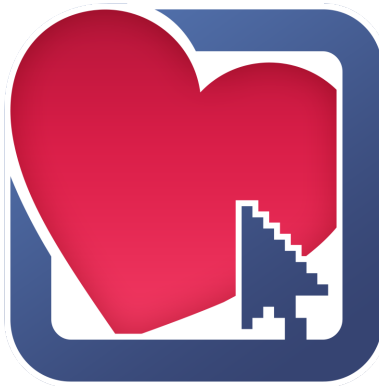


Ultimate Intimacy

**Connect With Your Man – Mind, Body,
and Soul**

Module One, Part 3

Overcoming the Past: Triggers and Trauma



**A Digital Romance Special Report
by Felicity Keith**

**Website: <http://www.DigitalRomanceInc.com>
Email: support@digitalromanceinc.com**

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Overcoming the Past: Triggers and Trauma

The statistics in America for sexual violence are heartbreaking and alarming. Some sources say as many as 1 in 4 women will be a victim of some form of sexual violence. And while the number is lower for men, it's important to know that it's estimated that as many as 1 in 6 males have experienced some form of sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18.

With numbers like that, there is a chance that dealing with the repercussions of sexual trauma may impact your healthy adult relationships.

The ways that symptoms of abuse show up for us as adults are incredibly varied and complex.

Depression, anxiety, and anger are the three most common symptoms. But other signs include...

- Shame
- Eating disorders
- Gastro-intestinal issues
- Sexual compulsions
- Self-destructive patterns and choices
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Sleep dysfunction, including insomnia and nightmares
- Physical pain during sex
- Substance abuse
- Promiscuity or being hyper-sexual
- Low libido, uninterested in sex
- Avoidance of emotional intimacy
- Constant need for emotional intimacy

Reading this list, you may realize that it isn't so easy to pinpoint how someone will react or how sexual abuse may affect someone. Some people experience completely opposite symptoms, and the truth is, many survivors of sexual violence have no noticeable symptoms. It's important to remember that abuse in the past does not preclude the ability to have loving relationships as an adult.

However, for many people, the trauma from our past can affect how we relate in the present. This can be in the form of ongoing psychological or physical symptoms. Also, triggers can pop up out of nowhere and cause problems. Knowing how to identify symptoms, communicate, and heal are important.

Steps Toward Healing

Share openly

I don't mean that you turn your partner into a therapist. . . you don't have to go into vivid details. But part of being emotionally intimate is sharing about ourselves. Letting your partner know that you have experienced sexual violence gives them the ability to be compassionate. It is scary, no doubt. Sharing this part of your past can bring up feelings of shame and vulnerability. However, in a long-term relationship, giving your partner this insight into who you are strengthens your bond.

The degree to which you share depends on you and your relationship. Some people may want to confide in their partner with great detail while others might share very little. It's okay either way.

Know and communicate your boundaries

If you know there are particular sexual situations that would emotionally trigger you, it's important to not only know them yourself but to outline them for your sexual partner. In the heat of the moment, it's possible for things to unfold in a way that wasn't exactly predicted. You want to make sure to discuss anything that is off-limits ahead of time.

Seek counseling or therapy

I am a huge advocate of therapy. Working with a trained mental health professional to process through what you survived is one of the biggest gifts of healing you can give yourself. If you've never gone to a therapist, it may sound really scary or uncomfortable to sit with a stranger and detail the most painful parts of your history. That is why most therapists and counselors offer a free introductory meeting so you can get a sense of whether you'd be comfortable with them. Spend 15-20 minutes asking questions about their background and clinical approach, and just see if you like them or not.

Be compassionate

If you are the one healing from past sexual trauma, be gentle with yourself. Don't get down on yourself if you get triggered or can't just "get over it." Surviving sexual violence is no small feat, and healing from it is a complicated process.

If your partner was the victim of sexual trauma, be compassionate. Understand that the path to healing can have many ups and downs. And nobody's path looks the same.