

# **Session 11: Review of Esteem and Introducing Intimacy**

## **Practice Assignment:**

Read the Intimacy Issues Module (Handout 10.1), and use Challenging Beliefs Worksheets (Handout 8.1) to confront Stuck Points about intimacy related to yourself or others. Continue completing worksheets on previous topics that are still problematic, and/or any concerns you have about the ending of treatment.

Continue to practice doing nice/worthwhile things for yourself, and giving and receiving compliments.

Finally, please write at least one page on what you think *now* about why your traumatic event(s) occurred. Also, consider what you believe *now* about yourself, others, and the world in the following areas: safety, trust, power/control, esteem, and intimacy.

## **Session 11 Handouts:**

8.1: Challenging Beliefs Worksheet (6 copies included)

10.1: Intimacy Issues Module

**HANDOUT 8.1**  
**Challenging Beliefs Worksheet**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Client: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Situation	B. Thought/Stuck Point	D. Challenging Thoughts	E. Problematic Patterns	F. Alternative Thought(s)
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**HANDOUT 10.1**  
**Intimacy Issues Module**

**Intimacy Beliefs Related to SELF:** Beliefs that you can take care of your own emotional needs. An important part of healthy living is the ability to soothe and calm oneself. Part of self-intimacy is the ability to be alone without feeling lonely or empty.

**PRIOR EXPERIENCE**

<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>
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 thoughts suggesting that you were unable to soothe, comfort, or nurture yourself.	If you previously had healthy, positive self-intimacy, you may be able to cope with a traumatic event because of the ability to use internal coping strategies. However, some traumatic events can create conflict; you may begin to doubt your ability to take care of your needs.
<b>Symptoms Associated with Negative Intimacy Beliefs about the Self</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to comfort and soothe the self</li> <li>• Fear of being alone</li> <li>• Experience of inner emptiness or deadness</li> <li>• Periods of great anxiety or panic if reminded of trauma when alone</li> <li>• Possibly looking to external sources of comfort—overeating, alcohol or other substance use, spending money, self-harm behaviors, or sex</li> <li>• Needy or demanding relationships</li> </ul>	
<b>Examples of Possible Stuck Points</b>	
<p>“If I get emotional, I will be out of control.”</p> <p>“I can’t tolerate being alone.”</p> <p>“I can’t handle my trauma symptoms by myself.”</p>	

**POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS**

<b>If you previously believed that . . .</b>	<b>A possible alternative thought may be . . .</b>
“I can take care of myself, and other people’s actions do not affect me,” the traumatic event may have shaken this belief. It will be helpful for you to remember the ways that you have taken care of meeting your needs in the past,	“I will not suffer forever. I can soothe myself and use the skills I have learned to cope with these painful feelings. I may need help in dealing with my reactions, but that is normal.” “The skills and abilities I am developing now

*(continued)*



**HANDOUT 10.1** (p. 2 of 4)

<b>If you previously believed that . . .</b>	<b>A possible alternative thought may be . . .</b>
and how you were able not to make other people's crises your own. In addition, understanding the typical reactions to trauma may help you feel less panicky about what you are experiencing. When some people have a difficult time making themselves feel better, they may turn to unhealthy behaviors (substance abuse, overeating, gambling, etc.) that only mask the symptoms instead of helping with recovery. The painful thoughts and feelings do not go away, however, and these persons then have to deal with the consequences of the unhealthy behaviors, which usually compound the problems.	will help me to cope better with other stressful situations in the future."
"I cannot take care of myself; I must have other people to help me," the traumatic event may have reinforced this belief. You may have become convinced that you do not have any skills to help yourself or make yourself feel better. It will help for you to begin to identify the small ways that you take care of yourself every day and to build on these small wins. It is good to have others in your life that you can rely on, but there are times when others are not available.	"Although it may be hard at first, I can develop skills for taking care of myself, including practicing self-care by doing things that I enjoy doing."  "It is healthy to ask others for help when I need it, but people are not always free immediately, and I can learn to take care of myself until they are available."

**Intimacy Beliefs Related to OTHERS:** Beliefs that you are capable of making different types of emotional connections with others. The desire for closeness is one of the most basic human needs. Intimate connections with others can be negatively affected by traumatic events or damaged by insensitive, hurtful, or unempathic responses from others.

**PRIOR EXPERIENCE**

<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>
Negative beliefs may have resulted from traumatic loss of intimate connections. The traumatic event may seem to confirm your belief in your inability to be close to another person.	If you previously had satisfying intimate relationships with others, you may find that the traumatic event (especially if it was an act committed by someone you knew) left you believing that you could never be close to anyone again.

(continued)

**HANDOUT 10.1** (p. 3 of 4)

**Posttraumatic Experience**

You may also have experienced a disruption in your belief about your ability to be intimate with others if you were blamed or rejected by persons you thought would be supportive.

**Symptoms Associated with Negative Esteem Beliefs about Others**

- Pervasive loneliness
- Emptiness or isolation
- Failure to experience connectedness with others, even in relationships that are genuinely loving and intimate

**Examples of Possible Stuck Points**

“If I get close to someone, I will get hurt.”  
“All anyone ever wants is sex.”  
“I will always be taken advantage of in relationships.”

**POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS**

<b>If you previously believed that . . .</b>	<b>Possible self-statements may be . . .</b>
<p>“I can depend on others and feel close and connected to them,” the traumatic event may have had negative effects on your ability to feel intimate with others. It will be important for you to regain healthy beliefs about your ability to become close to others. To have intimate relationships with others again, you may need to adopt new, more adaptive beliefs about intimacy. Intimate relationships take time to develop and effort from both people. You are not solely responsible for the failure of prior or future 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>“Even though a past relationship did not work out, it does not mean that I cannot have satisfying intimate relationships in the future. Not everyone will betray me. I will need to take risks in developing relationships in the future, but if I take it slowly, I will have a better chance of telling whether this person can be trusted.”</p>
<p>“I cannot be close to others, and everyone will hurt me,” the trauma may have reinforced this belief. It will be important for you to begin slowly taking chances with some other people, and to learn that you can not only trust them but can also be intimate with them. If there are people who let you down or hurt you with their response after the event, you can attempt to improve your relationships with them by telling them what you need and</p>	<p>“I can still be close to people, but I may not be able (or may not want) to be intimate with everyone I meet. I may lose prior or future intimate relationships with others who cannot meet me halfway, but this is not my fault or due to the fact that I did not try.”</p>

(continued)

**HANDOUT 10.1** (p. 4 of 4)

<b>If you previously believed that . . .</b>	<b>Possible self-statements may be . . .</b>
<p>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. If you talk to them about this, your relationships with them may improve, and you may end up feeling closer to them than you did before the traumatic event.</p> <p>Remember, many people need the support of others to recover from a traumatic event.</p>	