

Sensate Focus for Couples

PURPOSE

- Sensate focus exercises aim to work on intimate touch without penetration.
- These exercises are about being in the moment and using your senses (seeing, hearing/listening, touch, taste) to help you and your partner focus on the sensations produced by exploring each others bodies.
- These exercises do not involve penetration. In fact the first steps in these exercises start with an agreement for no genital contact.
- The steps outlined are designed to be inclusive for couples of all sexualities and sexual orientation.

GETTING STARTED

- Sensate focus exercises are done in three stages. In order to get the maximum benefit, try to practice each stage 2-3 times per week for 2-3 weeks before moving to the next stage.
- Before starting, consider what practical factors will increase your pleasure or playfulness e.g. lighting, the room, temperature, oils/lotions.
- Ensure you have a private, comfortable space where you won't be interrupted.
- It is important to explore potential obstacles to physical intimacy and think about ways to manage these. E.g. if you both have busy schedules, you may wish to consider scheduling time for this exercise. If some areas of the body feel like “no go” areas, you should discuss this with your partner so you can feel safe and comfortable during the practice.

STEP 1:

Pleasure Taking

The focus at this first stage is to concentrate on taking pleasure from your partner's body for yourself

This does not involve taking pleasure in pleasing your partner, but experiencing pleasure by focusing on what brings a sense of joy and pleasure to your senses through contact with their body.

There are lots of ways to explore how to get pleasure from your partner's body. Below are some very general instructions:

- Ensure that you have plenty of time to explore your partner's body (15-60 minutes).
- Decide who will go first.
- During step 1, avoid touching any sexual areas e.g. genitals and ensure you've discussed with one another if there are any area's off limits for this exercise.
- On you first turn, get your partner to lay on their front. Start by gently exploring their body through touching, stroking, smelling, and using your mouth to kiss or lick their back, neck, arms, buttock and legs. Don't forget to pay attention to their hands and feet.
- Pay attnetion to the different skin textures of your partners' body, any marks, body odours, etc.
- Make sure to pay attention to the sensations you experience with your senses and notice your thoughts and feelings that arise as you explore their body.
- Now ask your parter to lie on their back and explore touching or massaging their neck, check, stomach, shouldres, arms and legs.
- Again be creative with different types of touch and exploring your senses.
- When ready, swap places and repeat the steps above with your partner touching your body. Remember, each parter exploring touchthe goal is to explore in your own way how to pleasure from your partners body.
- Experiement with different sensations and use all your sense to "drink in" your partner's body. Focus on your own pleasure in experiencing texture, form and temperatur of the other person's body.

Reflection: Once complete, you might want to talk together about what you both enjoyed while taking pleasure from each other's bodies.

STEP 2:

Pleasure Giving

In this step, you are encouraged to become open to listening and responding to what your partner finds pleasurable. The focus is to concentrate on giving pleasure to your partner, following their instructions and suggestions.

The emphasis is on the reactions of the person being touched and caressed, rather than your own.

- Again, take it in turns to explore each others' bodies.
- If you are the first to be touched by your partner, make sure sure to let them know what you like and don't like.
- Sometimes a touch will be too light, gentle or ticklish, or too firm or uncomfortable. You can say how you feel, make appreciative noises or move the other person's hand to where or how you want to be touched.
- When guiding your partner, concentrate on your feelings and bodily sensations, rather than worrying if your parter gets tired or bored.
- You can spend as much time as you like in areas of your body or in ways of being touched that you find soothing, pleasurable and/or exciting.
- You can experiment with areas you might not have touched before or ways your partner has not touched you previously.
- You can invite your partner to use a soft piece of clothing or a feather to explore touch if you like.
- When it is your turn to touch your partner's body, try to discover the degrees of pressure and types of touch that they find most pleasurable and the types of touch that they find the most pleasurable by encouraging feedback or by placing your hand under their hand so they can show you.

Reflection: Once complete, you might want to talk together about what you both enjoyed about exploring giving pleasure to your partner.

STEP 3:

Pleasure giving/taking including genitals

In this step, you can include touching of breasts and genital areas.

You might want to spend several sessions or weeks on each phase of this stage before moving on to the next.

Continue to pay attention to the other parts of the body that you explored in previous sessions as well as the new areas that you are incorporating.

The main aim of this stage is to increase each persons pleasure and awareness of each other's responses to different types of stimulation.

If one or both of you become sexually aroused during this phase, that is fine although it is not the primary aim of the exercise.

- Start by completing step 1 & 2
- However, this time, you may wish to incorporate touching a partners breasts and nipples.
- Then include the areas around the genitals, including the inner thighs, testicals for people with a penis and the labia majora for people with a vulva. You might find it helpful to sit with your partner holding them from behind or both facing each other with the person wrapping their legs around the other persons hips. Make sure you are both comfortable with your backs supported if necessary.
- Finally, start exploring touching the genitals themselves e.g. the clitoris or entrance to the vagina or the penis, shaft and glans.
- After a while, you may want to incorporate oral exploration as well as manual touching e.g. kissing, licking, sucking, into both non-genital and genital touching. You may also want to experiment with vibrators of different shapes and sizes (these can be purchased in sex shops or online).

Reflection: Similar to previous steps, once complete, you might want to talk together about what you both enjoyed about your experiences.