

## TIME-IN

Focus on setting clear and firm boundaries, to enable the child to nurture and care for self. Therapeutic exercises encourage the child to do something pleasurable for self each day such as:

- Taking a lengthy and luxuriant bath
- Taking time for self away from family commitments
- Having a massage or sauna
- Buying something that gives self pleasure

One child bought herself a bouquet of flowers every two or three days and spent half an hour each day looking at them and absorbing their perfume. This was not only aesthetically pleasing to self but also helped her feel secure and happy while helping to relax.

Other exercises focus on relaxation and reflection, with the child spending time each day in self-affirmation of his/her positive attributes. Validating and complimenting self for having achieved or accomplished something with expertise fosters a more positive self image. Such exercises also enhance self respect and enable the child to value self more highly. This encourages a reduction of self-depreciating cognitions and behaviours.

Throughout these techniques the parent must demonstrate and provide a positive role model by modeling adaptive and appropriate behaviours. Apart from supporting the child to nurture self, the parent should also encourage the child to build up support networks outside therapy which validate him/her and foster interpersonal relationships while reducing his/her fear of intimacy. This allows for the child to build up support networks in which they can practice newly acquired skills while reducing dependency on the parent.

Incorporate a learning component which focuses on:

- The acquisition of new skills
- More adaptive behavioural responses
- Coping strategies – assess existing coping strategies, assessing their level of adaptiveness, and finding alternative strategies.
- Affect regulation exercises – drumming therapy, thunderstorm experiences, shaking the sheet exercises that demonstrate the ability to regulate affect and notice that feelings, no matter how strong, will pass in time.
- Connection skills – developing games that generate appropriate touch.
- Stress management and stress inoculation exercises where the child learns more adaptive ways to cope with stressful or frightening events, especially if the child experiences flashbacks, sleep disturbances, or recurring nightmares. As well as denial or numbing affect.
- Communication skills enabling the child to express their needs and to ask for what they want more effectively.

- Assertiveness training is an excellent procedure for improving communication skills, learning to say 'no' setting boundaries, and increasing self confidence
- Techniques aimed at enhancing problem solving and decision making skills are also invaluable – identifying needs and goals and generating workable solutions with which to achieve them enables the child to believe and trust self while recognising that they can actively influence their life rather than remaining a passive victim.

These aim to replace old archaic responses which, although adaptive in childhood, will have outlived their function and become maladaptive in adulthood. Focusing on the acquisition of skills enhances the child's coping strategies and interpersonal interactions and also enables him/her to begin to make choices about his/her life which empowers him/her to fulfill to full potential.

Adapted from Sanderson, C., 1995, *Counselling Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, pgs 140-155