

# Somatic Re-Experiencing of Sexual Trauma

Presented for:  
Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS)  
BDSM / Kink Special Interest Group (SIG)  
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Andrew Pari, L.C.S.W., Diplomat  
*Sexual Assault Awareness, LLC*  
[www.SAAwareness.com](http://www.SAAwareness.com)





Don't ~~get~~  
rape~~d~~.



positive sexuality course created by students,  
for students that tackles the big questions  
Sponsored by Haven, Survivor Resource Center

## Continuum of Harm

Seductive  
behavior or  
inappropriate  
advances

- The
- Bla
- Sex

Sexual  
Harassment

- Crude jokes
- Sexual comments
- Vulgar pictures

- Touching
- Pinching
- Groping



NO  
MEANS  
NO



The biggest thing to  
remember about  
role-play is that it's  
supposed to be silly &  
it's supposed to be fun!



# Katie, Who Wanted to be Raped\*:

## Background:

- ▶ Katie, 24 y/o white female
- ▶ Two breakups with boyfriends, most recent was particularly affecting
- ▶ Played with non-consensual consent themes, but never really satisfied
- ▶ After the 2nd break-up and over the course of several months, she engaged in dozens of self-created rape encounters.
- ▶ Came to me after a serious injury brought her to a clinic nurse who suggested she seek therapy.

\*Case Study on Rape Compulsion-Permission Granted by "Katie"



# Range of Expression

Paraphilic/Kink Expression from safety through extreme risk-taking:

- Masturbation fantasy
- Online roleplay
- Intimate partner play
- CNC Parties
- Stranger play (Tinder, Fetlife, Craigslist)
- “Rapebaiting”/Intentional risk-taking
- Unconscious risk-taking. Most concerning!





## Guided Rape Exposure : A Proposed Treatment Model

Andrew Pari, LCSW,  
Diplomate  
INTRO

- Women experiencing rape-trauma related symptoms experienced relief when engaging in unstructured re-enactments.

### CITATIONS

- The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism, van der Kolk, Bessel A., MD, Psychiatric Clinics of North America, Volume 12, Number 2, Pages 389-411, June 1989.
- Psychophysiological Sexual Arousal in Women with a History of Child Sexual Abuse. Alessandra H. Rellini & Cindy M. Meston (2006), Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 32:1, 5-22
- I'm Gonna Need You to Fight Me On This: How Violent Sex Helped Ease My PTSD McClelland, Mac, Good Magazine, June 29, 2011
- Prepared for Anything?: An Investigation of Female Genital Arousal in Response to Rape Cues. Suschinsky, K., and Lalumiere, M. Psychological Science 22(2):159-65 (2010).

### METHODS

1. N = 45
2. Structured qualitative interviews of women exploring \*CNC.

### DISCUSSION

- Women with a sexual violence history engaging in CNC experienced reduction of high-SNS activation.
- A guided "awareness" re-enactment model, combined with psycho-education and identification of trauma points, may significantly reduce trauma symptoms while decreasing repetition compulsion and re-traumatization.

# Guided \*CNC re-enactment of rape and sexual abuse experiences may reduce survivors' trauma symptoms.

75% of Subjects Interviewed  
Had a  
History of Sexualized Violence



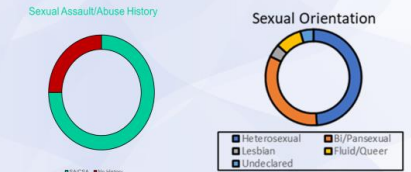
Over 80% of Subjects  
with a Sexualized Violence History  
Reported Trauma Symptom Reduction After  
Engagement in Unstructured CNC Activity

**\*CNC is "consensual non-consent," a form of sex play wherein the players take on roles in a sexual assault enactment; aka force fantasy, rape role-play, rape-play.**

### Results of Interviews (N=45)

Age: Range: 15-43 y/o; Avg: 27.2 y/o

Ed Lvl: High School-PostGrad; >1/3 Bachelors+



Prior childhood desire: ~30% (fantasy of kidnap/being sold)

### THEMED INTERVIEW QUOTES

#### Symptom Relief

- "I felt like the fact I had been raped before was suddenly not a big deal anymore."
- "I wanted to explore CNC because I read somewhere that it could be a really good way of overcoming what had happened to me...could replace my negative experiences with much more positive ones."
- "If I'm feeling vulnerable or the weight of my history, engaging in any of this helps me feel in control and more at peace..."

#### Shame/Stigma Reduction

- "therapy helped alleviate the shame...but it didn't come undone... I require a certain level of intensity/power exchange/force, etc in order to orgasm... I had been distressed over orgasming during rape in the past, and this time it wasn't distressing at all."

#### Feminist Perspective

- "Like you can be a feminist and be into rape baiting because your advocating for your own desires against a male controlled society that usually seeks to control female desire."
- "I do this to deal with what happened...to use it to gain control over [my] life now."

#### Re-Traumatization

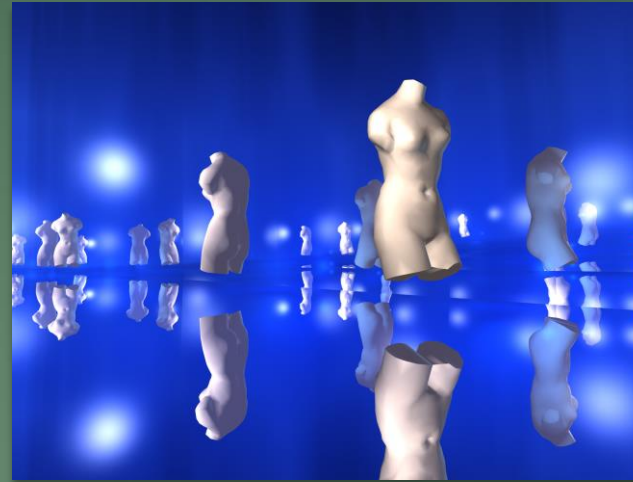
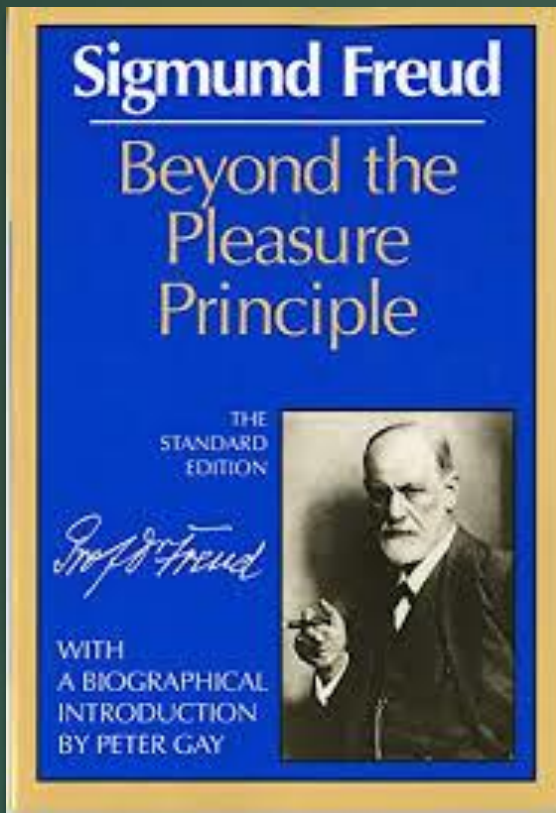
- "I like the fear, the violence. This is the only way I've found to manage stress."



# Conclusions of SexPosCon18: Radical Treatment Implication!

- **Intense emotionally impacting recreation of sexual assault has curative effects for some women.**
- **Needs to be under supervision of an experienced trauma therapist.**
- **This “Therapeutic Rape” would mimic elements of the original assault, engaging the sympathetic nervous system, shocking the system back to a stable pre-trauma state.**



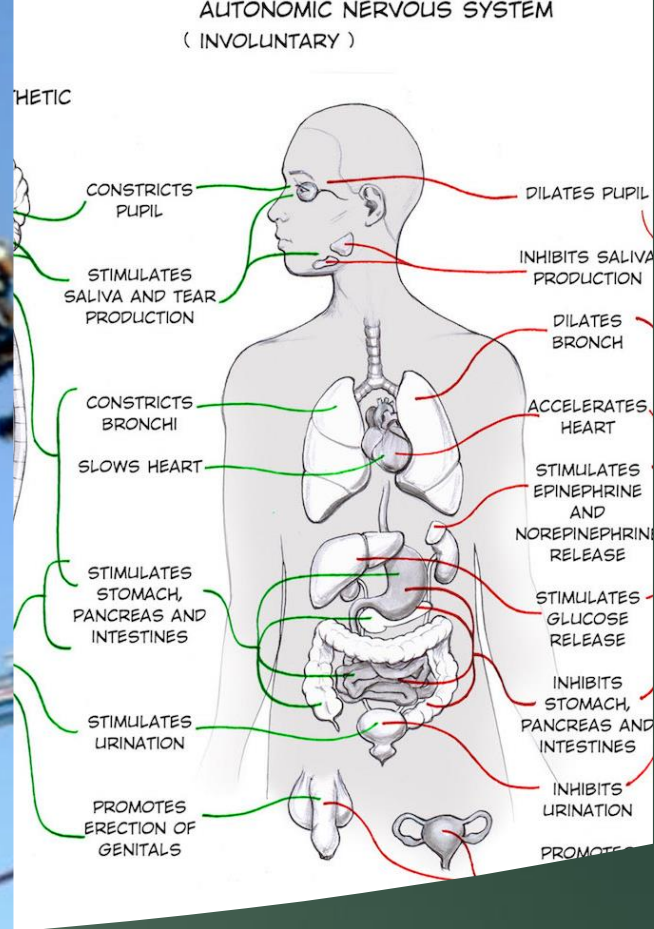


# Repetition Compulsion

compulsively reenacting aspects of a traumatic event or putting oneself in situations where the event is likely to happen again







# Elevated Sympathetic Nervous System Response (High-SNS)



# Mastery vs Retraumatization

## Mastery (Re-Scripting)

- ▶ Begins w/Remembrance
  - ▶ Conscious
- ▶ Moves to:
  - ▶ Assimilation
  - ▶ Integration
  - ▶ Healing
- ▶ Seeks “positive expression”
- ▶ Improved self-awareness/esteem
- ▶ Reduced symptomology

## Re-Traumatization

- ▶ Begins w/Remembrance
  - ▶ Sub/Unconscious (COULD be conscious w/o connection)
- ▶ Doesn't progress:
  - ▶ Continues to cycle and remain stuck
- ▶ Seeks “confirmation of negative self-bias” (dirty, worthless, deserving)
- ▶ Reinforces symptoms of anxiety/depression/low self-worth

“a traumatized individual reenacts a trauma in order to Remember, Assimilate, Integrate, and Heal from the traumatic experience.”  
(Levy 1998)



# Repetition vs Re-Scripting (via Kink Expression)

## Trauma

Retraumatizing  
Un/sub-conscious  
Often undesired  
Feelings of intense  
shame/guilt  
(unresolved by after-care)  
Repetition of Memory

## Kink

Seeking Mastery  
Conscious/Subconscious  
Moving past Memory to  
Assimilation  
Integration  
Healing



# Recoding (Re-scripting) Identity through SexPlay

Change Our Story (Assimilation)



Change Our Neural Pathways  
(Integration)



Change Our Relationship with Our Self (Healing)



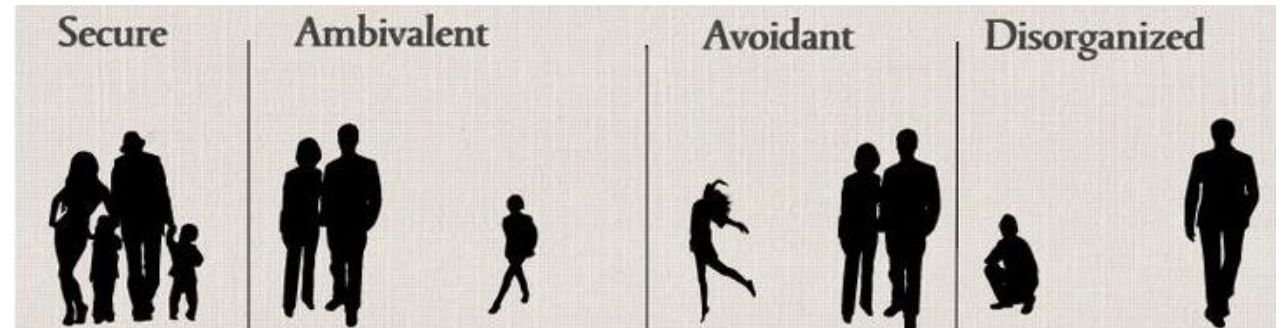
# What's Missing?

## The Guided Aspect of Relationship in Treatment

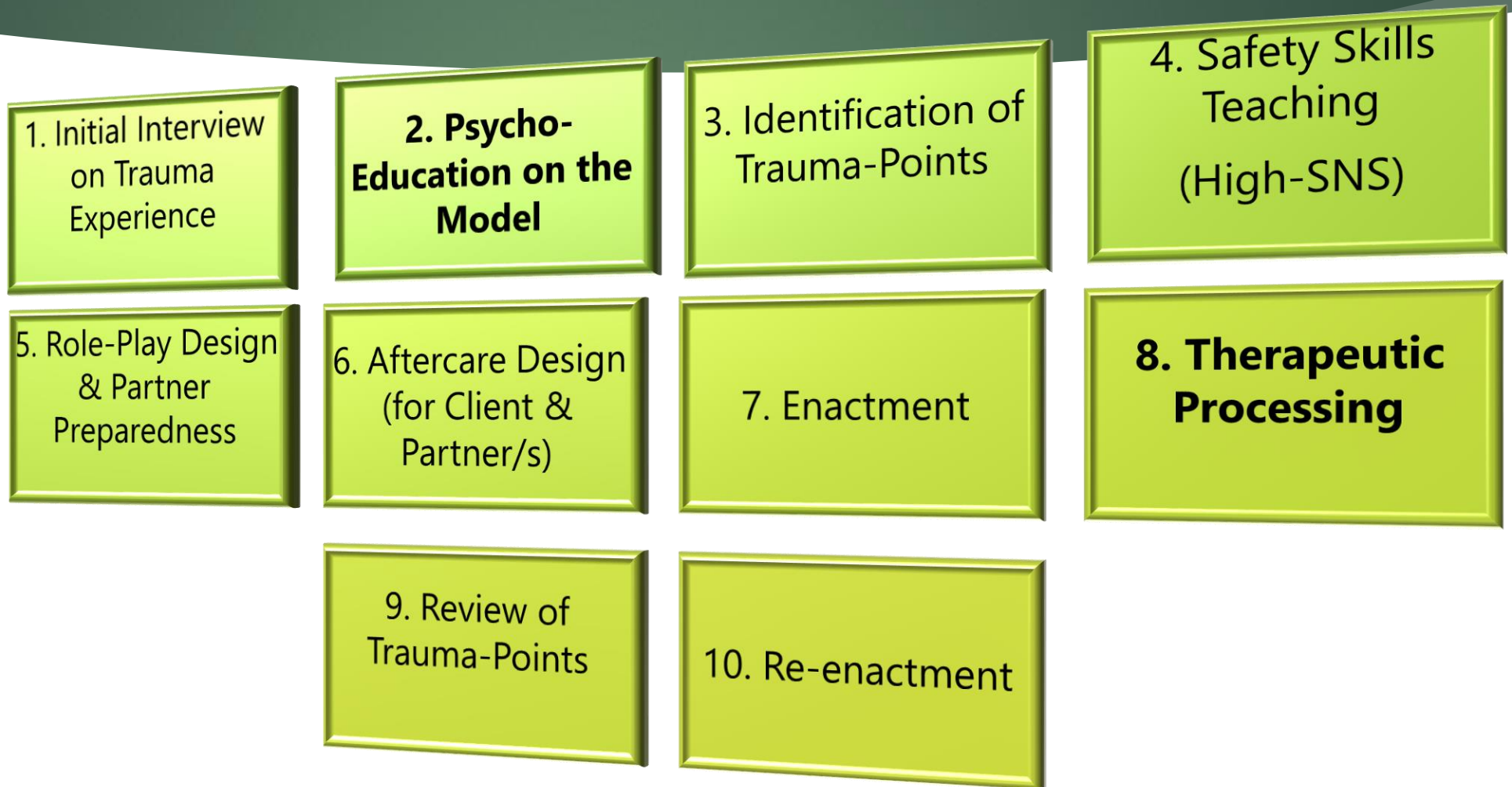
- ▶ Connection/Attachment/Relationship
- ▶ Attunement/Understood
- ▶ Psycho-Education:
  - ▶ Identifying the Pattern (Assimilation)
- ▶ Re-Scripting/Enactment:
  - ▶ Learning/Address the Pattern(Integration)
- ▶ Therapeutic Processing:
  - ▶ Understanding the Pattern (Healing)



- # "Like EMDR on crack!"



# The Somatic Mastery of Sexual Trauma Model





# Healing Benefits

- ▶ Validation/Normalization
- ▶ Receiving support with a trusted person through the re-enactment relieves the “fear of the other” predominate in sexual trauma, supporting the survivor to correctly orient to the person who hurt them vs generalized fears of many. The Balancing Experience.
- ▶ Experiencing their trauma in a safe, controlled, negotiated environment restores control and the sense of survival, of coming through the experience whole, as they did not the first time.
- ▶ Stepping back into the fear, the heightened arousal response, restores equilibrium and re-regulates the system to its pre-trauma state.
- ▶ Guided understanding through the “stuck” points that emerge relieves the confusion that result in the shame and guilt of sexual trauma.
- ▶ Attachment in safety is a necessary healing component. In this model, we have both the attachment to the therapist as well as the Safe “Perpetrator/s.”
- ▶ Connecting to emotional ventilation/catharsis through the physical/psychological pain of re-experiencing the moment/s of trauma.
- ▶ The ability to “revisit” the moment and provide self-care in ways that were not available at the time of the assault/abuse. Includes allowing for after-care by partner.
- ▶ Symptom reduction of anxiety, depression, avoidance, intrusive thoughts, dissociation, and desires to self-harm, all indicators of PTSD resolution.
- ▶ Positive attribute increases in self-confidence, sexual pleasure, connection, and focus.
- ▶ Trauma is re-contextualized as a “bad memory,” versus a present intrusion.



# Interview Quotes

“If I’m feeling vulnerable or the weight of my history, engaging in any of this helps me feel in control and more at peace...”

“therapy helped alleviate the shame...but it didn't come undone... I require a certain level of intensity/power exchange/force, etc in order to orgasm... I had been distressed over orgasming during rape in the past, and this time it wasn't distressing at all.”

“I wanted to explore CNC because I read somewhere that it could be a really good way of overcoming what had happened to me...could replace my negative experiences with much more positive ones.”



# The Goal of Somatic Mastery:

"I felt like the fact I had been raped before was suddenly not a big deal anymore."

-Interview Subject





# ***Thank You!***

Andrew Pari, LCSW, Diplmate  
andrew@saawareness.com

619/772-2175

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www.SAAwareness.com

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Twitter: @SexAssaultAware

IG: sexassaultawareness

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/andrewpari](http://www.linkedin.com/in/andrewpari)



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Discovering Dignity**