



WHAT IS CONNECTED RECOVERY®?

by Laney Knowlton, PhD, LMFT-S, CST, CSAT-S,
CCPS, CPTT-S, CCRDS-S, CCBRT, RAE



CONNECTED *Recovery*™

CONNECTEDRECOVERYTRAINING.COM

WHAT IS CONNECTED RECOVERY®

A MODEL FOR HEALING, WHOLENESS, AND CONNECTION

INTRODUCTION: YOU BELONG HERE

Connected Recovery® is a trauma-informed, attachment-based, and sex-positive model of healing designed to help people reconnect with themselves and others after experiences that have caused pain, disconnection, shame, or harm. It is for everyone.

This model applies across cultures, genders, sexual orientations, relational orientations, and relationship statuses. It is not built on a single definition of what people should be, how relationships should look, or what healing should require. Instead, Connected Recovery® is grounded in the belief that every person deserves safety, dignity, autonomy, and meaningful connection—and that healing is deeply personal.

Whether you are working to understand and change behaviors that no longer align with your values, healing from betrayal or relational injury, recovering from trauma, or simply wanting to feel more fully yourself, this model offers tools to help you: - Heal from what you have been through - Understand yourself with compassion rather than shame - Build a life you love - Form meaningful, authentic connection with yourself and others

Recovery is not about becoming someone new. It is about becoming more fully who you already are.

THE FOUNDATION OF CONNECTED RECOVERY®

Connected Recovery® is built on several core principles:

- **Healing happens through connection.** Disconnection—from ourselves, from others, from our bodies, from our emotions—is often at the heart of suffering. Recovery focuses on restoring safe connection at every level.
- **People are not broken.** Behaviors, reactions, and patterns develop for understandable reasons. The goal is understanding and change, not punishment or shame, combined with accountability and empowerment.
- **Safety comes first.** Emotional, physical, and relational safety are prerequisites for meaningful healing.
- **There is no single right way to heal.** Each person and relationship will move through this process in their own way and at their own pace.
- **Wholeness includes sexuality.** Sexuality is a part of being human and deserves care, respect, and healing rather than avoidance or shame.

Connected Recovery® integrates contemporary research and clinical practice related to attachment, trauma, relational healing, emotional regulation, and sexual health, while remaining accessible and adaptable for real people with real lives.



CONNECTED Recovery™

THE THREE PHASES OF RECOVERY

Healing unfolds in layers. While growth is not always linear, Connected Recovery® organizes the recovery process into three overlapping phases that build upon one another:

3 PHASES OF CONNECTED RECOVERY®

Based on Bowlby, Freyd, Maslow, Gottman, and Caudill & Drake

PHASE 1

REPAIR
ESTABLISHING
TRUTH
& SAFETY

Components 1-5

1. Trauma & Escape Cycles
2. Disclosure/Amends and Defining Self
3. Relational Accountability
4. Containment
5. Foundational Connection

PHASE 2

RECONNECT
BUILDING EMPATHY &
CONNECTION

Components 6-10

6. Emotions & Needs
7. Attachment & Family-of-Origin Trauma
8. Relational Patterns & Boundaries
9. Purposeful Sharing
10. Developing & Expressing Empathy

PHASE 3

RESTORE
HEALING
SEXUALITY

Components 11-15

11. Defining Healthy Sexuality
12. Identifying & Processing Sexual Trauma
13. Reclaiming & Redefining
14. Self-Exploration
15. Sexual Connection

PHASE 1: REPAIR – CREATING EMOTIONAL SAFETY THROUGH TRUTH

The first phase of recovery focuses on **safety**.

When there has been trauma, betrayal, deception, abuse, or harmful patterns of behavior, the nervous system shifts into survival mode. In this state, connection often feels unsafe, overwhelming, or impossible. Repair begins by addressing the conditions that made connection unsafe.

Phase 1 centers on:

- Understanding trauma and escape cycles
- Increasing self-awareness
- Establishing honesty with yourself and others
- Creating boundaries that protect emotional and physical safety
- Developing structured communication tools that reduce reactivity

The goal of Repair is not to fix everything or resolve all pain. It is to create enough safety—internally and externally—that healing can begin.

PHASE 2: RECONNECT – DEEPENING EMPATHY AND CONNECTION

Once a foundation of safety is in place, recovery shifts toward **connection**.

In Phase 2, the focus is on deepening understanding of emotions, needs, attachment patterns, and relational dynamics. This phase invites curiosity about *why* we react the way we do and how our histories shape our present relationship with self and others.



Phase 2 includes:

- Learning to identify and understand emotions and underlying needs
- Exploring attachment styles and family-of-origin patterns
- Recognizing relational patterns and conflict cycles
- Developing healthy boundaries that balance self-advocacy and empathy
- Practicing interpersonal transparency at levels that feel safe
- Cultivating empathy for self and others

Reconnect is about learning how to be present—with yourself and with others—without losing yourself or abandoning your needs.

PHASE 3: RESTORE – HEALING SEXUALITY AND DEEP SELF-CONNECTION

The final phase of recovery focuses on **wholeness**.

Sexuality is often deeply impacted by trauma, shame, betrayal, and relational harm. Phase 3 invites gentle, intentional healing of the sexual self—not as performance or obligation, but as connection, authenticity, and joy.

Restore includes:

- Defining healthy sexuality in personal, values-aligned ways
- Processing sexual trauma with compassion and support
- Replacing, reclaiming, and redefining aspects of sexuality impacted by harm
- Reconnecting emotionally and physically with the body
- Exploring desire, pleasure, and arousal at a self-directed pace
- Building sexual connection rooted in consent, safety, and presence

This phase honors that sexuality looks different for every person and every relationship. There is no timeline, no requirement, and no universal destination.

THE FIVE CORE COMPONENTS

Across all three phases, Connected Recovery® works through five repeating components. These elements appear in every phase, deepening as recovery progresses:

1. EDUCATION

Understanding what has happened—and why—reduces shame and increases choice. Education provides context for trauma responses, escape cycles, behaviors, emotions, and relational patterns.

2. HONESTY

Honesty involves understanding your story, telling the truth to yourself, and sharing information in ways that promote healing rather than harm.



3. BOUNDARIES

Boundaries create safety and freedom. They help define limits, protect well-being, and support trust over time.

4. COMMUNICATION

Healthy communication includes containment, clarity, and purpose. It allows emotions and needs to be expressed without overwhelming or disconnecting.

5. CONNECTION

Connection is both the path and the outcome of recovery—connection to self, to others, and to one's body, emotions, and values.

WHO THIS MODEL IS FOR

Connected Recovery® is intentionally inclusive and adaptable. It can be used by: – Individuals healing independently – People working to change harmful or incongruent behaviors – Those healing from betrayal or relational trauma – Relationships rebuilding trust and intimacy – People of all genders, cultures, sexual orientations, and relational structures

There is no requirement to fit a specific label or identity to engage in this work. The tools are meant to meet you where you are and help you get where you want to go.

PARENTING, FAMILIES, AND BREAKING GENERATIONAL PATTERNS

Connected Recovery® recognizes that healing does not happen in isolation. When adults experience betrayal, trauma, or significant relational injury, the impact often extends beyond the individual or primary relationship and into the broader family system.

This model includes guidance for **parenting following betrayal** and for **breaking generational patterns** that pass pain, secrecy, shame, or emotional disconnection from one generation to the next.

PARENTING AFTER BETRAYAL

Parenting in the wake of betrayal, infidelity, or problematic behavioral patterns presents unique challenges. Children—regardless of age—are perceptive. Even when adults try to hide pain, children often sense emotional shifts, tension, or changes in family dynamics. Ignoring or denying those changes can leave children confused and questioning their own reality.



Connected Recovery® emphasizes:

- Balancing **honesty with protection**, using age-appropriate and developmentally informed sharing
- Avoiding **triangulation**, secrecy, or placing children in adult emotional roles
- Helping children understand that they are **not responsible** for creating safety or repairing relationships
- Encouraging therapeutic and relational support so children have safe spaces to process emotions

BREAKING GENERATIONAL CYCLES

One of the most powerful ways to help children heal is for adults to do their **own recovery work**. Children learn more from what is modeled than what is explained.

The same tools used throughout Connected Recovery®—emotional awareness, boundaries, empathy, accountability, and connection—are the tools that change generational patterns. When adults practice these skills, they redefine family rules and create environments where emotions are allowed, boundaries are respected, and connection is safe.

Breaking generational patterns includes:

- Teaching emotional regulation and expression
- Modeling consent, autonomy, and respect for boundaries
- Encouraging curiosity, self-reflection, and self-trust
- Creating spaces where children feel safe being who they are

This work does not require perfection. It requires presence, humility, and a willingness to repair when mistakes are made.

THE HEART OF CONNECTED RECOVERY®

At its core, Connected Recovery® is about returning to yourself.

It is about learning to listen to your body, believe your emotions, honor your needs, and trust your internal experience. It is about becoming someone you respect, care for, and genuinely like—and building relationships that support rather than diminish that self.

Healing does not mean erasing the past. It means integrating it in a way that no longer controls your present or limits your future.

Connected Recovery® invites you to move from survival into growth, from disconnection into connection, and from shame into self-compassion—so you can build a life, identity, and relationships rooted in authenticity, safety, and connection.

You are not too much. You are not broken. You are not alone. You can heal and experience peace and joy again.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laney Knowlton, PhD, LMFT-S, CST, CSAT-S, CCPS, CPTT-S, CCRDS-S, CCBRT, RAE has worked in the mental health field since 2009, specializing in PSB and Betrayal Trauma. She has a Ph.D. in Clinical Sexology. Her therapeutic work includes individual, couple, and group counseling, along with intensive work and therapeutic workshops, with individuals and relationships struggling with PSB and/or betrayal trauma. She has presented at multiple professional conferences ranging from local to international levels, including ACA, AAMFT, SASH, IITAP, and TAMFT, and regularly guest lectures at various universities.

She created the Connected Recovery™ model of therapy, which walks individuals and relationships through recovering from betrayal trauma, connecting the fields of Problematic Sexual Behaviors (PSB) up to and including Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder, Betrayal Trauma, relational counseling through an Emotionally Focused Therapy lens, and Sex Therapy. She has published multiple books on her model, including a full-length book that walks through the three phases of recovery for individuals and relationships, and three books centered on therapeutic disclosure. She is the current president of SASH (the Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health), owns and runs the Connected Recovery™ certification program, co-owns NorthStar Relational Consulting, and owns Knowlton Counseling, a private practice in the Dallas/ Fort Worth, TX area.



CONNECTED *Recovery*™

CONNECTEDRECOVERYTRAINING.COM

