

#18



Difficult Relationship with the Body

Trauma's impact on the body can sometimes lead to feelings of shame, disconnection, and betrayal that we may not always understand or know how to manage.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit saprea.org/support-groups.** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

Group Activity

EMBODIMENT

For many survivors, the idea of feeling reconnected with their body can seem daunting. This is where embodiment comes into play. **Embodiment involves feeling present and empowered within your own body.** It centers around being attuned to your body's physical needs, responses, and sensations. Embodiment is important in all areas of your life, including sexual intimacy. Embodiment can begin by engaging in small moments of everyday Mindfulness—specifically moments that involve safe touch. While your mind and body may have learned to react to certain stimuli in a way that may be causing you difficulties as an adult, **you can learn or re-learn to experience touch while feeling safe.**

“Safe touch” refers to physical touch that can help us feel safe, comforted, relaxed, and grounded to the present. It can also refer to touch that doesn't disrupt these feelings if we are already experiencing them. In some cases, safe touch can also help to strengthen our feelings of connection and belonging with others. In this activity, we will practice an example of safe touch using a grounding exercise we've done together in past meetings.

ACTIVITY STEPS

Part 1—Butterfly Hug

- 01 Get into a comfortable position, either sitting up or lying down.
- 02 Cross your arms over your chest and rest the tips of your fingers on your collarbone, shoulders, or arms.

- 03 Next, gently tap your arms, alternating sides. As you do so, breathe in and out.
- 04 Envision feelings of warmth, comfort, and safety flowing through you as you continue tapping your arms and embracing yourself in what is sometimes referred to as the “self-love hug.”
- 05 Continue this exercise for 2–5 minutes or as long as you need to.
- 06 When you are done, rest your hands on your lap and let your attention come back to the present moment. Reflect on any thoughts, emotions, and sensations you had as you allowed yourself a moment to experience safe touch.

Part 2—Exploring Embodiment

- 01 Take a few minutes to think about other embodiment activities you could try. As a reminder, these are Mindfulness activities involving safe touch. Some examples include:
 - Snuggling with a pet.
 - Sitting in the sun.
 - Getting a massage.
 - Playing a sport with a friend.
 - Tickling or wrestling with your kids.
 - Holding hands with someone you trust.
 - Getting your hair or nails done.
 - Laying beneath a weighted blanket.
- 02 Write down a couple of ideas that you’d like to explore later.
- 03 When you try out an embodiment activity, mindfully observe how present you are and what emotions you feel. If the touch gets to be too much, acknowledge how you feel and try again another time.
- 04 After you try out the activity, reflect on the following questions:
 - How easy or difficult was it for me to stay present while practicing safe touch?
 - What physical sensations did I experience through safe touch? (Example: “When I sat outside, I felt the warmth of the sun on my face.”)
 - What emotions did I feel during the activity? (Example: “As I sat outside, I felt calm, relaxed, and comfortable in my own skin.”)
- 05 Consider what other ways you could practice safe touch to experience similar feelings of embodiment. For instance, if you enjoyed lounging in the sun, you might experience similar feelings of warmth and security by taking a bath or sitting close to your partner while you are both commuting on a train.
- 06 Remember that through these small steps, over time, safe touch can become a natural part of your day, something that enables you to feel more at home in your own body—whether during sex, at family events, while you are at work, or while you are practicing self-care.

Grounding Exercise

SELF-KINDNESS MEDITATION

This exercise can help us not only ground to the present but offer ourselves warmth, comfort, and compassion.

Activity Steps

- 01 Place both hands over your heart and take a moment to feel the warmth of your touch.**
Notice your breathing as it is. There is no need to change or deepen it.
- 02 As you breathe in, imagine a sense of calm and gratitude flowing through your body and towards your heart.**
As you breathe out, imagine any tension or stress leaving your body. It may also be helpful to focus on the image of a breathing heart.
- 03 Next, envision a moment when you were with someone who made you feel loved and safe.**
This moment may be an actual memory with a loved one, trusted friend, neighbor, therapist, or mentor. You could also think of a moment spent with a beloved pet. Or, rather than drawing from a memory, you can envision a hypothetical scenario with an older, wiser version of yourself, or a well-known figure you admire and whose work has brought you inspiration and comfort.
- 04 Think about the feelings of acceptance, safety, and love you experience when focusing on that person.**
Take a moment to allow these feelings to spread throughout your body.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at saprea.org.

- **DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP WITH BODY**
- **SEXUAL INTIMACY ISSUES**
- **SEXUAL HEALTH**

NEXT TOPIC:

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EVERYDAY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Practicing Acknowledgement everyday helps us to change automatic reactions into intentional, conscious actions that help us progress in our healing.