



A Guide to Healthy Sexuality

“Positive, meaningful sexual health is a central component of overall well-being and a key component of a healthy lifestyle.”

–World Health Organization–

Childhood sexual abuse can impact your sexual health in many ways, but no matter what has happened to you, it is possible to develop a healthy relationship with sex and sexuality.

How Can Abuse Affect Sexual Intimacy?

(Not all of these will apply to every survivor of childhood sexual abuse.)

- I avoid, fear, or lack interest in sex.
- I experience negative feelings such as anger, disgust, or guilt with touch.
- I engage in compulsive or unhealthy sexual behaviors.
- I feel emotionally distant or not present during sex.
- I experience intrusive or disturbing sexual thoughts and images.
- I experience pelvic pain or orgasmic difficulties.
- I have difficulty establishing or maintaining an intimate relationship.
- I approach sex as an obligation.
- I have an aversion to specific sexual behaviors.

Always remember that you have the right to communicate your needs and wants to your partner. Whether it is before, during, or after, sexual intimacy, your voice should be heard.

Consider the following positive sexual attitudes:

- Sex is controllable energy.
- Sex is a choice, not an obligation.
- Sex is a natural drive.
- Sex is nurturing and healing, not hurtful.
- Sex is an expression of love.
- Sex is sharing with someone.
- Sex is part of who I am.
- Sex requires communication.
- Sex is private, not secretive.
- Sex is respectful, not exploitive.
- Sex is honest, not deceitful.
- Sex is mutual.
- Sex is intimate.
- Sex is responsible.
- Sex is safe.
- Sex has boundaries.
- Sex is empowering.

Suggested Reading

[The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse](#) by Wendy Maltz