

SESSION 22

Dealing With Conflict and Learning How to Solve Problems Effectively

WEAVER Facilitator Guide

In this session, participants will address the issue of conflicts in relationships, what they can do to help a relationship, and effective ways of dealing with conflicts. A good way of beginning the discussion is to talk about what conflicts do for relationships, in both positive and negative ways. Some of those points are:

- * Highlighting differences between partners.
- * Giving partners an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship.
- * Providing an opportunity for the partners to grow closer together or to grow further apart depending on how they navigate the situation.

Most likely, most of the groups members will have had negative experiences with conflicts -- that is why they are in the program. Ask them to discuss what happens when there are conflicts in their relationships. Look for patterns. Some possible ones you may see are:

- ❖ Waiting too long to discuss problems and the result being that the problem is huge by the time the conflict erupts.
- ❖ Having a lot of conflicts in the same discussion -- things get diluted and no single issue gets focused on.
- ❖ Feeling that their partners avoid them and their concerns by being difficult to get to sit down "to talk"
- ❖ Fears of how conflicts have been dealt with in the past.
- ❖ What they learned about handling conflicts in their growing up years.

This discussion can be beneficial in helping the members identify their "conflict blocks." Use the discussion sheets in the workbook to facilitate the discussion. Help members identify the rules of their relationships and how those rules come up in conflicts. The questions to consider can be a good guide to this discussion.

The next step is to introduce the solution phase. Discuss the meaning of compromise and what the benefits of learning to compromise can be. Discuss the win-win aspect of dealing with conflicts as compared with the win-lose aspects of dealing with conflicts. Look at the compromise guidelines and focus on how to make a healthy and effective compromise. As with all of the tools in this program, the women are learning to allow themselves to be more vulnerable. Helping group members develop some guidelines for that vulnerability is important. Discuss how "set-ups" can happen when one allows themselves to be vulnerable, and discuss ways to avoid either being set up by a partner or by using the compromise as a way to set them up. Make sure to discuss "smokescreens" and the fact that if the conflict that is happening is not about the real problem, then the solution will not work simply because the real problem has not been addressed. Bring out the fact that it can be frightening to look at problems, but the only way that they will be resolved is to look at them. Lastly, have each member fill out the compromise worksheet using an identified problem from the earlier section of the group. Go over all of the handouts that are included.

SESSION 22
Client Handouts

Dealing With Conflict and Learning How to Solve Problems Effectively

Conflicts occur in all relationships. They are supposed to -- they are/can be potential learning opportunities for both partners in the relationship. Many of us believe that a "good" relationship has no conflicts, and that a conflict means that the relationship is in trouble. In healthy relationships that is not the case at all.

Think about what you learned about conflicts when you were growing up. Many females were taught that it is not "feminine" or "ladylike" to have a conflict. Many females were taught to *give in* to males and to find subtle (which often meant manipulative) ways to get what they wanted. The problem with avoiding conflicts is that they don't get resolved and the relationships then build up to a boiling point. This is where violence and abuse happens.

Dealing with conflicts in the early stages has a lot of benefits. The problems are approached when they are new, when they are fresh on the minds of both partners, and the chances of coming to healthy and satisfactory solutions is strong. Allowing problems to continue for a long time sets up patterns and habits that can be difficult to break. In addition, one or both members of the partnership are building up resentments that eventually have to come out -- and when they do, it usually feels like a tornado has hit.

Think about it. Suppose your partner has spent the last five years going to play pool every Saturday night with his buddies. You don't like it, but you haven't said anything about it until one day you just can't handle it anymore. So, what happens? Probably a huge argument in which both of you say things that you don't really mean, that are hurtful to each other, and which can cause damage to the relationship.

In addition, you both probably bring up a lot of things that have been held back and the argument starts to be about a lot of things and not just one issue. The end result is most likely hurt feelings, a damaged relationship, and no resolution of the problem.

We have choices in life. We can and we will have conflicts with others and with ourselves. When we avoid dealing with these conflicts, we run the risk of internalizing the problems and having the conflicts rage inside of us. This can cause both physical and emotional problems.

Take some time and jot down what you were taught about solving conflicts. How did you see problems handled in your family while growing up? Were conflicts dealt with effectively? Or did they mean a lot of stress for the entire family?

Now think about those same questions in terms of your partner. What are the similarities and differences that you both brought into your relationship?

Conflicts happen when rules of relationships are challenged or broken. All relationships have rules. The rules come from and are formed by things we bring in from our earlier lives, our experiences up until now, and our value systems. In relationships, rules center around:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ➤ Money | ➤ Sex |
| ➤ Children | ➤ How to spend free time |
| ➤ Recreation | ➤ Religion |
| ➤ Who is in charge of what | ➤ Who makes what decisions |
| ➤ Chores | ➤ Friends |

What kinds of conflicts do you have in your relationship in these areas? Can you define the rules both of you have about these areas?

Other areas to think about are: the rules you and your partner feel the most strongly about, areas where there are clashes, the reasons for those clashes, and how those clashes get resolved.

What are the easiest conflicts for you and your partner to resolve? What are the most difficult conflicts for you and your partner to resolve?

Remember: The most easily resolved conflicts are about what rule to follow. The most difficult conflicts to resolve center on "whose" rule is the one to follow (Haley, 1991).

How does this apply to your relationship?

Questions to consider

1. What kinds of things do you and your partner have conflicts about?
2. What normally happens in a conflict between you and your partner?
3. Are there any conflicts in your relationship that you and your partner do not/will not deal with? If yes, what are they? What are the reasons for not dealing with them? What kind of problems does this cause in your relationship?
4. What changes do you need to make in how you handle conflicts in your life?
5. What kinds of things do you and your partner have conflicts about?

Finding Solutions

Good and effective conflict management means finding a solution where both sides can feel that they have won and that the relationship is still intact -- hopefully even stronger.

The only possible downside of this can be that you won't get 100% of what you want. (But remember, in the old way of "win or lose" there was always a chance of getting 100% or nothing.) An effective way of dealing with conflicts in any relationship is to look for possible compromises. Compromise is an important aspect of relationships. The most successful relationships are those where the partners are willing and able to compromise with each other.

What does compromising mean to you?

A good compromise works at making all parties happy -- a "win/win" situation. In a good compromise, the best of both situations are hopefully combined into a whole. When making a compromise it is important to ask yourself the following questions:

What am I willing to give up?

What do I feel that I can't give up?

What do I want from my partner?

Is there anything that I can put off in what I want?

How important is this to me or to the others involved in this situation?

What can I do that would make the others in this situation happy?

What would I like my partner to do to make me happy?

If I give in, am I going to make others pay for it later?

Do I feel that I am always the one to give in?

Please remember!!! Many times when there is a conflict going on in the relationship, what is being dealt with is not what is really the problem. Some conflicts are smokescreens for bigger problems. The more that a relationship has "stuffed", the more likely it will be that the "apparent" conflict is not the "real" conflict. Go back to the description at the beginning of this chapter. If the going out with buddies problem has been a long standing pattern, the real conflict may not be about the going out with buddies, but rather, that one partner feels that friends are more important to the other partner than the relationship.

Whenever you are dealing with a conflict, take some time to look at what the real issue is. The more you focus on the real issues, the more chance you have of getting and keeping quality in the relationship. In making compromises, it is important to have as much information about all of the desired outcomes as possible. When we have this information, it becomes easier to make decisions about what to do.

- Each person needs to be able to let the other know what is very important about the situation.
- Each person also needs to let the other know what he or she would be willing to give up in order to come to an agreeable compromise.

It often helps to write the situations down and brainstorm different ways that each could get as much of what they want. Looking at how things can be done differently, what can be done later, what can be combined, and what can be delegated are good ways of coming to decisions.

If one person gives up more than the other, what are the benefits going to be? (For example, will that person get more on the next compromise, or will the other person do something special for them?). If you expect something back for giving up something, it is very important to let your partner know. When we make successful compromises, our relationships grow stronger and deeper. Trust is enhanced because each partner feels that the other is willing to give something up for them and is concerned about what is important to them.

Compromises are important in relationships because they help stop power struggles. Power struggles occur when one person wants or demands more power in a relationship than another. Power struggles can damage or even ruin relationships, so it is important to recognize them when they happen, deal with them immediately, and move on.

As you work on solving conflicts in your relationship, remember:

- Actions speak louder than words.
- Non-verbal communication (how you look, act, stand, tone of voice, expression on your face, etc.) is much more powerful than verbal communication.
- Be clear and specific in your communications.
- Decide what is important and focus on that. Decide what isn't important and ignore that.
- Test your assumptions before acting on them.
- Don't put a plan into action without your partner's agreement.
- Don't make a decision for your partner without him knowing about it.
- Don't attack when disagreeing.
- Understand that there are always 3 sides to an issue: your side, your partner's side, & reality.
- Respect your partner's side of an issue, even if you don't agree.
- Be honest about your feelings.
- Be aware of how your communication is perceived and make changes as needed.
- Let go of "being right".
- Don't preach, lecture, or nag.
- Don't gloat.
- Don't use or fall for excuses.
- Learn when to use humor and when not to. Don't tease or make fun of your partner.
- Don't use your superior abilities (in any area) to get an advantage.
- Be fair, be fair, be fair.
- Don't work hard to win the battle only to lose the war.

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Compromise Worksheet

Use one of the identified difficult situations from the above discussion.

The problem situation is (be as detailed as possible -- the more information you have, the easier it is to make a successful compromise):

What I want to have happen is (be really honest):

What my partner wants to have happen is (be equally honest about this side):

Our "wants" clash by...

The ways that these two situations can work together are:

To make a good compromise, I will give up, or postpone/my partner would like me to give up or postpone:

(How well do these match?)

I can't give up:

My partner is willing to give up or postpone/I would like my partner to give up or postpone:

(How well do these match?)

My partner can't give up:

Using the above information, the possible compromises we could have are:

Our agreed-upon compromise is (be very detailed here so each member knows what they are giving up, what they are giving, and what is expected from everyone involved in the situation):

Feedback: The compromise worked/didn't work because (do this step only when there has been some time to test the compromise):

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The strategies listed below can be used to help bring conflicts into focus and to help overcome them. The result will be the development of honest, forthright, and positive relationships with yourself and others.

- **Choose the time and place carefully.** Use your awareness of your partner to know when is the best time to work on solving a problem. Avoid difficult times or public places.
- **Focus on changing behaviors not people.** You can choose two directions in facing a conflict: fix the problem or fix the blame.
- **Agree on something.** Even if the agreement is that you both disagree on this issue, state the agreement. This helps both partners remember that they are "in this together."
- **Use "I" language.** State your case in terms of your own feelings. Own up to what belongs to you and don't deny any feelings even if they are embarrassing or seem silly. Keep the focus on the behaviors that need to be changed. This can reduce the number of conflicts, minimize the severity of the conflict, and lead to winning solutions.
- **Figure out where you went wrong and own up to it.** Owning up to one's mistakes is a very important component of conflict management. How is your behavior contributing to the problem and what can you do to change it? If you won't acknowledge it, you can't change it.
- **Criticize with precision.** Let the other person know exactly what you are unhappy about. Eliminate statements like "You are a lousy partner", or "You make my life miserable." Instead, let the other person know exactly what they are doing to displease you. Focus on the behaviors and not on the person.
- **When someone attacks...agree.** In dealing with someone who appears to want to attack and hurt you, a good counteroffensive is to simply agree. This tends to defuse the attack and lets the other person know that you are not going to participate in this interaction. If the person persists in making personal attacks, leaving the scene is a good maneuver.
- **Take a time out.** When it seems that the attempt at conflict management is not going anywhere and nothing is being resolved, it is often a good idea to stop for a while. The time out allows emotions to cool, and helps both sides to move away from the blaming phase and into the solution phase. Solutions are often difficult to find when anger is high.
- **Have more conflicts.** There are no conflict-free relationships. Many people believe that conflicts in a relationship are a sign of a major breakdown, so they avoid or cover up the inevitable problems that occur. The result of this is that resentment builds up, the positive aspects of a relationship are undermined and usually there is an eventual blowup. It is much healthier and more productive to bring up problems and annoyances (even if they are minor) when they occur and to deal with them. The result of this is a relationship where honesty prevails and neither side is keeping count of all of the wrongdoings of the other.
- **Find the third option.** In a conflict, there are two sides and two possible solutions -- mine and yours. The key to conflict management is to find the third option that will make both partners happy. Remember, this is not a "win-lose" situation, but rather a "win-win" goal.
- **Agree on the future.** Focus the solution on the specific actions that will be taken to solve the problem. What are ways that you can measure the effects of the agreed-upon solution? This demonstrates commitment to the solution and also helps minimize the chances of this conflict happening over and over again; it reinforces the commitment of the partners to one another.
- **Work it out on paper.** When a conflict is brewing, it is often helpful to sit down and work it out on paper before even approaching your partner. This gives you some time to think the problem through, come up with suggestions for solutions, and focus on the positive benefits of various solutions. In addition, problems often get dealt with more effectively when a solution is offered along with the problem.

Use the following rules as a guide when dealing with a conflict

"FAIR FIGHT" RULES

- I. If possible set up or ask for an appointment for the discussion.**
 - A. Have a mutually agreed upon time for the discussion.
 - B. Mutually agree on where the discussion will take place. Sometimes it is necessary to have a neutral setting.
 - C. Set a time length for the discussion. It is easy to let things get carried away and go on and on. This can result in another conflict and not a solution.
 - D. Let your partner know what you want to talk about.
- II. Don't hit "below the belt"**
 - A. Don't call names.
 - B. Don't disparage the family or friends of your partner.
 - C. Don't threaten, verbally or nonverbally.
 - D. Don't use displays of violence.
 - E. Don't use physical violence.
- III. Use "I" messages**
 - A. When you use "I" messages, you take responsibility for your feelings.
 - B. Don't use global terms such as "always", "never", etc. Focus on the behavior that you are having problems with, let your partner know exactly what you want, and let them know what the advantages are if the behavior is changed.
 - C. An "I" message reduces defensiveness, shows acceptance of responsibility, and retains your share of control of the situation.
 - D. A "you" message promotes defensiveness, gives away power, and puts total responsibility for the problem on the other person.
- IV. Deal with feelings first.**
 - A. Become aware of what you are feeling, so you can express it clearly.
 - B. Label what you are feeling. Verbalize and describe what you feel.
 - C. Allow your partner to do the same.
- V. Listen**
 - A. Work to develop an awareness of what the other person is feeling by being responsive to their verbal and nonverbal cues.
 - B. Accept their right to feel what they want to feel
- VI. Ask for specific action.**
 - A. Ask for what you want in detail.
 - B. Ask them what they want and get details.
 - C. Compromise and negotiate.

VII. Take a "time out", if needed

- A. If things get too heated, separate and cool down for a while.
- B. Always let your partner know that you are taking a time out. Don't just walk away or put the blame on them. Understand that you will come back to deal with the issue. When you come back, it is important that both of you agree that you are ready to continue the discussion. If not, make an appointment for when the issue will be discussed. Do not let the problem go unresolved, make sure that you as a couple come to a mutual agreement of how the problem is to be resolved.

VIII. Use teamwork.

- A. Don't use problems or issues as weapons to hurt one another.
- B. Work together to use the rules.
- C. Look at problem areas or issues in the relationship as opportunities to develop, grow, and to become stronger together.

IX. Never give up.

(Adapted from Geffner & Mantooth, 2000; Bach & Wyden, 1970)

Hints for getting others to open up (i.e., to "fight fair"): The other person needs to feel safe and heard so some tips on how to encourage this process are provided below. The more we know about what a person wants and needs, the better we are able to reach a comfortable and fair solution.

1. Encourage others to open up. Ask questions that show you are interested in what the other person has to say. Pay attention when the other person talks – don't just wait for your turn to talk!
2. Try to discover attitudes. Use questions to elicit the opinion of the other person.
3. Stick to the topic at hand. Don't bring up long buried problems or resentments.
4. Direct the conversation. Others can be focused onto topics by the use of questions. Ask for the information that you want, in the forms of advice, opinions, or suggestions.
5. Handle insults. Resist the urge to fight back. Do not give insult for insult. When this happens, the opportunity to solve the problem is lost.
6. Verify questionable information. Always leave room for clearing up possible misunderstandings. Never presume guilt.
7. Clarify meanings. Don't accept implications, vague references, or hints. Use open-ended questions. Open-ended questions require more thought and give more information.
8. Get the pertinent facts. Don't jump to conclusions, rather, find out what is on the other person's mind.
9. Start with easy questions. Start slowly and build up trust.
10. Stay calm.
11. Preface your questions with the facts that you know. Be willing to be challenged.
12. Ask short questions and seal your lips after each question. Give the other person a chance to respond.
13. Let your partner know that you have listened to them. This can be done by giving them eye contact, nodding as they speak, and paraphrasing what they have said when they are finished.

PART 5: FAMILY ISSUES

SESSION 23 Family Album

WEAVER Facilitator Guide

In this session, the clients will bring in photographs of their families. They will share these photos with the group members. This helps the group members personalize the families and loved ones of each other. This sharing makes the families of the group members more "real." It may dispel or reinforce the images of a member's family. Group members often get more information about one another. This exercise also helps group members connect their violent behavior to a loved person. This exercise also makes the violence and abuse that have happened more "real." The purpose of this exercise is for group members to begin developing empathy.

Many members will be very thorough in this exercise and will bring in a lot of pictures. This is fine, because it will give even more information about them and their lives. You need to monitor the time allotted to each member and make sure that some members don't get overlooked or allowed to escape the exercise.

Many members will give the excuse that they don't have any pictures. Respect this and ask them to give a verbal account or draw a rendition of their family. Very often, they are able to find pictures when they realize the excuse will not work.

Group members may express shock at the realization that what they may have imagined about each other's family and partner does not meet reality. This is a good opportunity for discussion. What did they imagine, what was that perception based on, and what do the differences show them?

Questions that can be asked in this session are:

1. Describe how your family is made up. Introduce us to the members of your family.
2. Is this picture before or after the incident?
3. Look at expressions in the pictures and ask what was going on when the picture was taken.
4. If there are children, find out if they are from this relationship or from a previous relationship. What issues, if any, are concerning the children?
5. How is your family like the family you grew up in?

SESSION 23
Client Handout

Family Album

The purpose of this exercise is to make your family real to you and to the rest of the group members --- what they look like, what they like to do, and how you all fit together. You are introducing the rest of the group to your family. Do the best and most responsible job that you can so that all of the other group members will have a better knowledge of who your family is and what it is all about.

Please gather pictures of your family:

1. The family you have created as an adult.
2. The family you grew up in.

Bring an assortment of pictures that tell something about you and your family, what kinds of things you did and do, the places you like to go to, vacations, special people and occasions.

In group, be prepared to share these pictures and help the other group members gain a feel for your family and what it means to you. As you share these pictures with the rest of the group, put yourself in the place of each family member at the time of each picture and be prepared to tell what was going on in the family at that time.

Imagine what the scenario would be like if you were missing from the pictures. What would be different for all of the other family members? For you?

As you listen to other group members, this is your opportunity to get to know people you have only heard about until now. Ask questions about getting to know the partner, and about things you may have assumed versus things that may not be true. At all times maintain respect and ask only questions that will help the group member understand herself better.

SESSION 24

Domestic Violence and Children: Parenting Issues

WEAVER Facilitator Guide

The goal of this session is to help participants see how the abuse in their lives impacts their children, how what they saw as children in their homes of origin may have helped set the scene for their adult behavior, and what kind of emotional legacy they would like to pass on to their children. The homework assignment is a very important component of this session. The group members are supposed to write a letter to their children. Have all members read their letters aloud to the group. If there are members who do not have children have them write a letter to the child they may have in the future

Have the group members read this section before the meeting. Have them prepare the homework letter in advance to present at the session. Ask them to come prepared to talk about the discussion questions openly and honestly. Remember that this session may bring up many emotions and memories of unpleasant events in their lives. This session is an important time to reinforce that children learn by how they live and what they see. Children need to have loving and stable homes in order to develop into strong, effective adults.

Ask group members what they want for their children as adults. This serves as a very effective lead into how they can foster and guide their children towards those goals. In addition, ask them to prepare for the discussion questions by remembering when they were children.

SESSION 24
Client Handouts

Children and Domestic Violence

Children deserve to live in secure environments. They deserve to feel safe in their homes, and they need examples of positive living skills to help them become effective and positive adults. Sadly, children are often another battleground of a relationship. Children may be used by partners against one another as a way of hurting or controlling one another. Examples of this are threats of not being able to see one's child, attempts at turning a child against a parent by the other parent, and allowing a child to witness/be exposed to differences between their parents such that they are put in the middle of the arguments or used as "pawns."

In addition, children often just "get in the way" where there is violence occurring. They may be hit by thrown objects, pushed by someone who is not watching what they are doing, or hit by accident. Children often get hurt because they attempt to "stop" the problems between their parents and they may take a hit that was meant for someone else.

Children may also attempt to deflect their parent's attention from each other by being "bad." They may act out in several ways and work to direct attention towards themselves as a way of stopping the abuse between their parents. For most children, the goal is to have Mommy and Daddy love each other and be there for them. Parents represent the safety of the world for children, and when they are not stable the child is not stable.

Many parents think their children do not know of the problems that exist between them. They think that they do an effective job of hiding their problems and of putting on a front for the children. This is usually not the case. **KIDS KNOW AND SENSE WHEN THERE ARE PROBLEMS.** They are very good at "feeling" the tension and the unrest. And, because no one is admitting that there is a problem, they often feel confused because of the mixed messages they are receiving.

Another issue for children in violent and abusive homes is that they often get overlooked. Parents are often so busy dealing with the problems between themselves that they have little time to attend to the needs of the children.

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH VIOLENCE IN THEIR HOME

Failure to thrive symptoms, including lack of appropriate growth, low attention span, being withdrawn, and not meeting growth and development levels in a timely manner

General aggressiveness

Patterns of over-compliance and fearfulness

Low self-esteem

Fear and distrust of close relationships

Conflict about taking sides with parents

Confusion over right and wrong behavior

Psychosomatic complaints

Problems relating to authority

Likely to repeat the patterns they learned

REACTIONS OF CHILDREN TO PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

Children are tremendously impacted by exposure to stressful events. Watching, hearing, and knowing about one's parents being involved in domestic violence has a strong impact on children. Consider the following facts:

1. In families where there is domestic violence, the rate of child abuse or serious neglect is very much greater than the national average.
2. Older children may be harmed when trying to protect their parents.
3. Children in homes where there is domestic violence may "indirectly" receive injuries. Infants are often injured by being "there" when the abusers strike out.
4. Children are often used by the abusers as a means to control the victim.
5. Battering can disrupt children's eating and sleeping patterns, and cause problems related to inadequate rest and nutrition.
6. Children from abusive homes frequently have stress-related physical ailments, such as ulcers, headaches, tummy aches, and rashes.
7. Children from violent homes often experience depression, anxiety, fear, and guilt. They may often blame themselves for the violence.
8. These children may have problems in school. They may be overly aggressive and difficult to control, or unusually passive and withdrawn.
9. Children from abusive homes may have difficulty making and keeping friends.
10. Children raised in abusive homes learn that violence is an effective way to resolve conflicts and problems.
11. Children from violent homes have higher risks of alcohol/drug abuse and juvenile delinquency.
12. A great majority of violent criminals were raised in abusive homes.
13. Domestic violence is a major factor in teen runaways and homeless street youth.
14. Boys who are exposed to their mother's abuse are more likely to abuse their female partners as adults than boys raised in nonviolent homes.

Children who are exposed to or suffer from trauma require special attention to deal with the after effects of the trauma. Children exposed to domestic violence show similar symptoms as children who survive natural disasters. For these children, the violence is a disaster.

TYPICAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES INCLUDE

- *Fears of future disasters
- *Loss of interest in school
- *Regressive behavior
- *Sleep disturbance and night terrors
- *Fears of natural events associated with the disaster

REACTIONS OF SPECIFIC AGE GROUPS

Different age groups of children tend to be vulnerable to the stress of disaster in unique ways. Below we have summarized typical responses for different age groups, and suggested ways to respond to them.

PRE-SCHOOL (AGES 1-5)

Typical responses in this age group include:

- Thumbsucking
- Bedwetting
- Fears of the darkness or animals
- Clinging to parents
- Night terrors
- Loss of bladder or bowel control; constipation
- Speech difficulties
- Loss or increase in appetite

Children in this age group are particularly vulnerable to the disruption of their previously secure world. Because they generally lack the verbal and conceptual skills necessary to cope effectively with sudden stress themselves, they look to family members for comfort. They are often strongly affected by reactions of parents and other family members. Abandonment is a major fear in this age group and children who have lost family members or even pets or toys will need special reassurance.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (AGES 5-11)

Common responses in this age group include:

- Irritability
- Whining
- Clinging
- Aggressive behavior at home or school
- Overt competition with younger siblings for parents' attention
- Night terrors, nightmares, fear of darkness
- School avoidance
- Withdrawal from peers
- Loss of interest and poor concentration in school

Regressive behavior is most typical of this group. Loss of pets or prized objects is particularly difficult for them to handle.

PREADOLESCENT (AGES 11-14)

Common responses in this age group are:

- Sleep disturbance
- Appetite disturbance
- Rebellion in the home
- Refusal to do chores
- School problems (fighting, withdrawal, loss of interest, attention-seeking behaviors)
- Physical problems (headaches, vague aches and pains, skin eruptions, bowel problems, psychosomatic complaints)
- Loss of interest in peer social activities

Peer reactions are especially significant in this age group. The child needs to feel that his/her fears are both appropriate and shared by others. Responses should be aimed at lessening tensions, anxieties and possible guilt feelings.

ADOLESCENT (AGES 14-18)

Common responses in this age group include:

- Psychosomatic symptoms (rashes, bowel problems, asthma)
- Headaches and tension
- Appetite and sleep disturbance
- Hypochondriasis
- Menstrual problems
- Agitation or decrease in energy level; apathy
- Decline in interest in the opposite sex
- Irresponsible and/or delinquent behavior
- Decline in emancipatory struggles over parental control
- Poor concentration

Most of the activities and interest of the adolescent are focused in his/her own age-group peers. They tend to be especially distressed by the disruption of their peer group activities and the lack of access to full adult responsibilities in community efforts.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES AS AN ABUSED CHILD BECOMES AN ADULT

1. An inability to trust.
2. Often displays very manipulative behavior.
3. Avoids being vulnerable.
4. Very often is an over-achiever. However, they are rarely happy with their accomplishments.
5. May have series of relationships, which are usually very unsatisfactory and have difficult endings. Unconsciously, they may be looking for someone to take care of them.
6. Depression, of a long-standing duration, is very common.
7. These can be very angry people, with limited skills on how to appropriately discharge their anger.
8. Very often, these people display addictive behaviors. Eating disorders may be closely related to having suffered abuse as a child.

CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

All children shall enjoy the following inalienable rights:

- The right to be treated as important human beings, with unique feelings, ideas and desires, and not as a source of argument between parents.
- The right to a sense of security and belonging derived from a loving and nurturing environment which shelters them from harm.
- The right to a continuing relationship with both parents and the freedom to receive love from and express love for both.
- The right to "listening parents"
- The right to express love and affection for each parent without having to stifle that love because of fear of disapproval by the other parent.
- The right to grow and flourish in an atmosphere free of exploitation, abuse, and neglect.
- The right to know that their parents' decisions to divorce is not their responsibility and that they will still be able to live with each parent.
- The right to continuing care and guidance from both parents in which they can be educated in mind, nourished in spirit, and developed in body, in an environment of unconditional love.
- The right to honest answers to questions about changing family relationships.
- The right to know and appreciate what is good in each parent without one parent degrading the other.
- The right to have a relaxed, secure relationship with both parents without being placed in a position to manipulate one parent against the other.
- The right to have one parent not undermine time with the other parent by suggesting tempting alternatives or by threatening to withhold activities with the other parent as punishment for the child's wrongdoing.
- The right to be able to experience regular and consistent parental contact and the right to know the reason for not having regular contact.
- The right to be a kid and to be insulated from the conflict and problems of parents.
- The right to be taught, according to their developmental levels, to understand values, to assume responsibility for their actions, and to cope with the just consequences of their choices.
- The right to be able to participate in their own destiny.

(From Oddenino, 1995)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

My child(ren) are ages _____ . The abusiveness in my relationship started when they were ages: _____ .

I have seen the following signs of distress from them:

My children have been exposed to the following (please describe as much of the violence and abuse as possible that you are aware of your child(ren) being exposed):

Intimacy: What Does It Mean?

When they were exposed to the abuse and violence, they responded in the following ways:

Using the information above, please develop a plan for helping your child(ren) deal with the stresses in his/her/their life. What can you do to make their lives more secure and comfortable, to help them recover from the impact of the abuse?

If you were raised in an abusive home, what impact do you think that abuse had on you, both as a child and as an adult? Do you remember what and how you felt, and how you dealt with it emotionally, physically, and mentally? Who were you angry at? How did you express that anger? What were the consequences of the abusive behavior on you or your siblings? Who was the actual "parent" to you or your siblings? Was it you, one of your parents, a relative, or a sibling? What have been the consequences of those experiences, as you became an adult -- choosing a partner, dealing with anger, being aware/unaware of abusive behavior, etc.?

What similarities do you see between you and your child in terms of the above question?

How do you want your child to remember you as a parent? What do you need to do to make that happen?

HOMEWORK

Write a letter to your child telling them how to have a happy relationship:

What feelings did writing this letter bring up for you?

Remember. It is important to take care of yourself too.

PART 6: INTIMACY ISSUES

SESSION 25

Intimacy: What Does It Mean?

WEAVER FACILITATOR GUIDE

In this session, we are looking at expanding the definition of intimacy. It is important to understand what group members mean when they discuss intimacy, how they see their relationships in terms of intimacy, and what they feel their partner's level of intimacy is towards them.

This is a good time to begin to explore the differences between healthy and unhealthy loving. Many individuals in these situations have an unhealthy belief system about love. You will often find that these individuals want their partners to be able to satisfy all of their needs and to be there for them no matter what. Co-dependency is often an issue that needs to be dealt with in order to develop healthier relationship skills.

The *Intimacy Circle* is an excellent tool for helping people understand their relationships. Have the group members graph their circles according to the instructions on the handout. Areas to address are:

- ✓ How well populated their intimacy circles are.
- ✓ How others are brought into the circle. Do group members put others in the inside rings first, or do they start them at the outside rings? The closer we start someone without knowing much about them, the more vulnerable we are to being used, abused, hurt, and taken advantage of. The more an individual starts someone on the outer rings and lets them earn their way into the closer levels, the safer and more dependable the relationship.
- ✓ The connection between sex and intimacy. Early sexuality in a relationship may be false intimacy. Because one is sexually intimate with another person does not mean that they are also emotionally intimate.
- ✓ Patterns of relationships and if any connections can be made between the patterns and how individuals put others on their intimacy circle.
- ✓ Expectations and demands of the relationships. All relationships go through ups and downs. In a healthy relationship, the level of intimacy goes back and forth between two or three levels of intimacy. Keep in mind that the more intimate the relationship, the more expectations and demands. People may need to move each other out a layer or so simply for space. In unhealthy relationships, we see patterns of being pushed out several layers and then pulled back into the center over and over. These often seem like exciting relationships, but in fact tend to be very draining and unhealthy. This is another pattern to have members look at as they assess their relationship histories.
- ✓ Addition of children or other family members. When there is a change in circumstances, such as a new baby, the wheel may change for a while. This often creates problems and tensions in a relationship. This is a good discussion topic.

Have the group members assess what stage their relationship is in. Many individuals like certain stages and will go from relationship to relationship just to stay in a certain stage. Spend some time discussing the harm that anger and resentment do to a relationship. Ask members to share what anger and resentments they need to let go of in order to help their relationships. Ask them to share how they will let go of these resentments.

In closing, discuss the connection between true intimacy and abuse. There isn't any. True intimacy implies trust and caring. One does not need to "make" someone else understand or love them. One does not need to "force" anything on someone else. True intimacy means that the relationship is honored and respected by both parties and that both parties have a commitment to making the relationship strong and healthy.

CARING WHEEL-FACILITATOR GUIDE

After you have finished the questions on intimacy, have the group look at the *Female Caring Wheel* in the handouts on page 154. Ask them to go back to the *Aggression Wheel* in Session One on page 4. First, have them look at both wheels and discuss the changes they have made in how they handle relationships. Second, have them discuss/list the changes that they still need to work on. It is important for the facilitator and group members to help each member become aware of the positive changes they have made; this helps make those changes stronger and more permanent.

SESSION 25

Client Handouts

WHAT IS INTIMACY?

Intimacy is the freedom to be oneself. It is freedom from fear of rejection by your partner. It is feeling accepted without having requirements. Intimacy is supportive rather than restrictive. It includes closeness, trust, and genuineness. It is not possessive or controlling. It includes open, two-way communication, tenderness, affection, warmth, and touching.

It is important to remember that there is no "one and only love " for any of us. No one person can meet all of our needs. It would be an unrealistic and overwhelming responsibility for one person to have to be "all things" for another at all times.

In addition, the closer we get to another person the more likely it becomes that they will let us down or that we will let them down. It works like this: the closer we get to another person and the closer we allow them to be to us, the more we want from them, the more they want from us, and the more chances there are that there will be times when we won't be able to give them what they want and need and vice versa. This is because there will be times when we/they don't have the resources, energy, time, or even desire to fulfill the needs and desires of another person no matter how important they are to us.

So, how does intimacy begin? Usually it starts with attraction and then moves from there. What attracts us to others?

- Physical proximity and familiarity. We tend to be attracted to people we are close to, both in physical closeness and in who we know.
- Having needs satisfied. The more our needs are satisfied by another person, the more attractive they become to us.
- Being similar. Very often we tend to be attracted to people whom are like us in values, behaviors, and hopes.
- Being opposite. We may also be attracted to others who are unlike us, most often in areas where we feel inadequate, such as a shy person being attracted to someone who is outgoing, a passive person who is attracted to someone who is assertive, and so on.
- Doing for others. When someone does something nice for us, we are often more attracted to them. And on the opposite side, doing something for someone else can often make them more attractive to us.
- Physical attractiveness. This is often the first line of attraction. But remember, we all have our own individual ideas of what is attractive and what is not attractive.
- Self-esteem. Most people are attracted to individuals who have strong self-esteem. However, we usually end up with partners who have similar levels of self-esteem to ours.

What Are The Possible Danger Zones In Love Relationships?

The behavior at the beginning of the relationship: Very often, early attraction keeps us from looking at and registering behavior that is not okay with us. We find excuses or reasons to not look at behavior that is not what we are comfortable with. **Lack of self-awareness and lack of accurately perceiving the other person:** In this area, we often tend to see only what we want to see in another person and to ignore those behaviors that we don't like. In addition, we may not know ourselves well enough and we may pick others who are unhealthy for us.

Mistaking sexual attraction for love: Just having sex with another person does not necessarily mean that they or we are in love. **Mistaking "romantic love" for "durable love":** Romantic love is the love that happens at the beginning of a relationship. It is often based on physical attraction instead of the emotional and mental aspects of another person. Sadly, we may often be attracted "physically" to others who are not good for us in any other way.

Emotional and Physical Intimacy

In understanding the healthy development of emotional and physical intimacy with another person, it is important to remember the following:

1. We **only** have control over our half of a relationship. We can ask for what we want in a relationship, but that doesn't mean we will get it. We **only** have control over how much intimacy we are willing to give to another person.
2. We have **no** control over the level of emotional or physical intimacy that another person wants from us. We have **no** control over the level of intimacy that another person is willing to give to us. What someone else wants us to give us or wants to give us is totally their decision. We can only hope that they will be honest with what they want and what they have to give to us.
3. To stay healthy and to protect oneself, it is safer and less vulnerable to move gradually or slowly through the levels of intimacy than to move rapidly, especially in the beginning of the relationship. These levels of intimacy are there for us to learn about the other person, while staying safe and not being or becoming overly vulnerable. Moving too fast through the levels of intimacy can open us up to hurt and abuse.
4. Once a deeper or closer level of emotional or physical intimacy is experienced in a relationship, it is always more difficult to return to a level of lesser intimacy. The closer we get to another person, the more we want from them and the more we want to give to them. They become more important to us and more difficult to lose.
5. Individual timing regarding appropriate levels of emotional and physical self-disclosure is different for different people. For safety and for developing a healthy relationship, these differences need to be expressed and respected. Putting pressure on someone to give physical or emotional intimacy **before they determine they are ready** is a violation of that person and can ruin a potentially good relationship. If one person is not ready for a new level of intimacy, the relationship is not ready for a new level of intimacy.

6. In our society, males are usually more comfortable with, often more skilled at, and may tend to expect more rapid **sexual** intimacy. On the other hand, most women are usually more comfortable with, often more skilled at, and may tend to expect from themselves and others more rapid **emotional** intimacy. The result of this differing socialization is conflict, frustration, confusion, resentment, and frequent disillusionment. In addition, women may feel that they are in a relationship with someone because they have permitted physical closeness, while men may just think it was a "sexual thing".

What are the components of love?

- **Caring**-feeling that the other person's well-being and happiness is as important as your own.
- **Attachment**-the need and desire to be with the other person. Wanting approval and love from the other person.
- **Intimacy**-having close and confidential communication. In romantic love there is also the physical arousal component. Expressing deep feelings, sharing about ones' self, and showing tenderness through touching and communicating are important parts of intimacy. Sexual intimacy, often called sexual exclusiveness, is also a part of this component.

The need to love and to be loved is one of our strongest needs.

What are some of the ways that we can develop a loving relationship?

Learn all you can about each other.

Learn to be honest with each other.

Learn to understand each other's needs, moods, and temperaments.

Respect each other as individuals with different needs and desires.

Allow the relationship to grow slowly and constantly.

Nurture more, criticize less.

Give a lot of positive attention to each other.

Learn to love yourself so that you can love others more.

Learn to express your needs, wants, desires, and feelings and to allow your partner to express their needs, wants, and feelings.

Tell yourself that you are wonderful and that you deserve to be happy!!! Do this everyday. You can only love another person as well as you love yourself.

(Adapted from Geffner & Mantooth, 2000)

Stages of a Relationship

1. **Sampling.**
This stage involves checking out the possibilities and then deciding on a person with whom you would like to develop a relationship. This involves thinking about how satisfying a relationship with this person might be. It is usually based on a small amount of information. Conversations with the other person are usually kept at a very superficial level at this stage.
2. **Bargaining.**
At this time the couple is beginning to work on mutually satisfying ways of interacting. The couple is trying to get to know each other better and to develop a pattern of being together. "Me" and "we" can often get confused at this point. The danger is giving up too much of oneself in order to please the other.
3. **Commitment.**
This stage involves making a mutual decision to spend time together as exclusive partners. This is a more intimate stage.
4. **Institutionalization.**
This is an extension of the commitment stage. It involves making a formal statement about the relationship-i.e. marriage etc. The couple is making a formal and public declaration of their commitment to one another.
5. **Coming apart.**
This is a stage where the relationship is no longer working and both members may be feeling some anxiety. It is characterized by increased arguments and disagreements and decreased enjoyment with one another. Both members may begin to look outside of the relationship to get their needs met. This is the time when outside help may be needed to resolve the problems. Not every relationship goes through this, although many relationships do experience a form of this stage as they go through transition times.
6. **Putting it back together again.**
This is a time of recommitment and re-energizing of the relationship. Both members of the relationship become aware of how important this relationship is or is not to them. This may also be a time when both sides become aware of the damaged areas of the relationship (i.e. trust) and begin to become aware of the effort, energy and time that it will take to repair. This can be a very fruitful and rewarding time and also frustrating as problem areas are dealt with.

(Adapted from Geffner & Mantooth, 2000)

Consider the following questions and write your answers on the circle

Intimacy Assignment

What do I want in an intimate relationship? What do I want to get from another person? What might I have to do in order to get those things?

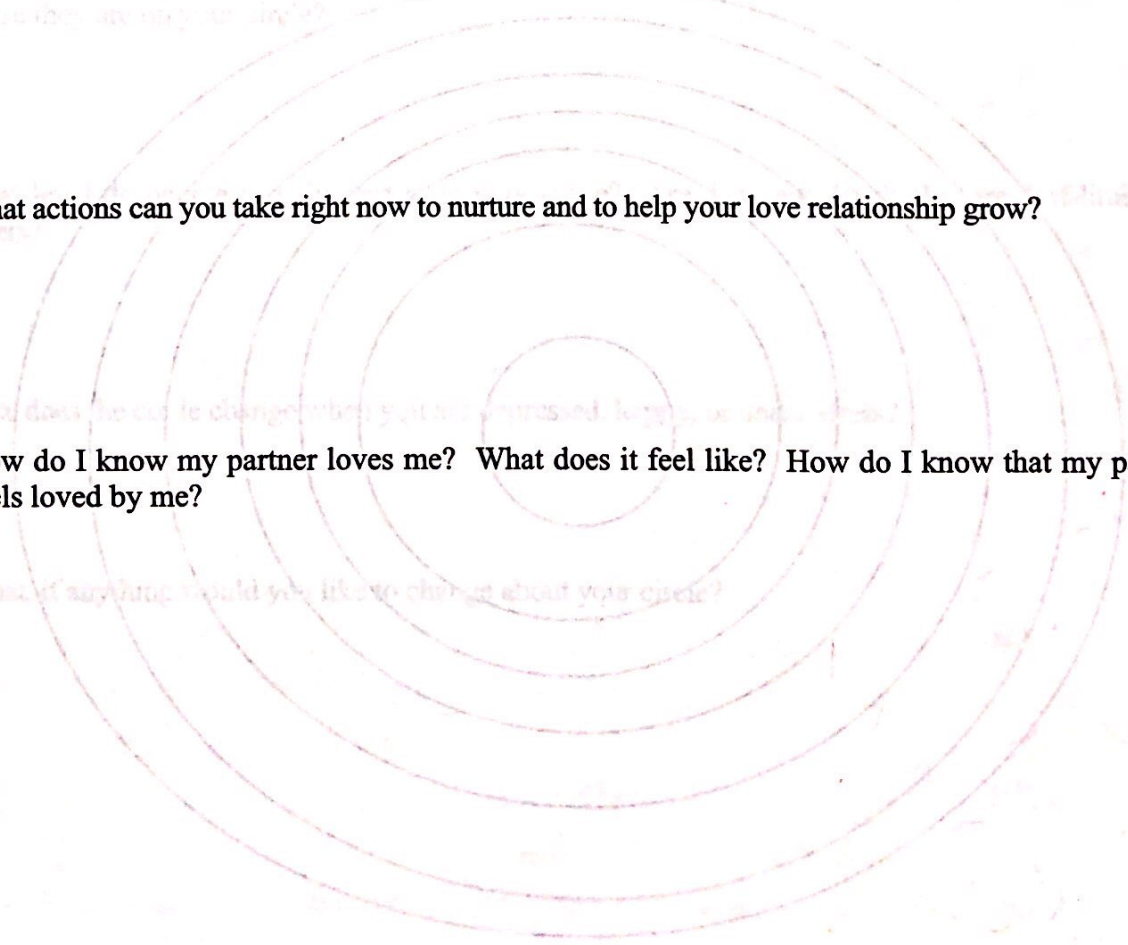
What can I bring to an intimate relationship? What do I want to give to another person?

What do I give to my partner in this relationship? How do I know I give this?

What actions can you take right now to nurture and to help your love relationship grow?

How do I know my partner loves me? What does it feel like? How do I know that my partner feels loved by me?

What, if anything, would you like to change about your circle?



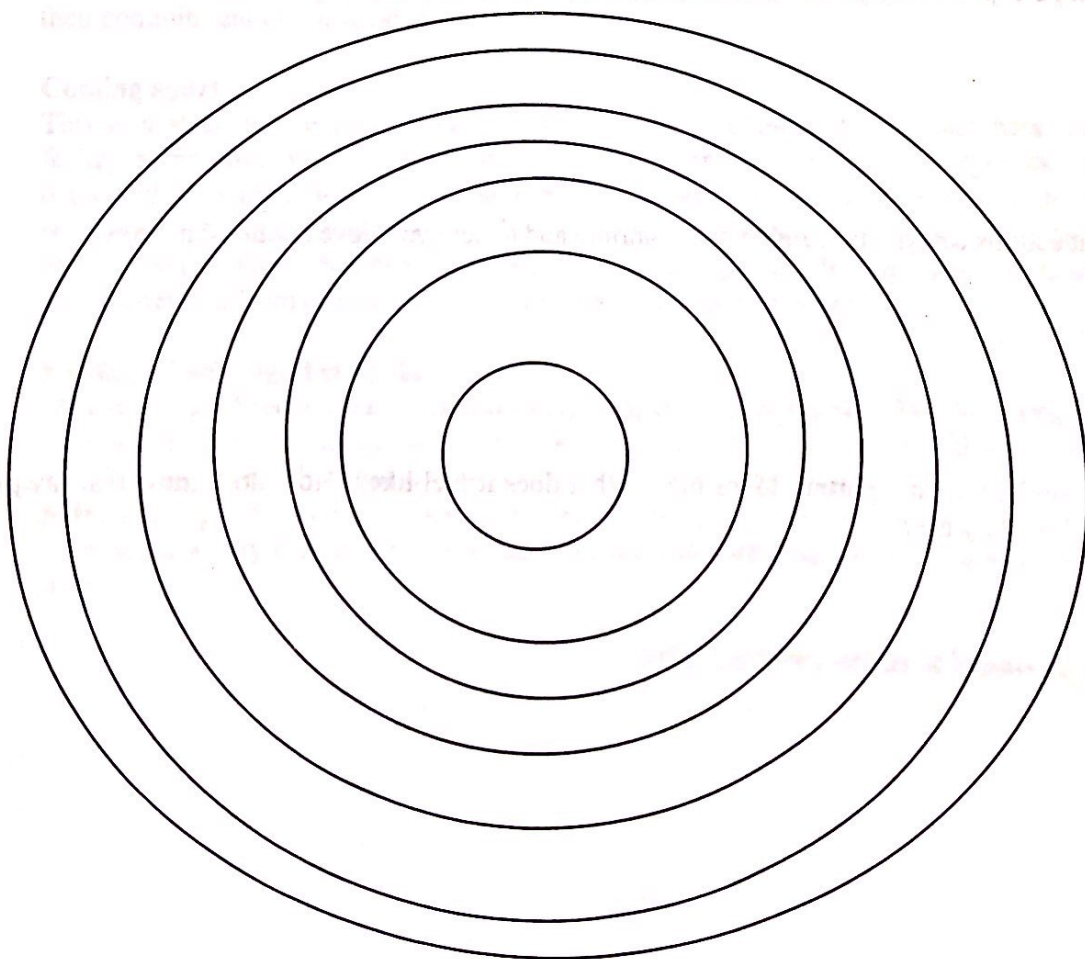
Letting Go

We all have to learn to let go in order to have healthy relationships. Because we will not get everything we want or need from another person, we need to learn to not hold grudges, to not want to get even, and to be able to move forward in our relationships -- or to get out of a relationship that is not good for us.

What angers and resentments am I holding on to that I need to let go of in order to have a stronger and healthier relationship, both with others and with myself?

Intimacy Circle

The intimacy circle below is where we put everyone in our lives. The further out on the layers, the less intimate the relationship. The closer to the center, the more intimate the relationship. Everyone in our life has a place on our intimacy circle. People move from layer to layer, depending on the level of intimacy of the relationship. Another important thing to consider is that in any relationship there are two intimacy circles going on -- yours and the other person's. Put all of the people in your lives somewhere on this circle based upon the degree of intimacy you have with them.



Consider the following questions and note your answers on the circle on the prior page and below:

Where on your circle is your partner? Where do you think you are on your partner's circle?

Where do you put your partner when you are angry, hurt, or upset? Where does your partner put you when s/he is angry, hurt, or upset?

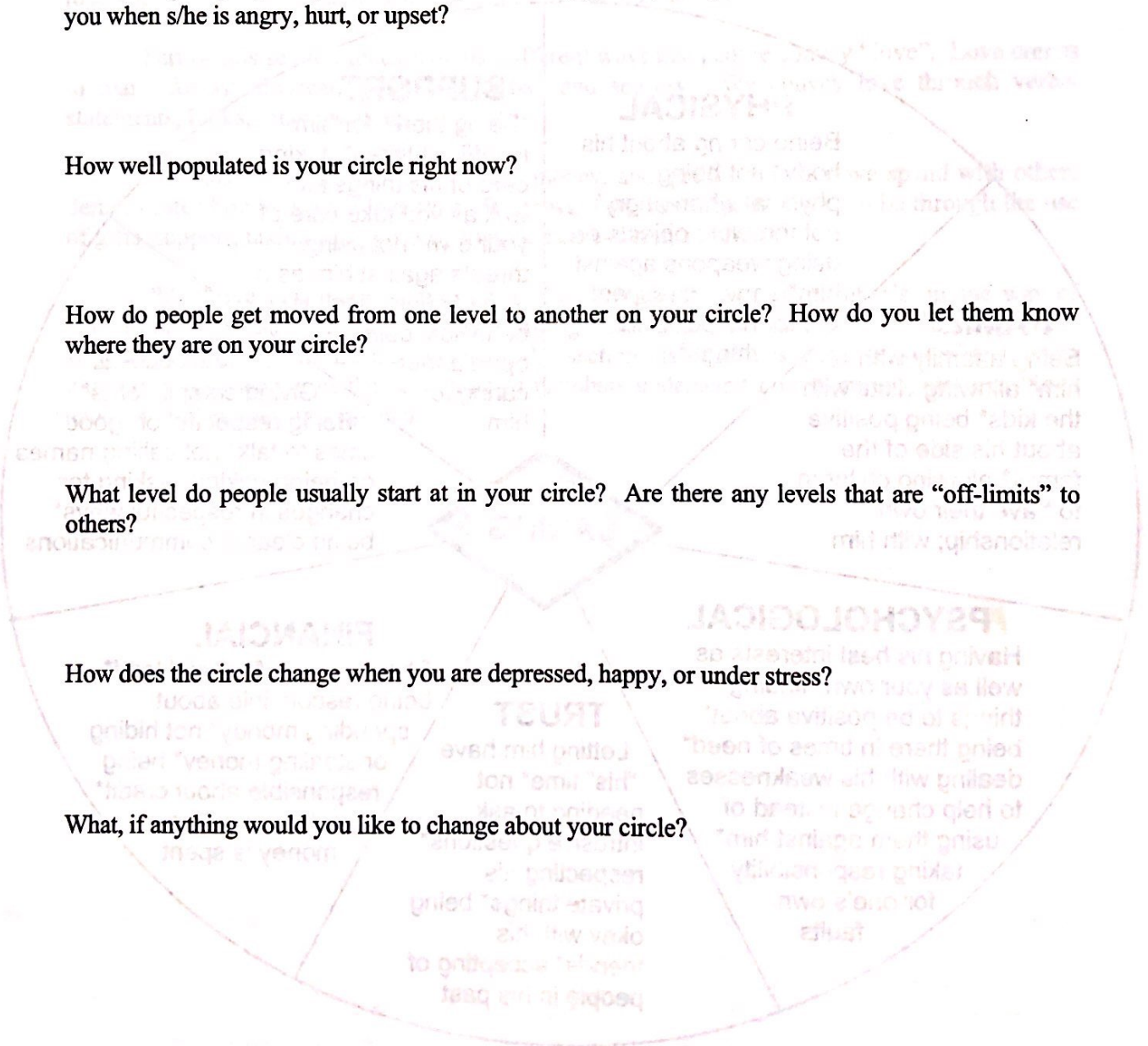
How well populated is your circle right now?

How do people get moved from one level to another on your circle? How do you let them know where they are on your circle?

What level do people usually start at in your circle? Are there any levels that are "off-limits" to others?

How does the circle change when you are depressed, happy, or under stress?

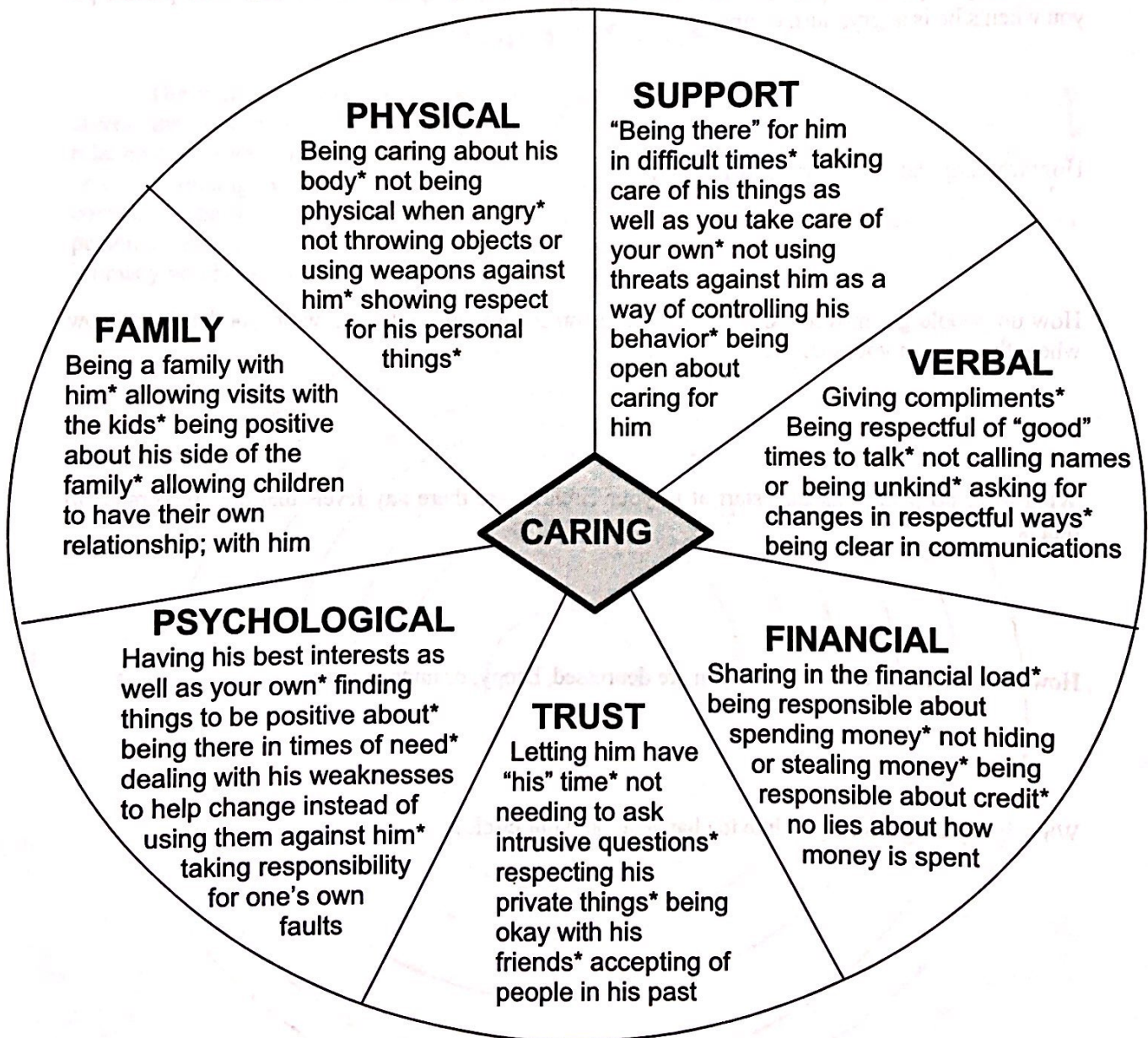
What, if anything would you like to change about your circle?



Now look at the *Female Caring Wheel* below. Using the *Caring Wheel*, and the *Aggression Wheel* from Session One, and answer the following questions:

1. What changes have I made in relationships?
2. What have been the outcomes of those changes, both positive and negative?
3. What changes do I need to still work on in the future?

FEMALE CARING WHEEL



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