Title: SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE: WHAT HEALS AND WHAT HURTS IN A COUPLE RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract: Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a significant trauma that affects a person’s self-concept and ability to form healthy intimate relationships later in adulthood. Approximately 20% of adults who experienced childhood sexual abuse go on to evidence serious psychopathology in adulthood (Harway & Faulk, 2005). Knowledge of how relationship partners affect the healing of the survivor may be very beneficial to couples’ therapists, to survivors themselves, and to their intimate partners. The purpose of this qualitative study is to increase understanding of the survivor’s experience of what is helpful and what is counterproductive in their healing process within the construct of their couple relationship. The results of this study may provide useful information for CSA survivors, their partners, and mental health professionals in their work with individuals and couples who have experienced CSA.