

Intimacy Issues Module

Beliefs Related to SELF: An important function for stability is the ability to soothe and calm oneself. This self-intimacy is reflected in the ability to be alone without feeling lonely or empty. When a trauma occurs, people react differently depending on their expectancy of how well they will cope.

Prior Experience

Negative	Positive
<p>If you had prior experiences (or poor role models) that led you to believe that you are unable to cope with negative life events, you may have reacted to the traumatic event with negative beliefs that you were unable to soothe, comfort, or nurture yourself.</p>	<p>A person with stable and positive self-intimacy may experience the traumatic event as less traumatic because of the expectancy and ability of drawing support from internal resources. However, if the event is in conflict with earlier self-intimacy belief, the person may feel overwhelmed or flooded by anxiety.</p>

Symptoms Associated With Negative Self-Intimacy Beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inability to comfort and soothe self ➤ Fear of being alone ➤ Experience of inner emptiness or deadness ➤ Periods of great anxiety or panic if reminded of trauma when alone ➤ May look to external sources of comfort—food, drugs, alcohol, medications, spending money, or sex ➤ Needy or demanding relationships

Resolution

New beliefs	A possible self-statement may be ...
<p>Understanding the typical reactions to trauma may help you feel less panicky about what you are experiencing. Most people cannot recover from such a major traumatic event without the support of others. External sources of comfort, such as alcohol or food, are just crutches that, instead of helping you to recover, may in fact prolong your reactions. They may comfort you in the short run because you use them to avoid</p>	<p>“I will not suffer forever. I can soothe myself and use the skills I have learned to cope with these negative feelings. I may need help in dealing with my reactions, but that is normal. Even though my feelings are quite strong and unpleasant to experience, I know they are temporary and will fade over time. The skills and abilities I am developing now will help me to cope better with other stressful situations in</p>

and suppress your feelings. The feelings do not go away, however, and you then have to deal with the consequences of the excess food, spending, alcohol, etc., which compounds the problem.	the future.”
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Beliefs Related to OTHERS: The longing for intimacy, connection, and closeness is one of the most basic human needs. The capacity to be intimately connected with other people is fragile. It can easily be damaged or destroyed through insensitive, hurtful, or unempathic responses from others.

Prior Experience

Negative	Positive
Negative beliefs may result from traumatic loss of intimate connections. The event may seem to confirm your belief in your inability to be close to another person.	If you had previously had satisfying intimate relationships with others, you may find that the event (especially if committed by an acquaintance) may leave you believing that you could never be intimate with anyone again.

Posttraumatic Experience
You may also experience a disruption in your belief about your ability to intimate with others if you were blamed or rejected by those who you thought would be supportive.

Symptoms Associated With Negative Others-Esteem Beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pervasive loneliness ➤ Emptiness or isolation ➤ Failure to experience connectedness with others even in relationships that are genuinely loving and intimate

Resolution

New beliefs	Possible self-statements about [] may be ...
In order for you to again have intimate relationships with others, you will need to adopt new, more adaptive beliefs about intimacy. Intimate relationships take time to	[New relationships] “Even though a former relationship did not work out, it does not mean that I cannot have satisfying intimate relationships in the future. I cannot continue to

<p>develop and involved effort from both people. You are not solely responsible for the failure of prior relationships. The development of relationships involves risk taking, and it is possible that you may be hurt again. Staying away from relationships for this reason alone, however, is likely to leave you feeling empty and alone.</p>	<p>believe and behave as though everyone will betray me. I will need to take risks in developing relationships in the future, but if I take it slow, I will have a better chance of telling whether this person can be trusted.”</p>
<p>Attempt to resolve your issues with the people who let you down and hurt you by asking them for what you need and letting them know how you feel about what they said or did. If they are unable to adjust to your requests and are unable to give you what you need, you may decide that you can no longer be close to those people. You may find, however, that they responded as they did out of ignorance or fear. As a result of your efforts, communication may improve and you may end up feeling closer to them than you did before the traumatic event.</p>	<p>[Existing relationships] “I can still be close to people, but I may not be able (or want) to be intimate with everyone I meet. I may lose prior or future intimate relationships with others who cannot meet me half-way, but this is not my fault or due to the fact that I did not try.”</p>