
MODULE A

Self

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SESSION I

Defining Self

Group Agreements

At the beginning of Session 1, your facilitator will explain some group agreements that will be maintained during the group meetings. When everyone agrees to them, the sessions will have the most benefit for all group members. The group agreements are listed here for your reference.

1. **Attendance.** We're all committing to show up at all the sessions. Your commitment to attend regularly helps to stabilize the group and creates an environment of mutual support. If you must miss a group meeting, please let the group facilitator know before that meeting.
2. **Confidentiality.** No personal information revealed in this room is to be repeated outside the room. We need to know that we can trust one another, and there can be no trust if information about a group member is given to outsiders or if group members gossip about one another outside the group. There are two exceptions to this rule of confidentiality: (1) the facilitator may have to communicate with other members of your treatment teams as part of your ongoing care; and (2) she is required by law to break confidentiality when a member's personal safety or the safety of another person is at stake. You, as a group member, will be responsible for maintaining confidentiality in your group.
3. **Safety.** It is important that each of you feels safe in the group. In order for this to happen, we all need to agree that there will be no verbal or physical abuse here.

4. **Participation.** Everyone should have a chance to join in the discussion. It is not helpful if some people dominate the conversation and if others remain silent. Also, please share all remarks with the whole group. Your comments, questions, and opinions are of interest to all members, and side remarks from one individual to another tend to distract and divide the group. Sometimes your facilitator will ask a question and want everyone to respond. We would all like to hear what you have to say. However, if you are unwilling to talk about a particular subject, you have the option to “pass.”
5. **Honesty.** We’re here to tell the truth. Nobody will pressure you to tell anything about yourself that you don’t want to talk about, but when you do talk, tell the truth about where you’ve been and how you feel. It will be more helpful if you talk about your personal experiences, rather than about people in general.
6. **Respect.** When you tell the truth about what you think, please do so in a way that respects others in the group. That means no criticizing, judging, or talking down to anyone. If you think that someone is showing disrespect to someone else, please say so respectfully. We all need to know how we are coming across. Also, please let people finish what they’re saying before you jump in. If someone is dominating the conversation, the facilitator will referee so that everyone gets a chance to talk. You might feel uncomfortable or angry at some point and not want to participate, but part of respect is agreeing not to disrupt the group. You can choose to be quiet until you feel more comfortable and are ready to participate again.
7. **Questions.** There are no dumb questions. Ask whatever is on your mind. Please respect one another’s honest questions.
8. **Task.** We’re here to talk about a program of recovery. Please try to stick to that topic. If we start to go off-task, the facilitator will direct us back to the topic at hand. If you think that we’re getting off the topic and she’s not doing anything about it, or if you think that she’s headed off on a tangent, please feel free to refocus us.
9. **Punctuality.** We’ll start on time and end on time. The times of our group meetings are _____.

Feeling Okay

There are times when any of us may feel uncomfortable or anxious, in the group or elsewhere. This happens to all of us at various times, especially in unfamiliar settings and with new experiences. Your facilitator will teach you three techniques that you can use if you are feeling this way. These techniques can help you to comfort or soothe yourself

and feel more grounded. Being grounded means being able to stay in the present instead of being knocked off balance by your emotions, including emotional memories and fears. These exercises can help you to detach from your inner, emotional discomfort by becoming more aware of the physical world, of the here and now. The exercises are

Five Senses

1. Close your eyes and relax for a few moments.
2. Open your eyes when you are ready.
3. Silently (or out loud), identify five things you can see around you . . .
Now identify four things you could feel or touch . . .
Identify three things you can hear . . .
Now identify two things you can smell . . .
Finally, identify what you can taste right now.

Focusing on the Here and Now

1. Relax. Take a deep breath and let it out.
2. Look at the room around you. Focus on the size of the room . . .
The color and texture of the walls . . .
The height of the ceilings . . .
The lights . . .
[If there are any] The windows . . .
The doors . . .
The furniture . . .
The decorations
3. Now focus on yourself . . .
Think of your name . . .
Think of your age . . .
Think of today's date and what time it is . . .
Think of what city and state you are in . . .
Think of the program you are in with this group.

(Some women find it more helpful to say all the above out loud.)

Deep Breathing

1. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
2. Take a couple of normal breaths. You probably will find that you are feeling these breaths mostly in your chest.

3. Try moving your breath deeper into your lower abdomen, so that your hand on your stomach moves up and down as you breathe.
4. This is called *deep breathing*. Try it again. You will find that you are breathing more slowly and more completely than usual.
5. Keep breathing deeply, noticing your breath moving in and out of your nose as you balance your breath. Let your abdomen fill with air each time.

You can practice deep breathing as a way to counteract feelings of anger, stress, fear, panic, and so on. It also is healthier to breathe more deeply (in your tummy), rather than shallowly (in your chest).

The goal of self-soothing and grounding exercises is to get your mind off other concerns and help to keep you focused on what you are trying to accomplish in the here and now. You can use these techniques outside the group, too, when you are feeling stressed or uncomfortable.

Who Are You?

As women, most of us have been taught to think of ourselves in terms of our roles as daughters, mothers, wives, relationship partners, employees, and so on. There is nothing wrong or bad about this—in fact, our connections with others tell us much about who we are. However, our roles do not tell the whole story about who we are. In recovery it is important to develop our relationships with others—our outer selves—and our relationship with our inner selves—our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

We are often uncomfortable focusing on “I” and worry about being selfish. *Selfish* means focusing on ourselves without regard for others. However, in avoiding selfishness, we often become self-less; that is, we have no sense of our selves at all. Recovery is a time for learning about the self and healing the self. Perhaps you can begin to think of this time of focusing on yourself as being self-full: neither self-less nor selfish. Your work in the group will help you to develop a more complete, whole picture of yourself.

The questions in this section will help you to remember what you discussed and how you felt during your first group session.

3. You may want to refer to the Possibilities Page (page 18) and check or circle any of the words there that may help you to answer the “Who am I?” question.

4. What qualities or characteristics of the other women in the group did you notice? Write down your observations. (You can note what you wrote on their sheets or things you want to write on their sheets or slips of paper during the next group session.)

5. Following the Possibilities Page is a page headed “Who Am I?” In the space provided, and over the course of your work with the group, you can record all the insights about yourself that you gain from this program. Write things that you learn in your group meetings, things that you learn from what the other women write on your sheet, things that you learn from this journal, and any other thoughts and feelings you have between the meetings.

Right now, on the “Who Am I?” page, write what the other group members wrote on your individual sheet that is hanging in the group meeting room or on your slips of paper.

6. Next, transfer to your “Who Am I?” page any feelings, beliefs, or qualities about yourself that you wrote down under question 2 in this section.

7. When you have completed that, look at the Possibilities Page again. If you see there any feelings, beliefs, or qualities that you would like to add to your list, do so. Then begin to make sentences on pages 20 and 21 that describe who you are. You can try to have at least twenty sentences by the last group session.

8. If you have any thoughts or feelings about how your addiction has affected the way you feel about yourself, please note them here.

Possibilities Page

Feelings

angry
joyful
sad
anxious
thoughtful
nervous
happy
afraid
amused
hurt
bitter
jealous
calm
lonely
mad
contented
miserable
disappointed
pleased
overjoyed
discouraged
depressed
relieved
glad
disturbed
embarrassed
furious
grateful

Beliefs

honesty is best
family is important
loyalty is important
hard work is good for you
monogamy is best
there is a God
save the earth
save money
stay young at heart
motherhood is fun
life is tough
expect the best
you are what you eat
anger is dangerous
have safe sex
reincarnation happens
don't trust the government
think before you speak
trust your friends
better safe than sorry
I'm full of ideas
I'm good with words
I'm good with pictures
I'm good with numbers
I'm good at making things
I'm a good listener

Qualities

sense of humor
dependable
sincere
good natured
trustworthy
smart
compassionate
streetwise
gentle
strong
creative
a survivor
wise
funny
warm
honest
passionate
calm
sensible
energetic

Who Am I?

Your thoughts and feelings about yourself: Include things that you learn from what the other women write on your sheet (or slips of paper).

Examples:

I'm street smart.

I'm a person that people like to confide in.

I'm a survivor.

I'm full of good ideas.

I'm often nervous.

I'm lonely.

Right now I feel better than I have in a long time.

I believe that life is tough, but I can make it.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

Recovery Scale

Please take a few moments to mark the degree to which you do each of the following things. You can make an "X" or a circle on each line to indicate your response.

You will complete this form again at the end of this module on Self to see how you have changed. You will not have to compare your answers with anyone else in the group, nor will you be judged on how well you are doing. This is not a test, but an opportunity for you to chart your own progress in recovery.

	Not at All	Just a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much
1. I keep up my physical appearance (nails, hair, bathing, clean clothes).	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I exercise regularly.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I eat healthy meals whenever I can.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I get restful sleep.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I complete tasks.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I can adapt to change.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. I keep up my living space.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I take constructive criticism well.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I can accept praise.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I laugh at funny things.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I acknowledge my needs and feelings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I engage in new interests.	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. I can relax without drugs or alcohol.	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. I value myself.	_____	_____	_____	_____

SESSION 2

Sense of Self

We can think of our lives as journeys from birth to where we are now, and to where we will be in the future. The landmarks of our journeys are

- People whom we have encountered along the way, such as mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster parents, teachers, sexual partners, friends, counselors, and correctional officers
- Events we have been involved in, including one-time occurrences, such as births, accidents, and being arrested
- Experiences we have had (for example, isolation in high school, summers with grandmothers, living in institutions)

Part of exploring who we are today is to go back and look at the people, events, and experiences that have shaped us. Sometimes looking at the past can be painful. We have experienced a lot of things that we would rather forget. But remembering is important because, if we are cut off from our pasts, we're cut off from parts of our selves. Also, examining our pasts can help us to identify things that we want to be different in the future. The good news is that we can make choices today that will improve our lives six months or a year from now. The past has shaped us but it doesn't have to control us. We can shape our presents and our futures through the choices that we make now.

On the next three pages, list the people, events, and experiences that have played major roles in creating who you are today. You can write in words and phrases or draw pictures or symbols.

People

Examples:

my mom—a heavy drinker

the girls I hung out with in junior high school

my first boyfriend who was a gang member

Events

Examples:

the birth of my first child

my sister leaving home

the judge sentencing me

Experiences

Examples:

moving around a lot as a child

hanging out with kids who knew the streets

leaving my children to come to prison

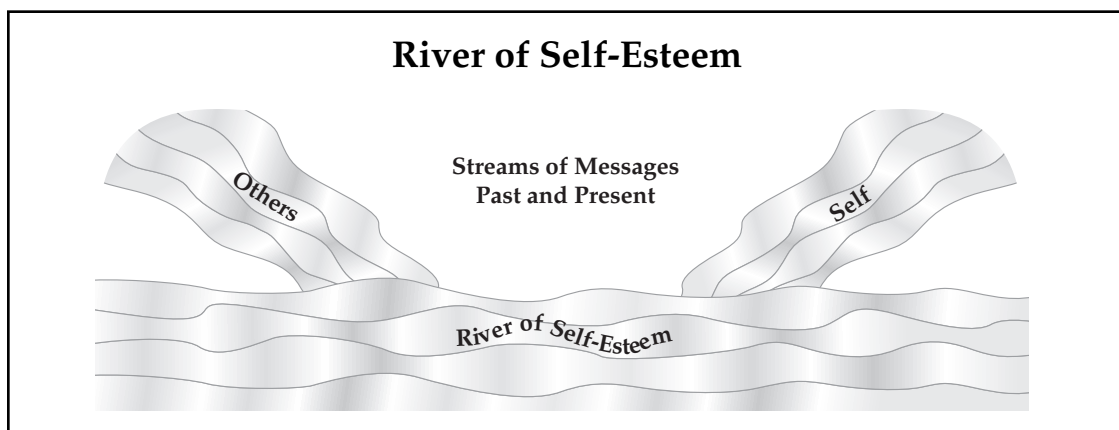
SESSION 3

Self-Esteem

Your self-esteem is the value you place on yourself. It is how you see yourself and it affects who you are. Having high self-esteem doesn't mean having a big ego; it means that you know and value who you are.

Look at the picture. It illustrates the river of self-esteem. It shows how the messages we receive about ourselves feed into our views of ourselves, like streams feeding into a river. Those messages include things we've heard from others in the past and things we've told ourselves in the past. They also include things people are still saying to us and things we are still saying to ourselves. They include messages from television, radio, and movies, as well as from parents, boyfriends, partners, friends, children, teachers, bosses, and others.

All these messages either nourish or pollute the river of self-esteem. If you've heard positive things about yourself, such as "You are such a brave woman," you're



likely to add that to your beliefs about yourself. On the other hand, if you've heard lots of negative things, such as "You're so stupid," or "You'll never be anything but a lousy drunk," you're likely to believe those things and you'll probably develop very low self-esteem.

In your group session, you made a collage that depicts the messages you have received about yourself from yourself and from others. In this journaling session, try to put into words what your collage pictured. Use the questions that follow to guide you.

Reflections

1. What are some of the messages about yourself that you received in the past from other people?
2. What are some messages that you receive currently from other people?
3. What are some of the things that you said to yourself, about yourself, in the past?
4. What are some of the things that you tell yourself, about yourself, now?

5. How do these past and present messages affect the way in which you see yourself today?

6. What are some of the messages from others that you would like to stop hearing?

7. Which of the messages that you tell yourself would you like to stop?

8. Choose one of the following four affirmations:

- I am a worthwhile human being.
- I am a valuable woman.
- I like who I am.
- I have strengths that I can use in my recovery.

Write it below to complete this sentence:

The affirmation that I am going to use each day is _____
_____ .

Affirmation is a way to give yourself new messages about yourself—positive messages. When you repeat a positive message, it begins to undo a negative one that you may have been carrying around for a long time. Your thinking begins to change. You begin to see yourself differently and to feel differently about yourself.

Beginning today, say this affirmation *out loud* to yourself five times every morning and five times every evening, while looking at yourself in a mirror (if one is available).

SESSION 4

Sexism, Racism, and Stigma

In your group session, you learned that a *stigma* is a visible characteristic that society interprets negatively. *Stigma* is Greek for “tattoo mark,” and having a stigma is like having a tattoo that advertises something bad about you. In our society, just being female carries a stigma. Other aspects of a woman’s identity can also carry a stigma in society—things such as race, class, sexual orientation, relationship status, criminal justice involvement, age, size, and appearance.

The messages about women in our society strongly affect how women see themselves. In your group session, you listened to a fantasy in order to see how powerful those messages can be.

Reflections

1. Recall how you felt when the fantasy was read in the group session. How did you feel when you imagined yourself to be a woman in that situation?

6. Think about the items you circled on the Power Chart. In which areas do you have an advantage in our society? In which areas are you at a disadvantage?

Areas of advantage or privilege:

Areas of disadvantage or oppression:

7. How do you feel about your advantages or privileges?

8. How do you feel about your disadvantages or oppression?

Act Like a Lady

Ladies should . . .

be polite

be sexy

be nurturing

take care of the house

be emotional

take care of the kids

be submissive

be superwomen

be dependent

put their needs aside

not be too smart

be clean

be pretty

be available to men

From Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart, by P. Kivel, 1992. Center City, MN: Hazelden. Copyright 1992 by Paul Kivel. Reprinted with permission of Hazelden Foundation, Center City, MN.

Act Like a Man

Men . . .

show no emotions
stand up for themselves
don't cry
don't make mistakes
know about sex
take care of their families
don't back down
know how to fix things
are physically strong
are able to "take it"

Men are . . .

aggressive
responsible
tough
successful
in control
active
dominant over women

From Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart, by P. Kivel, 1992. Center City, MN: Hazelden. Copyright 1992 by Paul Kivel. Reprinted with permission of Hazelden Foundation, Center City, MN.

Power Chart

Powerful Group

Less Powerful Group

men

women

adults

young people

bosses

workers

teachers

students

whites

people of color

rich

poor

Christians

Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, and so on

able-bodied

physically challenged

heterosexual

gay, lesbian, bisexual

formally educated

not formally educated

From Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart, by P. Kivel, 1992. Center City, MN: Hazelden. Copyright 1992 by Paul Kivel. Reprinted with permission of Hazelden Foundation, Center City, MN.

Recovery Scale

Please take a few moments to mark the degree to which you do each of the following things. You assessed yourself on this scale at the beginning of this module. Please reassess yourself to see where you are now. You will not have to compare your answers with anyone, and no one will judge how well you are doing. This is not a test; it is an opportunity for you to chart your own progress in recovery. After you finish this scale, go back and look at the one you did earlier (page 22).

	Not at All	Just a Little	Pretty Much	Very Much
1. I keep up my physical appearance (nails, hair, bathing, clean clothes).	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I exercise regularly.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I eat healthy meals whenever I can.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I get restful sleep.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I complete tasks.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I can adapt to change.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. I keep up my living space.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I take constructive criticism well.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I can accept praise.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I laugh at funny things.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I acknowledge my needs and feelings.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I engage in new interests.	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. I can relax without drugs or alcohol.	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. I value myself.	_____	_____	_____	_____

You may also want to turn to page 49 and do the first Relationship Recovery Scale before the next session.

