



SENSATE FOCUS: TOUCHING EXERCISES TO REDISCOVER INTIMACY

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Note: This handout is offered as a communication aid for patients and their providers. It is not a substitute for professional examination, diagnosis, or treatment.

INTRODUCTION

After cancer, people often have an altered body image that may cause them to feel self-conscious. This can lead to significant challenges with sexual intimacy, even with a familiar partner.

Sexual therapists frequently recommend [Sensate Focus](#). Sensate Focus is a practical and effective relaxing and progressive sensual touching technique. Per various studies, Sensate Focus has a high success rate in reducing sexual performance anxiety while enhancing communication and intimacy. More counselors and medical professionals have recently jumped onto the Sensate Focus bandwagon in recent years, referring their patients to this easy-to-practice technique.

HOW TO PRACTICE SENSATE FOCUS

Cornell University has published an exceptional guide on **engaging** in the progressive stages of **Sensate Focus**. You can access it [through this link](#).

HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF SENSATE FOCUS

Dr. William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson (commonly referred to as Masters and Johnson) developed the technique in the 1960s. Sensate Focus emphasizes [sensory aspects of touch](#), including pressure, texture, and temperature. The series of progressively intimate touching exercises are designed to allow the couple to lower their guard and enjoy sensual touching experiences without expectations, thereby reducing anxiety. Sensate Focus is designed to use sensual touch rather than sexual.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SENSATE FOCUS

Sensate Focus has an [83% effectiveness rate](#) for sexual therapists in relieving various sexual dysfunctions. Sexual therapists report high success rates with resolving cancer survivor sexual dysfunction when couples use this technique.

American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) highlights Sensate Focus as an effective intervention for [cancer-related sexual dysfunction](#).

Consider Sensate Focus as Time With Your Partner, Being Present In The Moment

If you are self-conscious or nervous while being intimate or contemplating intimacy, consider taking things in a less intimidating yet enjoyable direction. Consider trying the Sensate Focus technique to spend sensual and attentive time with each other.

References

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