



Psychosexual and Relationship Therapy: Self focus for women

‘Self focus for women’ is a set of tasks to help you to know your body better.

Introduction

These tasks will help you get more familiar with your body. You will also learn new things about how your body looks and works.

You will learn new things about how your body feels when it is touched. You may find that you enjoy being touched in places that you hadn't thought about before:

Sharing your learning with your partner may improve your sex life. By feeling comfortable with your own body, you will be more able to tell your partner what feels good.

You need to plan 45 minutes alone with no one else around. Try to relax and clear your mind of any worries.

Exercise 1

This exercise should be done alone when having a bath. Make sure the bathroom is nice and warm.

Lie in the bath and just enjoy relaxing. Be aware of the different sensations you are experiencing. How does the warm water feel on different parts of your body? What does moving the water over your skin feel like? Focus on the positive and good feelings you are experiencing in the bath.

When you have finished your bath, dry yourself using a soft, warm towel. Focus on how it feels to dry yourself. How do you like your body being dried? Try rubbing softly, then harder. Try patting gently. Wrap the towel around your body and let it soak up the moisture. Don't hurry. Spend time on all parts, such as your back, chest, stomach, arms and legs. Even spend time on parts such as your ears, hands and feet. Dry between each finger and toe. Take your time and think about each step.

Exercise 2

When you feel comfortable with the first exercise, you will have learned lots of new things about yourself and your body; now repeat the first exercise again. Exercise 2 is about using touch to explore your body.

After drying yourself, put some massage oil, body lotion or talc on your hands. Rub this into the skin, noting the different textures and sensations. Remember the parts that you enjoy touching most. Now work your hands through and over your hair – you may not want to use the oil or lotion this time. Again, remember what touches you enjoy most.

Now apply oil or lotion slowly over the rest of your body. Try different movements and pressures. Feel each part in turn. Explore your arms and hands, your shoulders and breasts.

Move down to your stomach, inside your thighs, legs, feet and toes. Do what you can on your back and buttocks. What kind of touching does your body like? Do you like fast or slow rubbing? Do you like being pummelled, pinched, squeezed and so on?

Note the variations in warmth, especially under your breasts, arms and between your thighs and buttocks. Let your fingers run over your pubic bone and vulva. Become aware of the different shapes and how each part feels. Which parts do you enjoy touching most and how?

Toes and feet can be most enjoyable – especially rubbing each toe in turn. Rubbing the muscles of your hands and feet can also be very enjoyable.

The first time you do this part of the exercise, it may feel a bit strange and uncomfortable. You may need to repeat it several times before you feel OK. You will become more and more aware of what you are experiencing and reaming about your body. Remember to go slowly and take each new step in turn.

On the second and third time, explore your breasts and little more. You may notice that your breast or nipple size changes when you massage them. Your breasts may become firmer and your nipples erect. Let your hands run over your genitals. Become aware of their shape, texture and temperature

When you have finished this task, relax. Go over the experience in your mind. Think about each step in turn. How did you feel about touching different parts of your body? How did you feel about touching your breasts and genitals? What did you learn? What was new?

Exercise 3

When you feel comfortable with the first two exercises, you will have learned even more about yourself and your body. Now repeat the first exercise.

After your bath, when you start rubbing oil, lotion or talc into your skin, watch yourself in a mirror. Focus your gaze onto the part of your body you are touching. Think about the good qualities of this part of your body. What is the best feature on your face? Is it your eyes, your nose, your mouth, the shape of your face, the softness of your skin? What is the best feature of your hands? Is it their size or shape, the length of your fingers, your fingernails, the sensitivity of your fingers, the firmness of your grip? What is the best feature of your breasts? Is it their size or shape, your nipples, the softness of your skin, their sensitivity to touch?

When you have looked at each part of your body in turn, look in a full length mirror, if you have one, and think about all the good things you have discovered about your whole body.

Exercise 4

This exercise can be done by itself, but you might prefer to combine it with exercises 1 and 2, as this is likely to make you feel more relaxed. This exercise is about looking at your genital area. You will need a fairly large hand mirror to do it.

Prop yourself against something firm like a wall, headboard or some pillows. Bend your knees and open your legs to expose your genital area. Position the hand mirror so that you can see your genitals.

Start with your pubic bone. If you have pubic hair, note the covering, where it starts and where it ends and its texture.

Now move on to your lips (labia). Identify your outer and inner lips. Your inner lips are usually smaller than the outer ones. You will need to use your fingers to pull your lips apart to see them

properly. You may find it easier to prop the mirror up against something. This will leave both hands free to perform the tasks.

Remember, no two women look alike. The size of the lips varies greatly from woman to woman. Sometimes the inner lips can be more prominent. They can hang down between the outer lips. The colour of the lips also varies. Note your own size and colouring. Feel your lips and note the difference in their texture and temperature.

Now pull your lips fairly wide apart. This will expose your vagina, urethra and clitoris. The inner lips usually meet at the top of the clitoral hood. This bit protects the clitoris. The urethra is a small opening between the vagina and the clitoris. When you have found them, look for your anus (back passage). The area between your vagina and your anus is called the perineum. Feel each part in turn. Gently touch, noting texture, temperature and colour and think about which areas are the most sensitive or the most pleasurable to touch.

Locate the muscle and the entrance to your vagina .by inserting your finger. (You can use lubricant to do this if you wish.) You may become aroused during this part of the exercise. This is OK. You will be able to notice how your clitoris becomes hard and erect. Notice how the colour of your labia changes. Notice how your vagina becomes moist.

When you have finished this task, relax. Go over the experience in your mind. Concentrate on your feelings. How did you feel when looking at your genitals? What did you like? What did you discover? What have you learned about yourself?

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