

Psychotherapy Guidebook

SEXUAL ATTITUDE RESTRUCTURING

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Sexual Attitude Restructuring

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DEFINITION

Sexual Attitude Restructuring (SAR) is a process of education/therapy designed to help individuals and couples examine their beliefs about human sexuality and change from a negative to a positive point of view about sex. The SAR process is based on the following assumption:

1. Sex plays a very important role in every person's life. Sexual fantasies, desires, and behavior should be recognized as valuable and integral parts of each person's total self.
2. Sex can and should be discussed casually and nonjudgmentally. Individuals have a right to know the facts and can enrich their lives by learning about the full range of sexual behavior.
3. Everyone has the right to have a good sex life, including persons who have physical or mental disabilities (paraplegics, diabetics, amputees, heart patients, the mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, etc.).
4. Sexuality is one of the most individualistic parts of a person's life. It is up to each person to determine and then to assume

responsibility for his own style of sexual expression.

5. To experience a healthy and fulfilling sex life people need to learn about and appreciate their bodies, know their feelings and their own sexual response cycle, become sensitive to the needs of others, and develop meaningful and intimate contact in their sexual relationships.

HISTORY

The SAR process grew out of a project in the early 1960s designed to determine the needs of young adults. In response to the findings of that project, the National Sex Forum was established in October 1968 for the training of professionals in sex education, sex therapy, and sex counseling. Shortly thereafter, the programs were opened to the patients/clients of the professional participants for personal sexual enrichment. Today over seventy thousand people have participated in the SAR process and more than half have been members of the helping professions.

In 1970 the National Sex Forum began making sexually explicit films of all aspects of human sexual behavior for use in the SAR process. There are more than sixty films currently being used in sex education and sex therapy programs in over two thousand schools and agencies around the world.

In June 1976, as an outgrowth of the research of the National Sex Forum

and a growing demand from members of the helping professions, the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality was founded. It is a graduate school totally devoted to the academic and practical study of sexuality.

TECHNIQUE

The SAR process is an examination of the broad range of sexual behavior and of individual feelings about what people do sexually. The long, absent permission to know about sex dramatically aids people in their ability to focus on and reconcile their sexual belief system.

The educational/therapeutic methodology consists of desensitization to sexual myths and resensitization to sexual facts through lecture, media (films, slides, and video) and small and large group discussions. Ten years of research shows that the use of sexually explicit films is the most important agent in attitudinal change. The

SAR process includes:

1. Endorsement (it is all right to be sexual, to know all there is to know about human sexuality)
2. Information giving (the history of sex research; what we know about human sexuality, and about our bodies and how they respond sexually)

3. The development of sexuality from birth to death
4. Masturbation (the way most men and many women make their first commitment to sexuality)
5. Homosexuality (and bisexuality) in the female and male
6. Desensitization and resensitization (banishing sexual myths and replacing them with facts)
7. Female and male sexuality
8. Sexual enrichment (how to have a better sex life)
9. Special problems (medical, religious, cultural, legal, etc.)
10. Sexual therapy for specific dysfunction (impotence, premature ejaculation, preorgasmic women, physically or emotionally disabled persons, etc.)
11. Cultural expression of sexuality, both historical and contemporary (art, film, dance, music)
12. Legal aspects of sexual behavior

APPLICATIONS

Accurate sexual information has long been unavailable to many professionals and most of the general public. Therapy for specific dysfunction was virtually unheard of and such complaints were subsumed under other

therapies with questionable results.

The SAR process, based on every person's right to acquire sexual knowledge, provides the most current factual sexual information, helps the individual to make an aware choice of his sexual life-style, and offers the most effective therapeutic procedures for the treatment of specific sexual dysfunction.

The format of the SAR process in large groups emphasizes the educational aspects, using films, slides, lectures, and large group discussions. Small group discussions are sometimes used and individual therapeutic consultation is available if needed.

The format of the SAR process in small groups emphasizes the therapeutic aspects, using video cassettes, a written manual (The SAR Guide for a Better Sex Life) for home assignments, and personal sharing in a small group. Participants may be referred to the group for specific sexual dysfunction or for personal sexual enrichment.