

# Porterbrook Clinic

Sheffield Care Trust

## Sexual Growth For Women

### Personal Sexual Growth

Information for Users of our service

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Your therapist might suggest you engage in a personal sexual growth programme. This isn't nearly as scary as it sounds! Many of us don't really stop to think about our sexual selves very much; this is an opportunity to do just that. You might be surprised by what you discover about yourself. In talking things through with your therapist, you will be able to design a personal sexual growth programme that's just right for you – but here are some questions to get you thinking along the right lines.

### ***What messages have you picked up about sex along the way?***

Every one of us receives messages about sex as we're growing up, from our parents, our siblings, our grandparents, our friends, the media and eventually from our sexual partners. Messages don't have to be spoken – if our parents turn off the television every time something sexy comes on, that's a pretty powerful message on its own! These messages can really affect how we think and feel about sex now, even if we're not consciously aware of them.

*Try to remember all the messages you've learned about sex and sexual women, and write them out on a large piece of paper. Which messages do you believe? Are these healthy and rewarding ways to think about your sexuality?*

### ***What do you do for fun?***

It's easy to get weighed down by the responsibilities of family life and work; but if you don't have any lust for life, what makes you think you can conjure up lust in the bedroom? Besides, stimulating your sympathetic nervous system by doing something fun or exhilarating (something that raises your heart rate) will also make you more sexually responsive.

*Think about things you used to do when you were younger that were fun: what gets in the way of doing them now? Could you take them up again? Think also about things you've always fancied trying: Acting? Singing? Trampolining? Line dancing? White water rafting? Resolve to take part in one new activity every month.*

### ***How do you feel about your body?***

We are constantly bombarded by the media as to what attractive women should look like – skinny, flawless, air-brushed ideals which none of us can live up to. As a result, many of us are expert when it comes to being critical about our bodies.

Unfortunately, feeling negative about our bodies is generally a huge turn-off –

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not only for us, but for our partners too, who can feel mystified and, well, frankly bored by our obsession with not being perfect enough to have good sex.

*Start by taking a good long look at yourself, naked, in front of a mirror (Figure 1). Run your hands over your body. What looks or feels good? Think about how wonderfully put together*

*your body is, and the things it enables you to do. Consider the things you take for granted that your body just keeps on doing without you even having to think about it. Find something nice to say about your body ... and then practice finding something nice to say about it, every day.*



Figure 1

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***Have you ever had a really good look at your genital area?***

If not, why not? Is that only for doctors to look at, or your partner? Every woman is different, so it's no good saying you've seen what it looks like in a textbook!

*It's your body! Take some time to get to know every millimetre of it, in comfort and privacy. A hand-held or floor length mirror will help (Figure 2).*

***What turns you on?***

OK, so something isn't working sexually right now – but how long has it been since you thought about what lights your

fire? Who do you know – personally or from the TV – that you find sexy? What's the sexiest book you've read? Movie you've seen? What kind of music gets you in the mood? When did you last spend time thinking up a delicious fantasy, or writing a sexy poem, story or letter? What clothes or make up make you feel good? Is there a food that feels wanton and luscious in your mouth?

*Whenever you get a quiet moment, think about the things that make you feel sexy – and make a commitment to yourself to do some of them. And if you don't know what turns you on, this is the time to find out. You'll find some ideas in the books below, and in the leaflet in this series, "Sexual Resources".*



**Figure 2**

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## ***Do you know how to give yourself pleasure?***

So you know what gets you in the mood – do you know how to take yourself all the way?! You can't expect anyone else to press all the right buttons if you don't know where they are yourself. Learning about your unique body and what gives you pleasure gives you a head start when it comes to being sexual with a partner; it's also an enjoyable activity for its own sake.

*Make the decision to become the world's expert on your body and how it responds; follow this easy recipe:*

- *Prepare the ingredients – a selection of the things you've discovered make you feel sexy*
- *Take some time for yourself*
- *Add a warm, private room where you won't be disturbed*
- *Stir in some lubricant*
- *Throw in some vibration, if you like that*
- *Bring to the simmer with a sexy story or fantasy*
- *Enjoy!*

The following books have lots more ideas on getting to know your sexual self better:

*The Mirror Within: A New Look at Sexuality* by Anne Dickson, (Quartet Books, 1985)

*Becoming Orgasmic: A Sexual and Personal Growth Programme for Women* by Julia R Heiman and Jo LoPiccolo (Piatkus Books, 1988)

*My Secret Garden: Women's Sexual Fantasies* by Nancy Friday (Quartet Books, 2001)

*How to Make Love to the Same Person for the Rest of your Life – and Still Love It* by Dagmar O'Connor (Virgin Books, 2003)

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