Your sexual biography

Time: several evenings, at your own pace · You need: a notebook or a file, a pen

Everyone has their own sexual history. It has shaped how you think about your sexuality today and how you live it with others. Much of it works on you without your noticing. That changes once you start looking at it.

I suggest a writing exercise for this. Simply writing things down often shows which messages and attitudes are still with you today.

How to go about it

Start writing your sexual biography. It doesn't have to be complete or told in order. Single scenes and short memories are enough. Write down whatever comes to mind and let one story carry you to the next. As you write, the next memory usually turns up by itself.

Use a notebook of its own or a file that only you open. What you write belongs to you. You can keep adding to it over weeks.

The questions below are prompts, not a duty. Take the ones that speak to you and leave the rest.

Family: how sexuality was handled at home

- Which scenes from your childhood show how your family dealt with sexuality? Describe them as precisely as you can.
- Who said what out loud?
- What did you only sense, without anyone saying it? Who did it come from?
- What was the mood in your home whenever sexuality came up?
- How would you describe the sexuality between your parents? Which situations come to mind that make you see it that way?

Your body

- Go through the stages of your life. What do you remember from each one? What was your relationship with your body like back then?
- What did you find particularly uncomfortable or embarrassing during puberty?
- What was on your mind when you started to be interested in other people?
- Were there situations in which suddenly a lot was about your appearance?
- Did you do things to change or hide your body? For example losing weight, sport, a particular way of grooming, hiding yourself.

First experiences

- How, and from whom, did you find out what sex is?
- Your first sexual experiences: where were they, with whom, and how did they come about?
- Were there earlier moments of getting close? What were they like?
- How did you experience your first time?
- Did you talk to anyone about it back then? How did that feel?
- How did you feel before your first attempts, during them and afterwards?
- Which feelings were there? What were you afraid of?

Fantasies that stay

- Are there sexual fantasies that have been with you for a long time, perhaps since puberty or since childhood?
- What happens in them?
- Which fantasies and images do you use when you masturbate, today or in the past?
- Do you recognise themes that run through them?
- Which details matter to you, and which arouse you most?
- What about them feels uncomfortable or embarrassing to you, what is tied up with shame?
- What happens inside you when you imagine telling a partner about them?
- Do you have a sense of how you came to these fantasies?

Sexuality in your relationships

- What place did sexuality have in your relationships, in the different phases of your life?
- Does something repeat itself? In you, in the people you were with?
- Describe exactly what that looked like and what you experienced.
- Did you do things you didn't want to do? What was that like for you?
- What have you already tried? What moved you to do it?

If it gets hard

Writing can bring up memories that hurt. You can take a break at any time or skip a question. Some things are easier to look at with someone else, in a session, at your own pace.

And then

After a few days, read what you have written. Which sentences, which messages turn up more than once? If you like, bring them along to a session. You decide how much of it you share.