

Time to Facilitate:
3 hours



MODULE #7

SEX AND SEXUALITY AS A PART OF HEALING

MODULE SUMMARY

Discussing the full spectrum of sexual experiences is sometimes uncomfortable, even for sexual violence advocates. In this module, the focus will be on assisting survivors in understanding their own needs and boundaries regarding sex and intimacy. Facilitators should:

- ▶ be aware their own feelings regarding sex and sexuality.
- ▶ reflect on how society influences our thoughts on sex and sexual activity.
- ▶ encourage the training participants to stretch themselves in this module; to notice when they feel uncomfortable or awkward and reflect on that.
- ▶ emphasize that all survivors who can consent to sexual should have the tools and support to define what is enjoyable sexual activity to them.

SEX AND SEXUALITY AS A PART OF HEALING LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Identify how child sexual abuse impacts a survivor's relationship with sex
- ▶ Analyze how societal views, our experiences, and our culture impact personal beliefs about sex
- ▶ Connect the role of the advocate to helping survivors explore what feels safe, pleasurable, and enjoyable to them regarding sex and intimacy
- ▶ Explore tools and resources that may be helpful to survivors in this area

STRUCTURE OF SEX AND SEXUALITY AS A PART OF HEALING MODULE

Time to facilitate: 3 hours total

Lesson 7.1 Understanding the Discomfort (0.5 Hours)

Lesson 7.2 Deepening Our Understanding (1.5 Hours)

Lesson 7.3 What Does this Mean for Advocacy? (1 Hour)

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR SEX AND SEXUALITY AS A PART OF HEALING MODULE

Lesson	In Person	Virtual
7.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Computer ▶ Projector or large TV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mentimeter or Jamboard; some sort of live collaboration tool
7.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Computer ▶ Projector or large TV ▶ PowerPoint ▶ Copies of, or link to, Our Sexual Values as Advocates handout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ PowerPoint ▶ Our Sexual Values as Advocates handout

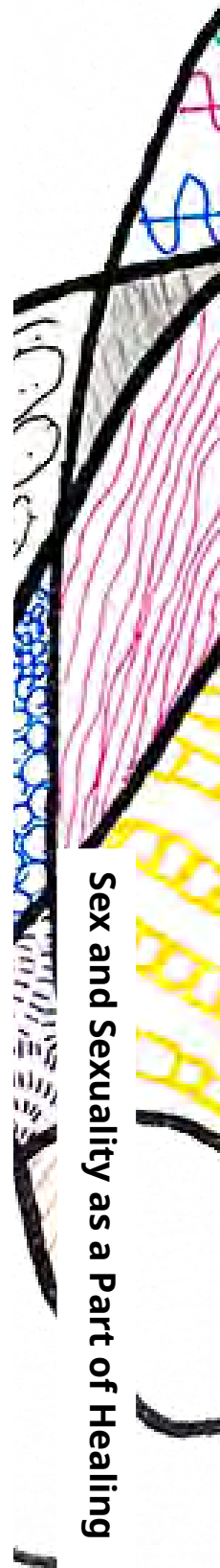
Lesson In Person

7.3

- ▶ Computer
- ▶ Projector or large TV
- ▶ Speakers that participants can hear
- ▶ PowerPoint
- ▶ [Copies of, or link to, Building Resilience Conversation Series Episode 4: How Does Child Sexual Abuse Impact Relationship Building?](#)
- ▶ [Copies of, or link to, Building Resilience Coloring Page Episode 4](#)
- ▶ Copies of, or link to, Strategic Planning worksheet

Virtual

- ▶ [Building Resilience Conversation Series Episode 4: How Does Child Sexual Abuse Impact Relationship Building?](#)
- ▶ [Building Resilience Coloring Page Episode 4](#)
- ▶ [How I Want It: Sexual Safety Planning for Survivors and Their Partners](#) by the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
- ▶ Strategic Planning worksheet



NOTES FOR PREPARATION FOR Lesson 7.1 Understanding the Discomfort

- ▶ Facilitators will open the module with the Word Association activity. The point of the activity is to defuse some of the tension and awkwardness that can occur when speaking about sex in a formal space. As a group, participants will be asked to list the words they have heard used to describe sex, penis, vagina, breasts, anus. Due to the nature of this activity, it is suggested that:
 - » Facilitators inform participants beforehand that they may feel awkward, and uncomfortable doing this, but to sit in the discomfort and participate in the activity. It's also okay to giggle and have fun with this activity.
 - ◆ Facilitators can (and should encourage) participants to include profanity, other languages, and emojis they've heard as answers in the activity.
 - » The co-facilitator(s) who is not facilitating the activity should participate if engagement is low.

- » Facilitators should consider allowing answers to be submitted anonymously to increase engagement. If not, participants may feel too embarrassed to participate in the activity.
 - ◆ In a virtual setting, facilitators are encouraged to use a platform like Menti-meter in the word cloud function to submit answers anonymously.
 - ◆ Google Jamboard could also work, as the facilitators could preset different boards with one word (sex, penis, vagina, breasts, anus) on each board. However, if any of the participants are logged into their Google accounts and are accessing the Jamboard, you will be able to see who typed what word on the screen which may increase hesitancy to participate and lower engagement.

- » For in-person, the facilitators will need to spend some time thinking about how they can encourage participation when there is most likely not a way to ensure anonymity. Some ideas are:
 - ◆ Project a Menti-meter on a large screen, and do the activity as suggested for virtual facilitation.
 - ◆ Have five different boxes set around the room labeled with the terms sex, penis, vagina, breasts, anus, and have people fold up their answers and put them in the boxes. The facilitator (or a participant volunteer) can then read them aloud to the group.
 - ◆ Have 5 large pieces of paper around the room labeled with the terms, and have people stick smaller sticky notes with the terms they think of on them.

- ▶ Facilitators should be prepared to offer observations about what they notice each term. For example:
 - » Which term generated the most and least responses
 - » Which term generated the fastest and slowest responses
- ▶ As an alternative activity, facilitators could have a discussion asking why sex and sexuality seem difficult to discuss, even as sexual violence advocates.

Lesson 7.1 Understanding the Discomfort

Estimated time: 0.5 hours



ACTIVITY Open the module by doing a word association activity as a large group. Before doing the activity, let the participants know that there might be initial discomfort, but try and work through that and participate.

Activity Instructions

- ▶ “The objective of this exercise is list as many terms you know for the following terms.”
- ▶ “We will go through one term at a time, and someone from the facilitation team will read of the words you all generate.”
- ▶ “When thinking of terms, this can include slang terms, emojis, terms from other languages, and profanity as well. All terms are welcome, as long as they are terms you have heard to talk about these things.”

Showing the terms one at a time, ask the participants to list terms that have heard to describe:

- ▶ Sex
- ▶ Penis
- ▶ Vagina
- ▶ Anus
- ▶ Breasts



DEBRIEF After going through the term, facilitate a large group discussion. Ask the following questions:

- ▶ What did you think about that activity?
- ▶ What are some of the things you noticed? Did you feel awkward, uncomfortable, or did some of those terms catch you off guard?
- ▶ What do you think the reason for doing that activity was?



End the activity and give the context for the activity, including:

- ▶ Talking about sex and sexuality at work can feel uncomfortable, even for sexual violence advocates. The more we do it, (and practice it in controlled spaces like this) the less awkward it will be to have these conversations with survivors who are looking for support.
- ▶ Using the anatomically correct names for body parts:
 - » normalizes discussing them and takes away the secrecy and shame around naming them. Especially for adult survivors of child sexual abuse, these words can seem scary, cause anxiety, and may be attached to trauma.
 - » can be a place for education and demonstrating what respect and comfort talking about bodies can look like.
- ▶ We need to be able to mirror the terms survivors use to talk about without feeling uncomfortable. That can be difficult to do if we've never heard the terms they're using before and feel uncomfortable asking for an explanation.

Lesson 7.2 Deepening Our Understanding Sex and Sexuality

- ▶ The points under TEACHING should be displayed on a PowerPoint that the facilitators will need to create and modify to fit your training needs. It is recommended that the facilitators take some time to discuss how sexual stereotypes about different identities may cause survivors to struggle with their sexuality. For example, consider naming some of the sexual stereotypes about marginalized groups in your community and how they are harmful to survivors, and linking them to statistics about sexual violence in your area/community, survivor stories, societal issues (i.e., high levels of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG); rising rate of violence against Asian women, the sexual abuse of people with disabilities in care facilities, the sexual violence experienced by those who are detained and incarcerated), policies efforts, and other themes the facilitators identify.

Lesson 7.2 Deepening Our Understanding

Estimated time: 1.5 hours



LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION Introducing the topic of sex and sexuality for adult survivors of child sexual abuse. Facilitate a group discussion, and ask the group:

- ▶ Why do you think a survivor of child sexual abuse would struggle with reclaiming or feeling comfortable in their sexuality?

- ▶ What are some aspects that may be difficult?



TEACHING In concluding the discussion, make sure to take some time to raise the following points. Facilitators should create a PowerPoint to display points, modifying them to meet your training needs. Discuss how sexual stereotypes about identities may cause a survivor to struggle with their sexuality:

- ▶ In our society, it's difficult to have open discussions about sex
- ▶ The stereotype about survivors is that they will always be afraid of sex and will never want to engage or they become hypersexual. People exist on many places on that spectrum, and that may change throughout their lifetimes.
- ▶ Survivors may struggle with:
 - » The physical acts involved in sex being triggering for survivors. This can include flashbacks, intrusive memories, or emotions/feelings that the survivor doesn't even connect to their abuse.

- » Feeling safe with a sexual partner
 - ◆ For survivors of incest, this may feel even more complicated, because the people or person (the survivor's family members) who were supposed to love and care for them in a nonsexual way abused them at an early age
- » Being able to set boundaries and saying no to aspects of sex or to stop at any point.
- » The connection between abuse and feeling pleasure.
- » Being connected with your body so that you can feel pleasure.
- » Describing sexual contact.
- » Knowing what they like and enjoy for themselves.
- » Emotional intimacy – it's scary to let people know you and get physically and emotionally close. Especially with a long-term partner, the survivor may feel they are family which complicates the sexual dynamic.



HANDOUT and **ACTIVITY** Distribute the Our Sexual Values as Advocates handout and ask the participants to fill it out individually. The handout can be found on page xlii.

After the group has finished, ask the following questions, and have a large group discussion about their results:

- ▶ Was anyone surprised by how they felt about some of the topics?
- ▶ Did people identify biases or myths?

Conclude this exercise by reflecting on the following points:

- ▶ We all have different feelings and beliefs about sexuality, and they come from our experiences, culture, environments, communities, and society.
- ▶ What we were taught and not taught, by abuse or not being abused, and sexual experiences we've had or not had shaped our judgment and how we feel about various behaviors and experiences.

- ▶ Being an advocate for survivors of sexual violence will require us to put those biases and myths aside and work with survivors in a non-judgmental manner.
- ▶ As a staff, they can hold each other accountable and support each other in their work.

NOTES FOR PREPARATION FOR Lesson 7.3 What Does That Mean for Our Advocacy

- ▶ It is suggested the participants stay in the same break-out groups throughout this lesson.

Lesson 7.3 What Does this Mean for Advocacy?

Estimated time: 1 hour



HANDOUT Distribute the [Building Resilience Coloring Page: Episode 4](#) by the Resource Sharing Project and show the video [Building Resilience Conversation Series #4: How Does Child Sexual Abuse Impact Relationship Building?](#)



Play from 27:18 (Not being able to say No) to 33:04 (Advocates who are survivors themselves).



BREAK OUT GROUP DISCUSSION Ask the participants to get into groups and discuss:

- ▶ How do you think advocates could support survivors wanting to explore sex and sexuality?

Have the groups share out about what they discussed.



DEBRIEF Emphasize in the debrief, if not raised, that it's the advocates' job to:

- ▶ Talk with survivors about sex and sexuality without discomfort and judgement

- ▶ Ask questions about survivors' sexuality without judgment and for the purpose of assisting the survivor. It is not the role of the advocate to encourage or discourage any particular sexual activity or beliefs. Instead, advocates should be curious. Some questions advocates could be:
 - » Ask permission to discuss this. This is one way to ask permission. "Sometimes people are nervous to discuss sex, sexuality, and intimacy, even if that is something they are struggling with. I want you to know I am very comfortable having these conversations, and sharing resources if you'd like to explore on your own. Is that something you would like to chat more about with me? There is no pressure to discuss this with me, but I want you to know I am open to chatting about this if you'd ever like to."

 - » Do you have an interest in incorporating your sexuality, as you define it, into your healing?

- ▶ Help survivors understand consent and boundaries and the importance of being able to have control over their bodies and sexual experiences.
- ▶ Help survivors understand sexual response and anatomy.
- ▶ Have services that help survivors experience pleasure – being able to feel non-sexual pleasure is a first step to being able to feel sexual pleasure.
- ▶ Have services that help survivors feel connected within their bodies.
- ▶ Help survivors identify which sex acts they are comfortable with, are not comfortable with at all, and ones that they are unsure of but would like to explore.
- ▶ Be able to talk about masturbation and how that can be a way for survivors to experience sexual pleasure and learn to trust themselves.



HANDOUT Distribute the [How I Want It: Sexual Safety Planning for Survivors and Their Partners](#) by the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence and have the participants read the document. Explain that this a tool created for survivors and their sexual partners to discuss their sexual boundaries and form a sexual safety plan.



BREAK OUT DISCUSSION Have the participants bring out their Strategic Planning worksheet and reflect on the following questions in their breakout groups, while filling out their worksheets individually:

- ▶ What changes need to happen at your organization so you can support adult survivors of child sexual abuse exploring their sexuality?

Have the participants share out what they discussed in their groups.



DEBRIEF Discuss these ideas if they are not named:

- ▶ Get training on assisting survivors with sexual safety planning, setting boundaries, BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism) & kink and exploring their sexuality.
- ▶ Get training on reproductive health.
- ▶ Have books on consent for all ages as resources for survivors.
- ▶ Teach youth in the community about sex, consent, intimacy, and pleasure.
- ▶ Have educational groups about discussing pleasure and intimacy for adult survivors of child sexual abuse.
- ▶ Do a book club that discusses sexuality and pleasure at your organization.
- ▶ Invite in guest speakers from the public health department to talk about sexual health options.
- ▶ Reflect on how sex and sexuality is discussed in organization spaces (if at all).



HANDOUT and **ACTIVITY** On their Strategic Planning worksheet, ask the participants to write down one way they can change their individual advocacy to better support the sexual needs of adult survivors of child sexual abuse, and organizational change they can support to support the sexual needs of adult survivors of child sexual abuse.



CONCLUSION Conclude this module with the suggested reflective journal prompts below:

- ▶ Reflection Journal Prompt: what do you think the world would look like if adult survivors of child sexual abuse could express their sexuality in a safe, supportive, and liberated way as they defined it?

FURTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

ABOUT SEX AND SEXUALITY AS A PART OF HEALING

- ▶ [Sex Turned Up Campaign](#) by the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
- ▶ [Finding Healing in Kink: A BR Interview with Ignacio Rivera](#) by the Resource Sharing Project
- ▶ *Come as You Are: The Surprising New Science that Will Transform Your Sex Life* BY Emily Nagoski
- ▶ *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis
- ▶ *The Survivor's Guide to Sex* by Staci Haines

Healing in Motion: Coalitions Supporting Growth and Change in the Lives of Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

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