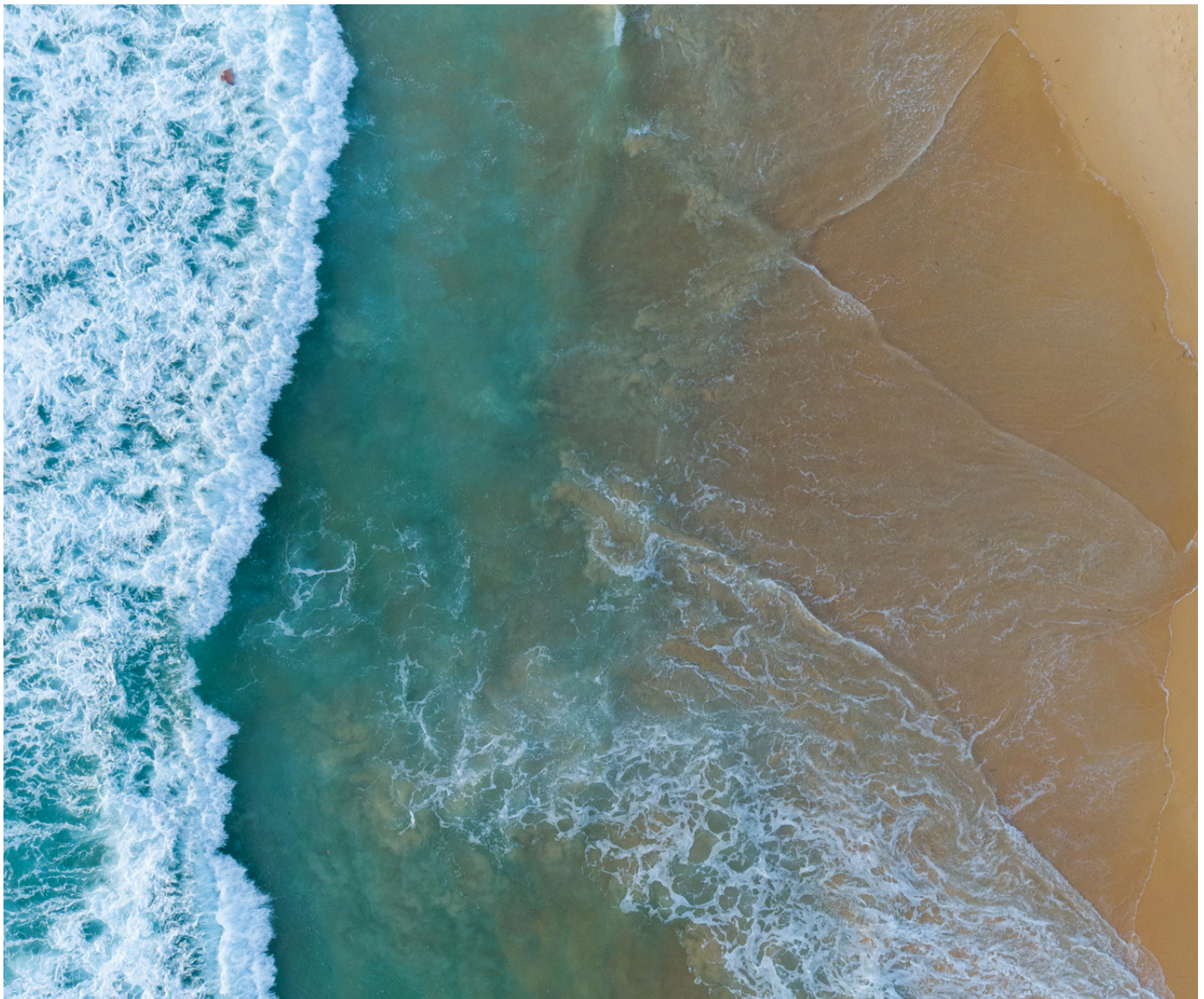


EROTIC SELF-EXPANSION

➤ A Framework for Healing Trauma

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Overview

Healing trauma through the erotic.



The Erotic Self-Expansion (ESE) model integrates trauma theory, identity development, and sexuality to support trauma survivors – particularly those affected by sexual trauma – in reclaiming and expanding their erotic sense of self. Grounded in Self-Expansion Theory (Aron & Aron, 1986), it reframes erotic healing not simply as symptom reduction, but as identity growth and reconnection to personal agency and vitality.

Core Premise

Eroticism is more than sexual activity – it encompasses desire, imagination, agency, and embodied vitality. Trauma often disrupts these dimensions, leading to emotional numbing, avoidance, and negative self-perceptions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). ESE positions the erotic as central to post-traumatic healing, inviting survivors to rebuild an integrated, empowered relationship with their erotic self.

Symptom	ESE Principle	Healing Mechanism
Decreased interest in activities	Desire	Reawakens internal motivation and longing
Anhedonia / emotional numbing	Pleasure	Builds tolerance for positive sensation
Hypervigilance	Play	Lowers stress responses through safe, embodied risk
Negative self-concept or shame	Purpose	Helps reconstruct meaning and personal agency

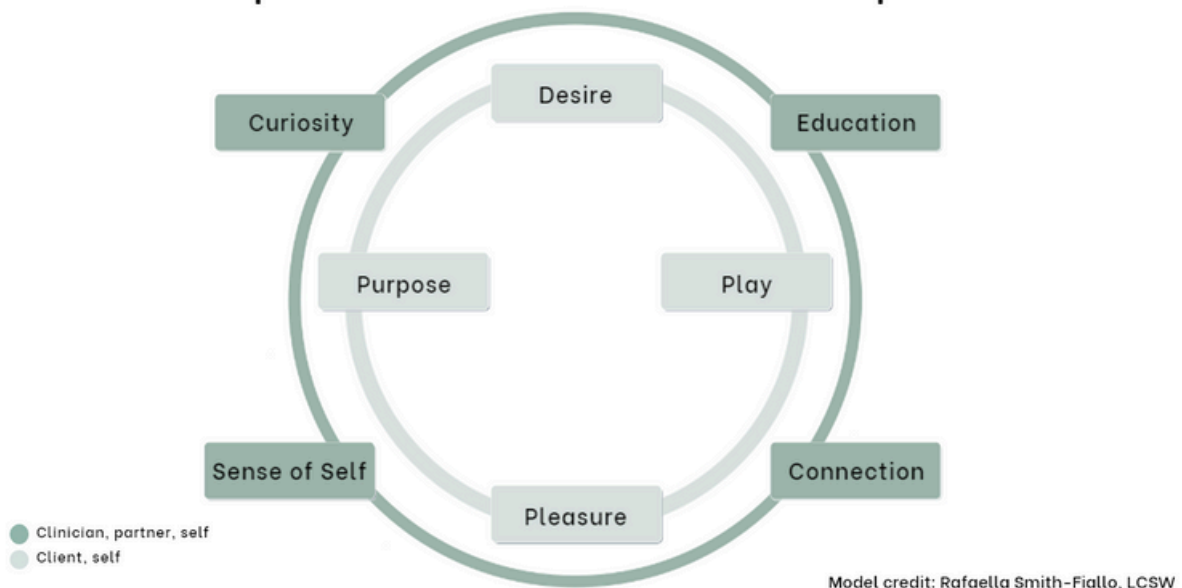
The Erotic-Self Expansion Formula

$$e = d + p^3$$

$$\text{Eroticism} = \text{Desire} + (\text{Pleasure} \times \text{Play} \times \text{Purpose})$$

This heuristic illustrates how erotic vitality can be reawakened through intentional engagement with these elements, even amid trauma-related barriers.

Principles of Erotic Self-Expansion



ESE Principles

Eroticism

- **Desire:** Reclaim permission to want, need, and seek
- **Pleasure:** Build tolerance for enjoyment and positive sensation
- **Play:** Reintroduce curiosity and experimentation in a safe context
- **Purpose:** Anchor erotic expression in meaning, values, and agency

Self-Expansion

- **Connection:** Cultivate safe relational and embodied intimacy
- **Sense of Self:** Rebuild a coherent, empowered sexual identity
- **Education:** Normalize, inform, and demystify the erotic experience
- **Curiosity:** Embrace exploration without pressure or expectation

Potential Applications Across Modalities

Internal Family Systems (IFS)	Engage protectors and exiles around autonomy and sexuality
Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)	Target traumatic memories that block pleasure
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	Reframe core beliefs around sex, identity, and worth
Somatic Therapies	Use breath, movement, and self-touch to ground eroticism

Conclusion

The ESE model invites a shift from trauma recovery to erotic expansion. It affirms that pleasure, curiosity, and erotic identity are not luxuries – they are powerful tools for healing and re-integration. ESE helps survivors reclaim the right to feel, want, and connect again.

Learn more about ESE

[Online CE Credits \(2.5 CEs\)](#)

[Modern Sex Therapy Institutes \(4 CEs\)](#)

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