

SENSATE FOCUS INSTRUCTIONS

Sensate Focus is a mindfulness practice focusing on touch. It is not a race to an end. The goal of Sensate Focus is to learn to focus on sensations and be present in the moment. To be in your body, not in your head. How long you spend engaging in sensate focus is up to you. Typically, sessions last between 15 to 20 minutes with a frequency of every 48 to 72 hours, and spread over eight or more weeks.

What Sensate Focus is NOT:

- This is *not* a precursor to sex.
- This is *not* about giving and receiving pleasure.
- This is *not* about experiencing sexual arousal.
- This is *not* about touching for the other person. The focus is on your own sensations.

General Instructions for Sensate Focus

- Arrange for one hour of complete privacy, free from distractions, when you have some energy, not after a full meal.
- Have clothing off to whatever extent is acceptable.
- Use hands and fingers only, focusing attention on the touch sensations of **Temperature, Pressure, and Texture (TPT)**.
- **No intercourse, oral sex, genital stimulation, or other sexual activity is to be connected with Sensate Focus sessions.**
- If erection or orgasm happens, it's important not to stop the session at this point because we don't want to reinforce the goal-oriented attitude.

The Toucher:

- The person who feels *least* comfortable with these exercises will be the toucher first.
- **Non-verbally touch FOR YOURSELF.** You are NOT touching to please your partner.
- Pay attention to the tactile sensations of **Temperature, Pressure, and Texture (TPT)**.
 - **Temperature: warm or cool**
 - Where is your partner warmer or cooler? Does that change?
 - **Pressure: hard or soft**
 - How does it feel to me when I use a firmer or lighter touch?
 - **Texture: smooth or rough**
 - Of hair; of skin; where are they smoother, rougher?
- When distracting thoughts appear, return to the tactile sensations of TPT. You may find yourself continually refocusing on TPT.
- There is no goal for sexual responsivity, either that it will happen or not.
- Trust that your partner will protect you from doing anything physically or psychologically uncomfortable by communicating that to you, non-verbally if possible.
- Touch long enough to get practiced at refocusing on sensations, but no so long as to become bored or tired.
 - Then switch with your partner by saying “switch.”

The Touched:

- Focus on **Temperature, Pressure, and Texture (TPT)** and don't be concerned with what your partner is experiencing.
- When distracting thoughts appear, refocus on tactile sensations of TPT.
- There is no goal for sexual responsivity, either that it will happen or not.
- Exercises should be non-verbal. If your partner is touching you in a place that makes you physically or psychologically uncomfortable, gently move their hand.
- When your partner says "switch," it's time for you to become the Toucher. When you are done touching, say "Stop."

Phase 1: Breast, chest, and genitals off limits

1. Begin in any comfortable position, changing positions as desired.
2. No intercourse, kissing, oral sex, or mutual masturbation is allowed during this phase.
 - a. At this stage, avoid touching the obvious erogenous zones: chest, breasts, nipples, vulva, clitoris or vagina, penis or testicles.
3. These are non-verbal exercises.
4. The toucher will touch their partner all over their body.
5. When the toucher is done, say "switch" and roles are switched.
6. Using hands and fingers only, focus your attention on the sensations of temperature, texture and pressure as you touch your partner **FOR YOURSELF**, not their pleasure.

Phase 2: Breast, chest, and genitals on limits

1. The Toucher will begin by sitting up on the bed, back against the headboard/wall, legs stretched out in front in a V shape.
2. The Touched will lie on their back, knees up, one leg placed on either side of partner, so their partner is in between their legs/knees.
 - a. In this position, the genitals of both partners are close to each other, but not touching. If they are touching, readjust positioning.
 - b. If this position is not possible, another option is for the touched to turn around with his/her back to their partner's chest, like riding a motorcycle, and the one being touched is the driver.
3. Now follow the exact same instructions as phase 1, except now you can touch chest, breasts, nipples, vulva, clitoris or vagina, penis or testicles, but don't focus all of your attention on these zones. Start with a bit of phase 1 to warm up before moving into phase 2.
 - a. No insertion of anything into the vagina.
4. The toucher will touch their partner all over their body.
5. When the toucher is done, say "switch" and roles are switched.
6. Using hands and fingers only, focus your attention on the sensations of temperature, texture and pressure as you touch and are being touched. Touch for yourself and be touched for yourself.

Source: Sensate Focus: The Art & Science of Mindful Touch Workshop with Constance Avery-Clark, PhD and Linda Weiner, MSW, LICSW from the Institute of Sexual & Relationship Therapy & Training, 2017. Sensate Focus was originally developed by Masters and Johnson and is outlined in their book, *Human Sexual Inadequacy*. Additional information can be found in this manual: Sensate Focus in Sex Therapy: An Illustrated Manual by Weiner and Avery-Clark.