org)

Time's Up Movement: [www.timesupnow.com](http://www.timesupnow.com)

Rape Crisis England & Wales: [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

Adult Children of Alcoholics World Service [www.Adultchildren.org](http://www.Adultchildren.org)

National Center for PTSD: [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

Plastic Martyr: [www.plasticmartyr.com](http://www.plasticmartyr.com)

Sexycises: [www.sexycises.com](http://www.sexycises.com)

Planned Parenthood: [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

The Apology Eve Ensler, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019

Healing Steps: A Gentle Path to Recovery for Survivors of Childhood

Sexual Abuse, Sharyn Higdon Jones, Inner Journey Publishing, 2018

Sexual Assault Survivor Gratitude Journal: Healing & Recovering From

Sexual Violation & Low Self Esteem, Linda Rachel Orange, 2018

The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse,  
Wendy Maltz, Harper Collins, 2012

The Courage to Heal Workbook: A Guide for Women and Men Survivors  
of Child Sexual Abuse, Laura Davis, Harper Collins, 1990

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