

CONJUGAL VISITS: CARE TOOLS



**THINKING ABOUT
OURSELVES IS ALSO
TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES**

A conjugal visit is a period offered by prisons and detention centres in which we are able to have intimate contact with the people of our choosing.

FOR EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US, CONJUGAL VISITS CAN BE AN OPPORTUNITY

- To have sex
- To enjoy close personal contact with others
- To share time with another person
- To disconnect from our routine
- To obtain money
- To get the emotional and physical support we need

WHY ORGANIZE A CONJUGAL VISIT?

- For pleasure and enjoyment
- To see and be with the people we love
- To enjoy the same opportunities for sex as those around us!
- To feel less alone
- To relax and disconnect from what's going on inside the prison
- To get pregnant
- *"It's my obligation" and "I have no other option"*
- To mitigate the effects of the violence we are or could end up facing
- To avert rejection, abandonment and loss of financial support
- And a whole host of other reasons...

Below are just a few of the ideas and strategies to take into account for our self-care and wellbeing before, during and after a conjugal visit, regardless of the reasons we have for requesting one:

BEFORE THE VISIT WE CAN

- **Ask for** and obtain information from corrections or visits management staff regarding access to conjugal visits and how they work (duration, spaces, conditions, etc.).
- Obtain **information on the prevention** of HIV and other STIs, and other aspects of sexual health care.
- Obtain **resources** for the prevention of STIs including HIV (internal or "female" condoms and external or "male" condoms) **and contraceptives**.
- Take time to think about ourselves and reflect on **what we want** from the conjugal visit.
- If the visit is with someone we have recently got to know (either through written correspondence or by other means), or with someone we've known for longer and who has coerced us into the visit or subjected us to any some form of violence, **we can postpone or reject** the visit, up to and including the very moment that we are called.

DURING THE VISIT

- We should have access to condoms within the visiting area. If there are none available, we can request them from staff.
- Being aware of and attending to **our own needs and desires** during the visit is important, and is

(also) a way of taking care of ourselves and being able to make the most of this time.

- If we are uncomfortable or find ourselves under pressure, we can **ring the bell** to interrupt the visit, even if we are unsure and/or afraid about what might happen, either there and then or afterwards, if we do so.
- If we are attacked and/or coerced into sex, we can interrupt the visit and **report** it.

AFTER THE VISIT (AND ALWAYS)

- If we feel we have been subjected to violence during the visit and we want to report this, we can **ask for the assistance** we need to do so.
- We **can talk with someone we trust** about how this affected/affects us emotionally. Think about the people with whom you feel comfortable and safe: friends, fellow inmates, corrections staff, or prison officers, among others. Writing a letter or making a call also give us a way to share what is happening with people on the outside.
- We can prepare for future visits by taking into account **how we want to feel**, and what we want and need from these moments and interactions, which we can choose to have or not to have.
- It may not be easy for us to see violence as it occurs and take appropriate action at the time, such as ringing the bell. We might have misgivings or feel worried or afraid about what might happen if we do so. We can count on the help offered by Creación Positiva, among others, to **address the issue**, assist us and go over everything that we are not clear about and that we need ahead of a possible conjugal visit. A space for care of our choosing.

Sexual health **care** is about being able to make decisions about our sexuality and how we enjoy our bodies, affections, feelings, desires and relationships. It is about being able to put into practice strategies for our well-being that help us feel good and enable us to **enjoy** our sexuality while feeling comfortable, respected and safe.

WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE FOR YOUR CARE?



Each one of us has a different experience of conjugal visits.

Exploring the various reasons for these visits can help us to better understand our desires and needs for care and intimacy, as well as to clearly recognize the types of situations we do not wish to encounter, that make us uncomfortable, and/or that put us at risk.



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