

Sexual Effects Inventory

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1. ATTITUDES ABOUT SEX

Sexual abuse generates negative, false attitudes about sex. These become hidden from your consciousness. You may have difficulty separating abusive sex from healthy sex. Offenders contaminate victims, imprinting them with an abusive way of thinking about sex, a sexual abuse mind-set. This mind-set can affect every aspect of a victim's sexuality: sexual drive, sexual expression, sex roles, intimate relationships, knowledge of sexual functioning, and sense of morality.

How have you been affected by this sexual abuse mind-set? Put a check star (*) in front of each statement you agree with and a question mark (?) in front of each statement you sometimes or partially agree with (statements that don't fit either category should be left blank).

- I feel sex is a duty I must perform
- I feel sex is something I do to get something else
- In sex, one person wins and one person loses
- Sex feels dirty to me
- Sex feels bad to me
- Sex feels secretive to me
- I equate sex with sexual abuse
- Sexual energy seems uncontrollable
- Sex is hurtful to me
- I believe sex is something you either give or you get
- I feel sex is power to control another person
- I believe having sex is all that matters
- I think sex benefits men more than women
- I think people have no responsibility to each other during sex
- I think sexual desire makes people act crazy
- I think males have a right to demand sex from women
- Sex means danger to me
- I believe sex is a way to escape painful emotions
- Sex is humiliating to me or others
- I feel sex is addictive

- I feel sex is a game
- I believe sex is a condition for receiving love

2.SEXUAL SELF-CONCEPT

Sexual abuse, and its consequences, can unconsciously influence how you feel about yourself and about sex. You may now see yourself as sexually damaged, suffering a poor sexual self-concept. Or you may have developed a self-concept that is inflated, where you believe you're more powerful as a result of sex.

Knowing how you view yourself as a sexual person is fundamental to eventually making changes in your sexual behaviour. Put a check mark in front of each statement you agree with and a question mark (?) in front of each statement you sometimes or partially agree with.

- I am an easy sexual target
- My sexuality is disgusting
- I hate my body
- There is something wrong with me sexually
- I am confused whether I'm gay or straight
- I feel I will lose control if I let myself go sexually
- I have no sense of being sexual at all
- I feel like a victim in sex
- I am sexually inadequate
- I don't like certain sexual parts of my body
- I want sex for all the wrong reasons
- I have to stay in control during sex
- I don't have a right to deny my body to any partner who wants it
- I can be loved only to the extent I can give sexually
- I am oversexed
- I have no right to control sexual interaction
- My primary blue is in sexually serving a partner
- If I want sex, I'm as sick as a sexual offender
- I blame myself for my past sexual abuse
- I deserve whatever I get sexually
- I wish I were the opposite sex
- I am inferior to other people because of my sexual past
- I am damaged goods
- I can easily be sexually dominated
- I'd be happiest in a world where sex didn't exist

- I couldn't live in a world without sex
- I am a sexual performer
- There are some things I have done sexually that I can never forgive myself for
- I am a sick person sexually
- I'm not loveable for who I am, only for what I do sexually
- I am a sexual object
- I feel bad about my gender
- I do not believe a particular sexual preference itself is a negative effect of sexual abuse to be overcome, It's the confusion about sexual preference and orientation that can be troublesome

3.AUTOMATIC REACTIONS TO TOUCH AND SEX

Sexual abuse can create a conditioned way of reacting to touch and sex. Some survivors get panicky, avoid sexual possibilities, and want to run the other way when sexually approached. Others freeze and feel helpless and unable to protect themselves. Still others get overexcited and may recklessly seek dangerous sexual encounters. You may experience spontaneous reactions to sex that cause you to numb sexual feelings, to divorce your mind from what is happening physically, or to become sexually aroused in inappropriate ways. Sexual settings and contact can bring back negative feelings associated with abuse.

Flashbacks to sexual abuse may arise and interfere with sexual relating and satisfaction. Put a check mark in front of each statement you agree with and a question mark (?) in front of each statement you sometimes or partially agree with.

- I am afraid of sex
- I have little interest in being sexual
- I am afraid of some sexual body parts
- I am preoccupied with sex
- I withdraw from sexual possibilities
- I am bothered by sexual thoughts I can't control
- When I get horny, I feel extremely anxious
- I feel especially powerful when I'm having sex
- I get sexually excited at times when I shouldn't be
- I constantly look for sexual opportunities
- I believe that when a person touches me, he or she wants to have sex
- I lose all power to protect myself when sexually approached
- I have unhealthy sexual interests and desires
- I often have flashbacks to past sexual abuse during sex
- I get panicky feelings when touched

- I feel emotionally distant during sex
- During sex my mind feels separate from my body
- I feel like I'm another person when I have sex
- I feel very nervous during sex
- I experience negative feelings such as fear, anger, shame, guilt, or nausea with sexual touch
- I get sexually aroused when I don't want to be
- I often feel emotionally pained after sex
- I am very sensitive to certain smells, sights, sounds or sensations during sex

4.SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Sexual abuse can shatter our capacity for healthy sex. You may have been taught abusive patterns of sexual behaviour and introduced to unhealthy, compulsive, abnormal sexual activities. Now as a reaction you may associate your sexual expression with secrecy and shame. Some survivors may withdraw from sex, preventing any fresh discovery of healthy sex. Other survivors may become preoccupied and driven by sex. Sometimes survivors reenact the abuse in an unconscious attempt to resolve deep-seated emotional conflict related to the original abuse.

These reactions need to be identified so you can better understand your behaviour and eventually work toward healthy changes. Put a check mark in front of each statement you agree with and a question mark (?) in front of each statement you sometimes or partially agree with.

- I isolate myself from other people socially
- I am unable to initiate sex
- I avoid situations that could lead to sex
- I am unable to say no to sex
- I feel I have no physical boundaries when it comes to sex
- I need to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs to really enjoy sex
- I spend money to have sex
- I feel confused about how and when to be sexual
- I engage in medically risky sexual behaviour (using no protection)
- I engage in sex for economic gain
- I have had more sexual partners than was good for me to have
- I act out sexually in ways hurtful to others
- I manipulate others into having sex with me
- I engage in sadomasochistic sex
- I have more than one sexual partner at a time
- I become involved with sexual partners who are primarily involved with someone else

- I use fantasies of sexual abuse to increase sexual arousal
- I feel addictively drawn to certain sexual behaviour
- I feel compelled to masturbate frequently
- I engage in secretive sexual activities
- I engage in sexual behaviours that could harm me
- I engage in sexual behaviours that could have negative consequences for others
- I have sex when I really don't want to
- I am confused as to what is appropriate and inappropriate in touching
- I often rely on abusive pornography to turn me on
- I find it hard to say no to unwanted sexual touch

5.Intimate Relationships

Sexual abuse influences a survivor's ability to establish and maintain healthy sexual relationships. Abuse can interfere with our ability to make good choices. Some survivors may have difficulty selecting partners who are emotionally supportive. Other survivors may be unable to trust and feel safe with intimate partners who do care. Survivors may fear intimacy or have a limited capacity to experience closeness. The sexual difficulties a survivor may have as a result of abuse often create emotional and sexual problems for the partner.

Knowing where relationship difficulties lie, and how abuse has caused problems, can help you work with your partner to solve individual concerns and to build a more intimate relationship together. Put a check mark in front of each statement you agree with and a question mark (?) in front of each statement you sometimes or partially agree with. I am drawn to partners who demand sex from me.

- I am afraid of being emotionally vulnerable in relationships
- I am unable to attract the kind of partner that would be good for me to have
- I feel obligated to please my partner in sex
- My intimate relationships always fail
- I have difficulty being intimate and sexual at the same time
- I don't trust that a partner could really be faithful to me
- I hide my real feelings in an intimate relationship
- A partner would reject me if he or she knew all about my sexual past
- I experience difficulty initiating sexual contact with a partner
- My intimate partner is continually unhappy with our sex life
- Our relationship would end if we stopped having sex
- I want, but am unable, to remain faithful to one intimate partner
- My intimate partner reminds me of a sexual offender
- My intimate partner perceives me as sexually abusive

- I want to get away from my partner immediately after sex
- My partner feels sexually rejected by me
- My partner feels sexually pressured by me
- I have difficulty communicating my sexual wants and needs
- I am afraid to be emotionally close with my partner

6. Sexual Functioning Problems

Sexual abuse can create specific problems with sexual functioning. Abuse may have taught you unhealthy patterns of responding to sexual stimulation. Stress and anxiety that originated with abuse may continue to shadow your sexual activity. Over time these sexual problems interfere with intimacy and long-term sexual satisfaction.

As you identify problem areas in how you function sexually now, you are also identifying specific sexual concerns to work on in the healing process. Put a check mark in front of each statement you agree with and a question mark (?) in front of each statement you sometimes or partially agree with.

- I find it difficult to become sexually aroused
- I have trouble experiencing sexual sensations
- I do not like to touch my genital area
- I have difficulty achieving orgasm when I stimulate myself
- I have difficulty having an orgasm with a partner
- I lack desire for sex
- I am hardly ever interested in sex
- I over control sexual interactions
- My orgasms seem more related to relieving tension than to feel pleasure
- My orgasms are not very pleasurable
- Sex in general is not very pleasurable
- I am limited in the types of sexual activity I feel comfortable with
- I do not like touch to my breasts
- I am unable to be vaginally penetrated
- I experience pain or discomfort with vaginal penetration
- I orgasm very fast

Men

- I have difficulty getting or maintaining a firm erection
- I have difficulty ejaculating
- I ejaculate very fast
- What you can learn from the inventory.

Now that you have completed the Sexual Effects Inventory, go back and review your responses.

Remember: There is no grading system, no correct set of answers. Rather you are looking to identify the effects of abuse on your current sexual self. For many survivors, taking the inventory leads to self-discovery, self-awareness. It's another step in your journey. Although your inventory is unique, you may learn from, or feel support from, the following reactions from other survivors.