

SEXUAL RETRAINING ASSIGNMENT 1

From *Restoring the Pleasure* 2016

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Date: _____ Time: _____

Guidelines for Sexual Retraining

(Read out loud together and discuss.)

1. No sexual intercourse or attempts at intercourse should be made until that is assigned. (If you should go ahead before intercourse is recommended, adjust the plan by backing up and repeating the two previous touching exercises.)
2. You may repeat any previously assigned experience, but don't go ahead of what has been assigned.
3. Select one spouse to initiate each experience. (Make sure the experience happens as scheduled.) The initiator will be the first receiver, choose the location, and set the atmosphere. Be creative with the setting. Try to vary the location and the accouterments (candles, music, etc.). Select a setting that is different from that of your usual sexual experiences. Turn off the TV and all electronic devices.
4. Even though you are not likely to use the full time, allow one to three hours for each exercise. Once you have made the time available, turn clocks around and ignore the time. You may set an alarm for the maximum time you have available. There is no need to fill the time allowed.
5. Protect against interruptions by turning off the telephone and doorbell, locking all doors, and putting pets outside.
6. Even though there will be a need to push through barriers, there should be no negative experiences. Demands or anxieties should be verbalized the moment they are felt. It's better not to complete the exercise than to repeat past negative patterns and feelings. It is very important to build trust by *never* violating the boundaries of the exercise. Never allow your hands to roam beyond the body part assigned.
7. The moment you feel anxiety, demand, or uncomfortable touch, express your feelings, talk about them, and come at the experience again in another way.
8. The focus of all touching experiences will be pleasure (enjoyment, comfort, relaxation, positive sensation). As long as it is not negative, the experience has been successful. As both pleasurer and receiver, your goal is to learn how to soak in the touch (refer to Underlying Principles for Body Caressing in Assignment 1).
9. After each experience, talk about your reactions and feelings. Listen carefully and try to understand how your spouse feels without evaluating or judging his or her reaction. Each spouse's reactions are valid.

Underlying Principles for Body Caressing

(Read out loud together and discuss.)

1. **Concept of Mutuality.** First Corinthians 7:3–5 teaches that our bodies are each other's to enjoy. This mutuality works best when caressing is scheduled into our lives on a regular basis and when it is free from demand for arousal, release, or intercourse. The only expectation is that we give our bodies to each other for mutual enjoyment. Pleasure cannot be demanded from each other, but rather is given and received freely.

2. **Sexual Arousal and Responsiveness.** These involuntary processes may occur when we are relaxed and soaking in sensuous touch, but they cannot be the goal. When we try to get aroused or try to have an orgasm, our trying is likely to interfere with the natural bodily responses. That is why it is important to distract from any anxiety about responsiveness by verbalizing when we feel that demand. In all touching exercises, do not become concerned if there is or is not arousal.

3. **Body Awareness/Sensate Focus.** The purpose of the touching exercises is body awareness. They are not to be therapeutic massages, but rather sensuous touches that communicate warmth. Even though our bodies are designed for pleasure, many of us have not learned to enjoy the giving and receiving of bodily touch.

4. **Receiving and Caressing.** As both pleasurer and receiver, we must take responsibility for discovering, communicating, and going after our sexual feelings and needs, but not at the other's expense. Demand is reduced when we can count on each other to share from within, rather than expecting the other to produce a response in us. We can give our bodies to each other to enjoy, but we cannot produce in each other the involuntary response of sexual arousal and release. Therefore, as

Receiver: Your only task is to soak in the touch and to redirect the pleasurer when the touch is not pleasing. Express your concern if at any time you start to wonder whether your spouse is not enjoying himself or herself.

Pleasurer: Your task is to lovingly touch your spouse in a way that feels good to you, enjoying his or her body for your pleasure. Think of radiating warmth through your fingertips (or any other part of your body) and taking in the sensation of warmth and the pulsation of your spouse's body. You might imagine that you are a blind person discovering your spouse through touch.

Trust that your spouse will redirect you if what you are doing is negative to him or her. Express your concern if at any time you become anxious rather than enjoying your spouse's body. Caress SLOWLY. Take time to mesh, relax, and discover the kind of touch that feels best to both of you.

5. **Techniques for Bodily Caressing.** Experiment with these suggestions that many couples have found helpful:

a. Touch in circles rather than straight lines.

b. Keep your hands with the contour of the other's body rather than using flat hands.

c. As the man, keep your pace behind that of your wife's in both activity and intensity. (If the man is the one who has felt rushed or left behind in past sexual experience, you may try reversing roles.)

6. Common Interferences to Enjoyment.

a. **Not taking enough time to mesh, feeling rushed.** Schedule one-to three-hour blocks of time free of distractions and interruptions. Follow all the preparatory steps for each experience.

b. **Anxiety about sexual performance or fear of failure.** If anything in a sexual retraining assignment feels like a demand that you could fail, redefine it until there is no way you can fail. For example, make sure you don't assume that pleasure means arousal; enjoy the good sensations of touch.

c. **Discomfort with bodily pleasure.** If there is a belief that bodily pleasure is wrong, talk about that—include your spiritual mentor and the Bible. If you notice yourself pulling away from good feelings, consciously work on moving your body toward the source of touch that is producing those feelings. Talk about your internal conflict with the sensations of bodily enjoyment.

d. Barriers, aversions, or panic reactions. When you come up against a brick wall, stop and talk about it and try approaching the experience differently. We work around the brick wall rather than blast through it. Sometimes, though, we encourage you to push against the brick wall to see if it might tumble.

e. Inability to let go and be out of control. Reducing fears and self-consciousness requires building trust, feeling affirmed, and accepting the intensity of natural arousal responses.

Have fun! Learn to laugh and cry together as you move through the process.