



# Psychosexual and Relationship Therapy in detail

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**This leaflet gives a more in depth explanation of what psychosexual therapy entails. The information is from the College of Sexual and Relationship website <https://www.cosrt.org.uk/psychosexual-therapy/>.**

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## What is psychosexual therapy?

Psychosexual therapy is the use of targeted counselling, or longer-term psychotherapy to help address sexual problems. It is a talking-based treatment and does not involve touch, such as massage.

Critically, psychosexual problems are emotional and/or psychological, but they can be caused by or lead to physical problems. This means that to understand psychosexual therapy properly, it is helpful to appreciate the interrelationship between physical and psychological.

Because of this, psychosexual therapy is highly specialised work that requires an in depth knowledge of anatomy, physiology as well as pharmacology (use, effect and mode of action of drugs). All of which need to be integrated into a medical model and applied into a psychotherapeutic (treatment by psychological rather than medical means) frame.

## Physical informing the psychological

For example, a physical effect of medical treatment might lead to changes in someone's appearance. The person may be scared that others will be less attracted to them because of those physical changes. In turn, the person might develop psychological barriers to, and a fear of, intimacy. Those barriers and fears could negatively impact on relationships and sexual experiences. While a medical professional would deal properly with the physical challenges faced, psychosexual therapy could be employed to tackle the related psychological problem.

## Psychological informing the physical

On the other hand, someone may have an emotional or psychological issue that ultimately manifests itself physically. A traumatic event such as rape, could lead to severe emotional challenges from shame to deep insecurity. Those emotional challenges could then manifest themselves physically through, for example, erectile dysfunction as the person inadvertently places barriers to stop physical intimacy. In this sort of situation, a medical professional would be able to rule out a physical cause (such as illness) for the tangible problem. Again, a therapist would be able to tackle the underlying emotional and psychological issues using psychosexual therapy. The hope in a scenario such as this is that resolving the emotional and psychological issues would then mean that the resulting physical problem would be resolved.

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