
Cluff Counseling PLLC

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Sensate Focus

Sensate focus provides a fresh, new, re-sensitized approach to lovemaking for all couples, not just for those who are having sexual difficulties. Some of the many benefits are:

- To develop and build up positive, pleasurable associations, memories and experiences with touch and sexuality
- To awaken and increase sensuality and awareness of positive and pleasurable sensations in the body.
- To get to “know” or acclimate husband and wife to each other’s bodies and sexual desires.
- To learn from each other where, how and what touch is most pleasurable and stimulating.
- To learn to enjoy giving and receiving the tactile pleasure of sexual intimacy (stroking and being stroked) for its own sake without the psychological pressure and expectation to proceed to climax.
- To help couples learn to be more conscious, attentive, and fully present in their lovemaking.
- To help men develop greater control over their sexual energy.
- To provide an opportunity for couples to “clear the slate” and start over sexually.

Week 1-Nonsexual Touching. Week one is simple. With clothes on, the receiver will choose how they want to be touched nonsexually for 15-45 minutes.

The next receiver then chooses how *they* want to be touched nonsexually. This non-sexual touch may include cuddling on the couch, lying together on the bed with arms around each other, giving a back, hand or foot massage, or sitting on your spouse’s lap while your hair is being stroked. The emotional intimacy of this exercise lays the foundation for future fireworks. Do this exercise three times this week.

Week 2-Spooning. Week two is a wonderful opportunity to experience the intimate nurturing position called “spooning.” Both spouses undress and get into bed lying on their left sides. For 15-45 minutes the giver warmly envelopes the other in a loving embrace. The receiver’s back is snuggled right next to the giver’s body, like two spoons lying together-one nestled within the other. It may be most comfortable for the giver to put his arm through / under her neck, so that she is not lying directly on his arm. Adjust your pillows so you are comfortable.

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Refrain from talking, so that you can savor the sensations of touch, and bask in your closeness. Hands should not touch sexual areas. Pay attention to your breathing, bringing it into harmony until it is synchronized. When the receiver signals, switch positions. The new touch giver will move behind the other so they can still lie on their left sides while spooning.

Week 3-Blissful Caress. This week will begin to awaken sexual senses providing three more blissful, tactile experiences. Husband and wife will undress together in the light, with the first receiver lying on the bed. You may want to consider using a portable heater if it's cold, since you will be undressed without covers.

For 15-45 minutes the giver will caress the receiver with the most tender, yet electrifying caress you can imagine. As the giver, imagine your hand drawing sexual energy to the surface of the skin everywhere you touch. You will barely touch the body as your hand slowly glides over her skin from head to toe-including sexual areas. Like a soft breeze blowing across the body, the giver should caress both the back and front of the body with his open hand. As the giver's hand slides along the body, it will feel almost as if soft kisses are being placed wherever it touches.

The intent of the blissful caress is to awaken sexual sensations from the depths of the soul rather than to simply arouse sexually. This caress sensitizes the body and helps awaken the sexual responses. The giver should make every caress a conscious movement, being attentive to the awakening energy in his or her spouse. As the receiver closes her eyes and concentrates on savoring every sensation, she may begin to feel sexual stirrings. The whole body should feel electrified with energy, like electricity being brought to the surface just below the touch of the hand. When the receiver signals, the couple will switch roles.

Week 4- Touching and Caressing avoiding genitals. Week four begins direct and definitive sensual pleasuring using the hands and lips to caress, stroke, and kiss the entire body, avoiding breasts and genitals of both husband and wife. Avoiding sexual areas allows the rest of the body to catch up sensually. Where sexual areas usually receive all the attention, the rest of the body will now have a chance to become erogenous, as if learning how to be sexually sensitized.

Again, for three sessions this week the couple will undress in the light, and the receiver will lie down on the bed. She will close her eyes and relax, focusing on her breathing, savoring each touch and caress. The receiver can add to her arousal by expressing her pleasure with auditory expressions such as, "I love it when you....." or "I love it when you do that," or even just a blissful "Mmmm!" This teaches or reinforces what is pleasurable in a positive way.

The giver will try to caress every part of the body, except breasts and genitals, noticing the textures and sensitivities of the body. If any touch or caress becomes irritating, the receiver can

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communicate by moving the giver's hand. Remember it is up to the receiver to teach what touch feels good to them. When the receiver signals, they will switch.

Week 5-Kissing. This week, the couple will again undress together. The couple may choose who would like to be the giver first. The husband will sit supported by pillows against the wall or headboard with his legs criss-crossed. The wife will sit on his crossed legs with her legs around her back. The couple will sit silently for a moment facing each other, connecting and communicating only with the light in each other's eyes.

The giver will then initiate kissing, licking, nibbling or touching the lips, face, neck and ears-being as creative as possible in providing pleasure. The giver should go slowly and concentrate on his own sensations-brushing his lips against hers, or tracing his tongue around her lips. Couples should keep the focus on sensations in the face and neck by avoiding any other sexual contact.

The receiver is to simply relax and relish every kiss. The receiver is not to kiss back but passively *receive* the kisses and caresses. At first it may be easier to keep one's eyes closed, but as comfort increases couples may find the increased emotional intimacy of eye contact a desirable addition. The receiver can communicate nonverbally by pulling away if anything becomes unpleasant. The receiver is to learn new pleasurable sensations, as well as to teach the giver what is pleasurable to them. These sessions will be only 5-15 minutes. The receiver will decide when to switch.

On the third kissing session of this week, husband and wife will both respond to each other's kisses and caresses. Both can give and receive in this shared sexual experience intended to restore the art of sensual kissing to lovemaking.

Week 6-Touching and Caressing Including Genitals. Week six is similar to week four, but with genitals and breasts now being included. Orgasm and intercourse are still prohibited. Couples will again undress in the light. On the *first session* the giver will spend at least 15 minutes on the nonsexual areas until the receiver signals that they can move to the breasts and genitals. The giver will touch, caress, and stroke the receiver's entire body.

Intentional touch, which characterizes an attitude of attentiveness, is necessary for these exercises. Love is conveyed in a more powerful way, and pleasure is increased with watchful care of each caress and response instead of with a bored or dismissive attitude.

The receiver should close their eyes and relax, focusing on their breathing, as they continue to savor each touch and caress. This step gives both husband and wife the opportunity to learn to *linger in arousal*, riding the waves of pleasure as they rise and fall throughout lovemaking. To increase her arousal and passion the wife may want to do Kegel exercises (contractions of the vaginal muscles) during

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her receiving session, since these mimic orgasmic contractions. The wife must learn to relax and focus her mind on the pleasurable sensations so that she can let go sexually. A willingness to openly and freely communicate sexual pleasure through verbal expression also helps her focus on the sensations and significantly increases her sexual arousal.

On the *third session*, give each other a guided tour of your body. This may produce some discomfort or even nervousness or shyness, since many have learned to feel shame or embarrassment about their bodies. The purpose is to see and learn about each other's sexual organs and functioning, as well as learn of other sexual hot spots. Decide who wants to go first then, using a mirror if necessary, show and share your sex organs in a teaching manner. Identify your sexual parts and how you like to be touched. Also share the other parts of your body that are your favorite erogenous areas and how you like them to be touched.

Week 7-Orgasm and Intercourse. While couples may now touch back when moved to do so, and orgasm and intercourse are now permissible, couples should still go slowly since relaxation, especially for the wife, is key to full and uninhibited orgasm. With goal-oriented sex being the norm, couples should focus on communicating love as they bask in the sensations of pleasure, even as they proceed to orgasm and intercourse.

The first receiver should be the lower-desire spouse to make their wants and needs the priority. In general, efforts to fulfill the wife's orgasm should come first since it's difficult for men to keep their sexual flame afire after ejaculation. Seeking to fulfill the wife first helps men gain greater self-control, as they develop greater mastery over their sexual energy. During this week's session, begin with (1) nonsexual touching, (2) a blissful caress of the whole body, (3) sensual kissing, and (4) gentle touching of sexual areas in preparation for full sexual arousal and orgasm. Try various positions to find what provides the most pleasure and the right clitoral stimulation.

This handout is adapted from *And They Were Not Ashamed: Strengthening Marriage through Sexual Fulfillment*. By Laura M. Brotherson.