

# VICTIM EMPATHY MODULE PLAN

## INTRO VICTIM EMPATHY WORK MODULE:

- Run Carich-Adkerson (acts as before/after comparative measure)

Explain that this module is aimed at trying to help the client to understand how sexual abuse affects the victim. There are two aims to doing this work:

1. To help the client learn the lessons from their behaviour and avoid behaving that way again (if the client is bright you can explain the idea of internal inhibitors, in simple terms).
2. To stop more people becoming victims of abusive behaviour.

- What is a victim? (brainstorm on flip)
- Ask them to attempt a definition (clarify or offer the following)

*“a victim is someone who has something horrible happen to them against their will.”*

In your case, \_\_\_\_\_ was a victim because you \_\_\_\_\_.

(insert victim's name)

(insert offence/beh)

- What is empathy? (brainstorm on flip)
- Ask them to attempt a definition (clarify or offer the following)

*“the ability to understand how other people feel”*

## FEELINGS:

Explain the following to the young person:

To get us started in understanding the feelings of others we are going to begin with exploring *feelings generally*, then move onto looking at *your* (the client's) feelings, before we move on to think about what *victims* feel. Lastly we will talk about what the *victim/s of your behaviour* might have felt as a result of what you did to him/her/them.

<b>FEELINGS GENERALLY:</b>
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- Brainstorm feelings (list as many feelings as possible on flip)

Yps often get lazy here and want to give up straight away, so it's worthwhile keeping them going, offering everyday situations they might have been in then asking them to recall what they felt etc.

- Give the yp the "Thinking about what others are feeling" worksheet to complete using their list of feelings.

Go through this and discuss their answers.

- Body feelings: If a young person struggles with the above exercise in terms of identifying feeling words, you could ask them to list what their body does in times of difficulty, success etc. This can also be used to reinforce the above if appropriate.

Using the brainstorm list, ask them to see if the feelings fall into any natural categories.

- Categorise feelings under headings: e.g. angry feelings, happy feelings, sad feelings, scared feelings....

Do this by using the sheet created during the brainstorm. Once the yp has decided the categories, use a different colour pen for each category and outline the feelings that are to be included in that category.

Some feelings will fall into more than one category.

Ask the yp to come up with a situation where someone (any person, not necessarily themselves) might have the kinds of feelings listed under *each category* (e.g. a situation where someone might feel angry, sad, etc.).

- Example situations where people might experience these feelings – yp to pick three or four sample categories to use for this. (list these on a separate flip)

Using pictures of people in different situations, ask the yp to assign feelings to the people – as many feelings as they think are appropriate, including the different ways the picture might be interpreted. Do this using four or five different pictures depicting varied situations.

- Feeling pictures – assign feelings to these,

You can refer to the first flip list of feelings for ideas, and other lists of feelings. The important thing is to feel that you've got the situation summed up well in terms of the feelings involved.

- Yp to identify “biggest” or “most significant” feeling for each picture – the one they think best sums it up.

**Emphasise:** that feelings largely come from *outside* of ourselves, they are usually prompted by people and situations – i.e. we all have the power to prompt feelings in others.

<b>YOUR FEELINGS:</b>
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**The next phase of the work involves the client beginning to think about and share their own feelings. If they appreciate how they feel in certain situations, this will help them to understand the feelings of others - particularly victims.**

- Ask the Yp to choose two situations that they have been in – one good, one bad, and assign feelings to these.

Share the worst and the best situations *that you feel comfortable sharing*.

Your abusive behaviour mustn't be shared at this point – but opportunity for this to be discussed will come later.

Point out the importance of feeling comfortable to share the chosen things, whilst emphasising the importance to the work of using *real* situations that evoke clear memories of how they felt.

If the young person shares some experience during which they have been abused, then obviously they should be given opportunity to do so at this point.

<b>VICTIM/S FEELINGS:</b>
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**ONLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION WHERE THERE ARE NO CONCERNS ABOUT THE YOUNG PERSON IN RESPECT OF SADISM TOWARDS VICTIMS.**

**The work now moves into the phase where the client will be asked to look at how their behaviour will have impacted on their victim/s.**

Explain that this may be a difficult and/or painful process, but that it is very important to face up to their responsibility for what happened and the effects their behaviour had.

- assign feelings cards to the victim/s (where more than one victim exists choose two that represent the breadth of the abusive behaviour)

Encourage the yp to say what it was about their behaviour that might have caused the victim to feel like they did. Yps often say, “I don’t know”, or something similar. Explain that it is not important that they know *exactly* what *this* particular victim definitely felt, but they should be encouraged to *try and imagine* how they might have felt.

Then ask the yp to complete the same exercise with the cards, this time listing their own feelings at the time of the abuse.

- Get the yp to complete victim/abuser thoughts and feelings sheet for each victim and for the offender – essentially copying out the lists they made with the cards.

The purpose of this is to contrast the feelings of the yp with those of the victim. The victim feelings can be transferred from the last exercise.

Point out that it was the behaviour of the yp that prompted the feelings in the victim (the feelings of the abuser can be used later on in treatment).

So far I've not made much use of the "thoughts" section of this sheet, but it could be used (now or later) when we're challenging cognitive distortions etc.

The next section is more input orientated in order to give the yp an idea about how victims are impacted by abuse (this is a weak area in this programme I feel – any good ideas here greatly appreciated!)

- Go over victim responses: "the receiving end" & "what child victims learn" &/or "questions victims of sexual abuse may ask".

This is to fill in any gaps in understanding about how victims feel and are affected by abuse.

If the victim is particularly young it is important to point out that,

- 1) children make assumptions from the behaviour of older people – i.e. what the child "learns", and
- 2) the impact of the abuse may be felt most strongly much later on, particularly when they reach puberty.

In the light of all the previous exercises, the yp should now attempt a victim letter i.e., a letter from the victim to him/herself. Put up the relevant flipcharts to help remind them of the work and to inform the letter writing.

Write a letter to yourself, as if you were writing as the victim (give out worksheet to direct them)

- Victim letter – from the victim: re-cap victim perspective as prep.

Go over the letter and assess how well it reflects the feelings assigned to the victims earlier. Point out weaknesses in it and encourage the good points.

Write a letter to the victim – THIS WON'T BE POSTED TO THEM – expressing what you would like to say to them

- Apology letter – to the victim: re-cap what he did and victim perspective as prep.

Go over the letter and assess how well it meets the criteria laid down in the worksheet. Point out weaknesses in it and encourage the good points.

- Re-run Carich-Adkerson and VED psychs. for comparison.

<b>EXCUSES EXCUSES!</b>
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This is a good point to address the excuses and minimisations employed by the yp in respect of their behaviour. It's not victim empathy work but seems to fit well at this point.

- Excuses, excuses sheet – to intro excuses generally
- Making excuses sheet – identifies minimisations/justifications (prep these in advance from disclosures/accounts of his behaviour towards victims – so that you can challenge any assertions that he didn't make excuses or minimisations etc...)
- Ask him/her to summarise what s/he did to the victim/s in a single sentence – challenge this version if necessary & give opportunity to amend it – then make it clear what he did.