Violence Against Women

A Curriculum for Empowerment

Resident's Workbook
The Women's Education Institute designs educational materials and offers technical assistance and training to organizations which are actively seeking to empower women. In our first three years we have produced Violence Against Women: A Curriculum for Empowerment; offered Leadership Training seminars for battered women's and anti-rape coalitions around the country; completed a study of women's housing and job conditions in Essex County, New Jersey; and co-sponsored two feminist economic agenda meetings from which we developed a pamphlet on women and the economy, "Economic Facts of Life for Women."

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Acknowledgements
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We also wish to acknowledge the following women for their help in testing a second draft of the curriculum and for their criticisms and feedback which so enriched the final product:


Special thanks go to the Chicago Resource Center for generously providing two years of funding for this project.
Ten years ago, battered women, with the help of feminists and community women, began to open shelters. Their dream was that no women should endure the brutality that they had lived through, alone and unsupported. Today we see the results of their hard work. We have 700 shelters and safe homes projects across the United States, serving thousands of women and children each year.

**Violence Against Women: A Curriculum for Empowerment**
was developed and tested with abused women in six shelters and safe homes projects in urban, rural and suburban neighborhoods. In each community, we asked battered women and shelter staff to tell us the topics that they wanted to talk about most. We asked their advice about ways to hold these discussions so that they would be enjoyable. The results are the ten workshops printed here.

The first four workshops are about violence against women. We discuss issues like: “Why are we abused?” “Why does he get away with it?” and, “Why do I feel so guilty?” Workshops 5, 6 and 7 cover the questions, “What are the roles women play in our society?” and “What do we think about them?” Workshops 8, 9 and 10 are about advocacy and they offer you a chance to discuss problems like, “Where do I find housing?” and “How do I know whether a counselor will be helpful or harmful to me?”

When you participate in these workshops, please don’t feel as if you are in school. There are no right or wrong answers. Battered women have told us that they want workshops that give them a chance to talk and to share problems and solutions with each other. The questions in each workshop are guides for you. We hope that they will allow you to have a good discussion. But if you stray from the topic and are enjoying yourselves, keep going. These are your discussions, not ours.

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**Outward Bound**

Tales of urban, suburban, and rural survival based on true-life stories of women weathering a turbulent environment.

**While he’s trying to beat your brains out, he’s not about to hand you the phone so you can call for help.**

**That’s why I worked out a code with my downstairs neighbor.**

**Every time my boyfriend was about to start in on me, and I could usually tell when it was coming, I’d start banging on the radiator.**

**My neighbor would hear it and call the police.**

**What happens if you have central heating?**
In your workbook we have left blank spaces after each question so that, if you want to, you can fill in the answers when the workshop ends. Your group leader will be writing the answers on newsprint for everybody to see, so don’t worry about copying them during the discussion.

Each group will probably have a discussion leader although we also encourage you to talk about these questions with other battered women. The discussion leader is not to act like a teacher. Rather, she is there to help guide you from question to question and to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate. You have the same questions in your workbook that she has in hers. In hers, however, we have provided instruction and some answers to the questions that battered women in other programs have given us.

We want our workshops to help you understand why women are abused, why we have been treated as second class citizens, and how we have been strong survivors in the face of violence. At the end of many of the workshops we brainstorm ways we can help each other in order to make our lives better. The battered women who developed this booklet with us found this last part of each workshop the most fun and useful. We call this section Empowerment. It means that we, as women, can act more effectively and feel more support when we act together. It means that we find hope and courage from the examples that other battered women provide us as we gain resources from the shelter to rebuild our lives.

We designed this workbook because we believe that the battered women’s movement should belong to you, the survivor of abuse. You are the experts about violence because you lived through it. You have much to teach each other, the community and shelter staff.

We hope that these workshops are a first step in empowering you to see that the violence was not your fault, and that you are needed in the effort to end violence against women and help other battered women.
Violence Against Women

HE'S IN ECSTASY. HE DROPS HIS TROUSERS AND SHORTS IN THE HALL AND JUST ABOUT DIES IN THE TUB.

I WAIT A FEW MINUTES FOR HIM TO RELAX. THAT'S WHEN I GRAB HIS PANTS AND TAKE OFF.

I WOULDN'T HAVE SEEN THE LOOK ON HIS FACE WHEN HE HEARD THE CAR AND WENT LOOKING FOR HIS PANTS... BUT I GUESS YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING.
## WORKSHOP 1
### Naming Our Experience

### PROBLEM

#### EXERCISE 1
**What abusive behavior have we experienced?**
Let's make a list of the different kinds of abusive behavior women in this group have experienced.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Abuse</th>
<th>Sexual Abuse</th>
<th>Emotional Abuse</th>
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### CAUSE

#### EXERCISE 2
**What does abuse do to women?**
List examples of the ways that abuse has affected your life by answering the following questions:

- What does abuse do to you?
- How does it make you feel?
- How does your personality change?
- What do you lose emotionally and materially?

1.

2.

3.

4.
EXERCISE 3
What does he get from abuse?
Make a list of what the abuser got from his behavior. Did he gain anything?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

SUMMARY STATEMENT
1. Abuse harms us in many ways. It is more than the actual slap or beating. It is a pattern of male control. It makes us feel bad about ourselves and it changes the way we act.

2. Abuse robs us of self-confidence and control. We feel powerless and he feels more powerful.

3. As a result, the abuser gains power and control and women are made to feel subordinate.

EMPOWERMENT
EXERCISE 4
What do women do to survive their abuse?
Even though your abuser had more power, what did you do to outsmart him and survive? How did you protect yourself and your children? How did you say “NO” to violence and what qualities did your behavior demonstrate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I did</th>
<th>Qualities I demonstrated</th>
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SUMMARY STATEMENT
Women become survivors because we fight for our lives and protect ourselves. We are not passive in the face of abuse. We try to stop it but the abuser has more power. We are often very creative, strong and resourceful in surviving the abuse.

EXERCISE 5
What are some MYTHS & FACTS about abuse?
Read the attached MYTHS & FACTS and the newspaper article. The facilitator of this workshop will lead a discussion.

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT BATTERING

MYTH 1
Battering only affects a small percentage of the population.

FACT
Two to four million women of all races and classes are beaten every year.

MYTH 2
Battering is only a momentary loss of control.

FACT
Battering can go on for hours. Many batterers plan their assault or foresee it.

MYTH 3
Battered women are masochistic; they like the violence.

FACT
No one likes to be abused. We often stay because we have no options or because we hope our partners will change or because we want the kids to have a father. This does not mean that we like the violence.

MYTH 4
Battering does not produce serious injuries. It is just a love pat.

FACT
Battered women are often severely injured. In one study of 100 women, 42 said a weapon had been used in the attack.
**MYTH 5**

Drinking causes men to batter.

**FACT**

Men batter when sober and when drunk. They use the fact that they were drinking as an excuse, "I didn't know what I was doing." But in reality they get drunk in order to say that they are not responsible for their behavior.

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**MYTH 6**

Therapy will stop his violence. If he goes to therapy, I will be safe at home.

**FACT**

The best way to get your husband to stop his violence is to separate from him, at least for awhile. Unless he takes responsibility for his violence and says violence is his fault and stays in counseling for 6-12 months to stop his abusive behavior, he will probably batter you again. We don't know yet if counseling is effective. If the batterer blames you for his violence, he probably will batter you again. His violence is not your fault.

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**MYTH 7**

Religious faith will prevent him from beating you.

**FACT**

Even clergymen have beaten their wives. Religious faith does not stop men from believing that they have a right to beat their wives.

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**MYTH 8**

It is easy for battered women to leave their abuser.

**FACT**

It is often very hard to leave. It is hard to find shelter for yourself and children. Money is tight. He often promises to never batter again and so we give him one more chance. The kids and you don't want to uproot yourselves. The unknown is always scary.
MYTH 9
Even if he is violent, it is better for the children to have a father.

FACT
Children are very upset and scared by violence. It is better for them to be without a father than to be frightened of their fathers.

MYTH 10
If you are battered by one man, you'll be battered by the next, too. Once a battered woman, always a battered woman.

FACT
Many battered women rebuild their lives and realize how strong and courageous they have been. Because you have been battered does not mean that you will be beaten again. Battering is the responsibility of the batterer and has nothing to do with your behavior.

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The New York Times

Why Battered Wives Don't Leave Home.

Dear Editor:

Your Dec. 11 Week in Review article “When Battered Wives Kill,” in suggesting stereotypes of which juries should be disabused, perpetuates another stereotype: that battered women stay with abusive men for such vague reasons as low self-esteem. Hogwash!

You stay because:

Anywhere you can go, he can go. When he finds you, his rage will make former abuse seem mild.

He has told you that if you try to leave, he will find your child at school and take it out on her, or on your pet, or on your parents.

Your friends have become alienated, and you have nowhere to go. If you do know people who may accept you, you inflict him on them, and few people are altruistic enough to put up with that. I learned this the hard way, when a policeman told me that my violent husband was my problem, that I had no right to inflict him on the police.

He lies convincingly. So you run away and the police bring you home, after he “explains” that you are insane and must be returned to his custody.

Professionals find it hard to believe that a quiet, amiable and educated man would do such things, especially since he never does it with witnesses around.

You finally get him to go with you for counseling, and the counselor tells you that you must both trust and communicate. Over your frantic, surreptitious protests, what you told the counselor in confidence is repeated to your husband, who reacts with quiet, intelligent concern. The satisfied counselor then tells him you had assumed he would react with anger and violence. The counselor sends you on your way with a paean to trust and communication—and as soon as your husband gets you alone, he beats the tar out of you.

You get into the fix because you never expected a quiet, amiable man to be abusive. The first times he did it, his tears afterward made you sorrier for him than for yourself. Somehow it seemed to be your fault, because you didn’t love or trust or support enough.

Later, when the counselor agrees it was your fault, all you know is you’ve tried everything and can’t get away.

I was lucky. There are years and hundreds of miles between me and my ex-husband now, but I still remember with special bitterness the psychiatrist, doctors and policemen who told me that I must enjoy or need such treatment, or I would never have put up with it.

(Name Withheld)
Mercer County, N.J., Dec. 12, 1983

12/29/83
GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP
1. To name the forms of abuse we have experienced.
2. To see that abuse is not our personal problem.
3. To validate the courage and strength of battered women.

WORKSHOP 2
Why Do Men Get Away With Violence Against Women

PROBLEM

EXERCISE 1
What response did you get from those you turned to?
Let’s go around the group and ask for a few quotes. What did the police, court, welfare worker, clergyperson, and your family say when you went to them for help.

Fill out the charts below by writing in what was said to the group members and the message about women and violence that they got.

POLICE:
What did the police say to you? Message about women and violence?
1.

2.

3.

AFTER A WHILE I GOT TO FEELING I MUST BE CRAZY TO PUT UP WITH ALL THIS PAIN.

BUT I'M NOT CRAZY! I WAS JUST TRYING SO HARD TO KEEP MY FAMILY TOGETHER.

ANNND... I HAD THIS LITTLE PROBLEM... I STILL LOVED HIM.

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO, GOT TO DO WITH IT?
WELFARE:
What did the welfare worker say to you?
1.  
2.  
3.  

CLERGYPERSON:
What did your clergyperson say to you?
1.  
2.  
3.  

FAMILY:
What did your family say to you?
1.  
2.  
3.  

COURT:
What did court personnel say to you?
1.  
2.  
3.  

CAUSE
EXERCISE 2

Let’s review the columns “Messages about women and violence” and discuss why we think men get away with abuse. Then read and discuss the statements below.
SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. When those we turn to don’t help us they are telling women that:
   a. we are second class citizens
   b. they are supporting his power over his wife in the family
   c. men have the right to batter
   d. we have less power than men.

2. The messages women often get from the agencies and people who are supposed to help them, make women feel responsible for the abuse and allow men to get away with violence. Often, the men who batter and the police and social services we turn to make us feel crazy when they pretend the abuse never happened or isn’t serious.

3. We are not passive. Violence is not our fault. Women are often actively trying to stop the violence, but we can’t stop it by ourselves.

4. Although some social agencies have changed and now treat battered women better, these changes only came about over the last ten years because of women’s struggles and hard work. For example, we opened 500 shelters and changed the laws in many states. (The workshop, “Grandmothers, Mothers, and the Women’s Movement,” explores this topic).
EMPOWERMENT
EXERCISE 3
How can we help each other?
Choose one woman in the group who has a problem this week with the court, police, welfare, clergy or her family.

What can we do to help her out with her problem?
1.

2.

3.

4.

If the court, or welfare, or the police, or any institution is causing us a problem, what can we do together so that other women won't have to face this problem?
1.

2.

3.

4.

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP
1. To show that social agencies, such as the police and courts, sometimes support violence against women.

2. To show that men have their violent behavior supported outside the family.

3. To clarify that abuse results from the unequal power men hold over women in the family and in society.

4. To demonstrate that men have had experiences that tell them that nothing will happen to them when they beat women.

5. To clarify that battered women have worked actively to stop the violence and to get social agencies to help them.
WORKSHOP 3
Understanding and Overcoming Guilt

PROBLEM

EXERCISE 1
What made you feel guilty?
Let's list together some of the things your family, friends and children said to you when you were leaving that made you feel guilty.

For women who have not left—what comments have you heard when you thought about leaving?

*Family & friends said*                               *Children said*
1.                                                  1.

2.                                                  2.

3.                                                  3.

4.                                                  4.

EXERCISE 2
What's wrong with these statements?
What could we say to our friends, family and children that supports battered women's struggles and their right to leave?

*Responses to family & friends*                           *Responses to children*
1.                                                  1.

2.                                                  2.

3.                                                  3.

4.                                                  4.
EXERCISE 3
What did he say when you left that made you feel guilty?
Break into small groups of three or four. Tell each other all the statements that your abuser made to you when you were leaving him or thinking of leaving him.

Write down the ones that made you feel guilty and then analyze these statements on the chart below.

Even though you felt guilty about some of the things he said, some of his statements also probably left you feeling important and needed. Write these feelings down too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He said</th>
<th>It made me feel</th>
<th>What did I do</th>
<th>How else could I respond</th>
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SUMMARY STATEMENT
1. Abusers frequently manipulate women by telling them they will never batter again, or they cannot survive without her. We have many fantasies that things will get better. We like to feel needed and important so we take him back. We care about him and want to believe him, but we are also frequently being manipulated.

2. Society tells us that it is much better to be with a man than to be alone so we keep hoping he will change—and we take him back.

3. There is a difference between being needed and being beaten. Beating is a way of exerting control, not expressing love.

4. Sometimes we feel better and feel like we have some control when he promises to never beat us again. In reality, he has the greater amount of control because he can beat again if he chooses to.
**CAUSE**

**EXERCISE 4**
What else makes women feel guilty about leaving?

In the large group make a list of what women have learned about getting a man and staying with him from our cultures (family, churches, movies and music).

What was the message you got from what your family or clergyperson said? What message did you get from music, movies, tv?

How did it make you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>How it made me feel or behave</th>
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**EMPOWERMENT**

**EXERCISE 5**
How can we fight the guilt that hurts us?

List a few situations that you might face in the future with your abuser, your children or family that may make you feel guilty.

Situations which may make me feel guilty:

1.  
   2.  
   3.  
   4.
EXERCISE 6
How can we handle these situations?
Break into small groups. Roleplay these situations and come up with some responses.

The facilitator will ask some groups to share their roleplays.

Solutions for roleplay 1

Solutions for roleplay 2

Solutions for roleplay 3

Solutions for roleplay 4

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP
1. To help women see that abusers frequently use guilt to manipulate us.

2. To help women learn how we are socialized to feel guilty and responsible for men. Society tells us that women have responsibility for the family. So women feel guilty when anything goes wrong in their family.

3. To help women overcome guilt.
WORKSHOP 4
Grandmothers, Mothers and the Women's Movement

PROBLEM

EXERCISE 1
Was it different for women in the past if they were abused?
Fill out the chart below by answering the questions: "If our grandmothers or mothers or other women of their generation experienced sexual assault or battering in the family what did they do?" "What were women's options in the past?" "What are our options?"

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<th>Grandmothers</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Ourselves</th>
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CAUSE

EXERCISE 2
Why is it different for us?
Let's discuss the questions:

1. Why might our mothers and grandmothers have been uncomfortable talking about their abuse?
2. What did they think the community's response would be?
3. Why did our mothers and grandmothers have no public solutions —why were there no shelters and why couldn't they get effective protective orders?
4. Were the experiences with violence different for women of different racial, ethnic and class groups?
SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. It is only because of a women’s movement that we now have more effective laws and shelters for battered women. Before the women’s movement, violence against women was considered private, personal, humiliating, and, we were to blame for it.

2. This women’s movement first arose out of the civil rights movement led by black people in the late 1950’s and 1960’s. The civil rights movement showed that poor people and black people could and would fight for their rights and dignity. The civil rights movement raised a plea for justice, equality and dignity.

3. Women in this movement, and women in general, began to draw parallels between themselves and the civil rights movement. Women too were oppressed and treated as second class citizens by men and by the institutions of the society.

4. In the late 1960s and early 1970s women began to organize politically around women’s rights and soon created the idea of a shelter.

EMPOWERMENT

EXERCISE 3
How can we affect the next generation?
Let’s list some of the things that we could be doing individually and as a group so that our daughters will have more power to stop violence against women and so that our sons will take a stand against it.

What we can do individually:
1.
2.
3.
4.

What we can do as a group—actions women should take together in the community:

Action 1

Action 2

Action 3
EXERCISE 4
What's our history?
Let's read the following together:

1. In 1976 two formerly battered women, Chris Womendez and Cherie Jimenez, opened their apartment to battered women in Boston. They shared their welfare checks to keep the doors open and to keep everyone fed. Their apartment soon became too small and Cherie, Chris and other battered women and feminists worked hard to raise money to open Transition House, the first East coast shelter.

2. Many former battered women, neighborhood women, feminists, lesbians—women of all races and classes—united in their communities to begin programs for abused women. Many had no funding, but could not bear to see another woman hurt and have no place to go.

3. In 1978, battered women and feminists started a national organization of grassroots shelters—The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. This organization lobbied for federal legislation to fund shelters and helped shelters share information across the country. It's Women of Color Task Force supervised a grant to help shelters develop small businesses and generate income.

4. Today there are at least 700 shelters and safe homes projects around the country—many of them sustained by the energy and courage of women in the community.
What is the history of our shelter?

Together let’s find out the history of this shelter by interviewing the staff, board members, residents or former residents who were invited to this workshop.

Ask the invited guests to address the following questions:

a. What year did the shelter open?
b. Who started it?
c. Why was the shelter started?

As we listen to this information let’s think about how we can make our own history. What could the shelter do differently to include the residents more?

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP

1. To demonstrate that we have a different, more helpful societal response to violence against women because of the women’s movement.

2. To show how important it is for women to organize together.
You know if you're gonna leave home, you'd best have some money socked away.

The problem is, the heavy hitters are usually the guys who don't let their wives work.

You gotta be sneaky. No reason to tell 'em you've got a part-time job.

I worked a mid-shift at a mail order house for a year just to save up some leaving money.

The day I left, he didn't have the faintest notion of what I was up to.

He says, as he's going off to work, "Don't do anything I wouldn't do."
WORKSHOP 5
Affirming Our Families

PROBLEM

EXERCISE 1
What is family?
Let’s talk about what is a family—What do families look like (who is in them) and what needs do they fulfill for us?

What persons make up the family? What needs does the family fulfill?
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

SUMMARY STATEMENT
“Family” can mean many different ways of living together with people. People who are committed to each other will provide for each other’s needs and security. In order to be a “legitimate” family you don’t have to stay in a situation where you suffer abuse from a man.
**CAUSE**

**EXERCISE 2**

**What are the facts?**

We probably think that most people live in "nuclear" families. Together let's read the following statements. What do they tell us about the way people are living together?

1. The government, for the purposes of gathering statistics, defines "family" as a group of two or more persons living together who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

   Using this definition, there are:
   - 62 million families in the U.S. today
   - of these, 50 million are married couples,
   - 10 million are families headed by women,
   - 2 million are families headed by men.

2. The government definition of "family" leaves out the thousands of us who are living with someone to whom we are not married—either a man or a woman.

3. Today, there are 20 million persons living alone and almost 2 million unmarried-couple households.

4. The "traditional nuclear family" (working husband, homemaker wife and children) is disappearing. Only 10% of all households are of this form.

**SUMMARY STATEMENT**

1. Today, roughly one-fifth of all family households are headed by a single parent. Nine times out of ten it's a woman.

2. Many women do not live in nuclear families. Many of us head households and take care of our families without a husband.
EXERCISE 3
Where do we get our ideas of what is family?

If so many of us are living in different kinds of non-nuclear families how come there is such a push to be in a nuclear family?

Let's make a list of where we get our ideas of what is a family?
1.

2.

3.

4.

What are the messages these different groups give us about families?
1.

2.

3.

How do these messages make us feel if we're not in a nuclear family?
1.

2.

3.
EXERCISE 4
What do TV shows tell us about women in families?

Let's make a list of television programs which show nuclear and non-nuclear families. What are the messages we get about women from these shows?

For some ethnic groups—especially Hispanic and Asian—there are no TV programs depicting non-nuclear families, although many women of these cultures take care of families alone.

**Nuclear family shows**  
1.  
2.  
3.

**Non-nuclear family shows**  
1.  
2.  
3.

Now that we've identified some shows let's answer the following questions:

How do these shows make us feel about ourselves and our families?

1.  
2.  
3.

What are women's goals and dreams in these shows?

1.  
2.  
3.
What do these shows leave out about our families?

1.

2.

3.

**SUMMARY STATEMENT**

1. In many of these shows women's goals are to catch a man. TV often glosses over the fact that some men treat women abusively. Instead we are presented with the view that the nuclear family is the ideal we should all seek.

2. This makes it more difficult for women who live alone or for those who want to create other kinds of family units. These shows give the message that the only way to be complete is with a man.

3. But many women are leading strong, productive lives without men.

**EMPOWERMENT**

**EXERCISE 5**

*How could a TV show portray our lives accurately?*

Break into small groups and design a TV program about yourselves, your friends and your children. What is it about your family and your friends' families that you would like to see included in a TV show? What needs to be portrayed that isn't? Give a title to your show and design a couple of episodes.

*Title of your show*

*Episode 1  Episode 2  Episode 3*

Share your TV show with the other small groups.

**GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP**

1. To challenge the myths about the nuclear family.

2. To acknowledge the strength of women as heads of families.
WORKSHOP 6
Growing Up Female:
Our Similarities and Differences

PROBLEM

EXERCISE 1
What expectations and responsibilities are placed on girls?
What did you want to be when you grew up?
1.

2.

3.

What did people tell you you could be?
1.

2.

3.

What responsibilities did you have in taking care of your home and your brothers and sisters?
1.

2.

3.

What were girls supposed to be interested in at school, and after school?
1.

2.

3.
EXERCISE 2
How was it different for boys?
Let's look at the same questions and see what the answers will be for boys.

What did the boys you knew want to be when they grew up?
1.  
2.  
3.  

What did people tell them they could be?
1.  
2.  
3.  

What responsibilities did boys have around the house and in taking care of their brothers and sisters?
1.  
2.  
3.  

What were boys interested in at school? What did they do after school?
1.  
2.  
3.
EXERCISE 3
What do we think of these roles?
Complete the following statements.

What I liked about the expectations and responsibilities for girls:
1. 
2. 
3. 

What I disliked:
1. 
2. 
3. 

SUMMARY STATEMENT
1. Girls are supervised more closely and told how to dress, how to behave, who they should be friends with.

2. Many boys don’t have to take care of children or help around the house. They have the freedom to play or hang out after school.

3. Usually, girls have different expectations and responsibilities than boys. These differences are not natural or biological—we weren’t born with them. Rather, women have been expected throughout history to do certain kinds of work. For example, it is not “natural” that women do all the childcare. Men can take care of children just as well as women. Certain tasks are seen as “women’s work,” but it doesn’t have to be this way.

4. In school, girls are not encouraged to be as interested as boys in math, science, or computers. Skills in these areas tend to lead to better paying jobs. Rather, girls are expected to want to be secretaries, nurses, or teachers. To want a job as a mechanic or an electrician is seen as unfeminine—even though these jobs pay better.

5. But all boys can’t do everything they would like to. Men and women who are victimized by racism or poverty can’t be who they want to be.
CAUSE

EXERCISE 4

How are we alike and different?

Let's look over our answers from the Exercises we just did. What are the similarities and differences of our experiences growing up female in our different racial or ethnic groups?

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. There are many racial and ethnic differences among women, but there also may be many similarities. For example, all women tend to have different expectations and responsibilities than men.

2. Sexual discrimination makes it difficult for all women to achieve their dreams—but this is even more true for poor women and women of color.

   For example, Black women have made big gains into service (clerical) and blue-collar jobs. But because of racism and sexism they are under-represented in professional and managerial jobs.

3. Women want choices. It's okay for us to like raising our kids and at the same time to want to be a carpenter.

4. Our racial and ethnic differences create diversity and open up new models and possibilities for women. We can learn from each other when we open ourselves to women of different racial and ethnic groups.
EMPOWERMENT

EXERCISE 5
What women did you look up to?
When you were growing up what woman did you look up to? Maybe it was a cousin or an aunt or some famous person.

Name and describe a woman in your racial or ethnic group who most inspired you when you were growing up.

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP

1. To clarify that women of different races, classes and ethnic groups have similar and different ways of coping with the pressures and joys of family, work and community.

2. To affirm that our differences are valuable and make us all culturally, politically, and personally richer.

3. To clarify that our families and society have different expectations for women and for men.
WORKSHOP 7
Independent Living

CAUSE

EXERCISE 1
How does society make it hard for women alone?
1.

2.

3.

4.

PROBLEM

EXERCISE 2
What are our particular worries about living on our own?
Let’s list the things that concern us about living alone. Even though we know there will be all kinds of concrete problems, let’s try and focus on personal concerns.
1.

2.

3.

4.

SUMMARY STATEMENT
These worries are real because society makes it hard for women alone. We shouldn’t blame ourselves for setbacks when we’re up against so much to begin with.
EXERCISE 3
How can we deal with these concerns?
A. In your small group choose one concern from Exercise 2 and answer the following questions.

1. What can I do by myself and with others to make the situation easier to handle?

2. What kind of help do I need from others?

3. Where can I get this help?

B. Roleplay a situation in which you need to ask someone for help and you get a positive response.

SUMMARY STATEMENT
All people go through crisis at some time in their lives. During these times we need to ask for help and support. Sometimes it feels humiliating, especially when we get negative responses. But we need to try again.

MY HUSBAND WOULD NEVER LET ME GO TO A SUPPORT GROUP... BUT HE DOESN'T MIND ME TAKING CLASSES.

SO WHAT THE HECK... I LIE. I TOLD HIM I WAS LEARNING TO BE A TRAVEL AGENT.

OF COURSE... I NEGLECTED TO MENTION THAT I WOULD BE MY FIRST CLIENT.
EMPOWERMENT

EXERCISE 4

What will be exciting about the future?

Each of us should answer the question, "What excites me about living on my own?"

After we have shared our answers, let’s figure out how we can help each other make sure these things can happen.

What will be exciting?
1.

2.

3.

How can we help each other?
1.

2.

3.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. Women have had to come up with all kinds of ways to survive a battering situation. Women have shown that they are clever, smart, creative and can fight back. Sometimes after we come out of battering we forget these strengths—but now we need them more than ever.

2. All women who live alone share worries about their safety and about being taken advantage of by repair people, landlords, lawyers, salespeople, men. We have to learn and share strategies and skills to take care of ourselves and our families.

Your facilitator will now hand out some information that might help you when you’re on your own:
1. A listing of resources.

2. Some tips on how to protect yourself from sexual assault.
PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT
(From a Stranger)

IN YOUR LIVING UNIT

Don't advertise living alone
1. Use initials on mailbox, in phone book; add dummy name.
2. If alone and the doorbell rings, call out, "I'll get it John," as though someone is with you.
3. Draw shades, drapes at night.

House should always look and sound occupied
1. Use timers to turn on lights at night.
2. Play radio.
3. Leave phone off hook if leaving home for considerable period during the day.
4. Notify neighbor if going away—ask to collect mail, papers, etc.

Essential hardware
1. Change locks from former tenant.
2. If key is lost, change cylinder.
3. Never put address on keyring.
Use of phone
1. Have emergency numbers near phone in big letters so you can read them without glasses.
2. Never reveal personal information on phone.
3. Report series of obscene calls to police:
   a. blow whistle into receiver
   b. tap mouthpiece and say, “Operator—this is the call I wanted you to trace.”
   c. have friend check on you at specific time: verbal code to indicate if something is wrong.

Never open door to stranger
1. Require identification from everyone: utility men, maintenance men, police, repairmen, salesmen; ask them to pass ID under door; when in doubt, check with company by telephone.
2. If stranger requests use of phone, regardless of reason or emergency, offer to make call for him while he waits outside of locked door.

In a building
1. Don’t overload yourself with bundles. Be prepared to drop them quickly if being followed.
2. If you think you’re being watched when leaving apartment, shout to mythical companion, “Take the cake out in ten minutes, George!”
3. If accosted, yell “Fire,” not “Help”—it will attract attention quickly.
ON THE STREET

1. Walk near curb, facing traffic.
2. If car pulls next to you going the same way you are, reverse direction.
3. If insecure on sidewalk and traffic permits, walk down middle of street.
4. If approached, look for lighted windows; wave and shout upward as though someone at window is watching you.

Carry purse, papers, umbrella under arm or keep purse between body and bundles
1. Carry money in two places—shoe, bra, or hidden pocket.
2. If you think someone might take purse, drop it in nearest mailbox; it will be returned to you.
3. Never wind purse strap around wrists (if grabbed, you can be pulled down and injured).
4. If someone tries for purse, throw it in street or turn it upside down and let contents fall out.
5. If purse is snatched, beware of phone call giving information where to retrieve it (call police for advice).

While traveling
1. At bus and subway stops, keep your back to the wall to avoid being approached from behind.
2. If suspect being followed, don’t get off at normal stop, get off at busy stop, tell attendant in change booth.


GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP

1. To help women see that they are not to blame for their problems.
2. To identify where women can get support and resources.
3. To build confidence.
4. To build bonds among women.
Advocacy

Whenever you get to thinking that things are hopeless, you gotta remember...

...ten years ago, it was almost impossible to get the cops to arrest your old man if he was beating you up.

You could hardly even get a protection order!

He could kick you around and nobody would legally stop him.

Those protection orders we finally got... no one gave'em to us. We fought for'em!

Isn't that what empowerment is all about?
PROBLEM

EXERCISE 1
Who should I turn to for help?
In small groups spend a few minutes answering the following questions:

What kinds of people would I go to for help or counseling and in what kinds of situations?

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What would you expect a counselor to help you with?
1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

In what ways have you counseled someone?
1. 

2. 

3. 

4.
CAUSE

EXERCISE 2
What are your experiences with counseling?
In the large group let’s list all the groups that women go to for counseling. Include the kinds of counseling that you’ve gone to.

1.

2.

3.

4.

What was helpful and what did you like about the counseling you went to?

1.

2.

3.

What wasn’t helpful; or what didn’t you like?

1.

2.

3.
SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. It is very important for everyone to feel respected in the counseling situation.

2. It is important to feel in control.

3. Professionals who counsel often put themselves in a more powerful position than their clients. Sometimes they abuse this power. They can make us feel stupid or blame us for our problems. For example, battered women have been asked questions like, “What did you do to provoke your abuser?” Such a question blames us and absolves him of responsibility.

5. Professionals need to treat us with respect and learn from us. They do not know everything. This is why battered women are often more helpful to other battered women than some professionals are.

6. Often, counselors, like many professionals, may have a destructive attitude toward women. Some of them believe that women should keep their family together no matter what the cost to the women. This is a sexist attitude that assumes women are responsible for everything that happens in the family—including their husband’s violence.

7. We have counseling skills to offer each other. Supportive friends and family members are often effective counselors.
EMPOWERMENT
EXERCISE 3
How do we get what we want?
Let's pick a negative experience one of us has had with a professional counselor.

After we hear the situation described, we will roleplay it.

Then we will discuss what went wrong in the situation and strategize what we could do to change it.

Using the strategies, let's roleplay the situation and have it come out positively.

SUMMARY STATEMENT
1. In many situations every woman can be her own counselor. We should trust our feelings about a situation and not be bullied.

2. It is important that in a counseling session we are treated in a way we think is right.

3. It is okay to question authority.

4. Some counselors are not helpful. If we do not like what is happening, we can ask to speak to someone else or bring an advocate.

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP
1. To help clarify that there are some kinds of counseling that are useful to women and some that are harmful.

2. To recognize that we can exercise control when we interact with professionals.

3. To help us see that we have many of the same skills that professionals have.

4. To help us clarify the context in which professionals may be useful to us.
WORKSHOP 9
Advocating For Ourselves

PROBLEM
EXERCISE 1
What are the problems we are facing?
Let’s choose a problem that one of us is facing with an agency. Or, pick a situation in which a woman does not get what she needs—such as a welfare emergency grant, a court protection order, an apartment.

First let’s describe the situation and then roleplay it.

CAUSE
EXERCISE 2
What happened?
What happened in the role play?

How was the woman made to feel?

Why didn’t she get what she wanted?

SUMMARY STATEMENT
1. Social agencies are supposed to serve us. Women are entitled to have their legal rights enforced by the police and courts.

2. But frequently these agencies want to maintain control. They do this by complicating the experience for us. When they make us wait for hours, or won’t answer our questions or assume we can’t understand an issue they are depriving us of our rights and giving us the message that women are second class citizens.

3. Welfare is also an entitlement, a right. When the welfare center makes us feel bad for asking for our rights, we are frequently intimidated and give up. In this way they cut off people and save money. This is illegal and women have a right to fight against this.

4. We are not the problem—but often agencies make us feel as if we are to blame.
EMPOWERMENT

EXERCISE 3
What can help us?
Referring back to Exercise 1, let's make a list of what information or different approaches the woman could use to get a better response from the agency. What could she do differently?

1.

2.

3.

4.

EXERCISE 4
How can we do it differently?
Let's roleplay the situation again so that it has a positive outcome. Include any new information or strategy suggested from the previous exercise.

EXERCISE 5
How can we help other battered women?
Let's brainstorm about how we can help each other deal with these agency problems during and after our stay at the shelter.

1.

2.

3.

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP
1. To help women develop strategies for dealing effectively with systems like the police and welfare.

2. To understand what resources we need to get effective help.

3. To build confidence.

4. To show how battered women can help one another solve problems.
WORKSHOP 10
Finding Housing

PROBLEM
EXERCISE 1
What are our options?
Together let’s read and discuss the following actual situation another shelter resident has faced in locating housing.

Dawn and her three children are staying at an emergency shelter. She has thirty days to stay there. Dawn is on welfare and she receives $400 a month. Her mother is deceased; her father and brother live within two blocks of her husband. Dawn does not believe her husband would honor a protection order—in fact, he fought the police when they intervened at the time of the abuse. Dawn has never lived in public housing and has no money saved.

What should she do, and what steps will she need to take in order to reach her goal of finding housing? Let’s list her options.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Let’s break into small groups and explore a few of these options. Some of us will work on Exercise 2A while others of us will work on 2B and 2C. Then we’ll get back together and share our activities.

EXERCISE 2A
Are relatives best?
Let’s list the advantages and disadvantages of moving in with relatives.

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Now let's make a list of the ways we can successfully deal with the disadvantages.

1.

2.

3.

4.

**EXERCISE 2B**

**What about shared housing?**

Let's list the advantages and disadvantages of sharing housing with another resident.

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Now make a list of the things that women, who are planning to share housing, need to negotiate.

1.

2.

3.

4.
EXERCISE 2C
What about getting your own apartment?
Make a list of the ways you can successfully deal with the disadvantages.

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Make a list of the ways you can successfully deal with the problems.

1.         
2.         
3.         
4.         

CAUSE
SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. Whether or not to move in with relatives, share housing, or get our own apartment are all tough choices. It’s not our individual failures or mistakes that make these choices difficult.

2. The government is not providing enough low cost apartments for people. Very few new units are being built or rehabilitated. There were 750 thousand new units constructed in 1970 and 250 thousand in 1981.

3. Since 1970 the cost of construction has gone up 324% and the cost of renting a new apartment in inner cities is estimated at $600 per month per unit.

4. Women with small children are often discriminated against when they look for housing.

5. We need to work together to demand more housing options.
EMPOWERMENT

EXERCISE 3
What can we do together?
As a group let's brainstorm how to go about finding a low-cost apartment.

Does anyone in the group have any experiences they can share about finding either private or public housing?

Let's decide as a group to find out how former residents have found housing, and/or to go as a group to the public housing offices and ask for priority housing for battered women.

GOALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP
1. To help residents become aware of their options for housing.
2. To build confidence in women about finding resources.
3. To demonstrate how battered women can be resources for one another.
GLOSSARY

ABUSE
To beat; To hurt both physically and mentally.

ADVOCACY
Speaking or writing in favor of; Support.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (LAWS)
Laws that guarantee women equal rights in housing and employment.

ASSAULT
A strong attack; Example: battering or rape.

ASSERTIVE
Certain; Positive; Confident.

ASSUMPTION
Something taken for granted without proof; Example: the assumption was that she stayed because she liked being beaten.

AUTHORITY
The power to enforce obedience; Right to command or act; Person or group who has such power or right.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
The efforts and results of a group of people to guarantee equality to all people no matter what their race, sex, religion, or sexual preference.

COALITION
Group of people or groups that get together to work for a common goal or set of goals.

CRISIS
A point at which change must come, either for the better or the worse; Turning point; deciding event.

CULTURES
The way different people live and do things.

DISCRIMINATION
Negative treatment shown towards a person because of sex, race, religion, class, or sexual preference.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Wife or partner battering; Child abuse; Incest; Any abuse that occurs in a residence where there are people living together in a relationship.

EMPOWERMENT
To give someone power or the ability to act.
ENTITLEMENT
Having the claim or right.

ETHNIC
Of or common to a particular group of people; Example: language, customs or characteristics.

FACILITATOR
Leader of a group

FEMINIST
One who believes in equality for women; One who believes in the improvement of the lives of women; One who believes in women's rights to control their own lives and bodies.

GRASS ROOTS
Ordinary citizens of a neighborhood, city, state acting together.

HARASSMENT
Troubled by repeated attacks; Tormented.

INTIMIDATED
Made afraid; Influenced by fear.

LEGISLATION
The making of laws; The laws made.

LOBBIED
Trying to influence members of a law-making body to act on a change of law or new law; Example: the women lobbied for a marital rape law.
MASOCHISTIC
To like being hit or beaten.

OPPRESSED
Burdened; Kept down by cruelty or injustice.

PROTECTION ORDER
This court order can protect a woman from abuse and harassment for the time of the order (usually 1 year); May also include an eviction order denying the abuser access to the property for the length of the order.

RESOURCEFULNESS
Thinking of ways to do things; Quickwitted.

SERVICE WORK
Workers who deal directly with people; Example: social workers, nurses, secretaries, waitresses.

SEXIST
Against a sex or member of a sex—usually female.

SOCIALIZED
The way you are raised; What you are taught to believe.

STATISTICS
Facts which are collected about people, battering, and so on; They are collected, counted, and used for many purposes.

SUBORDINATE
Having less importance; Dependent; Lower in rank.

VALIDATE
To prove true.

VICTIMIZATION
Causing to suffer.

WOMEN OF COLOR
A woman who is Black, Hispanic, Asian or Native American; Women who face not only sexism but racism in their daily lives.

We would like to thank the Women's Program of the Lutheran Settlement House in Philadelphia for preparing this glossary. The Women's Education Institute is responsible for modifications in the glossary.
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