

Sensate Focus: An Activity for Enhancing Intimacy

What is Sensate Focus?

Sensate Focus is a mindful exercise. The goals are to build trust and enhance intimacy. It involves exploring your partner's body through touch and other types of stimulation. You can also do this without a partner and discover pleasure in your own body.

This exercise can help people give and receive pleasure. It helps remove the pressure, expectation, or demand of reaching a certain goal, like orgasm or intercourse.

Sensate Focus enhances feelings of sexuality. It will help you to build a more satisfying sexual relationship with yourself and your partner.



Tips for an enjoyable Sensate Focus:

- 1. Plan ahead:** Talk about this exercise with your partner. Set a time to do this. Make sure you have at least 20 minutes for the exercise.
- 2. Find a private place:** Do this exercise where you will not be disturbed.
- 3. Prepare the environment:** Make your surroundings more pleasurable by playing relaxing music, lighting candles, and having aromas in the air.
- 4. Take your time:** Going slow is usually more rewarding for this exercise.
- 5. Communicate:** Tell your partner what feels good and what you do not like. Only move from one stage to the next when both of you are ready.

Phase 1: Non-genital sensate focus

The first few times you do this exercise, touch or massage non-genital parts of the body. These parts include the head, face, neck, back, arms, and legs. It is best to do sensate focus without clothes on or in more relaxed clothing. This will enhance feelings of intimacy.

In this phase, try not to touch the breasts or outer genitals. Sexual intercourse and reaching orgasm are not the goal of this phase. The goal is to enjoy the pleasure of touch.

Spend about 10 minutes (or longer) touching your partner and then switch roles. You can repeat this phase as many times as you like. Only move on to the next phase when both partners agree.

Phase 2: Genital sensate focus

Start this next phase by exploring non-genital areas of the body first (as you did in phase 1). Slowly include more sexual areas of the body. We recommend touching the chest and nipples first. Then, touch the areas around the genitals. Finally, touch the genitals (labia, clitoris, entrance to the vagina, penis, testicles and anus if desired).

You may want to try different types of touch. Try oral stimulation (kissing, licking, or sucking) or using a vibrator. To enhance pleasure, you can use a lubricant.

Try not to have sexual intercourse or penetration in this phase. It is okay to feel aroused or reach orgasm, but this is not the main focus.



Phase 3: Penetrative or receptive sensate focus

Start with non-genital and non-penetrative touching (phases 1 and 2). Then move into a position where your outer genitals are touching. Explore the sensation of brushing or rubbing your genitals together.

If you are doing this alone, brush or rub your genitals with a toy or your fingers.

When both partners are ready, gently insert the finger, toy, or penis into the vagina or anus. If you want to do penetration, try not to thrust right away. If you are being penetrated, talk to your partner and let them know what feels good. Try to focus on the sensations of insertion. Remember: If using a silicone sex toy then use a water-based lubricant.

Try moving the fingers, toy, or penis in and out of the genitals slowly. This should not be painful or uncomfortable. You can stop at this phase and return to outer genital touching anytime. Do what feels comfortable for you and your partner.

If you want to, you can start thrusting and reach orgasm. The goal of sensate focus is not to have an orgasm or have intercourse. The goal is to enjoy feelings of touch and sensuality.