

10 TOPICS TO ATTEND TO WITH ABUSE CLIENTS

Adapted from the work of Al and Diane Pessio by Deborah Willbur, LCSW and Curt Levang, Ph.D. Then adapted by Juliet Grayson

Topic	Cause	Body Parts	Procedure	Accommodator Statements/Intervention
1) The Experience of LOSS OF CONTROL	Will, choice and control violated		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rights must be freely given -Lots of time helping client to feel safe with therapist & group 	Controlled Approach Conscious Voluntary Movement
2) Feelings of FEAR AND TERROR	Intense fear & terror without ego-wrapping	<p>Trembling in Legs – possible impulse to run</p> <p>Tension in Shoulders – Suggests an impulse to hide</p> <p>Achiness in shoulders = fear – shrinks into body to hide</p> <p>Nausea – may be reflexive, unconscious attempt to get unpleasant, overcharged feelings out of the body</p> <p>High pitched sound</p>	<p>Create safety through ideal protective figures</p> <p>Contact figures – counter pressure shoulders</p> <p>Contract, contact, recognise, vocalise: Strongly contract muscles around the tension – then action appears - give contact by support or contact figures who provide resistance & pressure to the action</p> <p>Warn group. Ideals – hold client tightly</p>	<p>“We can help you handle how scared you are”</p> <p>“We are not frightened, your fear is normal and we will help you deal with it”</p> <p>“We will help you handle how much you feel”</p>
3) Need for PROTECTION	Absence of someone who would have protected,	Neck Cramps – common reaction when feeling more	Ideal parents – placed as wall/shield, facing abuser and placed between client & abuser	“If I had been back there then I would have seen that was going

	defended, prevented the abuse	vulnerable than commonly accustomed As a kind of unconscious, reflexive alternative to softness & feelings of defenselessness – some part of body will harden (frequently neck & calves) General tightening	Use countershaping figures – they apply subtle amount of resistance so client can continue the movement Containing but do NOT apply limits	on & I would have not let him/her do that to you” “If he comes any closer I will stop him and call the police” “You are strong, you can have an effect on me”
4) The Experience of PAIN, HURT, SADNESS	Physical pain and emotional anguish	Shows as tension or hardness in the stomach, throat & pressure in the chest	Contract, contact, vocalise, recognise: tighten muscles around distressed areas & then note what emotions, feelings, sounds or actions arise place hands of ideal figures firmly against all turbulent & shaking surfaces	“We can handle how sad you are”
5) The Impulse and Expression of REVENGE and	Assume, whatever the form of abuse that the client experienced, that	Tension in the calves	Exaggerate this felt tension - often the foot flexes as though to stamp or grind -if acceptable to	“It is all right that you have such revengeful & sadistic feelings but we won’t let you literally do it”

SADISTIC FEELINGS	they want to avenge themselves using the same method of abuse, i.e. unconsciously they want to do it back	Severe pains & cramps in calf muscles (may wake them in the night)	client, suggest symbolically stamping abuser Restrain feet & leg w/ideal limiting figures if client feels guilt about this expression. Therapist should attend to reports of sensations in client's hands, arms, etc. whatever body part is receiving the impulse to carry out the revenge	Be prepared to offer limiting figures
6) The Expression of EROTICISM, RECEPTIVITY and OPENNESS	Some unconscious part of body reacts to the stimulation—the guilt about this is enormous and client blames themselves for their own predicament, and that they feel sexual and ready to receive penetration (or are excited by violence) Magical sexual receptivity omnipotent 1) irresistible 2) draw attacker to them	Trembling in upper thighs & often pain & tension in lower back Client may sit “balled” up	Clear comprehensible teaching of this interpretation & intervention – to create a cognitive frame of reference Tightly hold knees together, so accommodators “take over” the task of holding knees together, so client can attend to, and feel the opposite impulse of separating them. Do not allow even slightest bit of opening Be ready for high piercing screams	“It is alright to feel open and to want to be receptive, but we can put limits on it and help you handle your openness & vulnerability” “We will not let you be literally penetrated, even if you want it”
7) The Impulse and Expression of HATRED and MURDER	Arises out of outrage for what has been done and a portion originates from	Global body symptoms – rapid heart beat, increased breathing. 1) tension in arms, hands, &	Ideal limiting figures – essential 6 people to limit 1	“It is alright to want to kill your attacker but we won't let you literally do it”

	impulse to kill person so it can never happen again	jaw - fists or claws, bared teeth 2) tension in legs - kicking	expertly placed	
8) The Increase of GUILT, SHAME, AND THE DESIRE FOR PUNISHMENT	An attempt by the psyche to balance out the ego forces that are out of control Victims are ashamed and guilty about how open they are. Unconscious secondary gain of specialness & uniqueness Also, due to the 1) Law of opposites they become rigidly closed, e.g. They are very angry so become rigidly nice 2) Law of turning inwards – punish self, accident prone, self-destructive -non-interactive solution of self punishment → isolation & omnipotence	Fist hitting head, legs, sexual organs	Limiting figures when client about to direct their anger inward –offer statements seriously & acted upon with determination - allow no possibility of client touching self with own fists or controlling hands of ideals –client’s don’t give up struggle easily	Offered seriously & acted upon with determination “We won’t let you hurt yourself” “You don’t deserve to be hurt”
9) The desire to express LOVE	After unlimited feelings get ego-wrapped – love may emerge	Touching heart, tears, tenderness	Loved aspect of real figure. Limiting figures hold client to provide reassurance & limits to	“We can help you handle how much you love him/her”

FOR THE ABUSER	Appeasement as amygdala response to survival		too overpowering love, applying flexible restraint	“We won’t let you burst with your feelings”
10) The need for an ANTIDOTE RELATIONSHIP			Whatever form abuse took ideal parents antidote it. Healing and respectful contact from an ideal figure of similar role to the abuser	