



Understanding how sexual trauma can impact intimate relationships



If you've been sexually abused or assaulted, it can change the way you feel about your body and sex.

You might freeze, zone out, feel sick or feel ashamed, or even have a panic attack.

For a while, you may dislike any kind of physical touching.

You may react in unexpected ways that seem uncaring, even with people you care about.

Sexual trauma can happen to people of all genders.

You deserve to feel safe.

Some things you may struggle with

Relationships that don't involve sex:

- Being intimate and affectionate with someone
- Having feelings such as anger, disgust or guilt when being touched
- Feeling confused about love and sex
- Trust.

Relationships that involve sex:

- Feeling emotionally distant, not present, avoiding or afraid of sex
- Feeling you have no choice but to have sex even if you don't want to
- Having trauma memories pop into your head before, during or even after sex
- Experiencing vaginal pain, erectile problems or no sensation of orgasm
- Having problems getting 'in the mood'

Having a healthy and trusting intimate relationship is possible

People can heal from their sexual trauma experience, and do not require a partner to do the healing work.

While learning how to trust again, it's important to:

- Be clear about your boundaries.
- Take your time becoming comfortable with your body.
- Know that having healthy relationships and a positive sex life is possible over time.

Healthy sex and sexual trauma are very different experiences.

- Healthy sex involves respect, safety and control for both people involved.
- Healthy sex is pleasurable, enjoyable and satisfying for both people involved.



Remember

- It's common to have difficulties with relationships after sexual trauma.
- Take your time, be patient and kind to yourself throughout the process.
- Some days will be good, and others will not.
- Feeling supported and respected with your decision to have sex or not is important. We call this consent (giving your permission).

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

Metropolitan area: A free 24-hr emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault, and counselling services for any form of unwanted sexual contact that has happened in the past for all genders ages 13 years and above.

Regional area: Advice and education and training can be provided to services across the state of Western Australia.

Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Email SARC Education and Training on SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au

Yorgum Healing Services

Disability counselling, intensive family support and National Redress services

Call 1800 469 371

13 Yarn

The first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, 24hrs/7 days a week

Call 139 276 (13YARN)

WA Police

To report a sexual assault:

Go to your local **police station**.

Call **131 444**

Go online [Safe2Say.com.au](https://www.safe2say.com.au)

Non emergencies

Police assistance and reporting

Call 131 444

Emergency

Call 000 Police, Fire, Ambulance