

## WHAT IS PSYCHOSEXUAL THERAPY?

Psychosexual Therapy, known as 'PST', is a treatment used to treat sexual dysfunctions or difficulties. Many sexual problems are caused by anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge, poor body image or communication and/or emotional problems.

As a qualified Psychosexual Therapist, I can help individuals or couples to explore what is not working and what needs to be different. I will help you to identify what is causing the problem (regardless of whether it is long-standing or recent) and provide practical ways of dealing with it.

A specific tailored treatment programme will be provided for each client/s – dependent on the presenting problem.

The **purpose** of Psychosexual Therapy is to help clients to get to the root cause of sexual problems and helps them understand how best to deal with them so they can achieve their **goal** of renewing sexual confidence and intimacy in existing or future relationships.

### **What does it involve?**

Psychosexual Therapy does **not** involve any physical contact between Therapist and client/s. It is a talking therapy which initially involves a full and thorough assessment of the client and their problem. Based on this, I will draw up a treatment plan. 'Homework' is then set which client/s carry out in the privacy of their own home. Length of treatment varies – but an average treatment lasts 8 – 10 sessions, usually taking place on a weekly or fortnightly basis to suit the client.

### **What will happen in the sessions?**

After assessment, a typical session would involve the client/s giving feedback to me about how the 'homework' went. Any problems encountered will be verbally explored and ways of overcoming them will be discussed. Client/s will be encouraged to talk about the physical and emotional aspects of the homework sessions. Further homework (mutually agreed between client and myself) will then be set.

### **The methods used**

PLISSIT is an acronym for a model of sex therapy. It stands for **permission, limited information, specific suggestions, and intensive therapy** (J. Annon et al, 1974). There are four levels to the therapy designed for each successive level to provide increasingly deeper levels of treatment. The first phase (permission) involves the Therapist exploring and reassuring client/s that their feelings/thoughts concerning the problem are normal. The second phase (limited information) is when the therapist provides specific information to the client/s regarding their concerns such as sexual response, anxiety, size or appearance of genitals, sexuality and aging, orgasmic responses, effects medication might have on sexual performance, etc. The third stage (specific suggestions) is comprised of homework assignments which may include the use of certain techniques recommended by the therapist. These are designed to help the client/s to reach goals such as improved communication, reduced anxiety, or new arousal behaviours. The final phase (intensive therapy) is needed if there are any relationship problems which might be at the root of the sexual problems. This is the phase required when the first three phases do not resolve the sexual problems and where the Therapist interprets and reflects to client/s to help them gain awareness of feelings which may be inhibiting their sexual response.

**Who is Psychosexual Therapy (PST) suitable for?**

It is suitable for individuals or couples (of any sexual orientation).

**What conditions might be helped by PST?**

Sex therapy can help with various sexual problems including:

*In men:*

Lack of desire

Difficulty in getting or keeping an erection

Premature/delayed or other ejaculation problems

*In women:*

Lack of desire

Difficulty in achieving orgasm

Pain during sex or an inability to have penetrative sex

**What might someone expect to feel during/after therapy?** Sexual problems can cause a lot of distress and unhappiness so understandably, talking about such a private and intimate subject may initially feel very strange. However, with the help of a trained and experienced Psychosexual Therapist, most clients soon feel more comfortable with, and confident in, the process. After therapy many clients report that they have been able to overcome their sexual difficulties and go on to have rewarding and fulfilling sex lives.