

**Getting Off the Emotional Roller-Coaster:
A Group for Women**

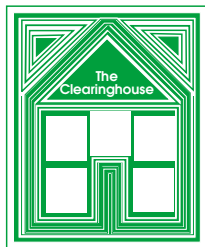
TI 081 - Thematic

By

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**The Clearinghouse for Structured/Thematic
Groups & Innovative Programs**



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Getting off the Emotional Rollercoaster: A group for women

**A group treatment manual for practitioners working with women who desire
to understand and manage their emotional experience**

By Tavia Whitney and Jennifer Ragan
Spring 2001

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Getting off the Emotional Roller-Coaster: A Group for Women

By: Jennifer Ragan and Tavia Whitney

Introduction

Population

This thematic group is intended for women who feel unable to regulate their emotions and desire to better understand and respond to their emotional states. Although having the skills to understand and regulate emotions is beneficial for both men and women, this group is targeted at women because it includes a component that addresses the ways in which society has the potential to impede women's ability to get their needs met by dictating in part how women should feel and how they should respond to their emotions.

Given the myriad of emotions people can have trouble experiencing and regulating, the inclusion criteria will not be limited to women experiencing difficulty with only one particular emotion (such as anger or sadness). Exclusionary criteria may include the presence of a significant mental illness, suicidality, psychosis, or a crisis in the person's life which is contributing to their emotional dysregulation and should be treated prior to the person entering this type of group. When appropriate, individual treatment to address these issues can be concurrent with group membership.

Due to the focus on the understanding of emotions and the correct usage of them as a source of information for how to behave, the group seeks to include those women whose attributes include: (1) an inability to label their emotions as they are having them, (2) an inability to understand the sources of their emotions, and (3) an inability to use their emotions to inform their behavior appropriately in order to get their needs met. Prospective group members may present with complaints of "moodiness," "emotional outbursts," or "feeling overwhelmed by their emotions." These women should be motivated to change these aspects of themselves and should not simply be looking for a group that will help them give the responsibility of regulating their moods to the people that surround them daily (i.e. "If only my partner would stop doing that, I wouldn't get so upset all the time!"). This group is best suited for people who have some insight into the origin and maintenance of their emotion regulation problems. In addition, prospective members should express a willingness to explore new ways of thinking and acting inside and outside the group in the hopes of better understanding and regulating their emotions.

Group Format

This thematic group is intended to be a 10-week short-term psychotherapy group with 1.5 hour weekly sessions. Each session will be tailored toward a particular stage of the change process. Many sessions, particularly earlier ones, will involve group cohesion exercises used to establish trust between members and a sense of safety in the group. Homework, if assigned, will be

reviewed the week after it is assigned. It is expected that all sessions will involve discussion around members' individual attempts at emotional understanding, with earlier sessions focusing on being able to label and identify the source of emotions and later sessions focusing on acceptance of emotions and how to use them to inform, rather than dictate, members' behavior.

All group members will read and sign the Group Expectations form, and agree to abide by all rules for the duration of the group. All group members will be encouraged to participate in each group activity and each member will be asked to share what they learned while doing the assigned homework. Activities likely to occur within group sessions include: psychoeducational presentations, dyadic and group discussion and feedback regarding group activities, homework and discussion of homework, role plays, and experiential exercises.

Change Model

Phase I: Labeling Emotions

We conceptualize change as initially occurring through members' ability to correctly label the emotions they are having and to begin to identify the sources of these emotions. Treatment goals of the initial phase are to enhance members' emotional vocabulary, to increase insight into the range of emotions that can be experienced, and to increase recognition of the fact that there are often many emotions underlying one emotional experience.

Phase II: Identifying and Evaluating Sources of Emotions

The next phase of the change model consists of educating members about the possible sources of their emotions and determining the extent to which their emotional experiences are reality-based. Often times, the emotions individuals experience have less to do with the present context and more to do with their core beliefs, societal pressures, and family history, for example. One treatment goal is to familiarize members with ways in which these and other factors can influence their experience. A second goal is to encourage members to consider these possible sources when attempting to understand their emotional experience, enabling them to respond rather than to react to a given situation. A final goal is to motivate members to evaluate and possibly modify their beliefs, thoughts, and assumptions about themselves, others, and the world.

Phase III: Increasing Acceptance of Emotions

Emotions can be a rich source of information for the individual about many things, including their needs and wants. However, people often deprive themselves of this knowledge when they avoid painful emotions in favor of those that are more familiar or more comfortable. This phase of the change model emphasizes accepting the more "difficult" emotions rather than relying on emotional reactions that are more comfortable but not appropriate to the situation. For example, individuals in the group who are more comfortable with feelings of anger but unable to tolerate feelings of sadness will be encouraged to acknowledge and experience sadness. A related goal is to help members to broaden their emotional repertoires, enabling them to learn the most from their experiences.

Phase IV: Identifying and Acting out New Behavioral Responses to Emotions

The last phase of the change model consists of helping members to respond to their emotions in appropriate ways that allow them to get their emotional needs met instead of creating more emotional crises. While *acceptance* of emotional experience is paramount, *expression* of all emotional responses is not always productive. One treatment goal is to help members identify the negative consequences and benefits of expressing and failing to express their emotions. A second treatment goal is to help members find appropriate, assertive ways of making their emotional needs known to significant people in their lives rather than being aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive. A third treatment goal is to help members meet their own emotional needs when their significant others are not able to or do not desire to do so. In order to accomplish these goals, members will be provided with opportunities to role play new ways of expressing their emotions and communicating their needs in the group, helping them to concretize what they have learned.

Phase V: Discussing Relapse Prevention and Termination

Group members will be exposed to the concept of relapse prevention as a means of preventing future slips into maladaptive ways of experiencing and responding to their emotional states. Leaders must convey to members that it is important to continue to practice the skills they have learned in the group if they hope to maintain their progress and continue to grow. They must also be made aware of the fact that they will have setbacks, but that this is both normal and expected and therefore members should not become consumed by feelings of failure. Leaders will also provide members with ways of finding additional sources of support in the future and allow members to bring their therapeutic relationships with one another to a close.

Group Screening Interviews

Individual screening interviews, conducted by two group co-leaders, will last approximately 30 minutes. These interviews will have four components: 1) describe the nature and format of the group so that the prospective group members can evaluate whether the group can possibly meet their needs, 2) understand the nature of the prospective group member's problems with emotional dysregulation and what consequences that has for the person, 3) assess the insight, willingness to change and participate, and interpersonal skills of the prospective group members, and 4) gather information to assess the extent to which the prospective group members meet inclusion/exclusion criteria (see Appendix A). Following each screening, the co-leaders will decide how appropriate the group is for the prospective group member and how appropriate they are for the group.

Session 1: Guidelines, Introductions

Session Goals:

- Begin the process of building group cohesion and safety.
- Introduce members to group format and ways to make use of the group.
- Use “ice breaker” activity to explore interpersonal styles.
- Give members an opportunity to share concerns and goals for group.

Agenda:

- Leaders introduce themselves.
- Go over the guidelines for group membership and invite members to suggest additional guidelines (Appendix B).

Group experiential activity to promote cohesion, reveal ways of interacting as a group, and to elicit emotional reactions in the moment:

- Prior to session, prepare a manila envelope with the following materials: two pairs of scissors, stack of construction paper, two rolls of transparent tape, and sheet of paper with instructions (Appendix C).

Inform members that they will be participating in a group activity, *but do not give any further description of the task*. Place envelope in the center of the circle and wait for members to take initiative. Follow time guidelines as outlined in the instructions.

Following task, process the experience with group members. Some helpful areas to explore:

- feelings about initiating activity (impulses, resistance, etc.)
- how actions reflected interpersonal styles outside of group
- reactions to other member’s actions during activity
- use of alternative ways of communicating

Go over information on how to make use of the group and see where people think they may have difficulties and where they would like help from the group (Appendix D)

Members introduce themselves and share what brought them to group; discuss individual goals for group experience.

Session 2: Sources of Emotions

Session Goals:

- Increase emotional vocabulary.
- Enhance awareness of emotional experience.
- Introduce possible sources of emotions.

Agenda:

Check in with members regarding their reactions to last session and their feelings about returning to the group this week. Use feelings in the moment to as a starting point for discussion of how to label emotions. As a group, generate list of emotion words so that members have a more extensive emotion vocabulary (write on flip chart); ask members if they can now be more specific about emotions they are experiencing in the moment (Appendix E).

Discuss tendency for people to experience more than one discrete emotion at a given moment and the importance of recognizing all contributing emotions. (Helpful to illustrate with the twins analogy—if it doesn't occur to a doctor that a woman might be having twins, then the doctor might miss hearing the heartbeat of one baby, simply because the doctor didn't know to *look* for the other baby; you have to get better at *looking* for all the emotions experienced in a given situation.) Encourage members to accept what they are feeling and to recognize the informative value of their emotions.

Talk about sources of emotions: interpretation of events in the present moment, projecting to the future, hijacked to past, repeating message, society, basic assumptions about the world, anniversary of traumatic event, meta-emotions, identity, needs (Appendix F and G).

Ask participants if they resonate with any of the sources discussed; if members are comfortable, encourage sharing of specific examples.

Assign homework: bring in one situation from the week ahead that involves strong emotions to talk about in the group the following week.

Session 3: Elaboration of Sources

Session Goals:

Practice identifying sources of emotions as they apply to members' experiences.
Enhance members' ability to discriminate between different emotional experiences.

Agenda:

Using list of emotions generated during session two, ask members how they are feeling in the moment. Also ask members to reflect on feelings related to group experience so far.

Review "homework": Invite members to share experience from previous week that involved strong emotions. Ask members to identify all emotions felt and all possible sources contributing to the experience.

Discuss how to discriminate between different emotions and identify events and interpretations that prompt emotion within the context of sadness; complete Sadness handout in pairs and then discuss reactions as a group (Appendix H).

For homework, ask members to read and complete handouts on Anger, Fear and Shame (Appendix H).

Session 4: Elaboration of Sources

Session Goals:

Explore events and interpretations that prompt emotions.

Explore how emotions are experienced and expressed.

Explore the aftereffects of emotions.

Agenda:

Check in with members about feelings in the moment and any initial reactions to homework assignments. Can use list of emotions if necessary.

Identify the events and interpretations that prompt feelings of anger, fear and shame by reviewing handouts assigned for homework (Appendix H). Discuss whether some worksheets were easier to complete than others and explore how this might be connected to members' comfort-level with certain emotions. Invite members to share examples from personal experience to illustrate areas identified on handouts.

Drawing on knowledge gained from completing the worksheets, discuss whether members are better able to understand previously confusing situations or reinterpret previous emotional reactions. Encourage members to share any insights with the rest of the group.

Keep in mind . . .

Around this time in the group's development members may be experiencing emotions that they had previously been avoiding, or the emotions they are experiencing may be particularly intense. It is important to give members an opportunity to discuss the reactions they are having, including any discomfort or frustration related to group participation.

Session 5: Elaboration of Sources

Session Goals:

Provide members with specific tools to enhance their ability to identify sources of emotions.

Agenda:

Introduce today's activity by telling members that they will have an opportunity to apply knowledge gained from previous sessions to a specific event or situation in their lives. Group members will be given a tool that will enable them to better determine the source of their emotional reactions.

Instruct members to close their eyes and imagine a specific situation from the recent past that was marked by particularly strong emotions. If unable to think of one specific event, members are free to concentrate on a pattern of emotional responding. Encourage members to focus on instance or pattern that involved emotions that were especially confusing and whose sources were unclear.

Invite members to share experiences with the rest of the group. Use questions listed on flip chart to explore the possible sources of their emotions (Appendix I). Give members a copy of questions for their own use (Appendix I).

Session 6: Examining Family of Origin and Societal Issues

Session Goals:

Explore influence of family on members' experience and expression of emotion.

Reflect on role that society plays in members' experience and expression of emotion.

Agenda:

Inform members of family sculpting activity and that the purpose is to help participants explore and increase their understanding of the beliefs about emotions and emotional expression that were communicated to them in their families of origin. Review how many of the sources of emotion are connected to early (or current) family dynamics.

Family Sculpting Exercise: Instruct members to take a moment to reflect on how emotions were expressed in their families of origin. Ask for a volunteer to complete first family sculpture and provide the following instructions:

“We would now like to do an exercise that will help to illustrate the different feelings and messages you have about experiencing and expressing emotions based on your experiences in your family. Take a few minutes to think about how emotions were handled by your parents, your siblings, and any other family members while you were growing up. Do you associate any particular emotion with a particular person? Was there some emotion that you never saw expressed? Once you have given that some thought, we would like you to use the other group members to create a family sculpture entitled, ‘Emotion in My Family when I was a Child.’ Select those group members whom you feel are the ‘best fit’ for the people in your sculpture. Arrange them in relation to each other in whatever positions and with whatever expressions you think best portray your experience when you were younger. After you have formed your sculpture, stand back, look at it, and be aware of any thoughts or feelings that the sculpture evokes in you. The group members who are in the sculpture should also be aware of any feelings that come up for them as they are positioned by the sculptor. The group members observing should keep track of any emotions that come up for them as they watch the sculpture being created.”

Ask the group how they felt about the exercise and process the experience. Restate that the purpose of the exercise is to begin to look at what we learned about emotions and emotional expression from our families when we were younger. Beginning with the sculptor, explore any feelings that came up during the exercise; then explore the feelings experienced by those in the sculpture and by those observing the exercise. Questions to ask the group members: What beliefs or “rules” about having and expressing emotions did you get from your family when you were young? To what extent does what you learned about emotions and emotional expression *then* affect how you deal with emotions *now*?

As time allows, have other members complete sculptures that reflect their family dynamics around emotion. For those members who do not have a chance to complete the exercise, invite them to describe how they would have designed the sculpture and briefly share any reactions.

Open discussion about how our families teach us what is appropriate or not in regards to emotions and how these “lessons” are manifest in our experience of emotion in the present. Pay particular attention to emotions as related to roles in interpersonal relationships.

Invite members to reflect on what society tells us about what we need to do to have fulfilling lives and what we need to do or be in order to be good people or good women. (examples: women are expected to be caretakers, to not express anger, to be emotional but may be called ‘neurotic’ if they become ‘too’ emotional, to have the perfect body, to not be assertive; women’s growth through connection with others is often considered to be weak, as ‘independence’ is highly valued in our culture).

Resources to consider: Women’s Growth in Connection: Writings from the Stone Center by Judith Jordan, Alexandra Kaplan, Jean Miller, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey; Women’s Anger: Clinical and Developmental Perspectives by Deborah Cox, Sally Stabb, and Karin Bruckner; Silencing the Self: Women and Depression by Dana Crowley Jack

Drawing on “new” knowledge of family and societal influences, explore reasons why some emotions might be harder or easier to feel than others (generate examples from group members). Some possible discussion questions: Why might we be able to notice anger, but not notice jealousy? Why might we be able to feel sadness and not admit to feeling angry? What makes it hard for us as women to have certain emotions? What about our family makes it hard for us to have certain emotions?

Session 7: Evaluating Beliefs as they Pertain to Emotions

Session Goals:

Introduce concepts of identity and belief systems and how they influence experience of emotion. Provide members with cognitive techniques with which to evaluate feelings and related beliefs.

Agenda:

Discuss identity issues as a source of emotion, focusing on how members define themselves as “good” people. Identity worksheet is essentially a sentence-completion task aimed at getting members to identify what it is that makes them “good” (Appendix J). Sentences begin with the phrase “I am a good person . . .” and members may complete the sentence with “*when* I (do this)” or “*because* I (do this, am this way),” or “*if* I (do this),” etc.

Allow about ten minutes to complete the worksheets, then invite members to share what they’ve written. Follow-up discussion centers on how one’s identity can become the lens through which we interpret events in our lives and can lead to automatic thoughts that cause us to experience certain emotions. For example, if a person identifies herself as “good” when she makes other people happy, she may not allow herself to experience or express anger for fear of upsetting another person, which would challenge her sense of “goodness.”

Continue exploration of the effects of belief systems on emotional experience by reviewing list of questions to ask oneself when evaluating whether or not automatic thoughts are based in reality (Appendix K).

Session 8: Behavioral Flexibility – Interpersonal Effectiveness

Session Goals:

Introduce role of needs and wants in relationships and how they influence emotions.
Encourage members to acknowledge needs and find appropriate ways to meet them.

Agenda:

An individual's needs and wants can influence how they interpret a given situation, which will then affect how they react emotionally to and behave in that situation. Have members use worksheet to identify their specific needs and wants in the context of three different types of relationships (Appendix L). Invite members to share what they have written; generate group list of needs and wants for each type of relationship on flip chart and note any overlaps.

Use discussion to promote awareness of the expectations that members have for different relationships and how their emotional experience can be affected when the expectations are or are not met.

Encourage members to consider different ways of getting their needs met, including using oneself as a resource instead of relying solely on others. Also discuss possibility that one's own needs may interfere, or not coincide, with the needs of the other person in the relationship, which may require some negotiation. In such cases, it may be necessary to prioritize one's needs and how important it is to have them met by the other person specifically, and might result in a redefinition or relinquishing of the relationship.

Review list of self-affirming statements for interpersonal effectiveness; give members a copy to take home (Appendix M).

Remind members of impending termination and invite them to think about how they would like to say good-bye to one another and end the group experience.

Session 9: Behavioral Flexibility – Interpersonal Effectiveness

Session Goals:

Highlight connections between emotional experience and unmet needs.

Provide members with possible format for expressing feelings and needs assertively.

Agenda:

Invite members to share experiences in which unmet needs contributed to their emotional experience.

Introduce format for verbally expressing feelings and needs to another person: “When you _____, I feel _____, because _____. I need/want _____. Can you do this? Are you willing?” (write on flip chart).

Invite members to practice this technique in front of the group using a real-life situation; encourage the other members to give feedback regarding clarity and effectiveness of message.

Continue discussion about termination and solicit ideas from members on how to say good-bye to one another.

Session 10: Maintenance and Termination

Session Goals:

Summarize as a group the main themes and “lessons” of the semester.

Review progress made and the concept of relapse prevention.

Discuss group termination and make available information regarding appropriate referrals.

Agenda:

Ask members to generate list of important topics covered in group this semester. Invite them to share why they feel these topics were important.

Invite members to share how they think they have changed since the beginning of the group (“What did you do/think at the beginning of the semester that you would not do/think now?”).

Encourage members to give each other feedback.

Discuss ways of maintaining progress and ways of facilitating further growth.

Say goodbye using format previously chosen by group members (e.g., “Yearbook Activity” in which members write notes to one another expressing what they appreciate about and what they wish for each other; members verbally express what they will miss most about group and the other group members).

Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-Group Therapy Consultation Notes

Name: _____ SSN: _____

Introduction of group co-leaders and orientation to pre-group interview:

- 20-30 minutes
- a chance to get to know each other
- get a sense of the ways that group might be helpful
- an opportunity for questions
- decide about joining the group

Interview guideline questions:

1. What do you know about group therapy? Have you had experience in any type of therapy before?

2. What is it about yourself that you would like to see change? How do you want to be different?

3. How comfortable are you in sharing your feelings? (Emphasize here-and-now disclosure.)

4. Any fears about being in the group? Anticipated difficulties?

About group therapy:

- to get support; meet others with similar issues
- to better understand how we relate to others; opportunity to practice new behaviors
- to talk about emotions — labeling, sources, coping and ways of expressing

Guidelines for group membership:

- commitment for one semester
- attendance, punctuality
- confidentiality
- no social contact outside of group (if it should occur, bring it back to group)

Results of meeting: _____

Co-leaders _____

Date _____

Appendix B: Group Contract

Commitments Regarding Group Membership

While people seek psychotherapy for many different reasons, almost all have wished for a better understanding of themselves. This group will strive to achieve that goal by encouraging an exploration of emotions and emotional expression, with the hope that members will gain a better understanding of what they are feeling, why they may be feeling it, and possible ways of expressing and coping with the feelings they are having.

Group therapy provides people with a unique opportunity to explore their interpersonal styles, to give and receive honest feedback, and to use interactions in the group to learn about themselves and their relationships to others outside of therapy. To this end, one of our main tasks this semester is to achieve a group culture of intimacy, acceptance, introspection, understanding and interpersonal honesty. In our commitment to creating this space, we agree to:

- be honest and respectful
- actively share our thoughts and feelings with the group
- keep an open mind
- maintain the absolute confidentiality of the group and its members
- attend every session and notify the group leaders in advance if unable to attend due to unavoidable circumstances
- arrive on time and stay through the entire session
- avoid any social contact with fellow group members until all persons involved have been out of the group for one month.
- notify the group *in advance* of plans to leave the group
- _____
- _____
- _____

Signed on _____:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Appendix C: Instructions for group experiential exercise

“You will have 10 minutes for this activity. Your task is to work together *as a group* to make something. You may use any or all of the materials provided, but you may not speak to each other during this exercise. An announcement will be made when you have two minutes remaining.”

Appendix D: Ways to get the most out of group therapy experience

What is a Therapy Group?

Often people have some apprehensions about a therapy group. These are natural and usually stem from not knowing what will happen in the group and what the other group members will be like. This brochure provides information about what therapy groups do and the benefits experienced by group members.

A therapy group is composed of individuals who share common concerns and who are interested in seeking solutions to these concerns. Trained therapists act as facilitators to assist group members in articulating their thoughts and feelings in a way that promotes growth for the entire group.

Benefits from Group Therapy

Group therapy provides an opportunity for members to articulate their most important current concerns. After a few sessions, a group dynamic begins to develop as group members share their feelings. This group dynamic has important benefits for everyone.

What You Can Gain from a Group

- Group members learn they are not alone in feeling a particular way.
- Members increase their own self-awareness through genuine and honest feedback from others.
- Members become more sensitive to the needs of others and increase their respect of individual differences.
- The group as a whole develops a feeling of cohesion and members find trust and security in the group.

You Are Responsible

To a great extent, you are responsible for determining what advantage you make of these opportunities. You determine the amount of energy—mental and emotional—you wish to invest in the group process. Obviously, the more you invest, the more you benefit.

Immediate Feedback

In group therapy you gain immediate feedback from other group members and the leader. While it is important to remember that you are the final judge of that feedback, you can learn much from it. Learning how others perceive you can help you decide what aspects of your life you want to change.

The Chance to Try New Behaviors

Group therapy also gives you a chance to try out new behaviors, to express feelings you have been hesitant to express, to assert yourself in new ways, and to experiment with new ideas. As you find trust and security in the group, you will feel more free to take risks.

Learning from Fellow Group Members

One of the most fascinating aspects of being in a group is learning from other group members. You not only benefit from recognizing your own emotional responses, but also from identifying with the feelings of others. Through identifying with others, you increase self-awareness.

It Takes a Commitment

In general it requires several sessions before members of a group begin to develop sufficient trust and security to be open and honest, to disclose their concerns and feelings.

Thus, patience is needed to give the group time to develop. In signing up for a therapy group, we encourage you to make a commitment to attend at least five sessions. If you are not getting what you want out of the group, talk about it with the group members.

To Get the Most Out of Your Group

1. Define Goals

Think about what you would like to get out of the group. Take time before each session to define your expectations for that session. Don't be surprised if your goals continue to change throughout the group process. As your self-awareness increases and as you listen to other group members, you will discover other issues which may become more important than your original ones.

2. Respect Your Pace for Group Involvement

Some people will be ready to disclose their thoughts and feelings right away, while others need more time. By respecting your own need to become involved only when ready, you are learning self-acceptance. If you have a difficult time knowing how to discuss your problems with the group, ask the group to help you.

3. Take Time for Yourself.

Some group members hesitate to take group time to disclose their concerns because they feel that others need the time or they question the importance of what they have to say. Many people experience this feeling and it may be important to use group therapy to figure out what this means in your life.

4. Focus on What is Important to You.

Time is limited in a group. Try not to focus on external issues. Instead, talk about relationships with significant others, questions about life goals and directions, childhood memories, dreams, and feelings about yourself. Try to provide essential information without going into extensive details. In addition, talk about the thoughts and feelings you have about other group members, the leaders, and the here-and-now process of the group. Examining what is occurring in the group in the present can help you recognize themes and patterns in your relationships and help you deal with these more directly.

5. Recognize and Express Feelings

The recognition, acceptance, and expression of feelings pave the way for personal growth and change. Thoughts and feelings are equally important to us in working through our difficulties. Group may help you integrate your cognitions and emotions in a more balanced manner.

6. Become Aware of Your Own Censorship

We are taught to be careful of what we communicate to others. Often the thoughts and feelings we hold back are very similar to what others in the group are experiencing. One goal of group therapy is to develop a safe environment where learning to express thoughts and feelings, without censorship, enables exploration and resolution of interpersonal conflicts. It also helps you become more assertive and self-affirming.

7. Be an Active Group Member.

Although most group leaders like to have a group of active participants, you need to determine how active and involved you want to be. Being active means expressing your reactions to others, sharing your concerns, listening to others, asking for clarification, giving support and comfort, and seeking them for yourself. It is natural that you will feel more active in some sessions than in others.

8. Take Risks

The group setting is an excellent place to experiment with different ways of behaving and expressing yourself. By taking risks, you can discover what works for you and what doesn't. Risk-taking might involve expressing feelings which are difficult for you, sharing information about yourself which you have kept secret, or confronting someone who is bothering you.

9. Give and Receive Feedback.

Sometimes giving and receiving feedback is uncomfortable. But one goal of a group setting is to learn how to do this in a supportive and constructive, yet challenging, manner. When this happens, it helps group members identify their patterns of relating, styles of personal presentation, unrecognized attitudes, and inconsistencies. Remember that people hear feedback best when given in a caring manner. It also needs to be concrete and specific and represent both feelings and thoughts.

10. Pay Attention to How You Let Others Get to Know You

All of us have ways of behaving which prevent others from knowing and getting close to us. Being in a group gives you the opportunity to identify these behaviors. Group can help you learn how to make changes and develop new ways of fostering intimacy.

11. Respond to Others

You have already learned ways to respond to the concerns and needs of others. Now be prepared to assess your responses and consider other options. Most group members learn that giving advice, suggestions, and solutions is seldom helpful. Instead, try to learn how to express personal reactions, communicate understanding, give support, and listen attentively.

12. Be Patient with Yourself.

Growth takes time, effort and patience. Your personal coping skills, behavior patterns, and self-perceptions have been learned and reinforced for many years. Changing them can be difficult and very slow. Being patient with yourself and accepting and understanding the inevitable blocks to growth establishes the foundation for growth and change.

About the Group Leaders

Most groups have two leaders. Although the basic function of the leaders is to facilitate individual growth within a group context, each leader has a special style of carrying out that task.

Some leaders take an active role throughout the duration of the group. Others tend to give group members more responsibility for self-exploration. Most, however, probably fall in between these extremes, with their activity level depending on what they feel is needed for a particular time and a particular group.

Respond openly to what the group leaders are doing or not doing. An important aspect of what you can learn through the group experience will come through your manner of relating to the leaders.

Appendix E: Emotion List

Emotion List

Depressed	Anxious	Angry	Guilty	Ashamed
Sad	Embarrassed	Excited	Frightened	Irritated
Insecure	Proud	Mad	Panicky	Frustrated
Nervous	Disgusted	Hurt	Cheerful	Disappointed
Enraged	Scared	Happy	Loving	Humiliated
Delighted	Charmed	Gleeful	Exhilarated	Powerful
Alluring	Sexy	Energetic	Hopeful	Vulnerable
Out of control	Blah	Discombobulated		

Appendix F: Sources of Emotions—Illustrations for Leaders

Sources of Emotions—Illustrations for Leaders

Automatic thoughts: thoughts that we have automatically that are subconscious or semiconscious

Example of how thoughts influence emotions:

A student has just approached her teacher after class to ask him a question. She goes up to him and tries to ask the question but he brushes her away saying that he is too busy for her and walks out the door.

If she thinks: He is brushing me away because he thinks I'm stupid and not worth talking to and that means that I AM stupid and not worth talking to...

Then she feels: Sad, ashamed, worthless . . .

If she thinks: He is brushing me off because he thinks I'm stupid and not worth talking to, but I know that I'm not stupid and he's just full of himself and plus I can figure out the answer to this question myself...

Then she feels: Annoyed

If she thinks: He must be having a bad day. I think I heard that he is getting a divorce. Him brushing me off has nothing to do with me. Poor guy.

Then she feels: Concern

Being Hijacked to the Past

Example: A young woman grew up in a house with a parent who would get drunk and then not pay attention to her. Now, she is grown up and has a partner who, on occasion, will have a few drinks. She becomes upset one night when her partner has several drinks and falls asleep on the couch. She is crying and thinks her partner doesn't love her anymore.

The young woman realizes that she was responding to the incident with her partner like she did when she was younger and her parent didn't pay attention to her when drinking. She was transported back to that time by the nature of the situation and was equating her partner's actions with those of her parent. This memory has distorted her view of the present situation.

Repeating Message

Example: A young woman wants to apply to college and knows in her head that she is smart and could get into school but just can't seem to muster up the strength to apply, because in her gut she feels like she won't be able to get in and that she isn't smart enough. This is because her mother has been telling her all her life that she is stupid and won't amount to anything. So she has a message playing in her head constantly telling her that she is stupid, even though her conscious mind is telling her how smart she really is. It is a battle she has to fight constantly and she can't understand why she can't just *will* her way out of feeling that way. But she relaxes and gives herself more room when she realizes 'How can I feel strong when others have criticized me for such a long time?'

Basic Assumptions about the World

Example: A young woman has grown up very sheltered and she believes that most adults are responsible and care about other people and are secure in themselves. So when she encounters professors at school who criticize her ideas in class, she thinks that if they are responsible and secure in themselves and care about students, then she must have *deserved* to have been criticized. Because she believes professors would admit when they were wrong, she feels embarrassed and stupid. What she isn't realizing is that many adults are insecure and irresponsible and will not admit to being wrong even when a student is right because it would hurt their self-esteem too much.

Example: A young woman grew up in a dysfunctional and non-supportive family environment. She was physically abused by her father and her mother ignored her. She has come to believe that *everyone* is out to hurt her and that she can never let her guard down or else she'll get hurt. Hence, when someone who might like her comes up to talk to her, she thinks they are there just to use her and will hurt her eventually, so instead of being happy to talk to them, she is angry because she is predicting future hurt by this person.

Anniversary of Traumatic Event

Example: A woman realizes that every summer she gets depressed. She can't figure out why because the weather is better in the summer and she has always liked warmer weather and her work and social life haven't changed to warrant a change in mood. What she comes to realize is that her mother died in the summer 5 years earlier and the warmth and the smell of summer remind her of that time and is connected in her mind to mourning the loss of her mother.

Meta-emotions

Example: A woman has a hard time expressing anger, because she has been taught by her mother and her religion that "Anger is not loving and so it is bad to get angry at the ones you love." Because she has this belief about anger, she cannot experience anger, and instead gets depressed, because she doesn't believe she has the right to be angry and demand better treatment for herself from her loved ones.

Myths about Emotions:

There is a right way to feel in every situation.

Letting others know that I am feeling bad is weakness.

Negative feelings are bad and destructive.

Being emotional means being out of control.

Emotions can just happen for no reason.

Some emotions are really stupid.

All painful emotions are a result of a bad attitude.

If others don't approve of my feelings, I obviously shouldn't feel the way I do.

Other people are the best judge of how I am feeling.

Painful emotions are not really important and should be ignored.

Social Conditioning

Example: Women are socially conditioned to believe that they are supposed to be loving and nurturing and that if they *do* express anger they are somehow “unwomanly” or “irrational” or “crazy.”

Identity

Sometimes we define ourselves in ways and then something happens that challenges who we think we are or whether or not we think we are good people. For instance, if you think that your identity and worth rests on getting straight As and being the smartest person in every class, then when you don't get the highest grade, you could feel worthless.

Needs

We all have the need to belong somewhere, feel loved, be supported, feel useful, do things well, be in control, etc... When these needs aren't getting met, it affects how we feel about ourselves and our lives and how fulfilled we feel.

Appendix G: Sources of Emotions—Handout

Automatic thoughts: These are thoughts that we have in a situation that we are not aware of but that influence our emotions greatly. For instance, if you were to go to a party thinking, “No one is going to like me when they talk to me and if they don’t like me, then I must not be very worthwhile to talk to”, then you’re bound to feel nervous about how people might respond to you, or sad, or maybe angry because you are expecting people to reject you.

Being Hijacked to the Past: Sometimes a situation we are experiencing reminds us of a similar experience we had in the past, and then we start interpreting everything in the present through the lenses of the past experience, even though the two situations are different. For instance, if you had a parent who was alcoholic and never paid attention to you when drinking, then alcohol may become associated with feelings of disappointment and sadness for you. And so if you see your partner drinking, you may get mad immediately, because you are assuming that this behavior will lead to the same outcome (you will be ignored) that alcohol led to in the past.

Repeating Message: When we are kids, our parents tell us who we are, what makes us loveable, what things we are good at, etc... Sometimes our parents define us in a certain way over and over again, and we can’t get that voice of theirs out of our heads. For instance, if your parent told you that you would never get into college and become successful, then every time you entered a class, you might feel intense anxiety, because you had your parent’s voice running through your head telling you that you were going to fail.

Basic Assumptions about the World: We all have assumptions about the world, how it works, and how people are going to treat us, and how good people are. If we think that all people are good and won’t hurt us, then we might trust people too much and get hurt a lot. If we think that most people will try to hurt us, then we might never let anyone into our lives and could be very lonely.

Anniversary of Traumatic Event: Sometimes, we are experiencing a situation that is taking place at a certain time of the year that holds great significance for us. For example, if your mother died in the spring, then every spring you may become depressed because the memory of her death is getting triggered.

Meta emotions: Sometimes we hold beliefs about having emotions. For example, if we feel that emotions are irrational and aren't helpful, then we are likely to get down on ourselves for having emotions instead of using them to understand what's going on inside of us.

Social Conditioning: Sometimes society tells us what we need to be or do to have a good life or be worthy, loveable people, and what it means to be a woman. These beliefs can influence our emotions when we feel (or are told) that we are not living up to society's expectations.

Identity: Sometimes we define ourselves in ways and then something happens that challenges who we think we are or whether or not we think we are good people. For instance, if you think that your identity and worth rests on getting straight As and being the smartest person in every class, then when you don't get the highest grade, you could feel worthless.

Needs: We all have the need to belong somewhere, feel loved, be supported, feel useful, do things well, be in control, etc... When these needs aren't getting met, it affects how we feel about ourselves and our lives and how fulfilled we feel.

Appendix H: Sadness, Anger, Fear, Shame

Adapted from Linehan, 1993 The Guilford Press

SADNESS

sadness	despair	grief	misery
anguish	disappointment	hopelessness	rejection
depression	gloominess	loneliness	unhappiness

Other: _____

Events that Prompt Feelings of Sadness

Things turning out badly.
Not getting what you want.
Losing someone you care about.
Being rejected or excluded.

Other: _____

Interpretations that Prompt Feelings of Sadness

Believing that you are worthless or not valuable.
Believing that you will not get what you want or need in your life.

Other: _____

Experiencing Sadness

Feeling tired, run-down, or low in energy.

Feeling empty.

Crying.

Other: _____

Expressing Sadness

Frowning.

Sitting or lying around, being inactive.

Withdrawing from social contact.

Other: _____

Aftereffects of Sadness

Feeling irritable, touchy, or grouchy.

Blaming or criticizing yourself.

Insomnia.

Anger, shame, fear, or other negative emotions.

Other: _____

ANGER

anger	disgust	grouchiness	irritation
aggravation	exasperation	grumpiness	rage
annoyance	frustration	hate	resentment

Other: _____

Events that Prompt Feelings of Anger

- Losing power.
- Losing respect.
- Being insulted.
- Not having things turn out the way you hoped or expected.

Other: _____

Interpretations that Prompt Feelings of Anger

- Expecting pain.
- Believing that things should be different.
- Rigidly thinking “I’m right.”
- Ruminating about the event that set off the anger in the first place, or in the past.

Other: _____

Experiencing the Emotion of Anger

- Feeling out of control.
- Feeling incoherent.
- Muscles tightening, teeth clamping together.
- Crying.

Other: _____

Expressing Anger

- Using a loud voice, yelling, screaming, or shouting.
- Mean or unpleasant facial expression.
- Walking heavily or stomping; slamming doors, walking out.

Other: _____

Aftereffects of Anger

Thinking only of the situation that made you angry.
Imagining future situations that will make you angry.
Intense shame, fear, or other negative emotions.

Other: _____

FEAR

fear edginess overwhelmed
apprehension hysteria panic
anxiety nervousness tenseness

Other: _____

Events that Prompt Fear

Being in a new or unfamiliar situation.
Being alone.
Being in a situation where you have been threatened or hurt in the past.

Other: _____

Interpretations that Prompt Fear

Believing that someone might reject you, criticize, dislike, or disapprove of you.
Expecting to fail.
Losing a sense of control; believing that you are helpless.

Other: _____

Experiencing Fear

Sweating or perspiring.
Feeling nervous, jittery or jumpy.
Feeling of heaviness in stomach.

Other: _____

Expressing Fear

A shaky or trembling voice.
Hiding from or avoiding what you fear.
Fleeing, running away.

Other: _____

Aftereffects of Fear

Losing your ability to focus or becoming disoriented.
Losing control.
Intense anger, shame or other negative emotions.

Other: _____

SHAME

shame
embarrassment

guilt
humiliation

invalidation
regret

Other: _____

Events that Prompt Feelings of Shame

- Doing something you or people you admire believe is wrong or immoral.
- Having others find out you have done something wrong.
- Being laughed at or made fun of.
- Failing at something you feel you are (or should be) competent to do.

Other: _____

Interpretations that Prompt Feelings of Shame

- Believing that your body (or some part of it) is too big, too small, or not “right.”
- Thinking that you have not lived up to expectations (yours or someone else’s).
- Comparing yourself to others and thinking that you are not “as good.”

Other: _____

Experiencing Shame

- Pain in the pit of the stomach.
- Wanting to hide or cover your face.
- Choking sensation, suffocating.

Other: _____

Expressing Shame

- Withdrawing, covering the face, hiding.
- Avoiding the person you have harmed or the people who know you have done wrong.
- Asking for forgiveness.

Other: _____

Aftereffects of Shame

Avoiding thinking about what you've done wrong.

Believing you are defective.

Isolation, feeling alienated.

Other: _____

Appendix I: Exploring the Sources of Emotions

Questions to Ask Yourself

Automatic Thoughts

- What was going through my mind just before I started to feel this way? How did I interpret what was going on?
- What do I imagine other people are thinking about me? How do their opinions of me affect my own self-concept?
- How am I interpreting what other people's actions mean (actions directed towards me and towards others)? What do these actions imply about that person and about me?
- Is this person doing or saying something that reminds me of something within myself or something about my life that I am not comfortable or happy with?
- What am I afraid might happen? What is the worst thing that could happen if this is true/false? What does this mean for my life now and in the future?

Being Hijacked to the Past

- Does this situation remind me of something that happened in the past? Does it echo some aspect of a past (and/or current) relationship?
- If this situation is similar to a previous experience, does that mean that it will have the SAME outcome or consequences as in the past?

Repeating Messages

- Is this person saying something about me that reminds me of what (my) _____ used to say? Am I having the same reaction to those words?
- Does this situation validate (or invalidate) another person's views of me? If I shared this experience with someone, who in my life would say "I told you so"?

Basic Assumptions about the World

- Does this situation challenge or support my general views about people?
- Do I trust that I will not get hurt in this situation, or do I feel like I have to protect myself from others?

Anniversary of a Traumatic Event

- What was happening in my life one year ago? Two years ago? Five or ten years ago?
- How do I usually feel this time of year—can I remember feeling this same way before? Does this season/holiday/time of the semester have any special meaning for me?
- Do I associate a particular event or time in my life with the sights or smells that surround me?

Meta emotions

- Am I feeling bad, weak, stupid, angry or afraid BECAUSE I am experiencing strong emotions? Am I feeling any of those things because I cannot “control” my emotions?
- Am I thinking that my emotions are dangerous or bad somehow? Am I thinking that I am weak or crazy when I am ‘SO emotional’?

Society

- Do I feel that society is telling me how to live my life, telling me what I “should” or “shouldn’t” do? Am I thinking that unless I am or act a certain way that I won’t live a happy life, or that I am not a good person?
- Is society telling me what it means to be a woman?

Needs

- What needs of mine aren’t getting met (to be understood, to be needed, to be loved, to be physically comforted, to be appreciated, to be encouraged, to be included and belong somewhere, to be in control of my life, to feel good about myself and my abilities, to be validated, to be protected, etc.)?
- Do I know what I am needing from the people in my life or in this situation?
- Why do I think I am not getting these needs met? Do I think it’s my fault somehow? Do I think I don’t deserve these things? Am I afraid my needs will never get met? Am I afraid that I won’t know how to get my needs met in the right way?
- Are there needs of mine that were not met by my parents that I am trying to get met currently?

Identity

- Is how I define myself being threatened? What is good or bad about that? Is how I define myself as a ‘good person’ being challenged?

Some general questions related to specific emotions:

If angry: Do I feel like I've lost power or respect, that I've been insulted, or that things have not turned out the way I hoped or expected but they SHOULD HAVE?

If sad: Did things turn out badly, or did I not get what I want and there's no one to blame, or did I lose someone I care about, or was I rejected or excluded?

If scared or anxious: Am I thinking that someone might reject, criticize, dislike, or disapprove of me? Am I expecting to fail? Do I feel helpless and out of control?

If feeling shame: Did I do something that I or other people believe is wrong or immoral? Did someone else find out I did something wrong? Am I being laughed at or made fun of? Did I fail at something I feel like I should be competent to do?

Appendix J: I am a Good Person

I Am a Good Person

I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

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I am a good person _____

I am a good person _____

Appendix K: Evaluating Automatic Thoughts

Have I had any experiences that show that this thought is not completely true all the time?

If my best friend or someone I loved had this thought, what would I tell that person?

If my best friend or someone who loves me knew I was thinking this thought, what would that person say to me? What evidence would that person point out to me that would suggest that my thoughts were not 100% true?

When I am not feeling this way, do I think about this type of situation any differently? How?

When I have felt this way in the past, what did I think about that helped me feel better?

Have I been in this type of situation before? What happened? Is there anything different between this situation and previous ones? What have I learned from prior experiences that could help me now?

Are there any small things that contradict my thoughts that I might be discounting as not important?

Five years from now, if I look back at this situation, will I look at it any differently? Will I focus on any different part of my experience?

Are there any strengths or positives in me or in the situation that I am ignoring?

Am I jumping to any conclusions that are not completely justified?

Am I blaming myself for something over which I do not have complete control?

Appendix L: Relationship with my Parents, Friends, Significant Others

In my relationship with my **PARENTS**:

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

In my relationship with my **FRIENDS**:

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

In my relationship with my **SIGNIFICANT OTHER**:

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

I need/want _____

Appendix M: Self-Affirming Statements for Interpersonal Effectiveness

1. It is OK to want or need something from someone else.
2. I have a choice to ask someone for what I want or need.
3. I can stand it if I don't get what I want or need.
4. The fact that someone says no to my request doesn't mean I should not have asked in the first place.
5. If I didn't get my objectives, that doesn't mean I didn't go about it in a skillful way.
6. Standing up for myself over "small" things can be just as important as "big" things are to others.
7. I can insist on my rights and still be a good person.
8. I sometimes have a right to assert myself, even though I may inconvenience others.
9. The fact that other people might not be assertive doesn't mean that I shouldn't be.
10. I can understand and validate another person, and still ask for what I want.
11. There is no law that says other people's opinions are more valid than mine.
12. I may want to please people I care about, but I don't have to please them all the time.
13. Giving, giving, giving is not the be-all of life. I am an important person in this world, too.
14. If I refuse to do a favor for people, that doesn't mean that I don't like them. They will probably understand that too.
15. I am under no obligation to say yes to people simply because they ask a favor of me.
16. The fact that I say no to someone does not make me a selfish person.
17. If I say no to people and they get angry, that does not mean that I should have said yes.
18. I can still feel good about myself, even though someone else is annoyed with me.

OTHERS: _____

Adapted from Linehan, 1993 The Guilford Press

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