

MODULE 12

Trust and Intimacy

Session XII

Trust and Intimacy

Meeting A

Materials MH p.63

Goal – Group members will be able to identify at least one barrier which inhibits their ability to trust other people.

Goal – Group members will be able to identify intimacy and see it as separate from sex.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you define the word "intimacy"? MH p.63
2. What are some of the differences between sexual and emotional closeness?
3. How has abuse affected your ability to be intimate with another person?
4. What behaviors do you do that interfere with connection and intimacy?

Meeting B

Materials MH - #65

Discussion Questions

1. How is trust earned?
2. How have your past relationships affected your current relationships?
3. What behaviors help to create a trusting relationship?

Goal – Members will share with the group one special attribute that makes them trustworthy.

TOPIC 8 Intimacy and Trust

SESSION RATIONALE

Survivors of sexual abuse often mistake sex for intimacy and emotional closeness. The confusion between sexual and emotional closeness leads some survivors to engage in sex when what they really want is intimacy and closeness. Women often feel disappointed and betrayed when a sex partner fails to treat them with the concern and care they would expect from an emotional intimate. Women need to begin clarifying the difference between sex and intimacy if they are to avoid being revictimized in future relationships.

GOAL 1: Each member will understand what it means to be intimate with another person.

GOAL 2: Each member will be able to articulate the conditions that promote or violate trust, reciprocity, and safety.

QUESTIONS

1. What is intimacy?
2. What is necessary for closeness (intimacy) to occur?
3. What conditions create trust, reciprocity, or safety?
4. What conditions violate trust, reciprocity, or safety?
5. How have substance abuse and other destructive behaviors interfered with connection and intimacy?

EXERCISE

Each woman will draw an Intimacy Network. Placing herself in the center, she will arrange her close relationships on concentric circles at increasing distance from the center (herself) (see Appendix Item F). Women will discuss their networks.

LEADERS' NOTES

QUESTION 1

What is intimacy?

TYPICAL RESPONSES Sex
 Passion
 Closeness
 Trust
 Emotional connection
 Relationship with a sex partner
 Understanding

Women who have experienced trauma demonstrate significant difficulty defining intimacy. Abusers have violated boundaries and thus left women with poor or nonexistent examples of safe and reciprocal relationships. Group members associate intimacy almost exclusively with sex, and often use the two words interchangeably. Consequently, leaders must reeducate members by helping them to redefine intimacy and underscore that the new definition of intimacy will include *trust*, *reciprocity*, and *safety*.

QUESTION 2

What is necessary for closeness (intimacy) to occur?

TYPICAL RESPONSES Trust
 Listening and being heard
 Understanding
 Rapport
 Confidentiality
 Accepting people as they are
 Honesty
 Familiarity

Most group members have little or no experience with genuine closeness. Consequently, their responses may reflect an idealized and simplistic view. The

discussion will be more productive if members can use examples to illustrate what they mean by some of the more abstract terms. Allow space for members to acknowledge their lack of experience with closeness to other people.

QUESTION 3

What conditions create trust, reciprocity, or safety?

TYPICAL RESPONSES When someone holds your confidences
 When someone accepts me the way I am
 When I'm there for them and they're there for me
 When boundaries are respected
 When someone does not try to hurt you or take
 advantage of you
 When someone listens to me and I feel heard
 When people make a real commitment to one
 another
 Mutual respect

Responses to this question may represent vague generalizations. Encourage members to provide specific behaviors and examples that create and demonstrate trust, reciprocity, and safety. For example:

- *Constancy over time.* She always returns everything she has borrowed from me. Pam and I have been roommates for eight months. We always let each other know if we're going to be home later than usual so we don't worry each other. She attends the building meeting every week. Consistently, Pam responds to me when I talk with her.
- *Predictability, being able to count on someone to behave in a certain way.* Laura is true to her word. When we work on projects together she always follows through on her part of the job. Every Tuesday, Laura agrees to meet me at the bus stop and she is there. She never verbally abuses me if I upset her.
- *Getting to know someone over a reasonable period of time.* I talked with Bob over the phone for several weeks before I told him my address. I talked with Sarah at school for several months before I agreed to go out with her.

- *Sharing the same values with someone.* I feel safe talking to Stan about my urges to use drugs because he has been there and knows what it is like to want to use. We go to NA every Monday and Saturday. He has been clean for two years and he supports my efforts to stay clean, unlike some of my other friends.

QUESTION 4

What conditions violate trust, reciprocity, or safety?

TYPICAL RESPONSES	Being let down	Lying
	Prejudging	Betrayal
	Denial	Deceitfulness
	Cheating	Selfishness
	Greediness	Abandonment
	Boundary violation	Being forced to have sex
	Being abused	Getting mixed messages
	Being taken advantage of	Not being believed
	Unreliability	

Leaders should note that women will have an easier time generating examples of how closeness was betrayed or violated than discussing how closeness can be created and maintained. Regrettably, many women who are multiple trauma survivors only know how relationships end in disappointment. You may want to comment about this lack of balance in women's experiences.

QUESTION 5

How have substance abuse and other destructive behaviors interfered with connection and intimacy?

- TYPICAL RESPONSES
- When someone is using, they are not dependable.
 - When someone is using, they are unavailable when I need them.
 - When someone uses drugs or drinks, their judgment is impaired and they do things or say things that