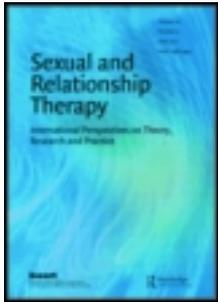


This article was downloaded by: [Talli Y. Rosenbaum]

On: 14 October 2012, At: 01:11

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Sexual and Relationship Therapy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/csmt20>

The sexual healing journey

Talli Y. Rosenbaum ^a

^a AAECT Certified Sex Therapist, Bet Shemesh, Israel

Version of record first published: 11 Oct 2012.

To cite this article: Talli Y. Rosenbaum (2012): The sexual healing journey, Sexual and Relationship Therapy, DOI:10.1080/14681994.2012.734607

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2012.734607>



PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

BOOK REVIEW

The sexual healing journey, by Wendy Maltz, New York, Harper Collins, 2012, 384 pp., £6.99 (paperback) £6.49 (Kindle), ISBN 13-978-0062130730

Sexual abuse, particularly in childhood, affects the normative developmental process of forming a secure sense of self. Common sequelae of sexual abuse include depression, self-destructive behavior, isolation, lowered self-esteem, inability to trust and substance abuse. Recovery from sexual abuse is in fact a multi-dimensional process involving addressing feelings of depression, self-blame and unresolved anger and restoring feelings of autonomy and control, often involving prolonged therapy.

Sexual difficulties unsurprisingly result from a history of abuse, but may not necessarily be adequately addressed in the healing process. While the ability to love and trust others and to form intimate relationships may be restored, experiencing sexual desire, pleasure and satisfaction may continue to be challenging and attempts to do so may result in pain, distress, triggering of trauma and dissociation. Typically, sexual problems are addressed by sex therapy, often using behavioral techniques and gentle exposure therapy.

Wendy Maltz, the author of *The sexual healing journey*, concludes that standard sex therapy, particularly when guided by directive exercises, is insufficient for sexual healing, may be too overwhelming for survivors of abuse and, in the worst case, may trigger trauma. In this book Maltz outlines, in a comprehensive and easy to read manner speaking directly to patients as well as clinicians, how to begin and travel the journey of sexual healing. She provides clear definitions of abuse, shattering gender myths and legitimizing varied types of situations likely experienced by her readers. She elucidates how past negative sexual experiences can shape sexual development and affect sexual functioning and offers concrete ways to help clients differentiate between their past negative experiences and their current reality and to claim the power to construct new, positive sexual feelings and associations. To do so requires affirming ones sense of self-esteem and autonomy, establishing safe and secure boundaries and experiencing sex not as an obligation or responsibility, but as a positive affirmation of the self and the relationship. To this end, the author invites the partner to take an active role in this journey.

While this book likely would not be able to replace therapy completely, it is written with such warmth and understanding that the value of the empathic and non-judgmental therapeutic alliance is healing to the reader. Wendy Maltz essentially holds her clients hands as she guides them through the process of understanding what has been lost, grieving it, reclaiming it and establishing a new reality. She addresses how to gain control over automatic reactions and feelings, mostly through cognitive restructuring and gentle exposure. She also directs clients to accept triggers and ride them out, knowing that this experience will be replaced by a new one. Far from being only cognitive and behavioral, the book does provide several specific

sensuality-based activities that teach readers and their partners how to experience sensations in non-sexual as well as sexual ways.

There is a comprehensive list of resources available at the back of the book, which confirms the truly inclusive and containing approach that Wendy Maltz demonstrates.

As a practitioner who deals with unconsummated marriage in traditional populations and with sexual pain disorders, I found Wendy Maltz's approach to be validating and relevant to many couples seeking sex therapy. All couples can benefit from removing pathology-based stigma, discouraging guilt and feelings of responsibility to sexually perform, and reframing the sexual venue as positive, safe and containing environment.

Talli Y. Rosenbaum
AASECT Certified Sex Therapist
Bet Shemesh, Israel
Email: talli@tallirosenbaum.com
©2012, Talli Y. Rosenbaum

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2012.734607>