



Coping *with* Sexual Abuse *workbook*

**Facilitator Reproducible
Guided Self-Exploration
Activities**

**Ester R.A. Leutenberg
& John J. Liptak, EdD**

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Facilitator Reproducible Guided Self-Exploration Activities

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Introduction for the Facilitators - Using This Book

In our workbook, *Coping with Sexual Abuse*, the term 'survivor' identifies someone who has been sexually abused. To honor and empower that person to heal, we present a process for healing regardless of when or how the person was abused, the amount of work the person has completed related to the abuse issues, or the person's present lifestyle. Each journey of recovery is personal and unique. Some survivors of sexual abuse move through similar challenges as they attempt to heal, and some have their own unique challenges.

'Sexual abuse' refers to any unwanted sexual activity in which a perpetrator or perpetrators use force, make threats, or take sexual advantage of people without their consent. Therefore, sexual abuse is any action that pressures people to do something sexually they don't want to do. It can also refer to any behavior that impacts others' ability to control their sexual activity or circumstances.

As co-authors, we hope that by your participants completing the assessments and activities included in this workbook, they will be able to deal with, accept, and move forward from what occurred to them in the past. Our goal for them is to build strength and resiliency and to have satisfying relationships, stable careers, and healthy personalities.



- Coercion into a sexual situation through fear
- Encouragement or coercion to prostitute (child or adult)
- Exhibitionism
- Fascination with child pornography
- Obscene phone calls/e-mails/texts/sexts
- Photographs with unwanted sexually explicit images
- Pornography (child, adult)
- Rape – Forced sexual activity (marital, partner, date, acquaintance, stranger)
- Restriction of birth control access
- Roughness/violence as sexual activity
- Sexual exploitation
- Sexual harassment and/or insults
- Sexual orientation bashing
- Sexually explicit photographing without permission
- Unwilling Sodomy
- Stalking
- Trafficking
- Use of force to coerce sexual activity, touching, kissing, fondling, etc.
- Use of threats to coerce unwanted sex
- Voyeurism (peeping into bathrooms, bedrooms, etc.)

Some Examples of Sexual Abuse

Myths about Sexual Abuse

- **MYTH: Sexual abuse only occurs to women.** In fact, both men and women can be perpetrators and victims of sexual abuse.
- **MYTH: Sexual abuse always occurs between strangers.** In fact, most victims of sexual abuse actually know or are related to their perpetrator.
- **MYTH: Sexual abuse is always violent.** In fact, many acts of sexual abuse are not violent, but all people have the right to decide what they want to do and what they do not want to do sexually.
- **MYTH: Sexual abuse occurs most often in same-sex relationships.** In fact, sexual abuse occurs in both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships.
- **MYTH: Sexual Abuse always involves physical contact.** In fact, sexual abuse may not involve any physical contact at all and can include such behaviors as repeatedly using sexual insults to other people, spying on someone, spreading explicit sexts, ogling or leering, suggestive comments, etc.

Introduction for the Facilitators - Beliefs about Personal Value

Many people who have been sexually abused develop several critical misconceptions about themselves and their value as human beings.

"I'm damaged goods now." Many survivors feel that the abuse has made them sexually inadequate or inferior to other people. They often feel as if they can never get their adequacy back.

"I'm a sexual object." Many survivors have lost their sexual identity due to the abuse and believe that they must either please others, or see themselves as easily controlled by others.

"Bad things happen to bad people. I must be bad." Many survivors believe this about themselves and think they deserved this abuse. This is not true. Bad things sometimes happen to good people.

"I am dirty." Many survivors cannot push the feeling of being dirty out of their mind and/or body.

"I'm a bad person." "I deserved it." "No one will ever want or love me." "I should have known." Many survivors experience feelings of guilt and shame. Consequently they feel like they are worthless and unlovable.

Although all of these conclusions are not true, they can cause tremendous mental, emotional, and physical damage. They represent a negative self-concept and can be extremely demeaning to the survivor. If these notions continue, survivors need to see a mental health and/or medical professional.

Common Reactions of Adults Who have Been Abused

As sexual abuse becomes a bigger problem for people on all levels of society, it is important to make note of the specific symptoms people may be experiencing or exhibiting. Because many of the symptoms tend to stay with survivors throughout their lives, it is important to acknowledge these symptoms as survivors work to recover and heal. People who have been abused may exhibit many of the following symptoms:

Addictions	Feeling worthless or "dirty"	Relationship issues
Anger	Guilt	Sadness
Boundary issues	Hatred of body	Self-mutilation
Confusion	Helplessness	Sexual addiction
Depression	Inability to control feelings	Shame
Detachment while having sex	Isolation from people	Suicidal thoughts
Disturbing sexual thoughts	Lack of interest in sex	Trust issues
Eating disorder	Low self-esteem	Unable to enjoy sex
Embarrassment	Negative view of sex	Unrealistic expectations of self
Empty feeling	Panic attacks	Unusual response when being touched
Fear	Poor self-acceptance	Victim thinking
Fear of a physical exam	Problems with rage and anger	

In order to heal and thrive after being sexually abused, people need support, trust, and understanding as they begin their healing journey.

The *Coping with Sexual Abuse Workbook* provides assessments and self-guided activities to help participants learn useful ways to explore, find support and find ways to cope with what has happened. Many choices of self-exploration activities are provided for participants to determine which best suit their unique needs.

Introduction for the Facilitators - Format of Book

The *Coping with Sexual Abuse Workbook* contains assessments and guided self-exploration activities for a variety of populations to help participants cope more effectively with the feelings and effects of sexual abuse.

Each chapter of this workbook begins with an annotated Table of Contents with notes and examples for the facilitator. Each chapter contains two primary elements:

- 1) a set of assessments to help participants gather information about themselves in a focused situation,
- 2) a set of guided self-exploration activities to help participants process information and learn ways of coping with the sexual abuse they experienced.

Assessments

Each chapter begins with an assessment that provides participants with valuable information about themselves. These assessments help to identify productive and unproductive patterns of behavior and life skills, and help to guide development of ways to interact with the world. Assessments provide a path to self-discovery through participants' exploration of their unique traits and behaviors. The purpose of these assessments is not to categorize people, but to allow them to explore various elements that are critical for success in coping with sexual abuse in everyday life. This workbook contains self-assessments and not tests. Traditional tests measure knowledge and elicit either right or wrong responses. For the assessments provided in this workbook, remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers. These assessments ask only for opinions or attitudes about topics related to a variety of coping skills and abilities.

The assessments in this workbook are based on self-reported data. In other words, the accuracy and usefulness of the data is dependent on the information that participants provide based on their experiences about themselves. All of the assessments in this workbook are designed to be administered, scored, and interpreted by the participants as a starting point for them to begin to learn more about themselves and their coping skills. Remind participants that the assessments are exploratory exercises and not a determination of abilities. These assessments are not a substitute for professional assistance. If you feel any of your participants need more assistance than you can provide, please refer them to an appropriate professional.

As your participants begin the assessments in this workbook give these instructions:

- There is no time limit for completing the assessments. You may work at your own pace. Allow yourself time to reflect on your results and how they compare to what you already know about yourself.
- Do not answer the assessments as you think others would like you to answer them or how you think others see you. These assessments are for you to reflect on your life and explore some of the barriers that are keeping you from living a less lonely life.
- Assessments are powerful tools, but only if you are honest with yourself. Take your time and be truthful in your responses so that your results are an actual reflection of you. Your level of commitment in completing the assessments honestly will determine how much you learn about yourself.
- Before completing each assessment, be sure to read the instructions. The assessments have similar formats, but they have different scales, responses, scoring instructions and methods for interpretation.
- Finally, remember that learning about yourself should be a positive and motivating experience. Don't stress about taking the assessments or about the discovery of your results. Just respond honestly and learn as much about yourself as you can.

(Continued on the next page.)

Introduction for the Facilitators - Format of Book *(Continued)*

Guided Self-Exploration Activities

Guided self-exploration activities assist participants in self-reflection and enhance self-knowledge, identify ongoing and potential ineffective behaviors, and teach more effective ways of coping. Guided self-exploration is designed to help participants make a series of discoveries that lead to increased social and emotional competencies, as well as to serve as an energizing way to help participants grow personally and professionally. These brief, easy-to-use self-reflection tools are designed to promote insight and self-growth.

Many different types of guided self-exploration activities are provided for you to pick and choose the activities most needed by, and most appealing to, your participants.

The unique features of self-guided exploration activities make them usable and appropriate for a variety of individual sessions and group sessions.

Features of Guided Self-Exploration Activities

- **Quick, easy and rewarding to use** – These guided self-exploration activities are designed to be an efficient, appealing method for motivating participants to explore information about themselves - including their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors - in a relatively short period of time.
- **Reproducible** – Because the guided self-exploration activities can be reproduced by the facilitator, no more than the one book is needed. You may photocopy as many pages as you wish for your participants. If you want to add or delete words on a page, make one photocopy, white out and/or write your own words, and then make photocopies from your personalized master.
- **Participative** – These guided self-exploration activities help people to focus their attention quickly, aid them in the self-reflection process, and guide them in learning new and more effective ways of coping.
- **Motivating to complete** – The guided self-exploration activities are designed to be an energizing way for participants to engage in self-reflection and learn about themselves. Various activities and modalities are included to enhance the learning process related to developing important social and emotional competency skills.
- **Low risk** – The guided self-exploration activities are designed to be less threatening than formal assessments and structured exercises. They are user-friendly; participants will generally feel more aware and motivated after completing these activities.
- **Adaptable to a variety of populations** – The guided self-exploration activities can be used with many different populations and can be tailored to meet the needs of the specific population with whom you work.
- **Focused** – Each guided self-exploration activity is designed to focus on a single coping issue, thus enhancing the experience for participants.
- **Flexible** – The guided self-exploration activities are flexible and can be used independently or to supplement other types of interventions.

Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.

Introduction for the Facilitators - Special Safety Considerations When Working with Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Your professional skills and familiarity with your participants is crucial.

The activities in this book need not be done in chronological order.

View the Table of Contents and select the order of chapters and/or pages depending on your participants' needs.

Emphasize that participants are survivors.

Skills that helped in the past may help now, in addition to new strategies.

They are already working toward recovery by attending this session.

Reassure participants about *their* safety, *their* control, and *their* empowerment.

Emphasize the following:

They decide what to disclose, when, and how, (through writing, drawing, etc.).

Their privacy is respected: sharing is voluntary, and what is said in session stays in session.

No one must stay in the room or be forced to participate.

They may stop, take a break, or request a different activity, etc., if they feel overwhelmed.

Discuss and legitimize concerns.

Telling too much too soon can be overwhelming. A slower pace may be safer.

People may have told them "It's no big deal." It is a big deal.

Explain that emotional reactions are unique to each person, and reactions may range from numbness to panic.

Discuss that cultural factors affect responses to abuse and to attitudes toward seeking help.

Alternate between coping skills activities and trauma-related work. Example:

Present "Visualizing a Safe Place" page 43, before presenting "My Story" page 34.

Provide a balanced approach.

Too much work could lead to shutting down. Too little focus could reinforce avoidance.

Create a safe environment.

Plan to end each session with deep breathing, guided imagery, or another relaxation technique.

Allow people to select their seats (some may want to be near an exit, etc.).

Opt for the maximum distance between seats for privacy and personal space preferences.

Prepare participants for exposure to others' emotions, disclosures and sexual content.

Tell people to share if they feel uncomfortable or need a time-out from an intense situation.

Ask whether the majority of participants prefer brighter or dimmer lighting.

Safety Plans

Encourage group participants to request private sessions as needed.

Emphasize the importance of telling the facilitator if anyone has thoughts of violence or self-harm.

Create a climate of collaboration.

Demonstrate that facilitators are partners in the recovery process, not authority figures.

Encourage peers to support each other by engaging in these ways:

Sharing thoughts and feelings within their comfort zone.

Modeling coping skills.

Asking for help.

Demonstrating self-care and assertiveness.

Setting boundaries, e.g., what one will and won't disclose to the group.

Reinforce resiliency by assisting participants to achieve these goals:

Develop a support system of people, places, and resources that promote recovery.

Help others.

Focus on strengths.

Recall positive experiences.

Gain perspective through spirituality, religion, higher power, peace in nature, etc.

Nurture hope for a healthy future.

Introduction for the Facilitators - Chapter Elements

The *Coping with Sexual Abuse Workbook* is designed to be used either independently or as part of an integrated curriculum. You may administer any of the assessments and the guided self-exploration activities to an individual or a group with whom you are working, or you may administer any of the activities over one or more days. Feel free to pick and choose those assessments and activities that best fit the outcomes you desire.

Ideas and Examples for the Facilitator

The first page of each chapter begins with a Table of Contents annotated with ideas and examples for the facilitator.

Assessments for the Participants, with Guidance from the Facilitator

Assessments with scoring directions and interpretation materials begin each chapter. The authors recommend that you begin presenting each topic by asking participants to complete the assessment. Facilitators can choose one or more, or all of the activities relevant to their participants' specific needs and concerns.

Guided Self-Exploration Activities for the Participants, with Guidance from the Facilitator

Practical questions and activities to prompt self-reflection and to promote self-understanding are included after each of the assessments. These questions and activities foster introspection and promote pro-social behaviors and coping skills. The activities in this workbook are tied to the assessments so that you can identify and select activities quickly and easily.

Chapter 1: BEGINNING THE HEALING PROCESS

This chapter helps participants identify where they are in their healing process, and allows them to explore the abuse in a safe way so that they can begin the healing process.

Chapter 2: SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

This chapter helps participants explore different types of symptoms that they may be experiencing that are related to the impact of past sexual abuse.

Chapter 3: SEXUAL ATTITUDES

This chapter helps participants identify the specific attitudes related to their own sexuality.

Chapter 4: FEELIN' GOOD ABOUT ME!

This chapter helps participants identify how good they feel about themselves. This is a critical component along the journey to healing.

PLEASE NOTE

You may photocopy as many assessments or handouts as you wish for your participants. To personalize assessments for the needs of each person or group, make one photocopy, delete and/or write your own words, and then make photocopies from your personalized master

According to the needs of your participants, you may select any chapter, and any pages within the chapter, in any order. The activities are divided into four chapters to help you identify and select assessments easily and quickly.

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Introduction for the Survivor of Sexual Abuse

You are a survivor with strengths that saved you.

You can rebound from sexual abuse.

You have begun the recovery process.

Yet, your safety, level of control, and autonomy were seriously threatened by the abuse.

As you experience the activities in this workbook

Coping with Sexual Abuse ...

You will be helped to feel safe emotionally and physically.

You will control when, what, and how, you go through the recovery process.

You will set the pace.

You will decide what to keep private, and what to share.

You may leave the room if you need a break.

You may ask for individual help.

***Healing doesn't mean the damage never existed.
It means the damage no longer controls our lives.***

~ Akshay Dubey

You will be helped to work toward the life *you* hope to live.

Do not suffer in silence or keep secrets about safety risks.

**If you or anyone wants to harm self or others, please tell staff,
call 911 or your local emergency services number, call a crisis hotline,
or go to the nearest hospital's emergency department.**

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. On the left is 'Ester Leutenberg' and on the right is 'John J. Liptak'. Both signatures are fluid and cursive.

co-authors

Beginning the Healing Process Assessment

Scoring Directions

Name _____ Date _____

The *Beginning the Healing Process Assessment* you just completed is designed to measure how you are proceeding after experiencing sexual abuse. For the section on the previous page, count the scores you circled. Put that total on the line marked TOTAL at the end.

Then, transfer your total to the space below:

Beginning the Healing Process Total = _____

Profile Interpretation

SCORE	RESULT	INDICATIONS
20 - 26	Low	Low scores indicate that you have begun to accept and integrate the traumatic event into your life. You will improve and maintain what you have accomplished by going through the process of engaging in these exercises.
27 - 33	Moderate	Moderate scores indicate that you have to some extent begun to heal, accept, and integrate the traumatic event into your life. You are engaging in the process of healing by doing these exercises.
34 - 40	High	High scores indicate that you have not begun to heal, accept, and integrate the traumatic event into your life. However, you have begun the process of healing by doing these exercises.

Assessment Description

Beginning the Healing Process

People scoring High on this assessment are having a difficult time in the healing process. They still have intrusive memories and flashbacks, feel detached emotionally, and often would like to withdraw from the world. They are not able yet to talk about the experience, and spend a lot of time and energy trying to forget the experience.

The Healing Journey

"Sexual healing takes a long time, but gradually it happens."

~ Ellen Bass & Laura Davis

What does sexual healing mean to you?

Why do you think it takes a long time?

What can you do to support yourself in this process?

Who else can support you in this process?
