



Sensate Focus 101

A free course on a commonly used sex therapy technique.



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Learning Agenda

What we'll discuss in this course

Getting Started

What is Sensate Focus?

Sensate Focus Stages

Inclusive Sensate Focus Modifications

Wrapping Up: Congratulations & What's Next?



Welcome!

I am so glad you decided to give Sexhale a try by taking our FREE course on Sensate Focus. Here at Sexhale, we truly believe in our ability to ignite sensuality and embrace sexuality, all by taking... one breath at a time.

Sexhale is a portmanteau (combination) of the words sex and exhale. It was created as a way to symbolize the importance of being confident enough to breathe in times of discomfort.

Often times, we get so nervous about discussing personal topics like sex that we literally hold our breath and tense up. Our company specializes in love, relationship, & intimacy coaching for adults of all genders, sexualities, and backgrounds to overcome the societal notion that anything regarding sex is taboo.

A perfect representation of releasing tension and deep breathing is the Sensate Focus Model or technique, developed by Masters and Johnson.



About Nijeria...

Nijeria is a Nationally Certified Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Virginia. She has been working in the mental health services field since 2015 and graduated with her M.S. in Counseling and Human Development in 2018 from Radford University. Nijeria has a background in psychology, sociology, liberal studies (gender, religion, & culture), & sex therapy.

"I believe in holistic health thus encouraging my clients to explore many methods of healing such as therapy, coaching, spirituality, eastern medicine, herbalism, and western medicine. No path is the same and every individual is unique so it's important that I foster an environment that looks at the person as a whole!"

Materials Needed

Feel free to download these materials to use during this course.

All Powerpoint Courses are downloadable. They are made using Canva and may seem odd when not in presentation view.

01

[Sexhale Sensate Focus Journal](#)

02

[Cornell Sensate Focus Overview](#)

03

Working computer, phone or tablet with internet, video, audio, and sound capabilities.



What is Sensate Focus?

Where does it come from and
how is it used?



Definition:

"Sensate Focus is a series of structured touching and discovery suggestions that provides opportunities for experiencing your own and your partner's bodies in a non-demand, exploratory way without having to read each other's minds."

(Weiner & Avery-Clark, 2017, pg. 8)

Sensate Focus can be considered as a form of Mindfulness, an ancient Eastern tradition.

"Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

A note about Non-Demand Exploration

It is defined as "touching for your own interest without regard for trying to make sexual response, pleasure, enjoyment or relaxation happen for yourself or your partner, or prevent them from happening. Touching for your own interest is further defined as focusing on the touch sensations of temperature, pressure, and texture. Temperature, pressure, and texture are even more specifically defined as cool or warm, hard or soft (firm or light), and smooth or rough." (pg. 8)

Think of sexual response, pleasure, enjoyment, excitement, and relaxation as the "cherries on top" of the ice cream or the "icing on the cake!" We do discuss these things as ultimate goals but in the initial phases of SF, we focus on tactile sensation.

The Primary focus of Sensate Focus:

"Each partner touches for self and focuses on his, her, or their own sensory experience without regard for the partner's or one's own pleasure."

(Weiner & Avery-Clark, 2017, pg. 14)



History

The Sensate Focus Model was developed by Master's and Johnson around the 1960's to 80's. William Masters and Virginia Johnson are two prominent figures in the sex therapy world as they "pioneered research into the understanding of human sexual response, dysfunction, and disorders through the direct observation of anatomical and physiological sexual responses of human subjects" (kinseyinstitute.org).

In 2017, the 1st edition of the Sensate Focus in Sex Therapy: The Illustrated Manual was created to "provide health professionals with specific information on the use of the structured touching opportunities used regularly by Sexologists to address their clients' sexual difficulties (Sensate Focus 1) and enhance intimate relationships (Sensate Focus 2)" (Weiner & Avery-Clark, 2017, Back Cover). This illustrated manual was created by Linda Weiner, MSW, LCSW and Constance Avery-Clark, PhD, who worked at the Masters & Johnson Institute in the mid- to late-1980s, as Research and Clinical Associates. During this time they were able to constantly observe the development and evolution of the Sensate Focus technique (Auteri, 2014, aasect.com).



William Masters
Photo by William Dellenbeck



Virginia Johnson
Photo by Bob Levin



Linda Weiner
sextherapiststlouis.com/about



Constance Avery-Clark
draveryclark.com/formal-bio/

What exactly does Sensate Focus do?

It teaches new skills to remediate sexual issues, and also eventually facilitate more satisfying and meaningful sexual intimacy.

(Weiner & Avery-Clark, 2017, pg. 9)



Sexual Dysfunction Treatment Areas

(Weiner & Avery-Clark,
2017, pg. 21 - 22)

01

Medical Issues

Any condition or medication that affects bodily functioning in the pelvic region.

02

Individual Issues

A person's overall psychological functioning, including engaging in spectating during times of intimacy.

03

Partner & Relationship Problems

Relationship distress and the impact of other partner(s) medical and personal issues.

04

Lifestyle Stressors

Outside demands and responsibilities that take away the individuals / couple's time and/or add pressure to his/her/their lives.

05

Sociocultural Influences

Family of origin, social, and religious factors that shape the individual's / couple's thought processes, behaviors, actions, morals, & values.

06

Mixed / Unknown Causes

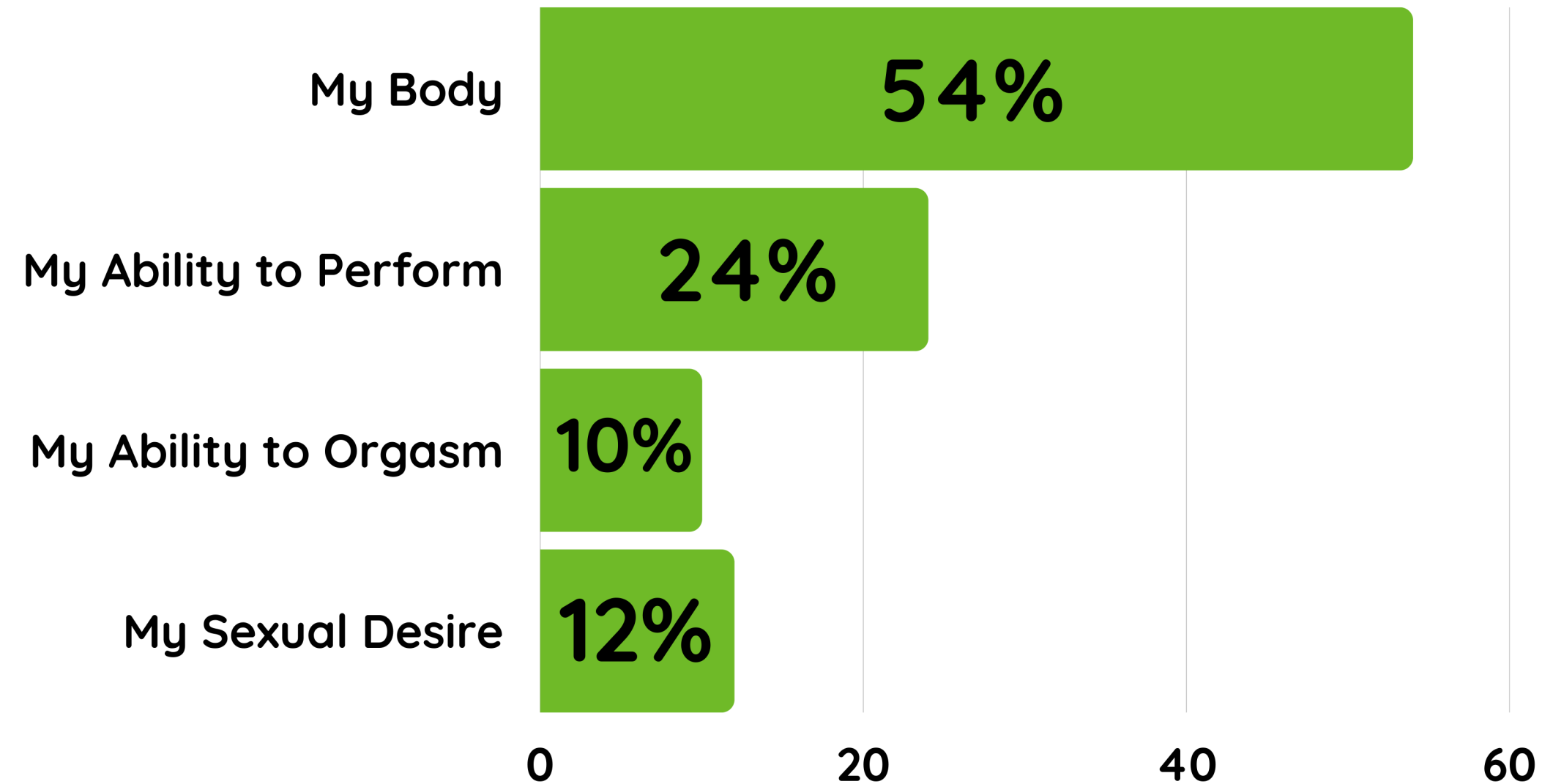
Factors that include a mixture, combination, and/or unknown cause that directly affect the individual or couple's sexual functioning.

A note about Spectatoring

It's a process in which the individual focuses on oneself from a third person perspective during sexual activity, rather than focusing on one's sensations and/or sexual partner (Carlson & Johnson, 1975).

In the Men's Health 2020 Sex in America Survey, 1,500 Americans were asked about kinks, orgasms, threesomes, and more.

Your biggest insecurity in the bedroom?



"Folks of all ages said their body is their biggest insecurity in the bedroom—more so than sexual desires, ability to perform, or ability to orgasm."

*Why does Sensate
Focus work?*

**"Touch is the first sensation we
experience before
and immediately after birth."**

(pg.10)



Touch is...

Reliable & Tangible.



Touch is...

A Gateway to Arousal.



Touch is...

Mutually Stimulating & Relatable.



Sensate Focus Stages

Touching to sensual
intercourse and everything in
between.

Preliminary Rules

Suggestions that make it less likely that there will be distractions, and that make it more likely that the touching sessions will go well.

pgs. 28-30

Complete each level of the hierarchy before proceeding onto the next one. Also include all of the previous levels in each of the subsequent touching sessions.

- 01 Have your touching sessions in any way that makes you feel as safe & comfortable as possible. For some, this may be the bedroom while for others, it is another place.
- 02 Set aside some unpressured time together before the touching sessions begin.
- 03 Allow the sessions to happen spontaneously but no less often than every 48- 72 hours.
- 04 The person touching should do so long enough to get over initial discomfort and to practice engaging the senses. Typically 5-15 minutes per person.
- 05 Alternate between who goes 1st when initiating and use the phrase "I would like to do a touching session now" to obtain full consent and practice communication.
- 06 Talk about anxieties only before and after the session. During, practice mindful focus.



Non-Genital Touching

Stage One

Breasts/Chest and Genitals Off Limits

pgs. 37-39



The person touching has contact with all of the partner's body, front and back, avoiding breasts, chest, and genitals (and any other part of the partner's body that, to the couple, represents something sexual).

The person touching focuses on his or her own experience of the different temperatures, textures, and pressures of the partner's skin and hair, and brings attention mindfully back to these sensations when distracted.

Handriding - If the Touchee experiences anything as physically uncomfortable, highly emotionally, uncomfortable, or ticklish, they are to move the Toucher's hand away from that area, or place his or her hand under or over the Toucher's hand for a moment to regain a sense of control.

The person being touched places his or her hand on the hand of the person touching for a few seconds, moves it away from the uncomfortable area for that moment, and then takes the hand off the Toucher's hand since the person touching is still primarily directing the touching.



Genital & Breast Touching

Stage Two

Breasts/Chest and Genitals On Limits

pgs. 39-44



When both partners are able to touch for their own interest and bring themselves back from distraction with breasts, chest, and genitals off limits, the breasts, chest, and genitals are added into the touch.

Attend to changes in sensory experience, do not focus solely on the breasts, chest, or genitals once these are on limits. Move away from and then back to these areas in order to have a full- body touching experience.

Arousal - If either partner experiences arousal, 1st acknowledge it. During stage 2, feel free to attend to the arousal unless it becomes uncomfortable or distracting.

If or when arousal becomes uncomfortable, extremely distracting, or is experienced as goal- oriented, the Touchee may choose to handride the Toucher's hands away from that area. If visual sensations become overly stimulating, clients are encouraged to close their eyes. As long as being orgasmic is not the intention of the Touchee or the Toucher, it is framed positively in terms of natural function, and the partners are encouraged to continue on with the Sensate Focus exercise.

Positions



One partner sitting up, the lying down.

In the first position, the Toucher sits up with the back against a headboard or wall, supportive pillows behind, and legs spread out in front in a “V” shape. The person being touched lies on his or her back between the Toucher’s outspread legs, face towards the ceiling, genitals close but not touching the other person’s genitals, with knees bent, calves up and over the partner’s thighs, and feet placed down on the outside of the partner’s hips.



Both partners sitting up, one in front.

If the person being touched feels too exposed or vulnerable in this first position, the Touchee can sit between the Toucher’s outspread legs, with the back up against the Toucher’s chest, both partners facing forward, and with the Touchee’s legs draped over the Toucher’s in a wider “V”.



Individual self-discovery and touch

Individuals begin each step in the same way that couples’ do. All of the same rules still apply. The client is both the Toucher and the Touchee. This is handled by having individuals focus on the sensations in their hands wherever they are touching themselves.



Adding Lubricants

Stage Three



Lotions, oils, & gels

One of the ways to enhance sensory awareness is to alter the medium of touch. Adding lotion, oil, or gels creates a slicker, silkier dimension.

- If using lotion, make sure it is non-alcoholic and hypo-allergenic.
- You may want to warm the container of oil or lotion in a basin of water before using it.
- Avoid dripping the oil/lotion onto your partner's body. Instead, put it in the palm of your hand and rub it briefly to warm it.
- Some couples like to begin touching without lotion and then add it partway into the experience for contrast. Others experiment by using it on one hand and not the other.



Mutual Touching

Stage Four

Receiving sensation from two sources simultaneously

pgs. 45-49



When partners can touch for their own interest, focus on sensations and bring themselves back from distractions when breasts, chest, and genitals are added, the couple moves on to include mutual touching.

Partners lie next to each other, sit facing each other, or get into any other position with which they are comfortable and that allows them to touch each other as completely as possible. They begin to touch each other at the same time for their own interest. At first they avoid breasts, chest, and genitals until they are able to focus easily on the sensations in this position. Alternating between touching simultaneously and touching each other one at a time is encouraged.

Positive Handriding - Involves the Touchee's placing one hand on top of or underneath the Toucher's hand, lacing fingers in between the Toucher's fingers.

The Touchee briefly uses this hand to move the Toucher's hand not only away from areas that might be uncomfortable or ticklish but also towards areas that might be of interest to the Touchee. The person being touched keeps the hand on or under the Toucher's hand for a few seconds, and then takes it away since the person touching is still, for the most part, in charge of directing the touching.



Mutual Touching: Suggested Positions





SENSUAL Intercourse

Stage Five

Genital to genital touching

Partner Astride, Genital- to- Genital Contact
Without Insertion

(Heterosexual - Woman on top example)

pgs. 50-51



The astride position involves the client's hovering over and facing the partner, her knees on the bed, supporting herself with her knees close to her partner's body and with her nondominant hand positioned above one of her partner's shoulders, supporting herself in a tripod fashion with both knees and one hand. This leaves her other hand free. She does not sit directly on the partner, nor does she lie down. Rather, she hovers above at a 45- degree angle, much like a jockey on a horse.

She is encouraged to use her partner's genitals much as she would use her own hand, exploring vulvar, clitoral, and mons contact using her partner's genitals but without insertion. She keeps going with the attitude of touching for focused self interest and redirecting attention back to sensations.

- Placing a pillow under the knees of the astride partner may be helpful for elevation when the astride partner is significantly shorter or the partner on the bottom significantly broader.
- Partner on bottom - Refrain from any hip movement and leave the genital-to-genital contact to the astride partner while focusing on the touch sensations wherever his or her hands are touching different parts of the astride partner's body.

Genital to genital touching

Partner Astride, Genital- to- Genital Contact
With Insertion
(Heterosexual - Woman on top example)

pgs. 51-53



Absorbing the sensations while resisting a goal-oriented agenda, the partner lying down is encouraged to keep the pelvis still throughout this stage. With heterosexual couples, the female client gets in the astride position and is encouraged to take her partner's penis and do the inserting. The astride partner is encouraged to insert the penis slowly, a little bit at a time. Attend to the tactile sensations during each stage of insertion rather than on judgments of whether or not it feels good, whether either is aroused or not, or on any other distracting thoughts.

Insertion Without Movement - Once there is full insertion, the partners focus on the sensations associated with penile containment, allowing the sensations to wash over them but without any movement.

Insertion With Movement - The astride partner is encouraged to explore different types of movement. The couple can explore movement with insertion as long as this is done while focusing on sensations for self- interest and not with any expectations for arousal or pleasure. While the astride partner is tending to the genital- to- genital sensations, she can also focus on touching other parts of her partner's body, and her partner can continue to focus on the sensations wherever his hands are touching her.

- Partner on bottom rules still apply.

Session end & options for release

pgs. 53-55



When the touching session ends, either partner can say “Stop.” Partners are encouraged to lie next to each other following the session. The couple may talk, practice mindfulness, or experience the power of being non-verbally present with the other person but without the pressure of achieving any particular goal.

If one member of the couple feels aroused even after lying quietly with the partner for a while, this partner may indicate he or she would like orgasmic release. The partner may:

1. Inform the person asking for release that the partner prefers for that person to provide his or her own release in private.
2. Lie next to and hold or touch the person asking for release while that person provides his or her own release with manual stimulation.
3. Provide manual release for the person seeking release.
4. Engage in any desired sexual activity but that this is entirely separate from the Sensate Focus sessions.

Oral release is discouraged because this tends to trigger expectations for a more goal-oriented, sexual or pleasuring encounter. It also may trigger prior pressure dynamics between the partners.



Inclusive Modifications

Addressing diversity in the
bedroom and fostering
uniqueness.

Sensate Focus Expansion

"Sex therapists from a wide variety of mental health and medical professions have creatively expanded the use of Sensate Focus over the years since Masters and Johnson published their work with primarily able-bodied, Caucasian, heterosexual couples. In fact, one of the most fertile areas in the expansion of Masters and Johnson's work has been the use of Sensate Focus with diverse populations."

(qtd in Linschoten, Weiner, & Avery-Clark, 2016)



Modifications for diverse populations include but are not limited to those who identify as queer, nonbinary/trans, kinky, and non-monogamous as well as those who suffer from sexual dysfunctions, disorders, and/or trauma.



Congratulations!

You've made it so what's next?

Do you want more?

Sexhale offers a plethora of services that range from intensives to coaching and group programs.

If you'd like to start one of our coaching programs or take a course, feel free to visit our website for more information. You can also email Nijeria directly to book a free 15 minute discovery call.

Coaching Services offered include:

- Couples' Intensives
- 1-on-1 Coaching
- Email Coaching
- Women's Group

Other Services/Products include:

- Community Memberships
- Digital & Print Products
- Pleasure Toys
- Reiki Energy Healing
- Guided Meditations

Thank you!

I hope that this free course has helped you in some way.
For questions, comments or concerns please email Nijeria
at info@thesexhalecoach.com.
