



# SELF-LOVE AFTER SEXUAL TRAUMA

REGAIN YOUR  
SEXUAL FREEDOM



# THIS IS A SAFE SPACE

We're Naked Grapefruit and we like to shed light on issues that are often overlooked. With the help of Roisin Ross, Independent Sexual Violence Advisor and all-round legend, we're bringing you a helpful resource focused on self-love after sexual trauma a cause where the lack of info currently available is nothing short of fucked up. If it helps just one person, then it will make our entire journey so far worth it.

We're fully aware that sexual abuse is an extremely difficult topic to both write and speak about and we want to be as careful as possible in doing so. Ultimately, we want to provide this as a safe space for you to understand the possible impacts of sexual trauma and to begin exploring so that you can regain your sexual freedom afterwards, cos we all deserve that.

After being sexually violated, trying to engage in anything sexual is hard and it's completely normal and justified to feel anxious, sick, upset, overwhelmed or any other difficult emotion. Thing is though, you should never carry shame, blame or guilt, these are reserved for anyone that has ever violated your body. What happened, shouldn't have happened and you shouldn't have to deal with this shit. Let's break through all these feelings so you can take control and feel pleasure again! We believe you, and in you!

We know this resource has the potential to be a trigger. If so, take a break, we'll still be here when you're back.



## What is sexual abuse?

Let's get down to it then, sexual abuse is any behaviour of a sexual nature without consent, it is NOT about an uncontrollable sexual desire, it's about power and control. It can happen to anyone, by anyone. Remember, you cannot consent to a sexual act if you do not have the capacity to do so, if you are threatened or if you do not have the freedom or ability to choose.

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How can sexual abuse  
affect your desires, sex  
life, orgasms and body?

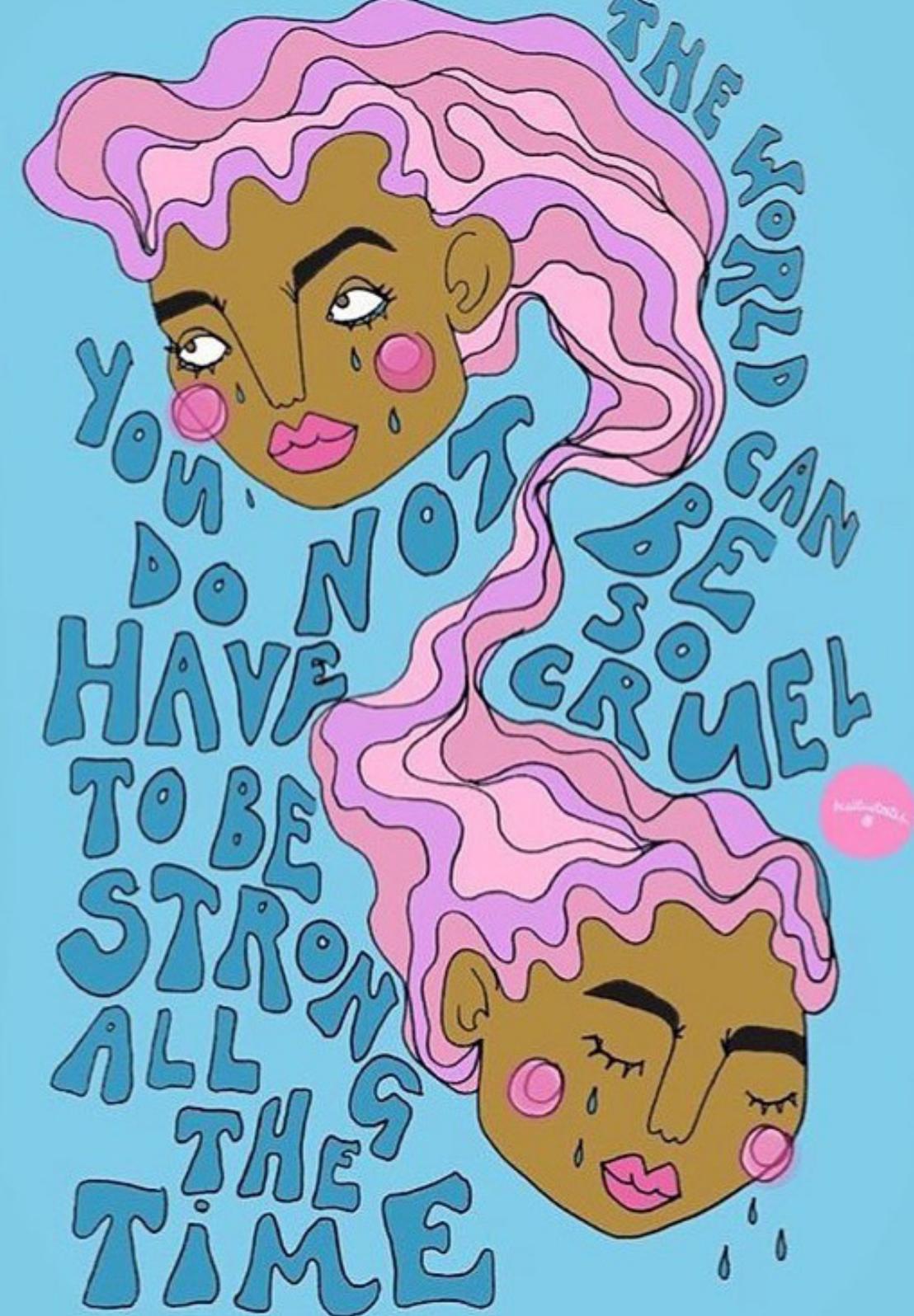
NUMBNESS

HYPERAROUSAL

DECREASED  
SEX  
DRIVE

INABILITY TO  
ORGASM

GENOPHOBIA



# Triggers

Triggers remind us of a traumatic, painful, scary or unpleasant memory. Triggers can be relived through any of our senses and can often result in anxiety, flashbacks, panic attacks, freezing up, sweating and more.

Anything can act as a trigger, such as:

- Seeing someone with the same haircut as your abuser.
- Hearing a similar accent to your abusers.
- Smelling the same scent your abuser was wearing.
- Tasting semen again for the first time after your abuse.
- Anyone touching you in an intimate way.

Whilst you can avoid some triggers, some can be unavoidable so you may find it helpful to think of coping strategies. Here's a handy example:

**Trigger?** The smell of transport, such as a taxi as that is where abuse took place.

**Coping strategy?** Take back control by carrying around a scent you like such as a lemon, peel the lemon when using that method of transport.

# Reactions to sexual violence

Fight or flight? These tend to be what we think about when it comes to reactions to violence, however, this isn't always the case with sexual violence.

Instead, our reactions to violence depend on what is going to allow us to best survive the attack and are determined by a power dynamic. Your abuser may be faster than you, stronger than you, they may be your manager, your family member, your work colleague, your ex-partner, your neighbour, your caregiver, your current partner, a taxi driver, someone you met in a bar and the list goes on...

Ultimately, they may have had some form of power and control over you when they abused you, this can be physical, psychological or hierarchical, but the result is the same.

You can have many reactions to sexual violence, all of which are valid, some of the most common are:

- Freezing - being unable to move or speak.
- Flopping - having no control over your body.
- Befriending - trying to be kind or make a joke of the situation.

The reactions above are just the most common one's survivors of sexual abuse disclose. These are the methods of protection that our brain sees as the most appropriate reaction to keep us alive, as opposed to purely stopping the violation.

The reason we mention this is because it's important you understand why your body reacted in a certain way so that you can start the healing process and not hold any form of self-blame.

**Remember, whatever your reaction, the abuse was not your fault and you are NEVER to blame, so let's shift that blame back to the rightful place of your abuser.**

• self love is a process •



# THE NEXT CHAPTER

## Self-love

The time is now, time to start loving yourself, your body and time to start feeling sexual again. We've made a handy list of ideas for you to try out, they probs won't all work for you, but hopefully there's something for everyone.

You might try something which works one day and not the next, it's important to remember that healing is not linear. You will have both good and bad days, as does everyone! One bad day after four good days isn't a step back and you're still making progress.

# Self-love with no touching

For some people, showing yourself (or anyone) love after abuse can be extremely hard- where do you even begin?

To start, we recommend engaging in some self-care strategies, these may feel a little uncomfortable at the start, depending on your personality, but they'll definitely help you start to self-love.

## Create a weekly chart

Changing it up each week with new things, here's a handy example.



Mind - I will write down my daily affirmations before I go to sleep



Body - I will stretch each morning



Social - I will not cancel on dinner on Wednesday



Personal - I will book that train to go see my friend

## Confess your undying love.... to yourself.

Write down your achievements, how proud you are of things you've done, how bloody amazing you are. If you're anything like us, this will probs feel a little awks, especially at first but start in a quiet space and just really think about yourself. Once done, keep the letter safe and read it when you need a little bit of support. The beauty of that support coming from yourself is the ultimate self-love.

## Motivational messages

Write down some little motivational messages to yourself and stick them around your mirror. Add, remove and change them as often as you like but be sure to say them out loud to yourself each morning. Say them until you believe them.

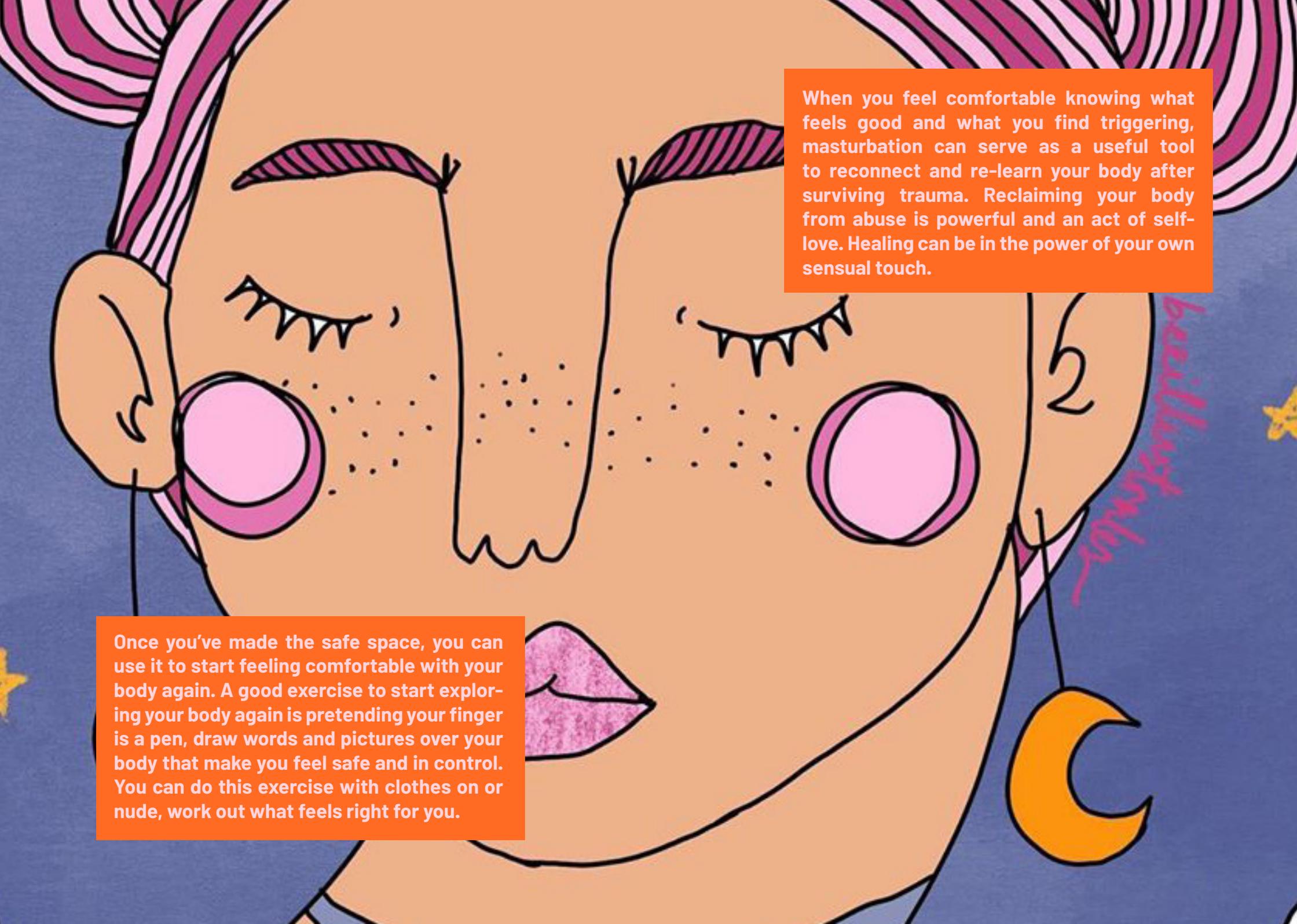
# Self-love touching yourself

Some people find it difficult and triggering to engage in any form of intimacy or even feel and speak about sexual desire post-abuse. However, if this is something you'd like to start, read on.

## Pleasure mapping

Draw or print an image of a body. Think about sensations you like, it can be absolutely anything, there's no right or wrong. It could be rubbing your stomach, tickling your arm, playing with your hair. Add these to your drawing to start making a pleasure map of your body, this is a good first step to reconnecting with your body.

Create a safe space that you feel secure, loved and relaxed in. Practice compassionate body scans in this environment, these are relaxation exercises where you feel your entire body section by section. After trauma, your muscles can be tensed up a lot of the time. Go from the top of your head to the soles of your feet clenching each section of your muscles and then relaxing them. Imagine releasing negative energy every time you release the tension in that area, because you are!



When you feel comfortable knowing what feels good and what you find triggering, masturbation can serve as a useful tool to reconnect and re-learn your body after surviving trauma. Reclaiming your body from abuse is powerful and an act of self-love. Healing can be in the power of your own sensual touch.

Once you've made the safe space, you can use it to start feeling comfortable with your body again. A good exercise to start exploring your body again is pretending your finger is a pen, draw words and pictures over your body that make you feel safe and in control. You can do this exercise with clothes on or nude, work out what feels right for you.

# Others touching you to show love

Sexual abuse can impact current and future intimacy, we've listed some tools you can use to start being intimate with safe people again.

## Sensual touch

Being intimate doesn't have to be about sex, sensual touch can go a long way when rediscovering yourself. Engage in activities to feel comfortable with the other persons touch, hold hands, hug, massage each other. Allowing someone safe to touch you can build your trust with them and may result in you feeling comfortable enough to be intimate in the future. It also may not, and that's absolutely fine, it's about whatever feels comfortable to you <3, safe people understand this and accept it!

## Clear guidance can be sexy

Speak to each other about guided sexual intimacy where you are in control and your partner follows your lead. You may find it helpful to create a safe word before you begin and practice saying this at different points to learn that they will stop when you say it and build further trust with that person, remember you are in control.

## Create a "Yes, No, Maybe" List

Don't worry if you're not familiar with these, we've got a handy guide here ([link to blog with more info and template](#)). This list should be things that turn you on, things you would never want to try or that might be triggering and things you might consider at some point. Speak through the list with your partner to establish intimacy boundaries. Remember if you think something is a YES and then it turns into a NO later, that's ok. Communicating your boundaries and sexual preferences is the key to enjoying sex!

## Create a touch continuum (fancy psychotherapy phrase)

To use with your partner as a guidance of what you are comfortable with, or as a process you both want to work towards. We've included a lil example on the next page.

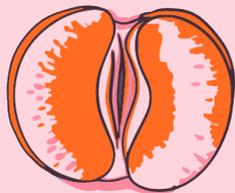


# THE END

Of course, not everyone is the same and some will find it easier than others to re-engage in sex after sexual abuse, there is no right and wrong, it's all about what you feel comfortable with Just remember to always be safe: use a condom, meet someone for the first time in public and get yourself checked after every intimate partner.

Sexual abuse is absent of consent, sex is a CONSENSUAL act enjoyed by both people- they are completely different!

If you're using sex to heal, you may find it helpful to write the positive things you've gained from every intimate partner and how it made you feel to give active consent.



# Support

Should you need professional support, it is out there and you should always reach out rather than suffering in silence. Use your voice, we believe you.

**Rape Crisis helpline:  
0808 802 9999**

**National stalking helpline:  
0808 802 0300**

**Domestic Abuse helpline:  
0808 2000 247**

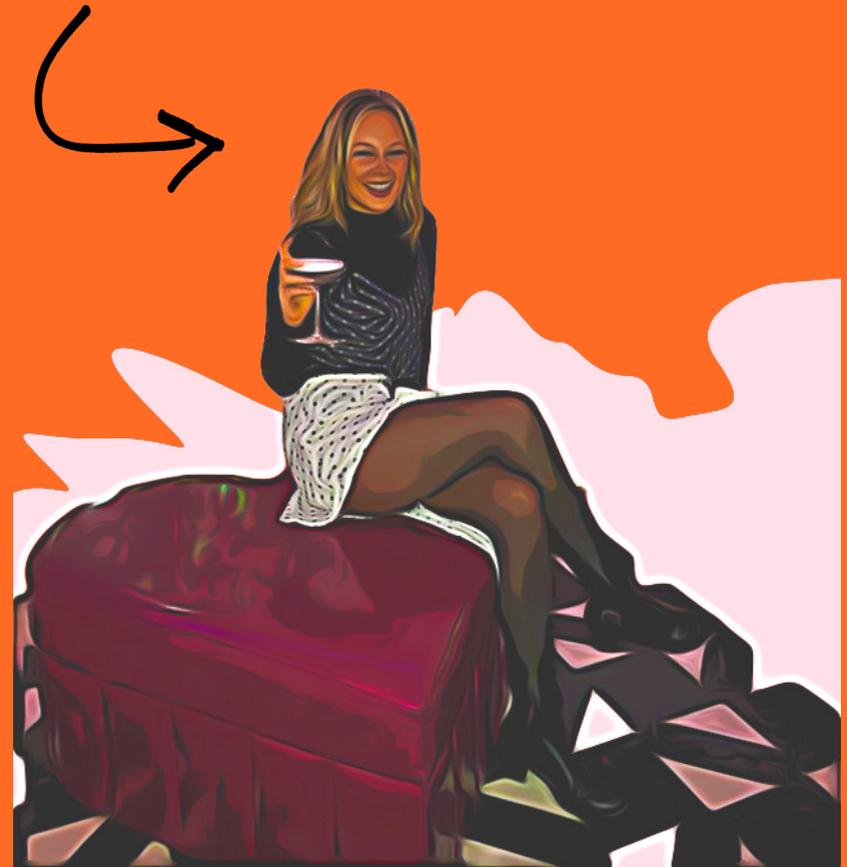
# Credits

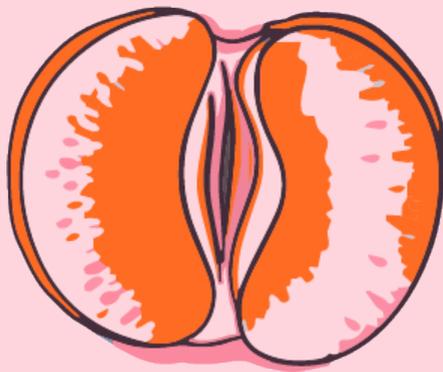
**This is a topic we're hugely passionate about so means a lot that we've been able to pull it together. A huge huge thank you to both Roisin and Bee for their time and help to make this possible.**



Thanks to Bee Anderson for allowing us to use her amazing and empowering illustrations. If you want to see more of these (and you really, really should), you can @beeillustrates or [www.beeillustrates.com](http://www.beeillustrates.com).

Roisin Ross for recognising the need for this resource and showing the initiative to get it done as well as using her expertise to provide the content. Thanks hun <3<3





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