

Helping Adult Victims of Child Abuse

Healing Exercises 2

by Dr. Doug

1. Work toward establishment of the essential conditions for ensuring an atmosphere in which sexual recovery can occur (these are essential for any healthy, sexual relationship):

A. Mutual consent

B. Equality of personal power in relationship

C. Mutual respect

D. Mutual trust

E. Safety and comfort in the sexual setting; no fear of danger, pregnancy, disease

2. It is an important goal to integrate emotional closeness (intimacy) into love-making. Sexual interaction can become an expression of feelings of closeness.

3. Begin the process of dealing with unwanted intrusive thoughts or flashbacks by not "avoiding" them and by using relaxation and/or systematic desensitization techniques.

4. Begin work on deconditioning feelings of guilt, disgust, shame, or embarrassment which may exist or come up during sexual activity.

5. Begin cognitive reframing of sexual activity as becoming more natural, pleasurable, fun; a healthy and enjoyable expression.

6. Work through any difficulty you may have with the balance between giving and receiving physical pleasure. Especially allow yourself to get in touch with what pleases you physically; give yourself permission to ask for it and to enjoy receiving.

7. Learn the skills of focusing on the moment and of how to "turn off" thinking about the past or future altogether. Cognitive activity is incompatible with sexual arousal and fulfillment.

8. Begin facing feared sexual situations in a gradual but consistent way. What you fear grows smaller when confronted directly.

Work through any issues around control which may interfere.

9. Communicate with your partner about how active he or she wants you to be during love-making.

10. Refrain from "guilt-tripping" yourself for whenever you are sexual or for lack of progress or setbacks in the sexual relationship.

11. Be aware that any good sexual relationship requires adjustment and changes, and thus communication on a continuing basis. You can work toward doing this without feelings of failure and inadequacy.