

# No Trained Seals!

While trained seals might be fun to watch at an aquarium, they are not fun when they represent how you interact with others.

The “No Trained Seal” image (below) represents the part in all of us that wants to say and do what will please others. This is not always a bad thing. But if you **only** say and do what you think will please others, it becomes difficult to identify **YOUR** genuine thoughts, feelings, needs, and wants in life.



It is easy to become a trained seal with others. There are many reasons why you might fall into the trap of being a trained seal.

- You don't want to disappoint those you care about and love.
- You don't want to cause problems for yourself and/or others.
- You fear conflict and find it easier to say/do what people want.
- You don't want to hurt others' feelings.
- You don't want to face the consequences of being honest.

- You want to be accepted/loved.
- You are afraid if you are yourself, others may be disgusted.

While being a trained seal can make you and everyone around you feel better in the short run, in the long run, you end up exhausted, unhappy, and more likely to “act out” in some way such as sexually acting out with your technology use.

It is important to note that it does not work well to be a trained seal in therapy! Unless your therapist knows what you truly think, feel, need, and want it is impossible to truly help you figure out why you are using child sexual abuse media. Also remember that staying in trained seal mode as you work through this workbook is going to limit the usefulness of the exercises.

Our hope is that you can discover **YOUR** genuine thoughts, feelings, needs, and wants in life as you move through the process of addressing your use of child sexual abuse media.

### **Reflect & Respond**

1. Describe a time in your life when you acted like a trained seal. Is the trained seal pattern a common pattern for you?

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2. Are there certain people in your life that you fall into the trained seal pattern with more often? If so, why?

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3. Above, we provided a list of reasons why people might choose to become a trained seal. Is there one reason on the list that stands out to you? Can you think of other reasons why you might become a trained seal? Are you more likely to be a trained seal when it comes to conversations about your sexuality and/or your use of child sexual abuse media?

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4. What are some of the benefits/problems in your life with being a trained seal?

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5. How does being a trained seal impact progress in treatment?

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## **React**

Develop a strategy to recognize when you are being a trained seal AND how you can make some attempts to stop being a trained seal with others.

Sometimes, it helps to break these habits by setting up an experiment with yourself. For example, you might say to yourself, "I am going to conduct an experiment today. I will consciously try not to be a trained seal with (name a person)." Or you might say, "Today at work, I'm going to reduce my trained seal responses by 50%."

Use these experiments to collect data about changing your trained seal behavior. How did others respond to you when you didn't act like a trained seal? How did you feel interacting differently with others? Could you do this more often? Maybe extend the experiment and try it again based on the new data you gather.

If you often fall into trained seal mode, we suggest buying a trained seal wind-up toy that you can keep on your desk, in your car, or perhaps on your kitchen counter. They are inexpensive and a great visual reminder to work on being more authentic!