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COUNSELING THE ABUSE VICTIM

**Pennsylvania Coalition
Against Domestic Violence**

Marge Jozpa

COUNSELING THE ABUSE VICTIM

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for

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This manual is specifically geared to the counseling of women victims of abuse. The vast majority of abused spouses are women, and the particular style of working described here was developed over several years by the Marital Abuse Project of Delaware County, Inc., ninety-eight percent of whose clients were women. While many of the ideas presented here are also applicable to working with men, the specifics of counseling male victims, batterers, and couples are beyond the scope of this manual.

Throughout this manual the terms "abuse", "spouse abuse", "wife battering", and other similar terms are used interchangeably to describe physical or emotional violence between members of a primary relationship, either present or past. Although the terms "wife" and "husband" are sometimes used (because the majority of people in battering situations are in a marriage relationship and because the legal status makes a difference in some legal procedures), the information here is intended to apply to partners of any primary relationship, married or not, living together, or separated/divorced, heterosexual or homosexual.

Also, the terms "counselor" and "client" are sometimes used for lack of better defined terminology. However, the counseling which is advocated in this manual is reflective of a "women helping women" approach which advances the belief in personal and peer support and in a counseling relationship where power of choice is held by the abused woman.

SECTION I

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An understanding of the oppression of women in general and battered women in particular is essential to effectively help the battered woman cope with her situation and to counter the myths about battering which have reinforced her plight. For this reason we will first present some background information on wife battering.

SOCIETAL ATTITUDES

Male/female roles and expectations of marriage relationships have traditionally given men permission to beat women. Men are expected by themselves and by society to be aggressive, dominant and controlling; women to be passive, accepting and submissive. Our culture reinforces these roles by supporting the idea of man as head of household, and of his wife as part of that household which he may control in any way he deems necessary. From this attitude stem both his permission to use violence and society's reluctance to intervene.

Traditionally, the woman is seen as the one who keeps the home together and who sets aside her own needs to do that. Our society assumes that if she is being beaten, she must not be a "good wife" and so blames her for the abuse; furthermore, if she continues to stay with her mate, she is assumed to enjoy the abuse, or at least not to see it as a problem.

Our society views the nuclear family as the place where family members receive emotional support and problems are solved; therefore problems within the family are considered shameful and private. This creates a barrier against the family seeking help and against intervention by individuals or institutions.

Government policies, violence in the media, military training, and other traditional values support the idea that violence is an acceptable means of problem-solving and that women are appropriate targets. These attitudes are transmitted to individuals via institutions in our society, and in turn influence the response of society to the violent family.

FACTS ABOUT ABUSE

1. Police Response

James Bannon of the Detroit Police Department, who conducted a study on police response to family violence calls, has pointed out that in most police departments, domestic violence calls are rated much lower in priority than any other assault calls, and in some places police will not answer such calls at all unless a weapon is involved.¹ Historically, the police have played the role of mediator or peacemaker and attempted to separate the parties briefly or convince them to reason with each other rather than protecting the victim. In many places there have been no specific guidelines developed for police to follow when answering domestic calls, although many battered women's groups are now developing specific training for police intervention.

Often the desperate victim calls the police expecting protection but is not taken seriously by the officers, and their very presence may enrage the attacker and so result in further violence after they leave. In many states, unless the police witness the assault or the injuries are severe, they cannot arrest the offender. Even if witnessed, many police officers are reluctant to arrest the assailant because they fear the victim's lack of cooperation in pursuing a complaint, which may make the officer liable to be sued for false arrest. To further complicate the problem for the police, they are responding to a situation which is potentially very dangerous to themselves. The FBI reports that 23 percent of the 132 police officers killed in 1974 were slain trying to stop family fights,² and

in 1972, 40 percent of the number injured in the line of duty were responding to a domestic violence call.³ Furthermore, police response has often been ineffective in stopping further violence. A study in Detroit revealed that police had attempted to intervene in previous domestic disturbances in 90% of the cases that eventually became spouse murder cases.⁴

2. The Court System

The victim who decides to proceed with civil or criminal charges against her mate is often discouraged by the criminal justice system, which she does not understand and which often does not regard her case serious. The court process is slow, which makes it inadequate in crisis. And the system itself is based on the premise that a crime committed is a discrete act. Spouse abuse, however, is an ongoing pattern, and the seriousness of a particular incident of violence depends upon its relationship to the ongoing pattern of abuse. When this pattern is not visible to the court system, the result is often lenient penalties, such as fines, lectures, or unsupervised probation, none of which afford the victim any real protection from recurrence of violence. Court penalties are often automatic, depending on such criteria as previous arrest record, and are not tailored to be the most effective solution for a given pattern of abuse. The abuser then realizes he will not really be punished and loses respect for the legal system, as well as feeling that he has permission to continue and increase the abuse.

3. Other Institutions

Other institutions the victim may encounter in seeking help are social service agencies, government agencies such as the Department of Public Welfare, and churches. Because of their traditional attitudes and lack of knowledge about battering they often send the woman back into a dangerous situation and reinforce her helplessness. These agencies are not set up to deal with the multiple needs of a violent family and can offer only partial remedies. Beginning in the 1970's, grassroots feminist groups began establishing hotlines and shelters for battered women, and gradually the problem has gained public attention; many institutions and agencies are now becoming sensitized to the needs of battered women and the entire violent family, and are beginning to offer more effective services.

4. Incidence

Research conducted by Richard Gelles, Murry Straus, and Suzanne Steinmetz has shown that spouse assault is a problem of great magnitude. "Studies indicate that up to 60 percent of all married women are subjected to physical violence by their husbands at some time during the marriage. One study showed that 20 percent of the husbands beat their wives 'regularly' - from daily to six times a year. Another indicated that 10 percent of the men interviewed in a random sample admitted to 'regularly' engaging in 'extreme physical abuse' of their wives."⁵

5. Escalation

Not only is spouse assault a problem of dramatic proportion, it is also a problem of a repetitive nature. The re-occurrence rate is exceptionally high for this crime. In one study, Sue Eisenberg and Pat Micklow found that in the population they interviewed, 90 percent of the beatings began during the first year of marriage and the beatings tended to escalate in frequency and intensity over the years of marriage. All too often the violence escalates until someone is murdered. In 1971, almost one-third of all female homicide victims in California were murdered by their husbands. Nationwide, FBI statistics for 1973 showed that one-fourth of all murders occurred within the family and one-half of these were husband-wife killings.

6. Distribution

Contrary to the popular stereotype of abuse as occurring primarily in low-income, working class or ethnic populations, statistics kept by organizations that work with battered women have shown that battering occurs in every segment of our society. For example, the Battered Women's Project in San Diego, California, reports that, of their clients, 7% of the abusers were unskilled workers, 47% were skilled, 15% were professional/administrative, and 31% were military.⁹ Hotlines report calls from women of all races, nationalities, and religions. Also, homosexual as well as heterosexual women may be battered by current or former mates.

7. Effects on Children

Violence between parents has an effect on the children both

during childhood and in adult life. The Battered Women's Project has kept statistics on the effects of violence on children; the majority of their clients reported an increase in psychological problems in their children after battering occurred,¹⁰ and many children are directly or accidentally abused by either the spouse or the victim.¹¹ Children of violent families often become the abusers and victims of the next generation; the statistics of the Battered Women's Project showed that 57% of the abusers and 27% of the victims were children of violent parents.¹²

THE VICTIMIZATION PROCESS

The individual victim of abuse finds herself in a complex situation. Her own internalized values make her dependent emotionally and economically on her mate, and perpetuate her feelings of worthlessness. Her community does not provide her with resources to either deal with or leave the situation. And she faces the practical problems of survival, often with children and no income. Her situation can be understood as a process of victimization. Her feelings and the kind of support she needs are different depending on which stage of the victimization process she has reached. It can be divided into three stages.

First Stage

In the first stage of victimization, when the first incidents of violence occur, the woman's initial reaction is usually disbelief - how could such a thing be happening to her? How could the man who

loves her do this to her? She also may feel responsible for the incident and begin to feel the shame and embarrassment so characteristic of the battered woman. This keeps her from going anywhere for help, or sharing her experience with family and friends. She is concerned about protecting the family image. In addition, she usually feels hopeful that this is a one-time incident, and that by changing her actions she can prevent further violence - she tries to be more pleasing to her husband, to be a "better wife", to keep the house neater, to stay out of his way when he is angry, and not to express feelings that might make him angry. Her husband is usually remorseful and promises never to hit her again. They both believe him.

It will be helpful to you as a counselor to understand at which stage of the victimization process the battered woman is, since her feelings and the kind of support she needs differ accordingly. A woman in the first stage will rarely call, but if she does, she will probably just ask for information, and will then continue to try to change her situation alone, rather than wanting any ongoing support.

Second Stage

In the second stage of victimization, more incidents of violence occur, and the woman begins to be afraid for her safety and her children's safety. She may still deny that the problem is serious, and may make excuses for her husband and efforts to change herself, but when violent incidents occur, she begins to turn outside for help - to her family, the police, the courts, social service agencies, ministers, hotlines. The response of her family and

friends is very important, because if she has their support and understanding she can withstand a negative response from the community or criminal justice system and begin to find ways to change her situation without moving further down on the victimization scale. A positive response from the criminal justice system, a community agency, or a battered women's hotline at this stage can also provide enough support for her to begin to move out of victimization. However, if she finds no help at this stage she will move further into the victim role and begin to internalize the guilt and sense of failure constantly reinforced by her husband.

In the second stage of victimization, the woman will still be looking to a counselor mainly for information, but will also benefit from some assistance in sorting out her feelings and setting goals. Since she will have begun to blame herself, you can be helpful in reinforcing a positive self-image and giving feedback and positive support. Also, you can help as an advocate in dealing with police, courts, and agencies. With someone to believe in her, the woman in the second stage can basically work it out on her own.

Third Stage

After years of abuse or a series of life-threatening incidents, the victim enters the third stage of the victimization process. This stage is characterized by passivity and hopelessness. She has internalized her anger, and turned it against herself: She feels worthless, guilty, and often suffers from physical problems such as digestive problems, headaches, or asthma. She lives in fear, is often jumpy and has nightmares, yet accepts this as normal and tells without

emotion stories of abuse which arouse fear and outrage in the listeners. Her sense of powerlessness and shame, as well as physical injuries, keep her inside more and more, and she accepts abuse as her lot. Often she becomes depressed and turns her anger against herself, resulting in suicide or self-mutilation. It is also in this stage that some victim's long-repressed rage erupts, and they murder their abusers.

Often women who have grown up as severely battered children are already in the third stage of victimization at the time they marry, and never question their husband's right to beat them or the idea that they are worthless and deserve such treatment. Also, it is in the third stage that many battered women are hospitalized. Lenore Walker, in The Victimization of Women writes, "Battered women have related stories of being treated as though they engaged in 'crazy' behavior. Many have been institutionalized involuntarily. In some cases, they were given so many shock treatments that their memories were impaired permanently. These women were diagnosed as paranoid, evidenced by their suspiciousness and lack of trust of people they feared might say the wrong thing to their batterers.....Many battered women's coping techniques, learned to protect themselves from further harm, have been viewed as evidence of severe intrapsychic personality disorders. My pilot research project has yielded data indicating that battered women suffer from situationally imposed emotional problems due to their victimization. They do not choose to be battered because of some personality deficit but develop behavioral disturbances because of the battering."¹³

When a woman has reached the third stage of victimization, she

needs a great deal more from you than information, support and advocacy. This stage is characterized by an inability to act on her own behalf, and by a distorted sense of her own worth and of reality. Therefore, she is often unable to use information about resources, or even to hear it clearly. You must begin by being supportive, accepting, and encouraging. It will usually take a long time to build trust in this situation, since the woman has learned not to trust either herself or her world, and is very isolated. As she begins to trust you and have hope of changing her life, she will often need a lot of help in structuring her actions, learning to make decisions and plans, and will need you to take quite an active advocacy role at first. You can help by planning with her specific, small tasks at which she can succeed, by reinforcing reality (both positive realities about the woman's worth and negative reality about the seriousness of her situation), and by giving her lots of reassurance. Often she will also need individual feminist therapy as well as hotline and group support, and after she has begun to trust you such a referral can be made.

TYPES OF ABUSERS

Men who abuse their partners have many things in common, but there are also many factors that may vary, and the characteristics they have in common may vary in degree and magnitude. For the purpose of discussion we have identified four types of abusers, but it is important to remember that no person will fit perfectly into any category. Abusers, of course, come from all races, classes, ethnic

groups, religions, and occupations. Traits they may have in common include insecurity, feelings of powerlessness, and an inability to accept weakness or mistakes in themselves or tolerate them in others. They are often strong defenders of the traditional male stereotype, but feel inferior about their own ability to live up to the image, although they would not admit it. Many have been trained in the military and have learned how to hit so that no bruises show. They are usually very possessive and jealous of their mates. Most will deny that abuse has happened or is a problem, instead saying that they "just slapped her around a little", and will rationalize the abuse. Many abusers have a basic mistrust and hatred of women.

It is also important to understand that many abusers of all four types appear very calm and rational in public, even to police officers at the door moments after inflicting a severe beating. They have a Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde pattern, only showing their violent, irrational side at home. Some of society's most disturbed men, including rapists and men who are mentally ill and eventually become dangerous, often first show their symptoms at home. At first their bizarre or dangerous behavior is only apparent to their wives, who cannot get anyone to believe them because their husbands are skilled at appearing rational when necessary. Some women in this situation have become so upset that they have been seen as being "ill" and have been institutionalized, until their husbands' actions became evident outside the home. Although the wives of these seriously disturbed men may be in the most serious danger, wives of many "ordinary" abusers will testify to their husbands' ability to be reasonable and charming to everyone except their wives. For this reason it is

vital for you as counselor to take the woman seriously and function as her advocate.

1. Rage from Within

The first specific type of abuser is the one whose violent behavior comes from "rage from within". He was often abused or neglected as a child, or suffered some other type of trauma such as wartime experiences. His violence stems from this rage, and will find an excuse and an outlet no matter what his partner does. This is the man who one day will beat her because the dinner is late and the next day beat her because it is early, although she serves it at the same time both nights. This abuser will sometimes attack his wife while she is sleeping. He blames his rages on his wife's behavior, but no matter how much she changes she can never please him. Thus he uses his rage to maintain his control over her and wants her to stay because he needs her to give him an excuse to unleash his anger. Although his rage comes from within himself, he does not know how to control it, nor does he see that he has any responsibility to control it as long as she accepts it. He usually accepts his own rationalizations and excuses, choosing not to control it or assume any responsibility for it unless or until he is forced to by the courts or by his mate's leaving or threatening to leave him.

2. Rightful Privilege

The second type of abuser is the man who really believes that it is not only his right but his duty to hit his wife when she "gets out of line". He believes that women are inferior, and need to be

controlled and punished. He is never sorry for his actions and sees all beatings as solely her responsibility - if she were a better wife, he would not have to punish her. The roots of such an attitude of a man toward his wife can be found in Roman family law, in which the actual word "familia" referred to the sum total of a man's goods and property, including his wife. Later, English common law, from which our marriage laws are derived, limited a husband's right to beat his wife to the use of a stick no thicker than his thumb (the "rule of thumb").¹⁴ Unfortunately, there are still men who think of their wives as their property and treat them accordingly.

3. Interpersonal Conflict

The third type of abuser is the man who does not know how to handle conflict. Usually with this type of abuser, the violence erupts out of a conflict between the partners, and both may be involved in physical violence. These people often do not acknowledge their feelings until they have built to the point of explosion. Often they have learned in their childhood homes that physical fights are the normal style of relating and do not know any other way of resolving conflict. They are usually very impulsive and erupt into violence without thinking about possible consequences of their actions. Often they were over-indulged as children and never internalized limits on their anger. These couples usually have a consciously or unconsciously agreed-upon norm of violence which is acceptable to them, and will only consider the behavior abusive if it gets "out of hand", or beyond this norm.

4. Physiological Cause

The fourth type of abuser is the man whose problem stems from an illness, such as a neurological problem, a brain tumor, an injury, or a chemical imbalance. This type of cause involves a personality change, and should be suspected when a man who has never been abusive begins to batter.

THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN ABUSER AND VICTIM

An understanding of the dynamics operating between the batterer and the victim can help the counselor understand what the battered woman is experiencing and help clarify the most effective action for her to take. The process between any two people is unique, of course, but there are several broad patterns which seem to recur with some batterers. We will look at these patterns in terms of balance of power, explosion of pent-up rage, handling conflict, and dependence.

1. Balance of Power

In an abusive relationship, the woman is almost always in a subordinate position to the man. He carries the traditional male power image to an extreme and often dictates every aspect of her life. However, even though he expects her obedience, he also often looks to her to stop his violence, or keep it within "acceptable limits". As a woman in this oppressive position begins to make positive changes in her life, to take power in the relationship, both of the partners are often uncomfortable with this change. The man feels it as a threat to his authority, and the woman feels she is

stepping out of her place. Yet ultimately the only way to stop the violence is for her to take a stand against it, and to insist on setting limits in a way that lets him know she will not back down, whether this be simply by insisting that it is a problem, by taking him to court, or by moving out. She will need a lot of support to do these things, since she is taking on a new role not supported by traditional societal values, by her own self-image, or by the role she has previously taken in the relationship. It is important to understand that setting limits and stopping the violence does not involve simply a few strong acts on her part, but means changing the whole balance of power in the relationship.

2. Tension and Release

When the battering arises from pent-up rage in the batterer rather than from conflict between the partners, the woman must still understand her role in order to change the pattern. First, although she may not know what is making him upset, she can almost always feel the tension building up. She knows, after a few incidents, that he will always find an excuse to release his rage because he needs to, and that she cannot stop it. Sometimes she will provoke him just to get it over with, and is always relieved when he finally "blows up", because then he again becomes apologetic and loving, and things can get "back to normal". A woman who has learned to live with this cycle always hopes to learn a better way to handle his rages, to anticipate and avoid them, and finds it hard to confront him because she understands that he has a problem and feels it is up to her as the more calm one to help him with it. She often will

not seek help until she is seriously injured or the children are in danger. She needs to realize that ultimately she cannot change or help him, but that he must be held accountable for his rages and must make a commitment to learn how to change, rather than simply making promises that he does not know how to keep. Her role in facilitating this change is to refuse to accept his violence even though she may understand it.

3. Conflict

For the couples whose violence stems from interpersonal conflict, the root of the problem lies in not knowing how to communicate or handle conflict constructively. Either or both may not know how to assert or clearly communicate their needs, desires, or expectations of the relationship, and they also keep their anger over little things to themselves. Without clear communication, both come to feel misunderstood, and little angers simmer until they feel justified in raging at each other and becoming violent. It is helpful for people in this cycle to understand the difference between the right to be angry and the right to be violent - often they have never learned ways to express angry feelings clearly without raging and hitting. Many of these couples can benefit greatly and end the violence in their relationships by couple counseling where they learn better communication and conflict resolution skills and learn to think about the consequences before reacting impulsively to their feelings.

4. Dependence

Another dynamic operating between many abusive couples is their

dependence on each other. The woman is dependent on the man financially and emotionally, getting her sense of identity and self-worth from him. However, he is dependent on her for nurturing and emotional support. This type of man often feels inadequate and powerless in the world, but keeps up a strong front outside the house. At home, he wants his wife to be dependent on him so that he can feel powerful, but also uses home as a place where he can get his emotional needs met. Also, the partners are dependent upon each other for physical touching and for sex. Both are motivated to stay in the relationship for these reasons. Often if the woman in this situation threatens to leave, the man will threaten to commit suicide or to drink to excess, since he feels he cannot survive without her.

SECTION II

COUNSELING SKILLS

FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

The counseling model we are presenting in this manual is based on a feminist philosophy which makes five basic assumptions about the nature of the counseling process.

1. Feminist counseling views all "personal" problems in the context of a sexist society and helps women understand the real oppression and socially defined roles which reinforced their victimization and their feelings of powerlessness. In counseling battered women, a large part of your role will be to communicate to your clients this vision and understanding through the facts about battering already presented. The difference between your own oppression as a woman and that of the battered woman is essentially one of degree. The issues the abused woman must struggle with - such as balance of power of relationships, being viewed as her husband's property, and finding her own worth as a woman in a sexist society - are the same issues that you and all women face daily to some degree. Given that woman's particular life experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and resources, you might also be struggling with all the problems of battering.

2. In a feminist model the woman coming for help is assumed to be a basically healthy person who needs understanding, information and support in order to make changes in her life. She is responsible for her own life decisions, and your role is to help her tap her own strengths and abilities, and to recognize and experience her potential as a woman. You as counselor can put forward the conscious

expectation that she will take charge of her own life, even though she may be in the habit of being dependent, will not believe at first that she can make decisions, and will appear to be unable to do so. You can help her learn to, and encourage her to act on her own competence rather than allowing yourself to see her as helpless and tell her what to do.

3. The women involved in feminist counseling are assumed to have a reciprocal relationship between equals. We will use the terms "counselor" and "client" to define different roles which are interchangeable depending on the skills and needs of the individuals involved. It is basic to the feminist philosophy that the term "counselor" does not connote power, value, or authority, and when you take on the role of "counselor" you also assume responsibility for communicating this to your "clients". You may have special training in a particular mode of therapy, and you can use this if you and the client agree that it is appropriate - however in a peer relationship you should see this as the sharing and teaching of skills rather than as a taking over of thinking for the client. As a peer you see yourself as a woman sharing the position of your client in society, and involve yourself in the counseling process by openly sharing your skills and your own experience which might be helpful to her in taking charge of her own life.

4. In the feminist model it is assumed that women are best able to help other women overcome the societal barriers, and several years of counseling women victims of domestic violence have confirmed that

other women can best provide support as this time. Many battered women are defensive toward all men because of their traumatic experiences with their mate and cannot feel safe with a male counselor. Also, their sense of identity is usually centered in their mate, and through feminist counseling they can begin to break this dependence and learn to receive emotional support from other women and from within themselves. Male counselors, however, can be helpful in couple counseling or at a later time when the woman is no longer in danger and has gained some perspective on her victimization.

5. Finally, as a feminist counselor who is aware of the role of society in shaping personal attitudes and reinforcing personal problems, you will want to become conscious of your own cultural biases and stereotypes in order to effectively support all your clients. We all unconsciously segregate others according to their race, their ethnic or economic group, or other arbitrary divisions. It is also easy to assume that all your clients have the same value system, religious beliefs, and lifestyle that you do, or to feel that they should have. In order to counter these attitudes in yourself, you can become sensitive to your internalized oppression - attitudes based on sexist, racist, or classist myths which you have accepted about yourself, and which you can learn to reject both for yourself and for the women you counsel. And you can actively learn about the real differences in life experience which affect women from cultural backgrounds different from your own. Most of the following information about cultural differences was compiled by the Battered Women's Project of San Diego, California, and is quoted by permission of Carol Angell, Project Director.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

1. Black Women

"...the reasons given to Black women by Black men for why they batter their wives or girlfriends are often similar to those given to the majority of our non-Black clients...The response of Black women to the violence they have experienced also cover the broad range of reactions that most battered women exhibit... Nevertheless, the factors influencing marital conflict and domestic violence in Black families may be unique to the particular situation they face in American society. Racial oppression plus a lack of economic power blend together to make marriage a more difficult struggle for many Black families...We know that frustration with one's social condition and a sense of being powerless contributes to the reasons that men batter their wives. Although Black men do not have a monopoly on such frustration, because of this double-edged sword of racism and economic deprivation, they may be more seriously affected than White men.

"...Since the cultural norms of our society encourage all men to exert male dominance in order to gain respect, this tends to encourage domestic violence and puts Black men in a precarious position which (Muriel) Rollins (of the San Diego Black Federation) has aptly described:

White men have the opportunity to assert their power (which they consider manhood) in many different ways such as protecting and providing for their families, and making money. The greater opportunity they have to assert themselves outside the home, the less power they need to legitimize their dominance within their homes. The structure of society does not allow Black men to assert themselves to any large extent outside their homes. They are not necessarily the full providers for their families, nor can they really protect their families. So for them to be men they must dominate their spouses and children.

"From our information on clients who called the BWP, we would like to hypothesize that there are some sources of conflict not as prevalent in Black households that are present in White families. For example, it seems clear that a wife's employment outside the home does not pose such a threat to Black men as it does to many White batterers. In addition, the Rollins study, as well as our own research, indicates the possibility that drugs and particularly alcohol may be a mayor source of conflict in White homes where abuse occurs, but they are not necessarily the most important in Black families.

"...Although the reasons given by some of our Black clients for remaining in the violent home are similar to the other battered women we encountered, these obstacles may have a different significance to Black women. In most Black families, the husband is the primary breadwinner, and with their economic situation historically in jeopardy, Black women may not just be giving up certain luxuries as some White women may be doing in divorcing their husband, but their family's very survival is at stake. Unlike White women who have been traditionally conditioned by their culture to depend on a man's protection, the Black woman's fear of making it alone is possibly based less on the loss of this protective shield than on the harsh realities of inadequate education, finding a job, and supporting children.

"In addition to the possibility of losing an important means of financial support, the Black woman in today's society has to face the grave issue of finding a compatible mate should she choose to marry after leaving her violent spouse. According to Staples and others, the number of available Black males for marriage is low, due to various

factors such as a higher rate of mortality and inter-marriage...

"Clearly, there is a need for more services for both the abused spouse and the batterer in the Black community, including more legal and counseling services. Programs need to be instituted that will help Black women learn of the availability of these agencies. Counselors should be sensitive to the fact that in many instances, Black women have a hesitancy to share their problems with others. This may be due to a lack of trust, or the feeling that those who listen can not really help. It is extremely important for counselors to build trust in such clients so that an avenue of genuine assistance is available to them. In this respect, churches can play an important role in disseminating services to battered women, since they are frequently a center for publicizing the community's concerns, and already offer informal counseling to many people.

"In addition, there is an important need for research dealing with the ramifications of domestic violence in the Black community. This research might provide valuable insights as to the factors in Black culture that contribute to or affect marital violence...we need more information on the validity of current theories about spouse abuse in the Black community."

2. Chicana Women

(Some Spanish-speaking communities have their own social service agencies.) "The effectiveness of these Latino organizations in dealing with battered women is sometimes limited by the strong emphasis that the culture places on family privacy. In addition, because the Latino woman often lacks the opportunity to obtain employment, or

does not have the transportation or income that would allow her to spend more time out of the home, she is forced to become extremely dependent on her husband. Because of her dependence, she is reluctant to talk to outsiders about domestic violence, which leads to secrecy and avoidance of the problem. Even the personnel in these ethnic-identified agencies sometimes have trouble admitting that wife abuse may exist in their minority community, for fear this admission may reinforce some of the negative cultural stereotypes falsely adhered to by the majority.

"Another difficulty for Chicanas in attempting to obtain social services other than those previously mentioned, is that the Spanish-speaking woman, who is isolated from the dominant culture by language, often has difficulty finding adequate bi-lingual or bi-cultural representatives within these larger agencies. Furthermore, because of her traditionally dependent role, the Latino woman is often kept ignorant of what services exist and what legal or economic rights she does possess.

"...It is important to remember that the role and needs of the Latino woman are rapidly changing. The younger girls are influenced as much by the outside culture as they are by their own families, and often they stay together and help one another more with their problems than their mothers were inclined to do. In spite of these changes, the majority of women often follow the more expected role models. Because the woman is financially dependent on her husband, her whole world tends to center around the home and she is valued primarily as a mother-figure. If she is being beaten and tries to leave her situation, she must go against deep-rooted cultural norms.

"Even the close extended family ties within the Latino community are often more of a hindrance than a help. Sometimes the family may be instrumental in providing support and protection. However, out of fear of blackening the family name, being disloyal to their husband, or experiencing personal embarrassment, Chicano women avoid mentioning their plight to either family members. For example, a woman who goes to her parents, even when battered by her husband, is considered a failure and loses face in the community. With the exception of siblings who do sometimes help, this means that a potentially valuable support network is not used.

"The Catholic Church. The Catholic Church could play a significant part in helping the battered Latino woman, and sometimes where the situation is very serious, the priest will encourage the woman to leave. Although the Catholic Church is changing and becoming more sensitive to these issues, there still remains a residue of traditional views among many priests. In the past, the Catholic Church tended to emphasize the Latino woman's motherly role to the exclusion of other roles, while at the same time promising a future for her 'in heaven', with little compensation in her day-to-day life. Even today, many priests maintain that a woman's first responsibility is to keep her family together. Here again, by stressing marriage vows and condemning divorce and separation, some priests will indirectly encourage women to endure physical abuse rather than break up the family. In addition, the religious controversy over birth control frequently leads to larger families with more children and more work that keeps the battered woman feeling completely trapped in her home."

3. "ILLEGAL ALIEN" WOMEN

"If the battered woman in the traditional Latino family is hidden from view, the position of the undocumented alien woman is even worse. It is difficult for most North Americans to appreciate the extreme poverty and lack of opportunity that causes many Mexicans to leave their country and come here...

"Understandably, some Mexican women hope to enhance their lives by coming to the United States with an American who promises to marry and provide for them. Once here, she becomes extremely vulnerable to threats of abandonment, and can become the victim of beatings with few alternatives to remedy the situation.

"One of the most common dilemmas is the case of the Mexican woman who thinks she is being immigrated when in fact either her husband has lied, or the Mexican marriage is not legally valid. Years later, the husband can marry a new woman, thus leaving his first Mexican "wife" with the choice of returning penniless to Mexico with her children, or tragically leaving her Mexican children in this country and returning to Mexico alone. Naturally, a woman would rather put up with many years of physical abuse than to be faced with abandonment or loss of her children. Similarly, if a woman who has been seriously battered returns to Mexico to get divorced, she may later find that such a divorce was not legal.

"The immigration system is very complicated and confusing, even to most lawyers. Rules change and policies and practices are continuously altered. If the illegal alien woman who has had children by an American man decides to leave her husband, she can remain in the U.S. only if she has resided here for seven years. In most cases,

the woman must leave the country in 30 days, which leads to complicated child custody battles. Sometimes an attorney can help by having her 'file for a change of status', thus postponing the immediate deportation.

"It is extremely important that counselors working with the abused Latino women know from the beginning what a woman's immigration status is. Once a woman has been approved by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, even if she gets divorced, her husband cannot have her deported. Without this approval, if there is a possibility of deportation, legal advice must be sought.

"Social agencies should emphasize to battered Latino women the importance of calling the police no matter what their immigration status is. Although the woman's fear may be great, the police do not usually get involved in immigration problems when called for a domestic violence dispute.

"If a woman is in the process of getting permanent residency papers, she should never be encouraged to go on welfare herself, since this will count against her. However, an illegal alien woman with American-born children can apply for welfare for her children. She must show the birth certificates of her U.S. born children and clearly state that she is not the recipient. Advocacy on the part of the woman is important here, since many women, out of embarrassment, will sign papers they cannot read and unknowingly falsify their record."

4. Asian Women

"...In order to understand the situation of battered women in the Asian communities, it is important to emphasize that there are (many) distinct Pan Asian groups in (America), each with its own language, cultural heritage, and adjustment problems. Some groups, like the Chinese, have deep historical roots in (America), while the Vietnamese, who are more recent immigrants, have very different obstacles confronting them. In addition, the previous conflicts between some Asian groups...have not been resolved upon entry into the U.S. and there presently exists a definite hierarchy of cultural groups with accompanying rivalries and conflicts...

"Having emphasized the diversity of cultural experiences, it is safe to say that in spite of these differences, many Asian groups do share certain basic attitudes that influence the treatment of battered women in these settings. The Asian communities are closely knit and somewhat in-bred which makes the recognition of domestic violence more difficult. Particularly for the older generation, there is a fear of bringing shame onto the family group if they talk about their problems. Some Asian women who are married to American servicemen are afraid they will be deported if they admit to being battered, while the more recent arrivals like the Vietnamese are not familiar with our laws and are afraid to call the police.

"Accompanying the obvious language problems of new immigrants is the fact that many women have no marketable skills, and are uncomfortable with such practices as paying rents and receiving welfare assistance. Many of these people dream of going home someday, saving their money scrupulously while avoiding a larger commitment to their

new culture. These strains can result in severe family tensions. The men are also unfamiliar with American ways and in their work often resort to a more humble demeanor when criticized or humiliated by their bosses. For some men, it is not culturally appropriate to employ aggressive behavior in such situations and the inward stress that this causes may be turned on the wife at home.

"There are other problems which affect the more acculturated Asian families. The large extended family plays a prominent role in Asian communities. If a woman is beaten by her husband she is often held responsible by other family members since a family's problems are seen as exemplifying a woman's personal weaknesses. Sometimes these women feel disloyal in talking about their husbands to in-laws who have treated them well. The extended family is the primary support system in Asian communities, and if a woman is beaten, divorce or separation seem totally inconceivable to her.

"From our conversation with the younger and more acculturated Asian women, they suffer much less from the traditional restrictions and are more receptive to receiving assistance from outside the immediate family. However, as more Asian women's consciousness is raised, thus disrupting the expectations of their men, the threat of battering may increase.

"Many of the Asian women who are victims of domestic violence are married to United States servicemen. The Asian military wives who find themselves alone and shut off from their families while living in a foreign country need continuous supportive services. These women have few friends or cultural ties, and suffer from extreme personal isolation. They are falsely threatened by their husbands

with deportation, and frequently ostracized from their own cultural groups...The American-born husband will sometimes threaten his Asian wife with what he wrongly believes is his legal right to custody over the children as a way of keeping her in the marriage. All too often, the Asian wives' only link with the new culture comes from his perspective and they may not even know it is illegal for their husband to beat them nor how to appeal for help.

"...Asian social services...within the Pan Asian communities... could be an extremely valuable link in gathering statistics on battered women and helping them find shelter...Pan Asian counselors could be briefed in training sessions on the nature of spouse abuse, and intervention techniques, and be updated on the latest resources available...A more extensive list of translators and interpreters, specifically trained to work with battered women, could be compiled ...(and) there needs to be hired a greater number of bi-lingual/bi-cultural staff...to work with Asian women..."

5. Native American Women

"It is important to remember that in all probability battering, like child abuse and alcoholism, was traditionally unheard of among most Native American tribes. As far as we know, Indian women today are affected by wife-battering neither more nor less than other women ...however, their needs are different in terms of services.

"Although abused women share in a common predicament, women living on reservations have certain additional problems to cope with in this regard. Because the populations on each reservation are small, the majority of people are related either directly or indirectly

through marriage. Any action taken by a woman to defend herself quickly becomes public knowledge, and the extreme embarrassment this causes a woman and her family in the community often prevents her from seeking help. In addition, the relative geographic isolation of (most) reservations...hinders the delivery of services.

"Like anywhere else, numerous factors contribute to domestic violence, and it was often pointed out to us that Indian women sometimes found it easier than their men to find employment off the reservation. For example, with the offering of new courses in secretarial training and the greater demand for such skills, many of the younger women become more economically independent. The exposure of these women to new and often conflicting values off the reservation, and their increased self-esteem coupled with the high male unemployment, has produced serious strains in some families. In such circumstances, many husbands are unable to express their feelings of frustration, for fear of showing weakness to their wives, and resort to battering as an alternative outlet.

"Another problem for Indian women, particularly the older generation who live in the more remote rural areas, is that they can be beaten without anyone noticing. Isolated from their neighbors, it is even more difficult for them to get help. Also, since families know each other so well, they are even more afraid to take sides in family disputes and tend not to interfere.

"After she has been abused, should an Indian woman decide to leave her husband, this would usually mean leaving the reservation as well. This is hardly an alternative for most women, since it would not only separate them from friends and relatives, but would mean

going into an unfamiliar environment where their very identity could be in jeopardy. At the time of the battering when a woman's defenses are down, and her self-esteem is low, such a radical change would be difficult to even consider.

"...It was suggested that outreach counselors and a hotline be set up in towns near the reservations and that these be staffed by trained non-Indians, or Indians from distant reservations to protect the client's anonymity in the local community. Improved transportation facilities would also be a critical service and off-reservation shelters would be advisable to help relieve family tensions.

"As suggested by the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women in their report on Battered Women and Children (1977), given the consent of each particular tribe, it might be beneficial to include in the tribal codes provisions outlining the rights of children and women, and provide effective mechanisms for the enforcement and protection of those rights. Since such measures would be protected by tribal ordinances that could not be enforced by the police off the reservation, these ordinances would have only limited effect if the tribal population decided to ignore them.

"Most important is the need to improve cooperation and coordination between federal, state, and county agencies to help fill in the gaps in services for abused women in these more isolated areas."

6. European Women

European women, especially older women, often have been brought up more strictly and traditionally than American women, and do not question the role of the "good wife". Therefore their sense of

failure if they are beaten may be extreme. Also, the extended family is still very important in European communities. Thus, the battered woman's distance from her family increases her sense of isolation. On the other hand, the family often would criticize her for being beaten and would not support her in leaving an abusive mate. As in the case of the Chicana, the Catholic Church and the strong religious upbringing of most European women reinforce these values.

A further and more obvious problem is the woman's language barrier and lack of knowledge of American society and institutions, such as Welfare, the court system, or even banks. Even women who have been in this country for many years have often been kept isolated by husbands who have been their only link to life in the new country and have strictly controlled their knowledge of and participation in American life. After many years the woman may still speak English with difficulty and be unable to read or write it.

If possible, an organization for battered women should have counselors available to speak as many languages as possible. Also, they should compile lists of translators. Many ethnic sub-cultures have social and service organizations in their communities. Again, these closely-knit communities sometimes initially present more of a barrier than an aid to the battered woman since they support traditional values and may ostracize her from her only cultural associations if her situation becomes known. Therefore it is important to assess the amount of real support available in these service organizations, educate their workers to the realities of battering, and protect your client's confidentiality. Once they understand the facts, these groups can often provide not only support with the

immediate problem but ongoing social/cultural ties.

The advocacy role of the counselor is essential in helping the foreign woman overcome her language and cultural barriers in order to use available resources and develop her independence.

7. Military Wives

"...military families do have some characteristics that are directly attributable to their place in a military establishment. Included in these are: the shifts in residence caused by changes of duty; or the difficult re-entry problems of fathers who have been absent when their children were young; and the fact that these families are likely to reside in communities predominantly composed of other military families. In some cases this lifestyle may strengthen a family's ability to cope with stress, but not always.

"Where wife-beating occurs, separation from one's family of origin tends to eliminate a valuable support system. If the dependent is unaware of civilian resources, and reluctant to receive help from the (military), she may become completely isolated and despondent...

"The abused woman may want nothing to do with the military system either because she knows 'they won't do anything' or because 'I don't want to wreck my husband's career; if he gets busted, I won't get any allotment or money and then how will the kids and I eat? Besides, he's threatened me with more violence if I tell.' Another problem is that the battered woman is often very reluctant to 'buck the system' when she is turned down once in her quest for help from military authorities, she quits trying.

"Although there is an old assumption that the military command

has a great deal of power over its men, in actuality, the U.S. Navy for example, has relinquished to the local authorities its authority over its men in civil affairs. Domestic problems, as long as they do not interfere with the serviceman's ability to perform his duty, are not likely to be dealt with by the military command.

"The commanding officer of the military spouse abuser must realize that, sooner or later, an unhealthy home situation is going to be reflected in the abuser's work. The abuser needs to know that his behavior at home is unacceptable to society and to the military, and should be changed.

(As a counselor, you need to be aware of services available through the military establishments in your area, and your organization should include military bases in its community education and advocacy efforts.) "Generally, it is felt that the chaplain is the one who can coordinate efforts to help both the abused and the abuser. (S)he is the one who can gracefully and tactfully facilitate healthful change in troubled military families...Clear procedures can direct the chaplain to obtain help in protecting and supporting the rights of the abused woman and her children. The chaplain and the commanding officer can cooperate to make sure the military abuser assumes responsibility for his actions and is directed to receive counseling.

"In terms of receiving medical attention, the abused military wife can seek treatment at (a military hospital) emergency room. At that time it is advisable for her to inform the doctor of the cause of her injury. (S)he should then direct that a security report be taken. In addition, she can request support from the American Red Cross (ARC)...The ARC has the potential, but may not always be able

to coordinate support services for battered women including counseling, housing, and financial or legal assistance. After obtaining the wife's written consent, the ARC might also be able to assist with emergency communication to the serviceman as deemed necessary by medical authorities or others involved.

"(Some military) Legal Assistance Offices (are) confined to offering the dependent legal assistance in the form of advocacy, but (may not) represent these dependents in court. (They may) advise on allotment problems and child non-support problems, and (may) act to set in motion procedures to retrieve recommended support for dependents...

"(In the Navy) the Navy Relief Society (NRS) has social workers available to counsel battered women and can, if it decides the case has merit, arrange emergency shelter and/or send a battered woman back to her relatives. This can be done only with the abusing spouse's knowledge, since he must pay for transportation. The Navy Relief Society also has a visiting nurse available if needed.

"An important link between the military wife and the military system is the ombudsman program. The ombudsman is a dependent spouse who is knowledgeable about community resources and can provide information and assistance to the navy spouse in her command. (This service exists in the Navy; similar services may exist in other branches of the military in your area.) This is a two-way communication link; she is in a position to present grievances to the commanding officer. The ombudsman can be the first source of aid for the troubled military wife; she is from the wife's own peer group, she can be a friend, and she is non-threatening and supportive. She is not a counselor, but can refer the wife to counseling services."

9. Low Income and Middle Income Women

There are some differences in the ways that low-income women and middle-income women are affected by battering.

First, the woman from a low-income background has often had to work from an early age and has some job skills and a sense that she can survive on her own if necessary. She may also have knowledge of the Welfare system and other resources if her family or friends have used them in the past. Also, she may be less concerned about protecting her husband's reputation or career if he holds a low-prestige job. Thus she will be more likely to call police and use the court system. Although she will probably be familiar with community resources and institutions, she will probably not be taken very seriously by them due to class prejudices of the workers and lack of adequate staffing in low-income communities. Therefore your role as advocate will help her in wading through the bureaucratic maze and in insisting that her case be given attention.

In contrast, the middle-income woman will likely be very concerned for her husband's career and will be reluctant for anyone to find out about the abuse, especially if he has a high standing in the community. For this reason, she is not likely to turn to public agencies or the courts, but may have access to private medical and legal help. Also, she has often been more sheltered than the low-income woman, especially if she is from a family with money, and may never have had to work. She may have no job skills and also no access to or knowledge of how to handle her husband's financial resources. If the money is all under her husband's control, she may be completely without personal financial resources, yet unable to

get help from agencies which base eligibility for services on the total family income. She will need much practical help from you in such areas as places to stay, finding sympathetic lawyers, and developing job skills, as well as advocacy with officials who know her husband and who may be unwilling to believe her. She will also need help in building her sense of herself as an independent, worthwhile person.

10. Lesbian Women

On first thought, homosexuality may seem to have no relationship to wife battering. However, some clients who call you will have had homosexual experiences in the past or may be presently living with a Lesbian partner. They may be experiencing abuse by a male ex-lover or ex-husband or by their current lover - abuse does exist within Lesbian relationships. The situation of the homosexual battered woman is characterized by dual oppression - all the issues which apply to battered women in general are magnified by society's prejudice against the homosexual minority. The Lesbian facing a problem often receives criticism from her family and society, which in fact may respond with hostility if she is known to be homosexual. She may face loss of her job and home as well as social ostracism.

As a counselor, you must be careful not to make judgments about anyone's sexual preference or lifestyle, just as you do not communicate other types of prejudice to your clients. Many Lesbians do not call battered women's hotlines because they fear the attitudes of the counselors there, but they may call if the counselors are open to listening to them and supporting their right to choose their own

lifestyle. Also, a woman in a homosexual relationship who calls usually will not share information about her sexual identity right away - if your attitude is judgmental you will not be able to form a trusting relationship with her or to help her in any sphere - and you may never know why. In addition to your basic counseling skills, you need to be willing to learn about the Lesbian experience and to be aware of and try to overcome your own fears of homosexuality in order to be a sensitive listener and effective counselor for the Lesbian woman. You also need to know of any referral sources in the gay community in order to direct callers to the most effective services and to an ongoing support system.

11. Handicapped Women

A woman with a physical handicap who is battered is usually even more isolated and dependent than most battered women. She may depend on her husband for physical care and mobility, especially if she is not connected to services and organizations for the handicapped. Even if she is aware of available services she may feel that her husband is the only one who would ever care for her, even though he abuses her. In addition, if she cannot get around easily, she is much more vulnerable when he does become violent because she cannot get away from him. If she cannot see, for example, he can torment her by simply moving things around so that she will be likely to fall.

Besides counseling the handicapped battered woman will need practical help in developing new support systems for dealing with her particular handicap if she decides to leave her husband. You should be open in asking her what practical help she needs and putting her

in touch with the appropriate agencies, as well as being sensitive to her needs and offering practical assistance when you are with her. For instance, if she is in a wheelchair, and is going to court, you can find out in advance which entrances and restrooms are wheelchair-accessible, and arrange for parking near accessible entrances.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD COUNSELOR

In giving support to the battered woman, it is much more important to communicate understanding and caring than to have any particular background or qualifications. In fact, professional training can sometimes foster the attitude that you are the "expert" who tells the client what to do, and if you have such training you may have to guard against assuming an attitude of superiority. In the peer feminist mode, your goal is to help the woman take back control of her life, not transfer it from batterer to counselor. Certain qualities can help you to be an effective counselor.

Empathy

If you have experienced battering yourself, you will probably be a very effective counselor because you know from personal experience what the woman is feeling and why it is hard for her to leave. The only stumbling block is that you may find that you do not yet have enough emotional distance from your own battering, and that listening to someone else's story will bring back your own past when you thought it no longer bothered you. If you find yourself talking about your own abuse more than listening to your client, or insisting that she

handle her situation the same way you handled yours, you probably need more time and someone to talk to in order to sort out your own experience. There is no reason to feel bad if this happens; you have as much right to good support to work through your feelings as anyone who calls on a hotline.

If you have not experienced battering, you can be an effective counselor if you are willing to develop empathy for the woman experiencing battering, to imagine yourself in her situation, and to understand the similarities between your experience and hers. The more you learn about battering and the more you really listen to your clients, the more empathy you will develop and the better counselor you will be.

Genuine Concern

The person who is genuinely concerned and communicates this to the woman seeking help will be the most effective in the counselor role. One of the main ways to communicate genuine concern is by listening carefully to the woman so as to understand her unique situation, and letting her know that you are hearing her. No woman fits the "profile of the victim" perfectly, so guard against making assumptions. Another way to communicate your concern is by sharing useful information from your own experience if this seems appropriate. Such sharing can provide ideas about handling the situation, as well as breaking down isolation.

Warmth and Acceptance

Your approach to your client must be warm and accepting. She will not be feeling strong when she calls you, and it may be a big

step for her to call for help the first time. Therefore a critical or cold attitude may discourage her and turn her away without any help. You can only begin to establish a trusting relationship by being accepting of all her feelings and letting her know that you will try to help her and be her advocate no matter what her situation may be. Let your caller know that you believe in her worth as a human being no matter what.

Honesty

Another essential quality is honesty. Often the woman has been to various agencies for help and does not trust either the sincerity of the counselor or the idea that any concrete help is available. Be realistic in giving her accurate information about her options. If you don't know the answer to a particular question (especially legal questions), be honest but tell her how to find out or say that you will find the answer - and then follow through. In helping her assess her options, be realistic - don't raise false hopes. Also, be realistic in terms of what commitments you make to the client. Once made, commitments to action on the client's behalf must be kept.

Patience

Patience is a quality which may be very difficult, especially in working with clients in the third stage of victimization. You must realize that it has taken years, perhaps a lifetime, for a woman to reach this stage of victimization, and it may take years for her to change. Many women will never make the changes that you would wish for them, and may be satisfied with situations which would be totally

unacceptable to you, but it is still your role to support each woman in making her own life decisions.

Many women decide to return to their abusive mates because change is too painful, or to be sure that there really is no hope for the relationship, or because of their ambivalence. Many will later leave again, perhaps permanently. The client's decision of what to do in a given situation is often not what you would see as an ideal solution, and you should tell her what you would see as a better choice and why, but nevertheless support her right to make her own choice, and remain available if her choice doesn't work. It is easy to expect too much, to expect every client to change her life to fit your vision of her ideal, but you must patiently tune in to where each individual woman is, what her values and experiences are, what resources and skills she has, what stage of her life she is in, and what changes are realistic for her. If your support helps her move only one step forward toward a better image of herself and toward her own definition of a better life, you have a right to feel good about your work.

COUNSELING SKILLS: PRACTICAL HELP WITH HER SITUATION

Getting Good Background Information

In order to realistically assess the options, good background information on the client's situation is critical. However, some clients will be unwilling to discuss their situation in detail until they first receive some general information and feel reassured from your attitude that you will not be critical, so you should never push for information. On the other hand, a client's question of "Why do you ask that?"

is often not as much a reluctance to divulge things as a curiosity about the relevance of the information, and once you tell her why a particular piece of information is important, she will most likely be glad to discuss it. In actuality almost everything about the client's life situation may be relevant to an understanding of what actions will be effective with her particular mate and also in terms of court actions. With experience, you will learn to be direct in asking questions and in explaining clearly why they are important, and you will be surprised that most clients are relieved to have someone to think with them about all the tangled details of their lives, once they are assured of confidentiality and your sincere concern.

There are several specific areas of information which are relevant, and which you should ask about. You will probably not want to go into great detail in a crisis situation, but if you work with a client over a period of time, you will probably at some point want to talk with her about all the following areas.

1. Personal Information

Most women who call are willing to give their name, address, and phone number, and you should ask for this information. If she does not want to tell you, reassure her that you will still help her, and try to work out some kind of code, such as a number, for your records and also so she can identify herself to you if she wants to call again. Reassure your client that her name is kept confidential - but try to find out her address right away in case she wants you to send the police in a crisis. Also, you will need this information if she wants you to advocate for her with police and courts. Other personal

information which will be important in assessing her options includes her age, her marital status, the number and ages of her children, whether or not she is living with the abuser, and whether he has weapons.

2. Resources

Although it seems difficult and nosey to ask a client about her finances, it affects her choices both in crisis (can she afford a motel?) and in long-term planning (what kind of legal help can she afford? How will she support herself and her children?) You should ask her about both emergency money and her overall financial picture when discussing her future plans - her income, her husband's income, and other assets, such as bank accounts, stocks, and property. She needs to be aware of these things and may need to take legal steps to protect her interest in case of a separation. Also ask her about other family and friends who can help with money, emotional support, or places to stay. Other resources to assess include transportation, other counselors, ministers, child care and job skills.

3. The Immediate Incident

Usually when the client calls, some recent incident of violence has motivated her call. The details of this incident are important, especially if she decides to use it in court. Details should include:

- Time and place of incident
- Description of what took place
- Description of her injuries
- Threats made
- Property damage
- Weapons
- Alcohol or drug use (by herself or the abuser)

Involvement of children (did they witness the incident? were they in danger? were they abused also?)
Police involvement (were they called? who were they? what was their response?)
Medical attention (What hospital? what was recorded on the medical report?)
Legal action taken

It is also a good idea to ask her if anything happened with which her abuser could file a counter claim - if she fought back or if she was drunk for instance, this could weaken her case and will affect her decision of whether or not to pursue the complaint; also knowing what his defense is likely to be and what accusations he will make in court will help you and her in preparing for court.

4. History

The more the history of the relationship is explored, the more the pattern of abuse will emerge and the more clear it will become what steps may be most effective in ending the abuse. History should include:

Length of relationship
When and how abuse began
History of the abuser (abused child? military? Arrest record?)
History of the victim (abused child? parents abusive of each other?)
Pattern of the abuse (how does it start? what triggers it? what ends it? severity?)
Past abusive incidents (how frequent? what led up to them? what happened?)
Solutions tried (police? hospital? court actions? counseling?)
Drug or Alcohol problems of victim or abuser.
Psychiatric treatment or institutionalization of victim or abuser

INFORMING HER OF HER OPTIONS

The abused woman has several options available to her. Detailed information about legal options is available in the Pennsylvania Coalition's Advocacy Manual. The following listing gives you some basic information about each option in order to help you explore them with her so that she can decide what to do.

1. Criminal Charges

If the police are not willing to sign a warrant at the time of the crisis, which they often will not be, the woman can go to a magistrate the next day and sign a private criminal complaint. Should she do this? What are the pros and cons of filing?

Pros:

- a. Some partners would listen to the District Justice and stop the abuse, and it shows the partner that the victim really means business - "THE ABUSE MUST STOP."
- b. Once a complaint is filed and has come before the District Justice for a decision, there is a record, and if abuse occurs again the District Justice may pay more attention.
- c. The more victims who do file complaints, the more the criminal justice system will take notice of the problem of marital abuse.

Cons:

- a. The District Justice may:
 - find him not guilty;
 - not take the situation seriously;
 - simply reprimand him;
 - impose a fine which may hurt her financially.
- b. The process is a big hassle; the burden is on the victim to make it work.
- c. Her partner may be very angry and retaliate.

Often a victim will press charges in her anger, right after the crime has been committed, but will later drop the charges for any

number of reasons. She should think carefully before using the criminal justice system, and try to use it only if she intends to go all the way through the process. If she drops the charges, it may be just that much more difficult for her to get help the next time she needs it. She may also be making it more difficult for other victims to use the system, and she may be asked to pay costs.

In order to help the victim make the best decision about filing a complaint, help her assess her own motivation and ability to cope with the stress and hassle of the court process, and assess what her partner's response may be. Stay in touch with her wishes. Emotional support can make the difference in seeing a case through.

2. Mental Health Commitment

The woman can try to have her husband committed for an emergency psychiatric examination. This is difficult to do, and abusive behavior by itself is not sufficient grounds for a commitment. The cause of the abusive behavior must be mental illness, and there must be reasonable probability that he will repeat it. Then, the commitment is only for an evaluation, and there must be a court hearing. However, if there is clearly a mental problem, it may be worth at least discussing the possibility with your local mental health agency. Also, it may be the only way to get the abuser the help he needs, and this may be important to his wife.

3. Separation

The woman may separate from her husband, either temporarily or permanently. Many women do not want to end the relationship, and

may not understand that a separation is not a legal procedure and may be temporary. You can explain that she can use a separation for several purposes: to put herself in a better bargaining position, to pressure him to make changes in order to get her to return, to have some time away while she decides what to do, or to start a new life without him.

If she decides to separate, either temporarily or permanently, there are many things she must take into consideration: financial security (including money, welfare, support court) housing, protecting her personal possessions, finding a lawyer, and making arrangements for her children. If separation is her choice, be sure to discuss each of those concerns with her at the earliest opportunity, preferably before she separates. Dealing with those concerns will probably take most of her time right after she separates, and the more preparation, the better. A Separation Agreement (a private agreement) may be drawn up by both parties (alone or with lawyers) to resolve areas of conflict.

If a separation is urgent, as in a crisis situation, explore with her the resources she has for temporary places to stay, and know what emergency housing or shelters are available (see the section on Crisis Calls).

4. Divorce

Usually a divorce may be the alternative sought by a victim if she has come to the realization that no matter what she does, her partner refuses to change or compromise in the relationship, and refuses to see his side in the problem. He may not want a divorce,

he may just want her to "straighten up" and "everything will be fine". Or, as in the case of abandonment or desertion, he may have no desire to continue the relationship or responsibilities.

Because divorce is just the final formal step in a long march toward emotional and economic independence, it is important to get ready for a divorce. The woman needs to think about what she wants from a divorce - besides freedom. What are the positive goals for her life? Does she want an education, a better job, a different lifestyle? How can she accomplish these goals?

A great deal of thought needs to go into whether a divorce is a viable option.

For instance, divorce may not be a good alternative:

- if she has been married nine years; after 10 years, she can collect on his social security.
- if she is separated, he is supporting her, and she needs this support and feels certain he will stop supporting her once a divorce is granted. He is obligated to support her as long as they are still married, but there is no alimony in Pennsylvania.

5. Stay and Make Plans to Leave

The woman may decide that she ultimately wants to leave the man, but for various reasons, usually financial, she cannot leave now. There may be things she needs to do first in order to be in a better position to leave, such as save some money, plan where to go, finish the children's school term, etc. If this is what she wants to do, explore with her how realistic this is in terms of her own safety - if her life is in real danger or if her staying would not put her in a better position but only prolong a bad situation, she may need a little push or some reassurance about her ability to "make it on her own". Be sure your encouragement is realistic, too - maybe she can't

make it yet, but you can help her define the steps she needs to make first, and help her plan the process in an orderly fashion. Your role is to help her think it through and give her information about the options so that she can decide what's best for her, not to decide for her.

If she is staying with the man while planning to leave, discuss with her what she can do to keep the situation under control until she can get out. Usually the woman knows what kinds of responses from her will cool him down. Often these responses that "work" may involve denial of her opinions, dignity and worth as a person, but doing this as a tactic to keep from getting killed and as a means to her goal of leaving is a lot different than doing it as a way of life. A woman in this situation is going to need a lot of support and time to talk to someone who understands the game she is playing, so be sure to arrange for her to be in close touch with a counselor during this process.

It is possible to get a divorce while both partners are still living in the same house, but this is probably the most difficult way to do it in terms of emotional hassles with the partner. Obviously it is not possible for her to keep her intentions secret in this situation.

6. Stay and Work on The Relationship

Most battered women love their spouses and would stay if they could stop the negative behavior. Sometimes the help of an objective counselor can begin to reduce the negative interaction and increase the positive interaction for a more satisfying relationship. Relationship counseling can be suggested if the woman is willing to go

for counseling but her spouse is not, she may:

- a. go to counseling herself and then get her partner to come in to discuss "her" problem;
- b. give her partner a "real" ultimatum, on which she is willing and able to follow through;
- c. if the victim has fled, use counseling as a condition for returning to the house and relationship.

7. Protection From Abuse Act

Senate Bill 218 became an enforceable law in Pennsylvania on December 7, 1976. This law gives abused household member (regardless of legal relationship) the right to petition the Court of Common Pleas to bring about a cessation of abuse of the petitioner or minor children. A hearing on the petition must be held within 10 days of filing. The court has the power to grant any protective order or approve any consent agreement which will stop the abuse. This may include granting possession of a jointly owned residence to the petitioner. The order can be of any duration up to one year.

An emergency order is available during the weekend from a District Justice, if good cause for it is shown at a hearing without the abuser present. The order would expire at the opening of the Court of Common Pleas on Monday and the case would be transferred to their docket. This proceeding can also be held at the Court of Common Pleas and a temporary order entered if there is immediate and present danger of abuse. A lawyer is usually necessary.

After an order is obtained it can be enforced by the local police department. Violation of it will be punished as contempt. This law is civil in nature and does not involve the household in the criminal court system. The wide range of relief available under it makes it

an attractive and flexible remedy.

What is the difference between a Protective Order and filing a criminal charge?

An abused person may want to file for a Protective Order and also file a criminal charge. You may do both. Neither proceeding will have any effect on the other.

The whole concept behind a Protective Order and a criminal charge are different. In a Protective Order, the abused person who files the Petition is suing in Civil Court to enforce a personal right. The abuser gets no criminal record and spends no time in jail, unless he/she violates the Order itself. In filing a criminal charge, the abused person is not technically a party to the lawsuit, but is only a witness. The state of Pennsylvania brings a prosecution against the accused criminal, in Criminal Court, to protect the public interest against certain types of behavior that have been defined as illegal. If the abuser is convicted, the penalty can range from a fine to probation to a jail sentence, depending on the seriousness of the crime committed.

The one other important difference between a Protective Order and filing a criminal charge is the length of time each takes to be processed. A temporary Protective Order may, in some circumstances, be issued the same day the abused person goes to Court, and that Order may be continued for up to one year. A criminal charge may take months to process, and during that time the abuser will probably be out of jail on bail.

Sorting and Summarizing

Often the woman living in a battering situation feels overwhelmed by the complexity and constancy of her problem and cannot look at it except as one mess. Your role is to help her identify specific aspects of it, separate the past situation from the present and label the parts of the problem. Much of this can be done by guiding her through the history of the problem as mentioned, asking clarifying questions as she talks, and summarizing what she has told you to be sure you understand it. The most obvious division of the problem is between the immediate crisis and the ongoing situation. Further, it can be divided into its practical parts, its emotional parts, its financial parts, etc.

Problem - Solving and Decision - Making

Separating the problem into its parts can be the first step in problem-solving. Clear feedback from you as to what parts of the problem you see as being easiest to address can be very helpful. Often just explaining the situation to you will make it clearer to the woman. You can help further by giving any information about resources that you may have for each aspect of the problem, and by helping your client identify decisions that have to be made in each area. When making a decision, several techniques may be helpful, such as: listing the pros and cons, fantasizing the outcome of each choice, envisioning the "worst possible" result of a decision and planning what to do if it happened, and identifying a "bottom line" beyond which she will not compromise a decision.

Setting Goals and Priorities

In each area which has been identified as a problem, and for each decision, the tasks involved to implement the decision must be identified. In each area, it is important to define both long-range and short-term goals, and to make the short-term goals small enough and specific enough to be realistically attainable, especially if the client feels hopeless and powerless. By helping her define goals in this way, you can help her set up success experiences for herself and begin to regain a sense of effectiveness. Then once goals have been set and tasks defined, they should be prioritized and a plan made as to when they will be carried out. Planning should be very specific, and should include communication between you and your client to assess the situation as it develops and to make further plans.

COUNSELING SKILLS - HELPING WITH FEELINGS

Initial Hesitancy of Client

When the battered woman first calls for help, she is often anxious about seeking help, as well as upset about her situation. You can reassure her even if she doesn't mention her anxieties, by letting her know where you are coming from as a counselor. First, reassure her that everything she says is confidential, and that you will not push her into any particular action (some women fear that you expect them automatically to get a divorce, for instance), but will support whatever decision she makes. Also let her know that you are there to support her and give her information, not to judge her, and that she need not feel pressured to share anything she is not comfortable about; also you may want to mention that she need not be ashamed of being a victim of abuse or of asking for help. If you take the initiative in mentioning these ideas during the first few minutes of the conversation (not in the form of a speech but in the type of comments and responses you make to her), it will help put some of her doubts to rest and she will be able to be more open with you.

Effective Listening

The most important skill you need as a counselor, of course, is the ability to listen well, especially when helping your client work with her feelings. This may sound easy, but actually it takes practice, and concentration.

First, your attitude as a listener is important. You need to communicate a feeling of calm to your caller, especially if she is in a crisis at the time or is upset. It is also important to focus your full attention on her, rather than thinking about your own similar experiences, or your next response. Many people are so busy thinking of what they will say next that they miss what the other person is saying, or hear it incorrectly. To help yourself learn to truly hear, listen with an open mind, without judgment, with empathy and without preconceived notions of what she is going to say and how she feels. Be careful that you do not project your assumptions of how she "must" feel based on what you know about battering - you are talking to a person, not to a stereotype, and she either may not feel a particular way or may not be able to admit to herself or to you that she has certain feelings.

Second, communicate to the woman that you really are hearing what she is saying. Certain types of responses from you will let her know that you are listening and interested:

Encouraging - phrases which convey interest, such as "I see," "Yes, go on," "That's interesting," "I hear you."

Restating - Paraphrase what she said and feed it back to her so that she knows you heard her correctly. This also lets her get specific clarifying information and evaluate whether you are on the right track (hearing her point of view rather than yours).

Summarizing - Summarizing the facts can help clarify and conceptualize the main points, and can establish a basis for further discussion and decisions.

Restating and summarizing give the client a chance to correct things she feels you misunderstood, assures her you are really trying to understand, and helps her think more clearly. The experience of being really heard is very supportive and will help her feel more open and trusting.

Third, listening for feelings is an essential part of good listening. Be aware of the feelings she mentions and also the feelings behind what she is saying directly, as well as emotions she communicates by her body language and tone of voice. The way in which you let her know that you are aware of her feelings is important - remember that she is the authority on her feelings, and things you observe may not mean what you think they mean. Therefore, reflect what you hear and see as your observation, not as a statement of fact, and ask her if you are hearing her accurately. For instance, say "It sounds to me like you are frightened," or "I hear some anger in what you are saying," or "Are you feeling guilty?" rather than "I am sure you are frightened," "You certainly are angry" or "You must be feeling guilty." If you hear a feeling, reflect it to her, and if she denies it, either you have misinterpreted her communication, or she is not yet ready to deal with or admit to that feeling. If that is the case, your style of communication has left the issue open for her to return to it at a later time if she chooses to.

As she shares her feelings with you, help her to label them. They are often confusing, especially during a crisis, and it helps to identify them and to be reassured that they are normal human emotions which can be recognized by others and which are normally experienced by women in a battering situation.

Roadblocks to Communication

Certain types of responses should be avoided because they cut off communication. Some of these are obvious, while others might seem to be helpful but actually take the focus off the client and her feelings.

Questioning, Probing - Of course, questions for information and clarity are vital. But don't ask loaded or moralizing questions, or questions just to satisfy your own curiosity or to get a certain "correct" answer. Make sure your questions are sensitive and connect with her feelings.

Criticizing, Namecalling - You may not agree with your client's handling of things, but critical comments will not make her change and will make her close off her feelings from you. You can be honest about your disagreement without attacking her, and still support her to make her own choices.

Teasing, Sarcasm - Such tactics communicate that you do not take her problem seriously and show lack of respect. However, once she has a little perspective on her situation, a healthy sense of humor, in a spirit of sharing, can lighten the situation.

Interpreting, Analyzing - Helping your client to sort out and analyze her situation is helpful, but interpreting or analyzing her feelings for her can be an intrusion. Again, she is the expert on her own feelings, and by giving her your interpretation, which may be quite wrong, or which she may not be ready to hear, you will destroy the safety which she could have used to analyze her own feelings at her own pace.

Moralizing, Threatening, Ordering - Of course the client is the one who must decide what to do, but it is easy to feel that she "should" follow a certain course of action. Telling someone what they "should", "have to", or "must" do creates resentment and resistance, even if they inwardly agree that your idea is correct.

Arguing, Lecturing, Persuading - Trying to convince your client to do what you want her to, and getting into a conflict with her, is definitely not your role. A decision seems logical to you may not be one that she is ready to make; furthermore, a decision that she reaches herself with your support will be the one she will actually carry out.

Advising, Providing Solutions - Giving advice may seem like a helpful thing to do, but in reality, it cuts off communication, especially on a feeling level, because it implies that you think you know more than she does about what is right for her,

and because it shows you are not listening to her. Advice is invariably based on your own experience, not hers. You can be much more helpful by providing space for her to sort out her feelings and reach her own choices. Providing options and giving the pros and cons of each is different from advice-giving in that you are providing her with full information and support rather than deciding for her. Finally, it is sometimes appropriate for you to tell her what possible courses of action you see as being best for her (especially if she asks you and if you have built trust over a period of time) but the key is to present this as your opinion and give clear reasons for that opinion. Finally, restate to her that the choice must be hers and that you will support her no matter what her decision is.

Sympathizing, Reassuring, Excusing - Be careful that in empathizing with the woman you do not blandly sympathize without really understanding. You do not want to belittle her feelings or take them lightly, even if they seem to you to be out of proportion. Also, be careful not to reassure her just to calm her down if there really is something to be upset about. You want to help her change the situation, not just feel better about it. Be aware that your attempts to make her feel better may stem from your own discomfort with her situation rather than being of real value to her.

Allowing Ventilation

During times of crisis and also in an ongoing oppressive situation, many feelings which arise, such as fear, anger, and hurt, cannot be expressed at the time either because the situation demands action and leaves no time for emotions (as when the victim must run for her life) or because the expression of feelings, especially anger, would further endanger her. These feelings then become "bottled up" and make the woman feel confused and be unable to think clearly. Each time another painful incident occurs, past unexpressed feelings again surface, making it harder and harder to respond effectively or to carry out decisions she makes. Her whole situation begins to feel like one mass of confusion, and it becomes hard to identify and differentiate feelings.

You can help her by acknowledging her feelings and giving her permission and encouragement to ventilate them through talking about them, crying, shouting or shaking, as she feels these feelings surfacing. Often when a woman finally has a safe space to ventilate these pent-up emotions, their release is very powerful. You can facilitate this process by reassuring her that ventilation of feelings is a healing process and will leave her more free to think clearly about her plans, and by supporting the free expression of all feelings. It is important for you to realize and to communicate to your client that emotions are often not rational, nor would she wish to act on them, but in the context of ventilation all feelings are accepted without judgment. It may also help to distinguish between ventilation, which is for the purpose of emotional release, and the taking of action - actions based on a process of decision-making will usually work out better than those based on strong emotion alone.

Working With Specific Feelings

The battered woman herself is probably not very aware of the victimization process she is experiencing or of the societal context in which she is being abused. You may be the first person from whom she hears that she has a right not to be beaten, a right to be respected as a human being, and a right to power over her own life. One of the most effective ways to begin to counter her negative self-image is for you to hold in your mind, and impart to her a vision of herself as a whole, worthwhile person, and to communicate your understanding of battering and the process of victimization. The more she understands her position the better she will be able to objectify it

and change it. The following are some specific suggestions to help her deal with particular aspects of her feelings.

1. Powerlessness

Probably the most important value that you can reinforce for her is the belief that she can indeed assume power in her life. Sometimes you may be the only one who believes in her, and the most important time to communicate this belief is when she is not acting as though she is in charge. It may seem as though she needs to be told what to do, and she may ask you to tell her what to do. It is easy for you to fall into the trap of deciding for her rather than supporting her to decide for herself, but this would reinforce her powerlessness. This is the time to insist that she is in fact in charge of her life and to express confidence in her ability to decide, and then to guide her through the steps of sorting, summarizing, problem-solving, decision-making, goal-setting, and prioritizing to help her find realistic ways to take one step at a time out of her situation. As she learns to use these skills herself, it will increase her actual ability to take charge and decide for herself without your help.

2. Low Self-Esteem

The woman is often out of touch with the things she does well and with her good qualities, and this low opinion of herself is reinforced daily by her husband and by her inability to change the situation. Often she will devalue things about herself which are evident as good qualities to others and which they admire. You can help by pointing these out to her and helping her list and appreciate her

assets. If she can only think of bad points, make a list of good qualities, and a list of things she would like to change. With both of you contributing to the list, the list of assets will probably be longer. Then, pick one thing she would like to change and think of a specific way she can begin to change it. This will reduce her sense of being trapped by what she sees as her own negative traits. Keep a list of her strengths, and remind her of them at times when she is feeling inadequate, and have her keep a list in a place where she can refer to it when she is feeling down.

No amount of compliments from you will ultimately ring true, however, until the woman begins to experience her own power and effectiveness. A realistic assessment of her resources, skills, and strengths will set the stage for her to structure her plans and goals in such a way that she can actually attain them and experience success. Your help is important in planning, encouraging her in carrying out her plans, and reinforcing her success. This process will in turn build her self-esteem.

3. Masochism

Many women have been told by psychiatrists or friends that they must like being beaten or they wouldn't stay, and some have even begun to accept this explanation and incorporate it into their view of themselves as a failure. Let your client know that you do not support this explanation, and help her look at all the reasons she has stayed. When she really looks at all the practical reasons, her feelings of powerlessness, her ambivalence, and her internalized negative self-image, she will realize that she does not in fact enjoy the abuse but

rather did not know how to change it. Positive feelings connected to the abuse may have been an effort to survive emotionally in an unliveable situation.

4. Guilt

The idea that she causes her attacker's violent outbursts must not be accepted. Although there may be things she does which trigger an attack, it is important for you to let her know that you do not accept any action as justification for violent attack. Even if his anger over an action of hers may be understandable and justifiable, the choice of violence as a response is his responsibility and is not her fault. The guilt she feels is more likely internalized anger which she will begin to feel and to direct more appropriately at her attacker as she understands the difference between his right to be angry at her and his choice of directing violence at her.

If the victim has also used violence (except if necessary in self-defense), you can help by being accepting of her anger, frustration, and desire to hurt or even kill him, but not of the violent response which will only make the situation more volatile and dangerous. Instead, you can help her find other ways to confront her situation which will move away from the violent cycle rather than perpetuating it.

5. Failure

In sorting out her life in the counseling process, the battered woman will often run into feelings of failure about the way she has handled things in the past. You can help her by affirming that she

is a worthwhile person no matter how she may have acted, and by allowing her the freedom to forgive herself for the past and learn from it. Often she is judging herself by unrealistic, critical standards set by her husband, and needs support to develop more realistic expectations of herself and to validate her strengths and past successes, no matter how insignificant they may seem. The idea that she has "always done the best she knew how" is helpful here - and it is true that if everything is considered including all her fears, her lack of information, her socialization, and support systems she may have lacked, she has always made the best choice that she was able to see and understand at the time. By establishing an atmosphere in which past "failures" can be accepted, you can help her gain strength to change her actions in the future.

6. Ambivalence

It is essential for you to understand that the battered woman is ambivalent about her situation. One conflict that she feels is between her love for her mate and her anger/fear/hatred toward him. Even if the abuse is severe, the abuser's remorse is usually very real, and it is easy to forget about the bad times when things are calm and to hope that this time things will really change. It is important for the woman not to be criticized for loving her mate, and for you to support her to acknowledge and examine all her feelings about him. There will be grief and a sense of loss if she decides to leave him, and these feelings are as real and important as the relief and new sense of freedom she will also feel. The acceptance of her positive feelings for him is an important step in letting go.

7. Anger

The battered woman will invariably be feeling angry, but this will probably be the hardest emotion for her to acknowledge. She may internalize her anger as guilt, depression, or physical illness, or she may displace it onto you or others. As women our anger is not accepted and most women have a hard time expressing it; the battered woman not only has the burden of this stereotype but the fear of her abuser's increased rage if she becomes angry with him. She may also be afraid of her own long-repressed rage. You can help by letting her know that it is inevitable for a person to feel anger toward someone who hurts them, and helping her find ways in which she can feel safe to begin to get in touch with her anger. If she has been repressing it, she may feel overwhelmed by it at first, and you can help her accept it as a part of herself, ventilate it, and then find constructive channels for the energy released by this process. Anger understood can be the fuel for a great deal of action, Particularly, do not let yourself be frightened by her anger, and help her differentiate between feeling angry and acting it out (such as killing her husband). Again, you support the feelings, but if your newly angry client seriously plans to shoot her husband, let her know that you will call the police.

7. Fear

Fear is a very real, daily part of the abuse victim's life. She is always anxious, not knowing when the next attack will come, and often this fear becomes such a part of her life that she accepts timidity and apprehension as normal. You can help her recognize this

fear as a response to the constant threat of violence and help her assess how realistic it is at any given time. Practical suggestions, such as knowing where she will run if he starts after her, changing the locks if he has left, keeping her address confidential when she separates, and alerting police can go a long way toward reducing her fears.

COUNSELING SKILLS: PROVIDING SKILLS

The foregoing sections have addressed the issues involved in providing supportive counseling on the practical level and in dealing with feelings. There are several other ways in which you can consciously provide support for your client.

Advocacy

Coupled with your support of the client to make her own choices must be a readiness to act on her behalf when appropriate and to be a strong advocate for her. This is discussed in detail in the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence manual on advocacy. The important point in terms of support is that it is not supportive to "take over" for your client in areas where she can do it by herself - in fact, it has the opposite effect of reinforcing her sense of helplessness. However, when you and the client decide that you should take an advocacy role in a given situation, you must be willing to be assertive in getting information from authorities and in communicating clearly to them on behalf of the client. Insist on clear information and complete answers from them. Again, do this on

the client's terms, helping her learn to handle authorities and communicating what she wants communicated rather than having discussions with anyone about your opinion of your client. Whenever possible, she should be present at all meetings regarding her case. Especially when acting as an advocate you must demonstrate respect for the person and her wishes even if you disagree with her values or choices.

Building Other Supports

Part of being supportive is passing on that role to permanent people in the client's life. Early in the counseling process you should help her identify other supports, such as family and friends, and begin building an ongoing support system. Often the woman in an abusive marriage is isolated and has few supports, and may be rejected by family and friends who lose patience with her turmoil or are critical of her decisions to leave or stay. You can help her identify possible new supports and encourage her to build them. This may include seeking new friends, developing new interests, and contacting others in similar situations such as through groups for battered women, social groups for newly single people or single parents, churches, educational activities, etc. This may be a very new and difficult process for her, and she will need your support to keep trying as new contacts may not work out well at first and she may need to try several avenues before she begins to find effective support. Encourage her to try many options and to have patience as new friendships are being built.

Contracting and Follow-up

Probably the most non-supportive thing you could do as a counselor is to fail to provide support you have promised. Therefore it is important to contract clearly with the client, to agree upon what things she will do, what you will do together, and what you will do for her. Also let her know clearly when you are available, and who she could contact when you are not available. You should contract together as to your role with her - how often to meet, how to contact her, what meetings or hearings you will attend, and so forth.

Follow-up may be only one call or may last for a period of years, depending on her needs and your willingness to do long-term counseling. You should always try to follow up at least once with every client, just to see how things are going and let her know you are still there. Discuss with her how you can contact her safely (see section on safety), and then call her in a few days. Often things will have happened in the meantime to change the situation and you can be of further help - if not, she will still be glad to know that you are concerned and available if she needs you in the future.

Referrals

Many of your clients will need services beyond what you or your organization offer. Your organization probably has a list of legal, counseling, housing, child care, and alcohol and drug abuse referrals available in your community, and hopefully these have been at least minimally screened so that you can make referrals with confidence.

In making a referral, especially a counseling referral about

which the woman may be apprehensive or defensive, help her understand the limits of your services and what sort of help she can expect from the referral. It is best to give two or three referrals, especially for lawyers, so that she can choose. Encourage her to make the contact herself, but if she is very hesitant, you can call the person or agency and smooth the way for her by letting them know she will be calling. You can also give her the name of a specific person in an agency by calling ahead.

If she is still hesitant, try to get to the feelings behind it. It may take time, especially if she has been isolated for a long time. She may need to talk only with you over a period of time before she is ready even to approach another person. And she may feel rejected by a referral - let her know specifically how the referral can help her in ways that you cannot.

Let your client know that if she has any problems, questions, or is dissatisfied with the referral, she should let you know and you can try to find her another referral. People do not all work well with the same persons, and she need not feel bad if the referral connection does not work out for her. Feedback about your referral sources will help you make better referrals in the future.

When making referrals to lawyers, it is particularly important in battering cases to find someone who is capable of working openly with the woman on the case, and being sensitive to her needs and wishes rather than taking over for her or "taking care" of her. The Lawyer's attitude toward battering and the battered woman can present problems which are not present in other types of legal proceedings. The battered woman needs a lawyer who does not make assumptions

about marriage, divorce, or child rearing which will go against what the woman is trying to do for her life. If the lawyer is willing to communicate openly, explain legal options fully and clearly, and work toward the woman's goals rather than the lawyer's, it is an ideal situation. As a counselor, you can sometimes help communication between the woman and the lawyer by helping her understand legal jargon and helping the lawyer understand the woman's situation and feelings. In terms of fees, encourage your client to discuss fees openly with the lawyer beforehand and to make a written contract with him/her. This makes it clear to both parties what the expectations are. Finally, a lawyer's experience and respect in the legal community and the community at large can be important, especially if the woman's case is not strong or if her husband is well-known. Relatively new lawyers, however, can also be excellent.

SPECIAL COUNSELING PROBLEMS

Handling Crisis Calls

For purposes of this training manual, we will define a crisis call as one in which the caller is in immediate danger or has just been abused, and you may have to take action other than just talking to her. In handling crisis calls the focus is not as much on in-depth counseling as it is on gathering essential information as quickly as possible in order to take action to handle the crisis. Often a call will sound like a crisis at first but as you ask the first few questions, you will find that the woman is not in immediate danger but feels very upset and needs to talk; this type of call then becomes a

counseling call and you can relax a bit!

The following procedure is a step-by-step guideline for handling crisis calls, from information-gathering to advocacy at the hospital and police station (either in person or by telephone) and plans for follow-up. However, there are some calls in which the situation is so extreme or immediate that you cannot follow the procedure in an orderly way and must take action more quickly. These are also the most anxiety-producing types of calls for counselors. We will call these Life and Death Emergencies, and suggestions for handling those are given in the next section.

First: Assess the Immediate Danger

Find out: Where she is (address and phone number) if she will tell you. If not, find out whatever you can.
Where her attacker is.
Whether there is a weapon involved.
Whether she has been injured.
Whether her children are in danger.

Suggest: That she call police.
That she get herself and her children to the safest place available and stay there till the police arrive.
That she ask police to take her to the hospital if she has been injured.
That she call you back after she has called police and is in a safe place.

Offer: To contact police yourself also, as an advocate.

If She Doesn't Want the Police:

Encourage her to make a police report even if she doesn't want to press charges - a police report now will help her get more protection later if she needs it.

Encourage her to go to the hospital, even if she thinks she has not been hurt "enough" to go to the hospital. She may have internal injuries. Also a hospital report is important if she should decide later to press charges.

Talk to her about her safety for the night, her options, and plans for follow-up.

Second: Call Police

It is important for the woman to take responsibility for her situation as much as possible, of course, so in most cases she should call the police herself. But if for any reason she cannot call them herself, you can do it, and then call the woman back. If you are in an office or house with two telephone lines, you can keep her on the line while you call police on another line. If you have a neighbor who wants to be involved, you could arrange with them to call police if you or a member of your family brings an emergency message to them. Otherwise, you will have to break your connection with the woman in order to call police - be sure to arrange how you will get back in touch with each other. Also, you can call police while she runs to safety.

If the woman is calling the police herself, you can function as an advocate if she wishes, and call the police also, after waiting a minute or two for them to receive her call. Introduce yourself and the agency you represent, and tell them that a client of yours is calling them for assistance. This contact often encourages the police to take the call more seriously, since they know someone knows about it and is monitoring their response. Also, you can give the police information about weapons, where the attacker is, etc., and they will be better prepared and less anxious in dealing with the situation. Thus your role can result in better response for the individual victim and better relations with the police department.

When talking with police, ask them to keep you informed as the situation develops. If you haven't heard from them in a half hour, call them again and ask them what is happening.

Third: Advocate for Her at Police Station or Hospital

In some organizations, counselors meet victims at the police station or hospital. In others, they do not, and in still others this decision is up to the individual counselor. Of course, you can be more supportive to the woman by being physically with her at this difficult time but telephone advocacy can also be quite effective. (Study the Pennsylvania Coalition advocacy manual for full details on advocacy.)

Whether advocating by telephone or in person, it is important to be polite and diplomatic but still to insist on getting information and informing the victim of her rights and legal options. If police or hospital personnel are uncooperative, try not to argue, as this may make things worse for the woman, but your organization can make it a point to contact the department or hospital later to make a complaint and hopefully to improve the situation for the next victim.

It is important to identify yourself, your role, and the organization you represent, but do it quietly so as not to embarrass the woman. Find out the names of the people you are dealing with, and remember both helpful and negative things that they did - you can write this down later and let other counselors know what can be expected from a particular police department or hospital.

It is important to be sensitive to supporting the victim without taking over for her. Information about legal options and suggestions for action should be given to the woman, not to the officers, and you should support whatever decisions she makes. Also, it is usually best not to get into detailed discussions of her situation

If she wishes to press criminal charges, there are three situations in which steps can be taken to have a warrant issued.

1. If the police witnessed the abuse personally, they may take the man directly to the magistrate and swear out a warrant. They are reluctant to do this, but if you are at the police station, tell her about this so that she can suggest it to them.
2. The police may issue a warrant on information received. This is applicable if the woman has visible severe injuries which the police can see, and she is willing to sign a statement as to who injured her. In this case she bears all liability for false information and she can be sued if it turns out she is lying about who her assailant was. You can suggest this to her if it is appropriate.
3. The police can sign a warrant on the basis of the hospital report. If the hospital report shows internal or other non-visible injuries, the woman can then ask the police to sign a warrant on the basis of information received from the hospital and from her statement as to who the assailant was. You may suggest this to her also.

Finally, if the Protection From Abuse Act (Act 218) seems appropriate, you can act as an advocate with the District Justice and facilitate an emergency order.

Fourth: Make Sure She Has a Safe Place for the Night

Discuss with the woman whether it is safe for her to go home that night. You might suggest that she can call someone such as a relative or friend to be with her at the hospital (whether or not you are there), to drive her home, to stay with her, or to let her stay at their house. Many women feel ashamed to ask for help from family and friends, but sometimes there is more potential support there than they expect - often it helps for you to point out that safety might be a higher priority than pride.

If your organization offers or has referrals to emergency housing or a shelter, help her decide whether this is appropriate and help her make the contact with them.

Fifth: Discuss Her Options and Arrange Follow-Up

Usually, your main role in crisis counseling will be to get the victim settled for the night and arrange for her to meet with you or someone at your office the next morning to plan the next steps. Most of the in-depth discussion of her situation and detailed planning is best done in later conversations and you normally will not be doing that at the hospital or police station. During the crisis, you should help her focus on her immediate safety and give her information about things she actually needs to act on that night, such as asking the police to sign a warrant and getting the hospital report. But you need to let her know what options are available to her and answer her questions. She will probably have enough to think about with the hospital, police, and magistrate, and will be reassured to know that she can talk with welfare, lawyers, support, custody, and all those other confusing things in the morning.

In any case, her situation should not be discussed in detail in front of police or hospital personnel, or in a public place such as the hospital waiting room. Also, you should not fill out any forms or write anything down there. Get her to write her name, address, and phone where she can be reached, give her information about your services (or tell her about them, if you are talking on the phone rather than in person), and try to pave the way for her to contact your office by phone or in person the next day.

Sixth: Reporting

As soon as the crisis is over, the woman is settled, and you are alone, either in your car or at home, fill in all appropriate forms. Accurate record-keeping is important, although boring, in helping you remember the woman's situation accurately, helping other counselors who may work with her in your organization, and in case of court action. When police and hospitals are involved, an accurate record of who was involved and what they did can be very helpful to her in preparing her case. And finally, accurate statistics from your records are important to your organization in getting funding.

Life and Death Emergency

There are times when you will step out of your role as a supportive counselor and take action, with or without the client's permission. You will be most apprehensive about the most improbable life and death crisis you can imagine. What if the call is interrupted by screaming, sounds of struggle, or gunshots, or the phone goes dead, or the woman says that she's just cut her wrists or has taken 35 aspirin? Although this kind of situation will probably never happen to you, you will feel more comfortable about being on call if you know what to do. Also, all suicide threats and drug crises are not necessarily life and death emergencies. Read the sections on "Suicide" and "Drug-Related Calls."

The general guideline is, IF A LIFE IS IN DANGER, CALL THE POLICE. If you have good reason to think that something is happening right now which is endangering a life, it is your responsibility to call the police. This is the only time that confidentiality does

not apply. Of course, in most cases you will not be calling the police without the permission of the victim. Extreme emergencies in which you must act without the permission or knowledge of the caller will be very rare, but in case it happens, this is the procedure:

1. If you know the address or phone number, call the police immediately, and give them all the information you have. If possible, call from another phone to keep the line open to the victim.
2. If you do not know the address, and the phone line is still open, you can have the call traced. Leave your phone open, get to another phone, call the operator, and ask for the supervisor. Tell her the situation, and ask her to trace the call. Tell her any shred of information you may have which would help her locate the caller, such as the name of the town, the first three letters of the phone number, whether it is a pay phone. She probably will not tell you any information, but she will call the police if she can locate the source of the call.
3. If the phone is dead or the woman has hung up, there is nothing you can do. If you have any information at all about her, call your local mental health emergency number. They may recognize her as a client of theirs and be able to help her. At the very least, you will be upset yourself, and you can freak out to them - they are also on call all night and are very supportive.

Suicide

Occasionally a caller will tell you that she is going to kill herself. Here are some basic guidelines to help you in handling suicide calls and to reduce some of your own anxieties in dealing with them.

First, try to find out if she has already wounded herself or taken a drug overdose. If so, try to find out her address and send an ambulance (see the section on Life and Death Emergency). Try to get across the message that you care and that her life is important.

Your focus in talking with a suicidal caller is to avert the suicide and get her connected to some ongoing resources to deal with the problems leading up to the suicidal feelings. In the immediate crisis, venting feelings helps reduce tensions and makes it easier for her to postpone suicide, but information on how to deal with the battering situation is also essential in giving her hope of being able to deal with the problem.

In talking with a suicidal person remain calm, interested, assured, and accepting. Keep your voice firm, but soft and reassuring and try to create a non-threatening atmosphere to discuss and confront her feelings. Don't overwhelm her with questions, but do be direct and open about her suicidal feelings - "Have you been thinking of taking your life, considering suicide, etc?" "Why do you want to kill yourself?" Realize that suicide is a real alternative that some people choose; what you want to do is get to the feelings behind her wish to kill herself and help her find other alternatives.

Once you begin talking about her feelings, you will probably find that she is feeling unhappy, hopeless, confused, and all the other feelings you are familiar with in helping battered women. The loss of a loved one, through divorce, separation, or emotional distance, is a frequent cause of suicide attempts even if that loved one is also an abuser. Also, a woman who feels very dependent on her abuser may feel unable to keep living if her situation demands that she consider leaving him or if he leaves her. The suicidal feelings may stem from anger misdirected toward herself rather than her abuser. And finally, a suicide threat may be a desperate attempt to communicate to her husband her frustration and to make him pay attention to

the seriousness of the situation. Helping her identify her feelings, and express them more clearly and directly, either toward her mate or by taking action to change her situation, will help her move away from the suicidal crisis.

Most people who talk about killing themselves are looking for someone to stop them. They are usually not 100% for suicide (unless they are already dead), and you don't have to make them 100% for life either. When they call for help they are probably 49% for life and 51% for suicide and your understanding, support and information can make the 2% difference to get them on the road to a more positive alternative.

Some Common Mistakes:

1. Trying to "talk her out of suicide" by moral sanctions, by arguing about the value of life, and by telling her she would be letting people down, or by trying to convince her that things are not really that bad, are common inappropriate responses. Things may well be "that bad" and you yourself might think her life is not worth living without some very major changes. These types of responses probably indicate that you are scared or uptight. They don't work because they don't deal with either her feelings or the realities of her situation.
2. Never doubt her intentions to commit suicide; never make fun of her or laugh at her. Don't say "You're crazy" or "That's wrong". Don't argue with her or hang up on her.

Specific Actions You Can Take:

1. Try to get her to make a commitment to take a specific action the next day, hopefully one that will be a step in changing her situation.
2. Try to get someone to stay with her or get her to go stay with someone. Ask her about friends or relatives who can help her, or get her into some sort of emergency housing. Try not to leave her isolated. At the very least, make sure she has the numbers of several crisis lines. Make a contract with her as to when you will contact each other.

3. Help her mobilize whatever resources are available in her life, and help her make connections with appropriate referrals. (See section on Referrals.) This is a situation in which you should take an active role both in suggesting referrals and helping her contact them. Avoid doing things behind her back; and let her know what your ideas are and why you think it is important for her to have support from others.

As a final reminder, remember that most people will end up not killing themselves if you give them the chance. The important thing is to communicate concern, not take their feelings lightly, and help them find real alternatives. However, remember they are ultimately responsible for themselves and if they are really intent on killing themselves, you may not be able to stop them. If you have done your best, nothing more is expected of you.

Alcohol and Drugs

One of the myths about abuse is that it is caused by alcohol, drugs, unemployment, or the pressures of day-to-day living. However, although these are often factors, they can more accurately be viewed as triggers than as causes of abuse. Many men experiencing these stresses do not batter, whereas a man who has violently attacked his wife may blame his action on any number of incidents, even a trivial or invented one. In regard to drinking, Richard Gelles says that a person who is potentially violent may drink in order to give himself an excuse for violent actions, which both spouses may later see as a lapse from normalcy rather than as a problem.¹⁵ Furthermore, some men who batter when drinking later stop drinking but continue to batter, switching to some other excuse.

Sometimes it is the battered woman who turns to alcohol or drugs to forget about her problem. If you are working with a woman with

an alcohol or drug problem, it may take a long time to build her trust to a point where you can make a referral to someone who can help specifically with her alcohol or drug problem. Throughout the process, help her with her specific problems around battering as you would with any client, and let her know that you care about her as a person. The woman using drugs is usually more out of touch with reality than the alcoholic, but both are extremely sensitive and need lots of "warm fuzzies" and reassurance that you care about them and believe that they are basically OK. Some ideas to reinforce are that it is her decision whether or not to drink or use drugs, but that there are resources available and support (from you if you are willing) which she can call before she takes a drink or uses drugs. Confine your practical discussion of the battering situation to the times when she is not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If an alcoholic woman calls you while she is drunk, the most important question to determine is whether or not she is in danger. Often a client who is drunk will tell you about a battering incident as though it is happening right now, when in fact it happened earlier but she is only now in touch with her feelings due to the alcohol. Most victims will not call in the midst of fighting because they are too wrapped up in the fight, but occasionally they will call while still fighting and in danger. If you think there is a chance that she is in danger, you should take the responsibility of sending the police because she may be too drunk to make this decision. In this case it is important to advocate for her with the police. They will be inclined to view her as "just another drunk", especially if it turns out to be a false alarm. You can explain to them that there

was a chance that she was in real danger and that you expect and appreciate their protection of her now and in future incidents - let them know there is a real threat of danger behind this incident. Also, your sending the police lets her know that you do take her situation seriously and are ready to offer real help.

If the caller is not in danger but is drunk and wants to talk about her situation, realize that she may talk on and on without making real progress in sorting things out. Don't waste time and energy discussing the details of the situation at this time, but don't hang up. Instead, let her know that you know she is drunk, and communicate your caring, support, and willingness to help. Validate her as a person, remind her or help her think of times she has felt good, and emphasize that you want to help her but that you can't really help with her problem while she is drinking. Let her know that you understand what is happening to her but that neither of you can deal with it effectively while she is drinking. If your organization meets clients in person during crisis, you may want to suggest meeting her in a neutral place just to give her some support for a while, but choose a place that is in walking distance of where she is - you don't want her to drive when she is drunk. In following up with an alcoholic client, you may find that she does not want to talk to you when she is sober - she may be ashamed or she may deny the problem except when she is drinking. You may want to keep calling back occasionally to let her know that you are there whenever she wants to talk, and encourage her to call you before she takes a drink, when she is upset and feels like drinking. This is also a good time to meet her to help her work toward solutions and support her in remaining sober.

Drug Crisis Calls

Occasionally someone may call who is experiencing a drug crisis. You don't need to know all about drugs in order to feel comfortable dealing with the situation. The following are broad guidelines to help you in talking to a drug user, and to help you determine whether this is an emergency situation which should be handled according to the procedures outlined under "Life and Death Emergency". Your county mental health emergency number may be your best resource in drug-related calls. Your involvement on the telephone would usually be limited to calming the person down and convincing them to give you permission to have someone experienced in handling drug crisis call them back.

The most important thing to know is what is happening with the caller right now - you must determine if her life is in danger or not. Some questions to find out:

What are present symptoms? What drug was taken? What amount?
Is this a prescription drug?
Was it taken in combination with alcohol or any other drug?
Is anyone present who can be of help?
Address and phone number, if she will tell you.

Lethal Drugs:

Barbiturates - seconal, tuinal - rainbows, amytal, etc. Very dangerous.
Doridan and other sleeping pills.
Aspirin - overdoses are serious. Over 15-20 pills, person should go to hospital.
Narcotics - heroin, morphine, demerol, codeine. Very dangerous.
Commercial cold tablets like Allerest and Contact, 20 to 30 tablets will kill.
Darvon - over 130 mg. is dangerous.

Non-Lethal Drugs:

Librium, valium, etc. are commonly used for suicide attempts. They will not work. Thorazine and other phenothiazines will not kill. But high doses should be seen in the hospital for side effects.

If you feel that the user's life is in danger, try to get her to go to the hospital. Try to get someone close, like a friend or relative, to go with her. If you know the address, call the police and have them send an ambulance; also, call a drug crisis line. If the person is involved in an abusive marital situation, it is appropriate for you to remain involved in the case, to meet the client at the hospital, if your organization provides this service, and to follow through as on other cases.

If the user refuses to go to the hospital or to tell you where she is, give whatever information you can to help her cope with the situation, stressing the importance of getting medical attention.

Bad Trips:

The common psychedelics are: LSD (acid), mescaline, psilocybin, STP and DMT, THC, and PCP, which is actually an animal tranquilizer which can cause bad trips, convulsions and death.

The main danger of hallucinogens is that the user may become so fearful that she loses the ability to make rational judgments. Also, tripping may make the user feel invulnerable, such as believing she can fly. People on bad trips are usually experiencing a panic reaction to something in their environment. They are usually very afraid and may be hallucinating and delusional, incoherent, and may appear psychotic. A person tripping should not be alone. Try to find out if there are friends nearby who can stay with her. If not, keep her on the phone and keep her talking.

Ninety-nine percent of bad trips can be handled with emotional support - "talking the person down". Talk about BASIC REALITY, such as what your name is, what her name is, that she is on a drug and it will wear off. Try to help her keep her focused on real things -

objects and events. The best treatment for a bad trip is to change it into a good trip without further chemical intervention.

If someone is extremely freaked out, she can be taken to a hospital emergency room. Try to find a friend of hers to do this. ADVISE HER NOT TO TAKE THORAZINE. It can be fatal if the drugs had speed in them.

Downers - Barbiturates:

Minor tranquilizers such as Valium, Librium, Vistaril, Equanil, Miltown are anti-anxiety agents. Prescribed for some types of neurotic disorders and occasionally to relieve symptoms of alcoholic withdrawal (D.T.'s). They are also used as muscle relaxants and may be prescribed for skeletal muscle in injuries to backs and knees.

Major tranquilizers include drugs like Thorazine, Mellaril, Prolixin, Campazine and Haldol. The use of these drugs usually indicates a psychiatric history as these are used in the treatment of psychosis and schizophrenia, but usually not alcoholism.

There are two dangers with these drugs: overdose (which can result in death) and withdrawal, if the habit is prolonged. Withdrawal may include anxiety, vomiting, hypertension, and convulsions, up to one week after the drug is discontinued.

Overdose:

Symptoms are slurred speech, confused thoughts; the person sounds like they are falling asleep. Our goal is to keep her awake and talking, and get her to a hospital if possible.

Some helpful points:

1. Important to maintain contact with the caller and keep her awake.
2. Try to get the caller's friends to help with keeping her awake and taking her to the hospital.

3. Try to get the person to vomit if the drug was taken less than one hour before.
4. Find out what the person took, how much and how long ago. Alcohol taken with downers is particularly dangerous as it multiplies the effects.

Withdrawal:

Symptoms are signs of convulsions, anxiety, or vomiting in a person who has been taking downers in the recent past. The goal is to get the person to go to the hospital. If she is addicted to downers and wants to quit, warn her of the necessity for medical supervision, as the convulsions are extremely unpredictable. If she is convulsing, get her to the hospital (convince her friends to take her, or call the ambulance, if you know the address). Have a friend put something between her teeth.

Speed:

Benzedrine, methedrine, dexadrine, "crank".

Users of speed often become very excited and unable to make rational judgements, while feeling great clarity of vision. Often the person will focus on some trivial detail and concentrate on it for hours with tremendous energy. With prolonged use, user may become ill from lack of food and sleep; other health hazards include hepatitis if speed is being injected, and malnutrition. If crashing (coming down from a speed binge), user may become terribly depressed, even suicidal.

Danger signs are:

1. Rapid or frightened speech.
2. Focusing of attention on dangerous things.
3. Feelings of irrational fear (paranoia).
4. Feelings of depression if crashing.

Your goal is: to help the person back to rationality; to provide a safe reference point until the effects of the drug wear off.

On the phone with a speeding caller:

1. Be calm, reassure her that she is safe, and that you are a friend.
2. Try to keep the caller on the phone, and rational. Don't worry about overdose; she is not in immediate physical danger from the drug.
3. If she has been speeding for several days, try to get her to eat and get some sleep.
4. If she is crashing, try to help her realize that the depression is the natural consequence of the drug and will pass; try to keep her talking.
5. Try to have her friends stay with her until the effects wear off. If no friends are available, try to keep her on the phone until she is rational again.

Narcotics and Opiates:

Heroin, morphine, methadone, codeine, opium, Darvon.

The danger of narcotics are addiction and withdrawal. The symptoms of withdrawal are sweating, chills, diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal cramps. A person experiencing symptoms of withdrawal sickness needs to get to a hospital.

Cocaine:

Cocaine is also addictive. The cocaine high gives a feeling of great physical strength and intellectual power. Without the drug, the addicted person feels an excruciating craving, and feels very tired and depressed, and sometimes suicidal. Cocaine overdose may cause death by stopping the heart and breathing.

If she has addiction and is craving cocaine, and is depressed and suicidal, try to help her be rational, and handle as any other suicide or depression call. Try to get the addicted person to consider entering a drug rehabilitation program. In case of overdose, try to get the person to go to the hospital.

Child Abuse

Child abuse is often present in families torn by marital violence, and you need not be timid about approaching it very directly. You can ask the battered woman if her children are also battered, and sometimes she will be willing to leave for their sake even though she would not consider her own safety important. She will often be very concerned about protecting them from him and will appreciate your support.

When the battered woman is abusing the children your role is more difficult. Often this is a cause of great guilt on her part, and if you foster a warm, accepting atmosphere, she may share this problem with you. This is a situation in which you can help her learn to accept her angry feelings but not act on them, and help her make connection with Parents Anonymous or other resources to aid abusive parents who wish to learn better parenting skills. Often her resources and experiences have been so limited that she simply has had no access to information or models of effective parenting. Also, her isolation as a battered woman may have left her totally alone to cope with several small children all day every day - a situation full of frustration for anyone and fertile ground for battering.

If the woman does not tell you that she abuses her children but you suspect it or have evidence, it is best to be very direct and ask her about it. Do this in a supportive manner, of course, and let her know that you understand that her frustration could lead to battering, and assume that she does not wish to hurt her children, although she may sometimes feel unreasonably angry. In this situation, you may feel that some intervention is necessary for the safety of the

children if she refuses to consider available resources and you have reason to believe that the children are in serious danger. If you decide that intervention is necessary, again be very direct with the woman and tell her what you plan to do and why you have decided to do it, and let her know that you still support her and will help her with her problem if she will accept your help. In some cases, she may become very angry with you, but may later come back and thank you for protecting her children when she herself could not.

If the Abused Victim Kills her Abuser

In working with a victim who has killed her abuser, it is essential for you to be in touch with your own feelings about what she has done and to be clear within yourself about the difference between supporting her as a person and supporting her action. You need a tremendous amount of empathy and willingness to understand just how trapped she felt and why murder seemed to be her best or only alternative. She will probably be feeling a mixture of horror, remorse, relief, and joy at her freedom from the situation. It may take her a long time and much caring support to sort through these feelings and reach a sense of resolution and peace within herself.

On the practical side, your role as advocate will be vital. She will need strong legal support as well as help in dealing with criticism and hostility from agencies she may encounter as she rebuilds her life. Most likely she will be in the public eye since murder cases are often sensationalized by the media. Familiarize yourself with the growing number of such cases and the defense used by the women involved. This information will be helpful to her lawyer in

preparing her case and also to her in helping her come to terms with herself.

OTHER COUNSELING ISSUES

There are several other issues and situations which arise in counseling which should be addressed. In some cases these involve decisions which must be made either by the individual counselor or by the organization.

Safety

The first issue is that of safety; both the victim's and the counselor's. Often the abused spouse will be in danger if the abuser finds out that she is in touch with anyone. Therefore, it is important never to call her unless she has said that it is OK, and never to identify yourself except by a first name. For your own safety, most organizations make a policy that counselors never go to the home of the victim (except in cases where trained counselors go with the police on crisis calls). The best places to meet are usually at an office space obtained by the counselor (this could be a hotline office, or space in a lawyer's office, a social service agency, or a church) or in a neutral public place such as a restaurant. In some organizations, counselors meet clients at police stations, hospitals and courts. These decisions should be thought out in advance so that you have concrete suggestions to make and know what you are and are not able to do at the time of the call.

Always consider your client's safety in planning for follow-up

calls. Ask her whether and when it is safe to call her, and whether you will endanger her by asking for her if someone else is home. If so you pretend to be a wrong number, i.e. ask the person who answers for some other name and then act surprised and apologize. If she answers, always ask her if she can talk freely - she may have to pretend you are a wrong number.

Meeting the Abuser

In some instances the woman may want you to talk with her mate, to "tell him not to hit her", to mediate between them. Sometimes he is willing to do this. Again, the policies of the organization and your own limitations should be determined in advance. Even abusers who are willing to meet with counselors sometimes become angry and dangerous during the interview, so it is still wise never to go to their home and never to meet without others present who can provide protection if necessary. Also, if your role does not include mediation or couple counseling, you should be prepared with referrals you trust for those couples who want this type of counseling.

Knowing Your Limits

Each counselor must define her limits of time and energy and communicate clearly to the battered spouse what these limits are. There are two reasons for setting such limits. First, if you are constantly available, it invites the battered spouse to become dependent on you for support and help in thinking things through, rather than developing her own strength and resources. Second, you will become drained by such constant availability and will eventually

burn out and be useless to yourself and resentful of the person you are helping. In order to avoid such burn out, you must be aware of your own personal needs for time, privacy, and to pursue your own interests, and then tell your client clearly when you are and are not available. If you are working with a 24-hour hotline, there will always be someone available even if you are not; otherwise, be sure the client is aware of whatever 24-hour crisis services exist in the community. If you do take on too much and become overwhelmed by one client's needs or by taking on too many clients, it is better to discuss this with other counselors and arrange for referrals to them rather than continue in a situation which drains you and becomes less effective for the client.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is such a "given" in a counseling situation that it is almost taken for granted - therefore, it needs to be reiterated to you as counselor and verbalized to clients so that there is no question. The situations in which confidentiality becomes difficult are those in which several counselors in an organization are involved with a client, and in cases requiring advocacy. In the first instance keep discussions focused on information sharing to help the client rather than on gossip and include only those workers directly involved. Imagine how you would feel as the subject of the discussion; if your communication is motivated by caring about the woman and concern for her interests, say it. If not, keep it to yourself. When advocating, the key to confidentiality is to communicate what the client communicated rather than your opinions. Confidentiality laws

cover workers on hotlines, and you are not required to divulge information to anyone. Never testify in court unless the client wants you to, your organization supports you, and a lawyer you trust agrees with the decision.

Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts may arise if both partners in an abusive marriage call. Your organization should decide in advance what to do in such situations and have a clear policy. You may define your services as being geared to women only, or you may decide to serve the first partner who calls while providing a referral for the other. In some situations, each partner may work with a different counselor or you may provide couple counseling. The important point is to know in advance what services you do and don't provide, and where to refer clients you cannot serve. Also, when working with a client over a long period of time, she may want services from you (such as help in finding a job) which could better be provided by someone whose expertise is in that field. You do not have to personally help her in every area of her life - you can refer her to others for some services and maintain your focus of help specifically around problems of battering.

SECTION III

GROUP COUNSELING

IMPORTANCE OF GROUPS

Many hotlines and shelters have begun support groups for battered women and have found this to be a very effective method of counseling. Since the Battered Woman is even more isolated than most women, a support group is often the first time she has met other women in her situation, and this can be a powerful experience in her realization that this is not just her "problem" or "failure". Also, the group setting provides the opportunity to build emotional and practical support systems among other women who understand. This in turn lessens her dependence on men for help and for her sense of identity and thereby makes her less vulnerable to continued abuse.

Often in groups for battered women the same processes happen as in a feminist consciousness raising group. By sharing experiences, discovering similarities both among the members and between themselves and facilitators, who may not have been battered, they can begin to get in touch with the oppression they all share as women and to understand the societal context of the problem of battering. Individually, this realization is an empowering process, relieving the individual woman of guilt and self-doubt and connecting her to a sisterhood which will support her to grow.

Sometimes the group is the only place where the battered woman can feel safe from her attacker and let down her guard. While in the group she is physically safe, and can begin to relax emotionally as well.

In her home she must constantly assess her husband's mood and control her emotions according to his reactions, showing only those

emotions which will not antagonize him at any given moment. In the group she finally has the freedom to be genuine, and to feel and express anger, fear, grief, and love without worrying about his reaction. This is a freeing experience which allows her to know her own feelings more clearly.

Another important function of the group is to impart information about laws concerning abuse, realistic options of the victim, available support systems, and information about the victimization process and what is being learned about the dynamics of battering and of the relationship between the abuser and the victim. Sharing of information is important both from the facilitator to the group and among the group members. Outside speakers and resource people can also be brought in, such as lawyers to discuss abuse laws and volunteers or former victims to share their experiences about going to court, parenting, forming new relationships, and other areas of concern.

Finally, the group process provides a shared reality or vision of the problem of battering on which the woman can rely. She knows that she can depend on the group not to buy into any of the myths of battering and to support her as a competent person even when she loses faith in herself. The group provides reliable support for change and each woman who grows a little gives encouragement to the others, and as this process continues, it empowers each woman to take charge of her life.

FACILITATOR'S ROLE

It is assumed that the same feminist approach to counseling and orientation toward battering discussed earlier in this manual will apply to your vision of working with battered women in groups. Our concern in this section will be how to translate this feminist perspective into an effective, functioning peer support group. As a facilitator, you can communicate this view by what you say and by the way you structure the group.

First, by calling yourself a "facilitator", "focalizer", or "convenor" rather than a "leader" you can begin to demystify the power relationship, but you will still be seen as the "leader" and you do, in fact, have some authority because of your role. As a facilitator, you have accepted responsibility for the smooth functioning of the group, the practical details of convening the group, and handling crises which arise. Other members of the group may share in these functions, but they are not "required" to in the same way that you are. In this role you may often make arbitrary decisions for the sake of moving things quickly - for instance, assigning people to smaller groups or deciding on the time for a break, or planning the order of activities in a structured group. You can keep this role from becoming confused with power by verbalizing often to the group that this is a role rather than a definition of worth or a desire for control, by requesting feedback from the group about all phases of group functioning, and by teaching this role or parts of it to other group members as they wish to assume more responsibility. However, your initial assumption of this added

responsibility is vital because it is often all the battered woman can do to focus attention on herself, and the group should be a place where nothing more is expected of her until she is ready.

The purpose of a peer support group for battered women is not for you as facilitator to provide therapy for individual women who "have a problem", but rather to empower battered women as a group and to build support for the individual woman to take charge of her life. Various methods of group work, such as sensitivity training, Gestalt, assertiveness training, Transactional Analysis, Re-evaluation Co-counseling and others can be used within this context, and you may also find it appropriate to do some intensive counseling with individuals within the group setting depending on your own skills and their desires. The important point is to view these activities as tools you can use to help women overcome the damage done by their oppression and claim power, rather than as mysterious processes that you are using on "weak" or "sick" people.

The actual format for the group should grow out of the needs and desires of the group members and should incorporate the skills they bring to the group, as well as those of the facilitators.

Some groups will wish to focus on discussion, some on learning about legal remedies, some on various modes of therapy, some on assertiveness training; and many ongoing groups may incorporate all of these elements at different times. As the facilitator, you can consciously involve the members from the very beginning by voicing their concerns and planning the direction of the group. You may have strongly encouraged such participation since many members' self-esteem is at a low ebb and they may not feel competent.

GUIDELINES

One of the ways you can develop safety and peer support within the group is by putting forth your philosophies verbally. At the first session (or, in an open group, at every session where new members are present) you should take some time to talk about this and to put forth some guidelines for making it happen. Here are some specific things which need to be clarified for peer support to become a reality in the group.

Confidentiality

Of course, to be effective, the group must be confidential. A woman must be able to trust that what she says in a group and often even the fact that she is there must never be found out by her mate. In addition, no one else should ever hear what she shares in group, nor should other members discuss it among themselves. You should not hesitate to remind the group often about respecting each others' privacy, and in an open group, it should be mentioned every time new members are present.

Responsibility for Self

Emphasize to the members that the group exists for them to use to meet their particular needs, rather than to place expectations on them to fulfill group norms. Each woman is the final authority and decision-maker for her life, and has a right to expect support and respect from the group rather than criticism.

Self-Involvement and Privacy

Let the members know that you hope that each one will share her feelings and experiences openly with the group so that trust will build and that you also will involve yourself in this way. However, each woman also has the right to pass if she is not comfortable in sharing with the group. Encourage members to respect each woman's contribution and try to support her where she is.

Listening

Every group member needs to talk and your calling attention to this obvious fact will bring smiles of recognition from the members while gently calling into consciousness the need to take turns and to listen well. Point out that all of us appreciate aware listening, and can make an effort to listen attentively even if we are upset ourselves. It is also your responsibility to intervene when people interrupt and are unable to listen. This is sometimes hard to do, but with practice you will learn to be gentle but firm and to interrupt the interruptors with a sense of humor and awareness both of the needs of the group and of the "talker".

Acceptance

Finally, in order for the group to be safe for each woman to grow at her own speed and her own way, it must be non-judgmental. As facilitator you must not only verbalize this expectation but you must be prepared to demonstrate it in your responses and to interrupt judgmental responses when other group members make them. You may often have to point out that although one person may have handled

a certain situation in a particular way and another person may handle it differently, so suggestions may be made and information may be shared about how different members would handle a certain situation; but no member knows what another member "should" do. Also, some members' values may differ greatly and may conflict, but within the group each member must have the absolute right to her own opinions and beliefs in order to have the safety to examine them and to grow. This is not to imply that you should allow anyone to put down anyone else in the group, and you will find that sometimes members may make racist or classist remarks or critical remarks about certain values which hurt someone else in the group, and you can effectively stop this from happening by pointing out that such remarks are hurtful and by insisting that within the group judgmental or hurtful remarks are not allowed on either side of any issue or boundary. You can point out that each one has a right to her opinion but insist that she express it as her opinion and belief and not impose it on anyone else.

TYPES OF GROUP STRUCTURES

In considering starting a group, you will have to make some decisions about the type of group structure you would be comfortable working with. Depending on your own situation and resources, you may have to make some choices arbitrarily before the group begins, while other decisions about the format and direction of the group can be made with the group members.

The types of groups will be considered from four points of view: closed vs. open membership, discussion vs. counseling, structured vs. non-structured, and ongoing vs. time limited.

Closed vs. Open Membership

A closed group is defined as one in which the members pre-register and the membership is limited to a certain number, after which no one else may join. In an open group new members may join at any time, either with some sort of pre-registration procedure or by simply attending.

The advantage of a closed group is that the members, after going through an initial process of getting to know each other, can build very deep trust in each other. They get to know each other well, feel safe and comfortable, and can depend on the group to respond to them in the same way each week. They do not have to repeat their "story" for new people, but can move ahead to new issues. Also, you can screen people ahead of time to try for a better group balance and to try to identify people who cannot function in the group setting or who need additional referrals. It is an easier type of group to

facilitate since you know in advance who the members are after the first week.

The closed group has some disadvantages, however. One of the chief disadvantages of a closed group for the battered woman is that it requires her to make a commitment to attend each week and to have a stable enough schedule to do so. Emotionally, she is often unable to make such a decision, feeling motivated to seek help only when she is in immediate crisis, and wanting to avoid the whole issue when things are calm. Practically, her life is often in chaos and her time controlled by her mate's whims. Therefore, she cannot always go each week even if she wants to - there is no money one week, no transportation the next, her mate is unexpectedly home and wants her there another week, and still another week she may have to go to a court hearing.

In a closed group attrition presents a problem since members who do not return reduce the size of the group and affect morale. Members who are initially enthusiastic about the group may not return due to personality clashes, ethnic or lifestyle issues, or anxiety about something that was said. Often they will leave the group rather than discuss this with either the facilitators or the other members, so you should always call a member who does not return to see why she left, help her work things out if she wants to, or connect her to other resources she may need.

The open group has the advantage of being available immediately when the woman is ready and able to attend. If it is open both in terms of joining and leaving at any time, or even of attending intermittently, it has the additional advantage of placing no expectations

or demands on her to make a commitment to the group at a time when she is struggling to make even the slightest commitment to herself. Thus, a woman may come to the group every week during times when she needs more support or may come once and return at a later time. In the long run, this type of group has the potential of building a large community of support, as many women come through the group and get in touch with each other to share support and resources.

The disadvantages are, of course, in the need to integrate new people while still maintaining depth of support for ongoing members. Sometimes this can be done by keeping introductions brief and letting new members get to know the others over a period of time. Usually the new members have the most need to "tell their story" and ongoing members are often glad to give extra time and attention to the new one since they received this when they joined the group. New members are usually as glad to be able to pour out their story that they can do so without a great deal of information on who the other members are, so long as they feel acceptance and understanding coming from the group.

This is also a more difficult type of group to lead, since you never know how many people will attend or who they may be. Also, with no prior contact you will not know what to expect in terms of the urgency of their practical situation or their emotional state - you must be prepared for crises and should have back-up available, including places to stay, medical help, and emergency mental health resources.

Discussion vs. Counseling

In a discussion group, many practical issues can be explored and experiences shared. Women have an opportunity to analyze the complicated life changes they are facing. Such a group can provide a good setting to sort things out, gain perspective, and reach a sense of internal resolution. However, it is most effective after a woman has gained some emotional distance from the experience and is no longer in crisis. Many battered women have not had the opportunity to work through their feelings at all and are very upset or else have repressed their feelings. They may find that a discussion group only brings back bad memories and they feel "all stirred up" again and are consequently unable to focus on the discussion or gain very much from it.

A counseling group, when the focus is on feelings, and where emotional release such as crying or shouting are encouraged, can be very effective for the woman who is in crisis because her feelings are on the surface anyway and get in the way of her talking or thinking things through. By creating a safe space for emotional catharsis, she can gain some release from her pent-up or overflowing emotions and thus become freer to analyze her situation and to take action. Many women who have been battered have found that such a group was most helpful during an immediate crisis and also was a necessary step in dealing with the emotional pains of battering (either recent or past) before they could make full use of a discussion type of group.

Structured vs. Non-structured

In a structured group, activities are planned in advance. On the plus side, this allows you to be prepared for the group, and also provides a way to be sure that all the concerns of the members are incorporated at one time or another. Also, you can be sure that resources are available and the predictability of the group makes it feel safer for some people. On the minus side, it requires more time to prepare for such a group, and it does not always allow adequate space for dealing with crisis. Although a group can be structured with time set aside to deal with immediate concerns, a full agenda or an outside speaker may not leave enough time to deal with an unforeseen problem in the life of a member. Therefore, it is again usually a more effective type of group for a woman who has enough distance from her battering situation so that her life is fairly predictable both emotionally and practically.

There are two ways in which a group can be non-structured. First, a group can have a format including such activities as an opening exercise, a time for each member to speak, a discussion period, and a closing, without any advance planning of what topics will be discussed or how much time will be devoted to each activity. Thus, the group has a sort of "skeleton" but is still flexible enough to meet immediate concerns. Second, a group can be totally spontaneous both in the types of activities which happen and the particular focus of an individual group session. In this case, you and the members plan together at the beginning of each session what will be included in that meeting. Either type of non-structured

group is very effective in dealing with crisis situations and in fact assumes that its members may be in crisis at any time. It demands great flexibility on your part and a willingness to be ready to cope with anything. However, lack of an agenda may be threatening to some people, both members and facilitators; it requires skill and confidence to create each week an experience which is responsive to the concerns of that week rather than being chaotic or unfocused. (Don't let that scare you - your confidence and skill will grow as you and the other members share the experience and build together.)

Time-limited vs. Ongoing

In a group limited to a specific number of sessions, each member knows ahead of time what commitment she is making and can plan accordingly. If there are many topics of concern to the group, members know how much time they can allow for each one and can also pace themselves in terms of using the group to deal with their own personal issues. Sometimes a woman with a need to share something that is difficult for her will risk trusting the group when she knows she only has two or three more sessions in which to do it. Some women are more comfortable with a short-term commitment than an indefinite one. A time-limited group can also be flexible if members decide that they want more time in the group, by re-contracting for another period of time. This is also a way to add new members to the group. Some groups continue at the same time each week indefinitely, but members re-contract every four or six weeks, at which time there is some turnover of membership without disruption of the group.

An ongoing group with closed membership can provide a very deep experience for its members over a long period of time, but must be sensitively handled in terms of members realizing when the group is outgrowing itself and individuals need to get on to other things. If members reach this point at different times, it can be difficult for those who need to leave to do it without "abandoning" members who wish to continue. Sensitivity is the key, of course, and the resolution can be a positive step of growth for all concerned.

The ongoing group with open membership is most responsive to the needs of the woman whose life is chaotic due to crises of battering. It is always available and demands no commitment in terms of continuity. Thus, it provides constant support which she can use whenever she needs it and to which she can contribute whenever she is able, even if it is a year later. Such a group will inevitably evolve in form and content as well as in membership and probably also in leadership, while still providing a continuing support system for the battered woman. In an ongoing group it is particularly important for you as facilitator to contract for specific periods of time, however, and to take time off. Otherwise, you will "burn-out" quickly. Such a group can successfully be run by a pool of facilitators who rotate responsibility for the group.

ISSUES IN PLANNING GROUPS

Safety

Whatever type of group is contemplated, there are practical considerations for which you must plan. One of the most important is safety. Many abusers will not allow their wives to attend a group and so your members may be attending group without their mate's knowledge. Also, an abuser may track down his wife after she has left him. Therefore, it is usually a good idea to figure out some strategy whereby the location of the group meeting can be kept secret. The group can be advertised with only a phone number and then the members can be told the location after an initial phone call or screening interview. It is also a good idea for the police department to be aware of where and when your group meets and for you to have a pre-arranged plan for contacting them quickly if trouble should arise.

Child Care

Another major consideration is child care. Many women bear the sole responsibility for one or more small children and may not be able to arrange for or afford babysitting in order to attend group sessions. If your organization decides to provide child care, it is usually better to have the children in another part of the building from where the group is held so that the mothers' attention is not distracted. Sometimes a church or community organization or individual church members can be found who would like to donate child care during groups. Many groups try to find aware men to

provide this service in order to provide the children with positive male role models and break down their image of men as violent. At the very least, you should try to develop a list of possible babysitters.

Back-up

Another extremely important consideration in working with battered women is to be sure that some other type of support system is available besides the group. While in some types of therapy groups the members deal mostly with the past, this is not true of a battered women's group. Here, most women are still dealing with a new crisis each day, whether that be another physical attack or a hassle over a separation agreement. Usually this is provided by a hotline or shelter for abuse victims. Most women attending the group will either be living with their assailant or will have recently left and often will still be in danger. They will need practical help with legal procedures, welfare information and life planning, as well as someone available to talk to individually as the situation develops. The group alone cannot provide the availability, individualized counseling and practical resources usually needed by battered women.

Screening

You will have to decide whether screening of members for your group is possible, desirable, or necessary. If the members make contact with your group through a hotline, the hotline counselors can explore with them the idea of attending a group and help them

decide whether this would best meet their need at this time. Many women, especially the most isolated, may be hesitant about joining a group, so there must be some process by which they can find out what to expect from the group and be reassured that demands will not be placed on them for which they are not ready. The purpose of screening is to facilitate entry into the group by those who will benefit, rather than to eliminate people. Therefore, you must be sensitive about not setting up screening procedures which are too demanding.

If your group is set up for women in immediate crisis, be aware that both their situation and their feelings may change from day to day, so it is important to have your group available with a minimum of waiting and hassle. She should be able to find out what and where the group is, decide whether it is for her, and attend within the same week. In this type of group, you should plan to spend some time after the group talking to new members individually to explore their situation with them, make them aware of resources other than the group, and help them decide if the group is for them.

In the case of a closed group to which a woman makes a commitment for a certain number of sessions, you will want to set up a way for each woman to have enough of an idea of what the group is about to make her commitment clearly. You can set up individual screening interviews, or you can hold an "introductory" session to give people a sense of the group and its members before making a commitment.

Referrals

Either during a screening interview or a group session, you may

realize that a woman is unable to make use of the group or you may feel that she needs more support than the group is able to give. Specifically, if a woman is in so much need to talk about her own problem that she cannot listen at all to others, if she has an uncontrolled alcohol or drug problem, if she is mentally retarded to a degree which prevents her from understanding what is happening in the group, if she is clearly out of touch with reality, if she is suicidal, or if she is so depressed as to be non-functional, you should explore with her the possibility of other supports instead of, or sometimes in addition to, the group. See the section on making effective referrals.

Size

In a closed group, you can limit the number of participants. Decide before advertising your group on the minimum and maximum number of members you can handle. Three to eight members, plus a facilitator or two, usually provides a large enough group for diversity and a sense of group identity, yet a small enough group for each person to have adequate time to be heard and feel known by the other members. With two facilitators, groups can be larger and can divide into smaller sub-groups for some activities so that everyone has more time to be heard.

In drop-in, or open groups, this technique is often used on evenings when many women show up. Large groups are also no problem if the format is mainly information-sharing by outside resource people.

Group members who have or are learning some leadership skills

can assist when larger groups wish to divide. Also, ongoing groups, once they are comfortable with each other and the group process, can divide into smaller groups without specific leadership.

Composition

Of course, the composition of your group will depend mainly on who wishes to come to it; and you certainly would not want to turn anyone away because she did not fit into a pre-conceived plan for achieving balance. If several groups are available, however, you may be able to plan for more balanced composition in terms of age, race, class, and sexual orientation of members. The more diverse your group, the more potential there is for learning from each other's experiences but also the more likely that there will be clashes between people because of biases and prejudices. When that happens, you will have to take an active role in thoughtfully bringing it into the open and helping people listen to and respect each other's differences, which can produce a very positive growth experience from what can be initially a tense and embarrassing situation.

The one division which is often helpful is between those who are in emotional crisis and need to focus on their feelings with strong counseling support and those who are not feeling upset and are ready for a group more focused on discussion and information. This relates more to the state of emotional need than to the actual situation of the woman. In fact, a group which includes women at various stages of the process of changing their situation will provide better opportunities for learning from each other's experiences and will also guard against a sense of hopelessness which might pervade the group

everyone is at a point of extreme crisis and no one has yet found any way to begin to change her situation.

Scheduling

Ideally, there should be groups available at various times of day and days of the week. In practical terms, groups must be planned when you and your co-facilitators are available. If you are flexible and there are enough facilitators, try to schedule both a day group and an evening group. Women coming to group will often have to coordinate work and child care schedules, as well as the major problem of their mates' schedules. Many of the members will only be "allowed" out on certain nights, will have to "ask permission" which may be capriciously denied, or will have to sneak out while their mate is at work.

Breaks/Smoking

At least for the first session, you may have to decide about the times and duration of breaks. The issue of smoking should also be discussed with the group, and the needs of both smokers and non-smokers considered. Some people cannot be around smoke at all, while others will be unable to sit through group without cigarettes. Some options are to divide smoking and non-smoking areas, if the room is large and well-ventilated, to divide sub-groups along smoking and non-smoking lines, to take breaks during which smokers can go out for a cigarette, or to ask smokers to go out briefly for a cigarette while the group continues (surprisingly, this can work well without anyone's feeling rejected if it is handled with humor and

understanding, especially if the smokers can hear from the next room and are trying to cut down on cigarettes anyway).

Refreshments before the meeting or at least something to drink can be a good ice-breaker and help establish a relaxed atmosphere as members arrive. One-to-one conversations are natural during this time and you increase the good feeling among members. You should supply the refreshments for the first session, but bring it up at the first meeting for the group members to decide whether they want to continue this; and, if so, who will be responsible for it and how it will be paid for. In a drop-in group, you will probably have to continue to do it yourself and have a can for donations.

Payment

The issue of payment is an important one and must be carefully thought about. Of course your time in organizing the group is valuable and should be reimbursed, if possible. Your organization may have funds to hire you, but most groups, even if they can pay for a group leading position, must raise much of their operating budget through donations and grassroots funding efforts. If you decide to charge a fee for the group, be aware that many battered women do not control any of the family money and must account to their husbands for literally every penny spent. They may have only enough for bus fare, and sometimes not even that. Other women may be from middle-or-upper class families and have access to their own money, although simply having a husband with money does not guarantee access by the woman. A sliding fee scale is often a fair way to take these differences into account.

If you decide to ask for donations, be assertive in explaining the need for your organization for money and the use that will be made of the donations and make it clear that a woman who cannot pay should not feel guilty and should not deprive herself of money she really needs for her own survival.

TWO FACILITATORS

There are several advantages to having two facilitators in the group. Running a group is a big demand in terms of time and energy and you will have more attention to give to the work if you are sharing the load with someone else who is not in crisis. You and your co-facilitator can be aware of each other's needs for support and can bring different styles of facilitation and different skills to the group. Often she will notice things that you do not and be able to pick up on the "missing link" in a discussion or explanation, especially if you are giving information and may have forgotten something. Also, you can take turns taking a more active role in the group process and acting as more of an observer to give feedback and be aware of problems.

It is a good idea, if possible, for the two of you to have different backgrounds, such as pairing an older woman with a younger one, a woman who has experienced abuse with one who has not, a Black woman with a White one, or a professionally trained counselor with a peer counselor. This provides a balance of perspectives, especially if the group is diverse in terms of age, race, economic group, etc.

In an open or drop-in group, it is essential to have two facilitators available because you cannot know ahead of time how many clients will show up and you may need to break into smaller groups if attendance is large.

Also, in any group, a person who is very upset may need more attention than the group can give, especially if she is in an immediate crisis or is suicidal or violent. If you have two facilitators, one can go with this woman into another room for some extra

help with the crisis while the other facilitator carries on with the group. (Sometimes other group members may also wish to join in giving support to the one in crisis, but you should not expect this of them. They may need to remain focused on their own concerns instead.)

A model which incorporates shared facilitation also provides an excellent way to integrate new facilitators and for group members to gradually take on more of the functions of facilitation as they are ready.

EVALUATION

Feedback and evaluation should be an ongoing process; and the more it involves all the group members, the more valuable it will be. Each session should include some mechanism for everyone to give their reactions to what was done and suggestions for improvement. From time to time you may want to set aside time to discuss in depth the positive and negative aspects of group and think together about improvements. This can be done as a "brainstorming" session, using questions such as, "What is the thing you like best about group?" "What could be improved?" and specific concerns such as "How could we make the group accessible to women without transportation, child care, or money?" This can lead into discussion and action.

Such a session should be held near the end of a time-limited group (such as during the seventh week of an eight-week cycle), and every three or four months in an ongoing group. You can also ask for written suggestions and comments. You may have members who would like to give it some thought at home, in addition to, or instead of participating in a discussion.

After each session, you and your co-facilitator should take the time to write down what happened in group, the highlights, and any problems which arose. Also, take the time to think for a moment about each individual member and whether there is someone who needs extra support this week or a referral to a lawyer, counselor, etc. By discussing these things with your co-facilitator right away, you will remember more than if you wait to do an "evaluation" later.

BUILDING SUPPORT AMONG MEMBERS

One of your most important functions as a group facilitator is to help the members set up support systems for themselves and teach them ways to support each other. It is not up to you to be everyone's support person and it is not healthy for you or for them to try to take on that role. Here are some specific ways that group members can support each other:

1. Members who wish to (and for whom it is safe) can exchange telephone numbers and call each other for emotional support. It helps to make it clear that the person who needs support ask the person she is calling whether she has time to listen and that the person called have permission to say "no" if she is not able to give support at that time. If you as facilitator make this point to the group, it will prevent people from thinking they "have" to listen and then resenting the caller. Also, it puts the responsibility on the caller to find willing listeners rather than "dumping" on anyone she calls.
2. Members can participate in social activities together. After living an isolated life for a long time, many women, once out on their own, are timid about going to social activities and especially about meeting men. Group members can enjoy each other's company at such activities as movies or going out to dinner and can go together to singles activities to help each other begin to develop new social circles. It is a good idea to try not to talk about

their "problems" during such activities, but to focus on the "here and now" and the future. Socialization activities are for fun, not for mini-group sessions!

3. You can post a list for people to sign up to exchange skills and services. People can write on one list things they need and on another the things they are offering, and then contact each other. This could include:

- child care
- transportation
- going to court with someone
- being available to be called in a crisis
- going shopping together
- calling in the morning to say "hi" and get the day started
- special skills, such as sewing, repair work, car work
- sharing big cleaning jobs at home
- sharing outings with children

4. Members can develop and share a list of resources such as lawyers, babysitters, clubs, restaurants, books, job-finding services, educational opportunities, etc.

TECHNIQUES AND EXERCISES FOR USE IN GROUPS

Here are several basic types of exercises you may want to use:

1. Go-rounds. You will probably find that the go-round is an excellent way to introduce a new topic. In a go-round, each person takes a turn to answer the question, going around the circle in an orderly fashion. The idea is to focus fully on one person at a time, to really listen to her. Others can make supportive responses, or give suggestions if asked, but should not take the spotlight off of the speaker. It is up to you as facilitator to be sure that each person gets her turn, and that no one's turn gets taken over by someone else.

Many women have never been in a group before, so it is important for you to explain the structure and purpose of go-rounds the very first time you do it. You may find that there is a great tendency to cut in on each other and take over if you don't, because everyone is eager to talk. However, once the structure has been established, you can stop an interruptor simply by reminding her that the go-round isn't over yet.

It's a good idea to take a minute before the go-round starts for everyone to think about what she is going to say. That way each one can give full attention to the speaker, rather than having half her mind on trying to think of what to say when her turn comes.

2. Discussion. It is usually a good idea to have an open discussion following a go-round. It is much less structured, so that people can respond more freely to each other and express ideas back and forth. It is still your responsibility to be aware of encouraging participation by everyone, shifting the spotlight away from monopolizers, asking questions to draw out quieter members, etc.
3. Focus on the Good. This is an excellent method of getting a group meeting started on a positive note. It should generally be used to open each meeting. In a short go-round, each woman tells one good thing that happened to her that week. This can be very difficult if she has had a bad week; but it's valuable, because she can always find one good thing, no matter how small, and this helps her focus on the positive. Sometimes, the week may have been so bad that while a woman is trying to think of one good thing, she will start to cry or will have to talk about the bad things before she can start to think of the good. If this happens, let her "take some time" (see below), and then ask again for the one good thing. Or it may be best to let her pass for the moment and then "take time" when the go-round is over. You decide which way to handle it, depending on the situation.
4. "Taking Time" is a short period (usually about five minutes) during which the full attention of the group is given to one member who is particularly upset or has something on her mind. You can introduce it by explaining that often it

helps to have the supportive listening of the whole group, and that it's OK to cry or shout if you feel like it.

The concept of "taking time" may be threatening to some or all of the women but is an excellent way to create space for releasing feelings. If no one wants to "take time", it is appropriate for you to use it the first time. This can make it feel safer for the members and also helps show you as a human being who has problems too.

"Taking time" should be available during each session, probably right after "focus on the good" and the women should be able to ask for it any time they feel a need. Also, if a member is visibly upset, you can simply ask if she would like to talk about it, and ask that the group listen, without necessarily calling it "taking time". Members of battered women's groups have said that one of the things they liked about the group was that facilitators dealt with the individual needs of the members before moving the discussion along.

5. Role Playing. This can be a very effective method of introducing a topic or of exploring a situation which someone brings up. It is important to allow enough time when using it. The first time it is introduced, it helps to tell the group members that it's natural to feel nervous about it if you've never done it before, but most people really enjoy it once they try it! Of course, anyone has the right to pass, just like in anything else in the group. Also for the first role-play, you should take one of the parts, unless

members volunteer. Usually role-players are selected by drawing straws, but they can also volunteer, especially if they have brought up the problem being dramatized (although they might wish to take the opposite part than the one they play in real life)!

Here is a possible format for role-playing: First the role-play, then a quick go-round on "How did you feel watching/participating in the role-play?" This is to focus on subjective feelings which may have been brought out by the role-playing. Be sure to include the players in the go-round! Then have a discussion on the topic of the role-play.

For the first time, we suggest this situation: Woman telling her neighbor that she is leaving her husband (or he is leaving her). This is general enough to allow concentration on the role-playing as a form rather than generating a lot of discussion and also is easy enough to help people feel more comfortable about role-playing.

Role-playing can also be used as a vehicle for encouraging emotional release in a counseling type of group. In this case, a woman might want to role-play an upsetting situation several times or from several points of view in order to get in touch with her feelings and work through them. She might want to play it first as herself, then as her husband, then as her child, her mother, or whoever else is involved, while other group members fill the other roles. Also, she might want to play it as it actually

happened, as she was afraid it would happen, as she would like it to happen, etc. Role-playing can also be a way of practicing for new situations such as going to court, approaching a mate in a new style, or meeting new men.

6. Small Groups. Sometimes, especially if the group is large, you may want to divide it up for some exercises. One idea is to share ideas or "brainstorm" a topic in groups of two or three, then return to share insights with the whole group. Another possibility is to divide the group into two smaller groups, in order for each person to have more time to speak or in order to deal with different questions or to use different techniques in each group. One group might want to discuss a topic while the other did role-playing, for instance. A brief report to the whole group afterward would bring everyone back to a feeling of unity.
7. "Up" Exercises for Ending Group Sessions.
 - a. What I like best about myself is.....
 - b. What I like about (the person next to me) is...
 - c. Something I am going to do "just for myself" in the next week is...
 - d. Wallet exercise: each person chooses one item from her wallet and explains its significance to the group.
 - e. Rose bush: Imagine yourself as a rose bush (or other flower). Picture what you look like - flowers, color, leaves, etc. What are your surroundings? How do you relate to weather, change of seasons, etc.
 - f. Give an imaginary gift to the person on your right.
 - g. Describe your ideal vacation.
 - h. Describe your ideal occupation/career.
 - i. I want to become...

- j. Reading poetry/singing.
- k. "The seat on my right is free". Start with one empty seat. The person to the left says "The seat on my right is free and I would like _____ to sit next to me." Have everyone do it.
- l. Draw self-portraits.
- m. Sending a Message. Hand out consecutive numbered pieces of paper. Form a circle with one person in the middle. The middle person calls out a number. The person who has that number then calls out two numbers. The people with those numbers then try to change places without letting the middle person get one of these places, using non-verbal communication to find out who the other is without letting the middle person know.

POSSIBLE FORMAT FOR AN EIGHT-WEEK STRUCTURED SUPPORT GROUP

The following format was developed by Delaware County Women in Transition and the Marital Abuse Project of Delaware County, Inc. (PA). It is a synthesis of ideas shared by Women in Transition of Philadelphia, PA and Judy Diaz of Langhorne, PA, and was developed through an ongoing support group for facilitators who experienced all the exercises themselves and shared their learning in the facilitators' group while also serving as facilitators of another group. This format was designed as a closed group using two facilitators with a membership of ten to twelve women. Hopefully some of the ideas here will be helpful to you or will spark your imagination in developing your own groups for battered women, although the specific exercises here focus on the experiences of separation and divorce rather than specifically on battering.

There is quite a bit of information which must be covered at the beginning of this group model, and also several topics which should be discussed early as a basis for future activities. Therefore, we have developed a specific format for the first two sessions. Also, the last session, which focuses on needs and goals, is quite structured, with some room for flexibility. For the intervening sessions, you can develop your own according to the needs of your group. Sample exercises are included on several topics, and suggestions are given for other types of exercises. Of course, battering can be added as a specific

topic and you could develop discussion questions and exercises with that specific focus, although women often discuss and share their experiences of battering in the context of the group model as it is.

Group sessions should follow this general format:

1. Focus on the Good
2. "Taking Time"
3. Two or three exercises relating to the topic(s), possibly including go-rounds, a discussion, a role-play. The exercises should be varied, and it is often a good idea to move around a bit, stretch, or change positions between them, especially if your group does not take a break.
4. A short closing exercise on a positive tone.
5. Exchange names, if desired
6. Evaluate

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST SESSION

Study your training materials, of course! Especially the format for Session I on the next page. Specifically, the things you need to be familiar with for the first session include: Go-rounds. In the first session, you will introduce go-rounds. Be prepared to explain about go-rounds, and to monitor pretty closely. Structure is very important in the first session; the members may be nervous, excited, relieved to be talking, and unfamiliar with the format of go-rounds. Once this structure is established as a time to listen without interrupting, it can become more flexible in later sessions, but if you never establish it, you may leave the door open for all sorts of unnecessary communication problems.

Philosophy and Guidelines. Be prepared to explain them. Before the group meeting, the two facilitators should decide which one of them will have primary responsibility for each of the exercises in the session. Think about how you will introduce each topic, what points you especially need to make (write yourself notes or an outline if you want to), think about what you will say in your initial brief introduction (item 1). Decide who will be time-keeper for the introductory pairs, and for stopping fifteen minutes before the end on exercise 5.

Things you will need for the first session:

Refreshments - coffee, tea, cups, napkins, etc.
Tape recorder for exercise 6 (optional)
Pencils or pens for everyone
Ditto master or paper for address list, #8
Slips of paper and something to put them in, for exchanging names, #9

MOST IMPORTANT: After you do all that, relax! They will be glad to be there and they will like you!

SESSION 1

1. Facilitators introduce themselves - be very brief, don't get into things that will be covered in the introduction exercise. Just your name and one relevant thing about you is fine, such as how you got involved in the project or something personal.
2. Talk about the purpose and philosophy of the groups and the guidelines. Explain the guidelines one by one and answer any questions they may have.
3. Introductions - First, each woman gets a partner (or two - this can be done in groups of either two or three). You should direct the choice of partners, to minimize discomfort. We don't want to hook into old fears about "what if nobody asks me..." Each person should be paired with someone she does NOT know. You can direct this individually ("you two go together and you two...") or say something like, "choose the person next to you," or use numbering off.

Second, the pairs (or three-somes) go to other parts of the room and each person takes three minutes to talk while the other listens. Tell them to listen carefully, as they will be introducing each other to the group! Someone with a watch (usually one of the facilitators must keep time, and call out loudly when it is time for the partners to switch, and when it is time for the whole group to reassemble. In their turn, each person answers these three questions:

What is your life situation right now? (Tell whatever you want to about partner, children, whatever is going on in your life.)

How are you feeling right now?

One significant thing about myself that I want to share with the group.

4. Introductions with the whole group - First, this is the time to explain how a go-round works, and to emphasize the importance of listening and taking turns! Do this first, and as the exercise progresses, comment on how it is working and reinforce good listening and gently remind anyone who forgets!

In this go-round, each woman introduces her partner to the group. As the introductions are being made, notice whether the women mention significant things that are really about themselves (third question) or whether they define themselves in terms of others, such as husband, children, or in terms of roles only, such as wife, mother, career woman. Point out how the women in your group define themselves. If relevant, you can go around quickly again, with each woman telling one special thing that relates only to herself, rather than the rest of the family, such as a special talent or interest she has.

5. Go-round: "What was your fantasy of marriage as a young girl; or what did you expect from your marriage? What was the reality of your marriage; or what did you actually get?" This is the "meat" of the first session. For many women, this is the first chance they have had to talk about what their marriage was actually like, to share their shattered hopes without criticism. It is important not to break up the group for this exercise, since everyone needs to hear about everyone else so that they will all feel that they know each other. This exercise will take a long time. They need a chance to spill it all out at this first session and discover commonalities among themselves. They will probably be relieved and excited and may try to turn this into a discussion; be sure to keep it a go-round until everyone has had her turn. If there is time, a discussion can follow. If there is not enough time for everyone to talk, let the remaining people say just a sentence or two and ask them to hold their story to begin the next week's session. Stop this exercise or the discussion when about 15 minutes of the session remain, in order to finish pressing business of the first session.
6. Ending on a positive note: Quick go-round: Choose one thing to do in the coming week just for yourself. Make it specific. Can be something frivolous! You can write these down or tape record them. This lifts spirits and focuses on the future, after they have talked about their rotten marriages. Tell them that we will begin next week by telling about the things we did just for ourselves.
7. Group decision making and incidental business: decide about smoking; decide about breaks.
8. Pass around a paper for everyone to sign her name, address, and phone number. If you have access to a ditto machine, do this directly on the ditto master. Or each woman can write her own list of name and phone number only. In this case, go around the circle, each woman giving her name, spelling it, and saying her number as the members write it down. This takes time but helps people remember names.

9. Exchange names and phone numbers. Pass out pencils and slips of paper, draw names and phone numbers out of a hat. Each woman is to call the woman whose name she draws during the coming week.
10. Evaluation. Ask what they liked and what they would change.

After the first session: Congratulate yourselves! Then sit down right away (or within 24 hours at the latest) and evaluate the session. If you don't do it right away, you may forget important things that would help you. Make an appointment with your co-facilitator to plan the next session.

Preparation for the Second Session

New Members - Contact everyone who did not show up at the first session. Find out why, and try to get a firm commitment as to whether or not they really want to join the group. If possible, new members who plan to begin with the second session should come early so that you can fill them in on what happened at the first group. If they can't come early, fill them in on the telephone.

Be prepared to explain and introduce:

"Taking Time"
"Focus on the Good"

You will need:

Page on the process of grieving (to pass out)
Slips of paper for exchanging names
Pencils or pens for members
Your note pad
Coat of Arms (to give out if your group decides to do
"Focus on Yourself" next.)

STAGES OF GRIEF

In On Death and Dying, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has identified five stages that people go through in coming to terms with death. Although her work has been done mainly with patients facing physical death, she points out that these stages are equally applicable to the death of a relationship. It is often helpful for a person experiencing the ending of a relationship to be aware of these five stages of grief. Most people find that they experience all five stages before the experience of grieving is complete. Sometimes they experience more than one stage at a time, or go back and forth between stages several times. The stages may occur in any order and for any length of time. Being aware of them can help someone in the process of grieving to assess where they are, where they are headed, and can be a helpful reminder that they are not crazy, but simply experiencing the normal human process of grieving.

First Stage: Denial and Isolation

This is often the initial reaction: "No, it can't be happening to me!" This is often a healthy way to get some distance and perspective on the reality of the situation until the time that the person is ready to deal with it. People in this stage also often feel alone and think that there is no one they can talk to about it.

Second Stage: Anger

Once the reality that the relationship has ended comes home, the person usually feels anger, rage, envy, and resentment. "Why me? Why not somebody else?" This stage is apt to alienate other people but it is very important for the person experiencing it. The person is rightfully angry about being cheated of many things that had been planned for, worked for, and believed in, and is jealous of others who are not facing such a difficult situation.

Third Stage: Bargaining

Patients facing death often try to make deals with God or Fate to postpone the inevitable. Bargains are often based on guilt-the patient wants to make up for past wrongs. In facing the ending of a relationship, the person may try to make bargains with her/himself, feeling that if she/he changes everything she/he feels guilty for, maybe things will work out again. Sometimes, of course, bargaining goes on between the partners in the relationship, but it can also happen internally after the relationship is over.

Fourth Stage: Depression

Sometimes depression may be based on guilt and shame which are unrealistically exaggerated. In this kind of depression, it may be helpful to remind oneself of the real facts and the positive things, however few they may seem. Alternately, depression may be a healthy tool to prepare for the loss of love objects. In this case it is important to allow this grief to be fully experienced, through thinking about the loss, talking about it, and crying over it. A supportive and accepting listener may be helpful during this time.

Fifth Stage: Acceptance

Eventually the person experiencing loss has worked through all these feelings and is resigned to the situation. The past no longer has the power to evoke uncontrollable or heavy feelings. The dying patient is ready to face death; the person ending a relationship has faced the death of that relationship, learned from it, let go of it, and is ready to move on.

SESSION II

1. Introduction of new members. New members should have been prepared ahead of time. If there are new members, simply go around the circle having each woman say her name and where she's from. It's not necessary to repeat things that the new members have missed; as time goes on, the background information will get filled in.
2. Focus on the Good. Introduce and explain this exercise. Then do it, and ask them to include the thing they planned at last week's session to do just for themselves. (Session one, #6)
3. If you didn't finish the go-round on Marriage last week (#5), do it now, and include the new members. If new members are the only ones who haven't done it, don't do it just for them. They will be telling things to the already-established group without hearing anything about the "old members" and this could be an uncomfortable spotlighting.
4. "Taking Time". Introduce it and use it if anyone wants to, or use it yourself if you want to. Tell them that it is always available for anyone to ask for at any time if they need it and that it will be offered every week after goods and news.
5. The process of grieving. Pass out the sheet on grieving and take time for everyone to read it. Then introduce the questions for the go-round and give everyone a minute to think about their answer. Have the go-round and follow with discussion if it seems appropriate. The questions are:

How have you experienced the different stages of the process of grieving and where are you now in this process?

Where do you think your spouse is?
6. Go-round on being in a women's group. Many women may come to the group feeling anxious about trusting other women. Many of us have related to other women mainly in terms of competition. It is important to bring out these feelings and share them early in the group. Talk about this briefly and ask the question: How does it feel to you to be in a group with other women? (Both good and bad feelings are ok!)
7. Ending on a positive note. Choose an "up" exercise from the page listing them.
8. Group decision-making. Decide what topic the group wants to deal with next. Groups may vary in whether they want to think about themselves and their own individual focus now or whether it is more pressing to talk about children first. Some groups may want to talk about relationships right away, but it is a good idea to encourage thinking about themselves as separate people first. Decide your group's priorities for the next session or two.

9. Exchange names - optional (the group decides).
10. Evaluate
11. Pass out address list.

PLANNING SESSIONS III - VII

The purposes of these sessions are: to deal with the expressed concerns of the members, to go into more detail on topics most interesting to the group, and to compile specific suggestions for dealing with specific situations.

The main topics to be covered are: Focus on Yourself, Dealing with Children, Relationships, and Sexuality. They can be covered in any order and you can choose exercises on each topic to fill one or more sessions.

One suggestion for planning might be: at the end of the second session, decide which topic to deal with first. Facilitators plan the third session from the suggestions for that topic. Then, as part of the third session (and again later in the group experience if necessary), have a planning session. First, brainstorm to clarify areas of interest and to generate topics. Group members can suggest specific questions for go-rounds and discussions on each topic. After a list of ideas has been compiled, set priorities, still in the group. Then, in planning the following sessions, the facilitators can use these ideas and structure sessions using your knowledge of the group and its operation. Some suggestions will be useful for discussions, some for go-rounds, some for role-playing. Try to vary the sessions and follow the format for group sessions.

Another possibility is to bring in outside resources for particular topics.

EXERCISES FOR "FOCUS ON YOURSELF"

1. Significant People. This can be a good way to begin thinking about yourself - by taking a look back at the others who have been influential in your life. It's a go-round (a time-consuming but introspective one) and the questions are: "Who are the three most significant people in your life?" They can be living or dead, a present relationship, a past influence. Explain that "significant" should be taken to mean important and may be either a good or bad influence on one's life. "Can you go to any of these people for good feelings and emotional support?"

2. Assessing your resources: Go-round.

"Who do you confide in now?"

"Do you find it easy or hard to confide in other people?"

3. Love Seat. Very positive exercise - leaves people feeling good! Use it at the end of a session. Here's how to do it:

Each woman takes a turn to be the "Focus" around the circle. When a woman is "Focus": First, she tells the group one good thing about herself. Then each group member tells the "Focus" one good thing they have observed in her. Then, the "Focus" tells how she felt validating herself and how it felt to receive compliments.

4. Discussion: What does it mean to you to be a separate person:
5. Go-round: If you could be anyone, who would you be? Why?
6. Role-play: Woman telling a friend about the things she has discovered about herself since she separated from her husband and the things she misses about her marriage.

EXERCISES FOR "DEALING WITH CHILDREN"

1. Role-play: Mother telling child that parents are separating. Role-players choose age and sex of child. Go-round and discussion.
2. Role-play: Child returning after being with Daddy or in-laws. Go-round and discussion.
3. Go-round about dealing with children's feelings. A useful resource is The Boys and Girls Book about Divorce, and leaders can refer to it and will find many helpful ideas for dealing with the feelings and situations that children may encounter (that means you should READ IT!) The idea of this go-round, or discussion, is to look at some of the ways that children may act, try to understand what they may be feeling, and think about how the mothers can help them and deal more effectively with them. Give each woman a turn either to tell of an experience where she found something that worked or was aware of what her children were feeling and was able to help them or to share some behavior she does not understand and ask for suggestions. Some of these situations could be done as role-playing.
4. Brainstorming: Helpful ideas for dealing with children. Write down ideas that come out of the above exercise, have them run off for the group and for future groups!
5. Discussion or role-play: How to make decisions about summers and holidays. This can lead into discussion of ideas for dealing with ex-husband and in-laws about children. Use specific situations that the group members have encountered.

EXERCISES FOR "RELATIONSHIPS"

1. Relationships with ex-husband and in-laws:

Role-play: Woman telling a parent or parent-in-law that she and her husband are splitting up.

Role-play: Husband telling his wife that he wants a divorce.

Role-play: Husband telling his separated wife that he wants to get back together with her.

2. New Relationships:

Go-round: How do you feel about marriage now?

Go-round: What do you like about being a woman?

Go-round: Fantasize your ideal man.

Go-round: Go-round and discussion: What do I want in a relationship now?

The purpose of this is to help the women focus on what it is they are really looking for now. It can include a discussion of the different types of relationships between men and women, what our emotional needs are now, what our practical needs are now, and how we can meet the type of people we want to relate to now. Group facilitators should be aware of bringing sexuality into the discussion. The women may be reluctant to be the first one to talk about sex, so if you talk about sexual relationships, the other members will feel more comfortable. Once it is mentioned, they will probably be eager to talk about it! During the discussion, be alert for situations to role-play.

Role-play: Meeting a man in a singles bar.

Discussion topics on the dynamics of relationships:

How long do you hang onto a relationship waiting for the other person to change?

How can you confront your partner constructively to demand changes in the relationship?

It is possible to work on the relationship while apart?

Why did I let myself be intimidated in my relationships?

How was I independent/dependent in my marriage?

How was the power divided in my marriage? How were decisions made?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of living together vs. marrying again?

EXERCISES FOR "SEXUALITY"

1. Coat of Arms. In order to do this exercise, the Coat of Arms should be passed out the week before. This exercise also takes quite a bit of time and should not be used in the same session with the Significant People exercise. It is a good exercise for sharing some rather personal things and can be effective if it is used after the group has developed some basic trust. It brings them a lot closer. When explaining it, stress that the questions about "accomplishments" deal with what YOU feel to be your most important accomplishments in terms of yourself. This is very subjective and does not necessarily deal with awards or outward measurements of success.

To share the Coat of Arms, have a separate go-round for each of the six sections. By this time you can be a little more flexible with the format of the go-round to allow people to ask for clarification on what people say and let people respond supportively to each other. This can be the main exercise for a session. It takes a while but seems to hold people's attention. They get very involved in it.

2. Go-rounds. "What were your husband's attitudes toward sex in your marriage?" "What are your attitudes toward sex now?" "How does the way I feel about my body affect the way I feel about myself? ...the way I relate to men? ...to women?"

COAT OF ARMS

1	2
3	4
5	6

1. What do you regard as your greatest personal achievement?
2. What is one value, a deep commitment from which you would never budge?
3. What is the one thing that other people can do to make you most happy?
4. What material possession is most significant to you?
5. What would you do if you had one year to live and were guaranteed success in whatever you attempted?
6. What three words(qualities) would you like to have associated with you? These would become your personal motto, words to live by.

POSSIBLE FORMAT FOR AN ONGOING DROP-IN GROUP

The following format was developed and used successfully by the Marital Abuse Project of Delaware County, (PA) Inc. An ongoing drop-in group was begun in response to requests from women who joined the eight-week group outlined in the preceding section and found that it did not meet their needs because of the unpredictability of their lives or because their crisis situations did not allow them enough emotional distance to focus on structured discussion.

The drop-in group was unstructured in the sense that there were no pre-arranged topics for discussion and the elements of each week's session evolved according to the needs and desires of the members present that night. However, there was a basic format including several elements also used in the eight-week groups, as well as optional elements depending on the composition of the group. The basic format is as follows:

1. Philosophy and Guidelines
2. Focus on the Good
3. Introductions or Sharing "Where My Life Is At"
4. Taking Time
5. Small Groups or Pairs
6. Discussion
7. Meeting Real Needs
8. Closing Circle
9. Evaluation

Philosophy and Guidelines

Any time that new members are present it is vital for the facilitators to explain at the beginning what the groups are all about and what the guidelines are (especially emphasizing confidentiality, listening, and the idea that each woman is encouraged to use the group however she needs to). This will help the new person to feel

more at ease and give her an idea what to expect so that she will feel less like the "new kid at school" playing a game in which all the other players know the rules and she doesn't. If members who have attended before are enthusiastic about the group, they will be welcoming toward her and will want to share their view on what the group is like for them. Some groups also write up a one page description or brochure explaining what the groups are like and what the guidelines are for new people to read when they first come to the group.

Focus on the Good

As in the eight-week group, this is a valuable exercise to begin the group on a positive note. Although it may seem less relevant to people in crisis (their problems seem much more pressing and their good things may feel trivial by comparison), it is even more important for that very reason. With a whole group of people in crisis, it is easy for everyone to talk about their problems and allow a feeling of hopelessness to build. This exercise begins the session by injecting a bit of perspective. Often women who feel sunk in their worries are surprised at how many good things actually have happened to them in the past week and are glad that they were reminded of them.

Sometimes a member will be so upset and in such a terrible situation that she really cannot think of even one good thing. This is a time when it may be a good idea to gently insist that she keep trying to think of something, no matter how small. She may wish to

pass the first time around the circle, but you should come back and ask her again. If she still cannot find even one thing, it is clear that she is most in need of the group's support and she should be encouraged to "take time" right then. Once she has spent some time on the concern which was occupying her mind, she will be able to have enough perspective to find something good. When a person is in the midst of crisis, it is hardest to look for the positive, but that is also the time when the most effective support is not to buy the idea that "everything is awful" but to persist in helping her sort through the negative and find a ray of hope.

Introductions or Sharing "Where My Life Is At"

Whenever new members are present, of course there must be some sort of brief introduction of each person. This does not need to be extensive but should give the new person some sense of connection to the other members so that she will feel that she is among people who will understand. You can go around the circle and have each person answer specific questions, such as "What is your life situation right now?", "What is something you like about yourself?", "What would you like to change in your life?", "What are you looking forward to?", or "What would you like the group to know about you?" It is usually a good idea to specify that this is the time for brief answers only - the time to go into detail is during "taking time" so that everyone gets adequate time to talk. It is usually a good idea to ask one informational question so that members get some idea of what is happening with each other and what they have in common, and one questions which focuses on the woman herself and helps build

self-esteem and a sense of identity (Examples: "What do you like about yourself?", "What do you do well?", "What do you like to do in your spare time just for yourself?")

When there are no new members present, this exercise can be changed to "Where My Life Is At" - a brief update on each woman's latest happenings. Members who attend the group a lot like to keep in touch with each other's progress, especially if they attend sporadically. Sometimes in a drop-in group it is like a reunion when members attend who have been absent for a while. This sharing is fun and helps everyone feel encouraged by progress made as well as becoming aware of a member's special need for support if she is going through a difficult experience, such as a court hearing.

Taking Time

We found that Taking Time was usually the main event of a drop-in crisis group, because it answered the need for emotional release. Even newcomers often found it possible and healing to let down their guard and cry when given caring support by the group. While it is sometimes hard for people who are not in crisis to get in touch with their feelings, women in the midst of crisis are eager for some outlet.

In introducing Taking Time to new members, it helps to mention that it may seem silly or embarrassing to cry or be angry in front of a group of strangers, but this is a natural feeling! Most of us felt that way at first and have found that the release is worth it. Although feelings may seem silly when we are thinking about them, they do not seem at all foolish when we are feeling them; doing so

with the support of a group gives both release and perspective. The use the individual members may need to make of their time will range from heavy crying to talking and even laughing - the element that makes this format work is to place no expectations on HOW a woman uses her time but to accept and encourage whatever SHE defines as her need of the group's attention. In this way you give permission for powerful emotional catharsis if someone needs to do that while also allowing space for women who just need to talk about their situation but are not presently in touch with heavy emotions. In either case, the technique is valuable because it gives each woman a time which is truly for herself, to define and use as she needs. This counteracts feelings of not being worth any time of her own and not having any control.

In practical terms, it is usually a good idea to structure the time spent on Taking Time by giving each woman an equal amount of time, usually ten or fifteen minutes. Someone can be timekeeper and let her know when she has two or three minutes to go. You will want to be flexible to allow for people who really need extra time or people who don't feel comfortable sharing very much at that time. And, of course, you yourself should take your share of time also; by sharing less of yourself, you set up a distance between yourself and the other members and create a climate in which they may begin to feel that they are "needy" while you are "all together". By sharing as a full member of the group, you show them your humanness and your struggles and your willingness to share, as well as serving as a role model for being in touch with your feelings. You will see more clearly that you are all struggling with the same basic issues

in different degrees and details. Of course, you or any member may elect to "pass" on a particular day or to give some or all of your time to someone who is in great crisis.

Small Groups or Pairs

If the group is large, you may want to divide into smaller groups or even pairs for Taking Time. This will work only if each small group or pair has at least one person who has been to the group before and is familiar with the feeling of talking about herself and her feelings for an extended period of time. Usually a group of four or five is about the largest; if each woman takes fifteen minutes, that is a little over an hour, which is about as long as everyone will be able to pay good attention to the others. Pairs are a good idea when everyone is feeling a need for an extended time to focus on themselves and sort through their feelings; pairs could go on for as long as twenty minutes to one-half hour for each person, if everyone is feeling introspective. After the pairs or small group sessions, the larger group can reconvene and each woman can share a sentence or two about what is on her mind or what she is working with at present. This will help everyone feel connected rather than curious and shut out from the other groups.

Discussion

Discussion is an option which may or may not be useful at any given group session. It usually is much more productive after Taking Time rather than before, because everyone will have had the chance to get some of their emotional turmoil off their minds and will be able

to be more objective and to listen better.

The decision of whether or not to have discussion should always be made by the group as a whole depending on their needs and wishes. This is a good time for people to share experiences about specific situations such as going to court or dealing with a visiting parent. It is also a good time for people to ask the other group members for specific suggestions about an issue they are struggling with.

Meeting Real Needs

In a crisis group you have a particular responsibility to be aware of the Real Needs of the members. This is especially true of new members who come to a drop-in group. They may have no other supports or connections and may not yet feel free to ask the group for specific, practical support. Therefore, it is up to you to be sure you know whether any member needs further individual counseling, referrals, court information, etc. You can ask about this during the group and share information and lists such as discussed under the section on "Building Support Among Members". It is also a good idea to sit down individually with each new member either before or after the group to find out a little more detail about her situation and what support she needs. While the need for emotional support and release is great during a battering crisis, helping the battered women to feel better while offering her no practical help would be worse than giving her nothing at all.

Closing Circle

A closing circle, using the sorts of exercises listed in "'Up' Exercises for Ending Group Sessions" is a good idea.

Evaluation

See the section on "Evaluation".

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

If Only One Member Shows Up

This is more apt to happen with a drop-in group, but might also happen in a group with a specific membership. In a drop-in group, of course, it is just one of those things that happens and no one need feel let down.

In a closed group, however, it may feel like a rejection and a bit let-down for the member who attends and also for you (and the other facilitator). In this case, you need to call the absent members to see why they did not attend. It may be just a fluke or they may be uncomfortable about something that happened which needs to be discussed or changed.

As a self-involving member, you (and your co-facilitator) can each Take Time as well as the one member and each of you will get a nice large block of time to focus on herself. Also, general discussion can be valuable or you can all focus together on discussing her particular situation. Although it may be initially a little uncomfortable to be the "only one", group members who have had this experience have generally viewed it as an opportunity and have come away feeling that it was a time well spent.

Latecomers

There will always be latecomers. You can make a latecomer welcome without disrupting the group by taking a brief moment to fill her in on what is happening and then asking her for a "Focus on the Good" from the past week.

If you are already in small groups or are in the middle of an exercise in a structured group, tell her what is happening and let her join a group and participate, even though she has missed what was said by those who have already taken their turns.

If it is a new member in a drop-in group and you have already talked about the philosophy and guidelines, it is a good idea for your co-facilitator or another member to go into another room with her and fill her in before she joins the group. This will only take a few minutes but will help her feel more comfortable without interrupting the flow of the group. A quick introduction of everyone is then in order.

You may want to ask her if there is a practical reason why she is late. Perhaps she has a transportation or child care problem that someone in the group could help with. Or, she may always have to be late due to her schedule, her husband's schedule, or bus schedules. If so, it helps if the other members know this so that they will not be critical or feel disrupted by her late entry. This is especially true of a closed group.

Women Bringing Children/Mothers/Other Relatives

Sometimes women will bring other family members with them. If someone brings children and you are not set up for child care, you will be glad if you have two facilitators! It is important not to be critical or resentful of the mother or to treat the children as a nuisance. Welcome her and be glad she did not let herself be stopped from seeking support because of her responsibility for children. If she is in danger, she may have children with her

because she is in the act of fleeing; and you, of course, want to support her to take her children with her to safety.

If the problem is lack of child care but the situation is not desperate, try to call on the resources of the group members and your organization to help her arrange child care so that she can be relieved of the responsibility of the children during future groups. For the group session during which the children are present, you can successfully include older children in the Focus on the Good and the Closing Circle. They will appreciate the positive attention and will like feeling included. If you do not have a co-facilitator, you can ask the group members to take turns going out to be with the children for ten minute intervals. This is not too draining on any individual nor does it take a person away from the group for so long that she loses the thread of what is happening. You can ask the people willing to participate to number off in advance and to remember who comes before and after them. This way they can "change shifts" quietly without disrupting the group.

If a woman brings her mother, sister, or friend, include them in the group and ask them to participate in the group even if they say they "don't have a problem" or "just came to be with her". Explain that if they share nothing of themselves it may inhibit other members who will feel observed and criticized and encourage them to share openly. Some will join in and find it a positive experience; others will choose to leave and meet their friend after the group. When breaking into small groups, it is usually a good idea to separate friends/relatives since their presence often inhibits getting in touch with intimate feelings.

If a woman brings her male abuser, explain to him that this is not a couples group and give him appropriate referrals if he wants them. Do not let him enter the room where the group is meeting. He may know the husband of someone there. Treat him with politeness and respect as a person, even though you may know things about him which make you feel hostile toward him. But be firm in insisting that he not join the group.

Women in Danger

If a woman comes to the group who is in immediate danger and is fleeing or hiding out from her husband, this can be very frightening for you and the other group members and may introduce a threat of actual harm to all of you. There may be a tendency for some members to be resentful of the woman for placing the group in danger; do not let this fear take over. Alert the police; go to a safer place if necessary, even to the police station; ask for a police escort to go home if necessary; and point out to the group that if this woman ever needed everyone's support, it is right now. If he shows up there remember that most abusers are less likely to become violent if others are present, although some will. It is best not to let yourselves be seen (in case the abuser should recognize someone or seek someone out for revenge). If the abuser is not in the area, the situation will be less tense, but the main focus will still be to find practical support for the woman in terms of a place to stay and other supports. Other group members may want to offer practical help but should not feel obligated to. It is your responsibility to connect her with all

proper resources before leaving.

Women Whose Injuries Are Visible

Surprisingly, even women who have suffered severe injuries themselves have a tendency to pull away from the visibly injured woman and to ignore both her injury and herself as a person. People may become nervous and not be very open or very real in the group when an injured woman is present. This happens for two reasons: the reminder of their own injuries is too painful and they seek to avoid it and they are afraid of saying the wrong thing to the woman. Unless someone else is comfortable about relating to the injured woman and spontaneously offers her empathy, it may be up to you to bring it into the open for discussion. Certainly you should let her know you notice it (how could you not?) and ask if she needs medical help. She may need a referral to a doctor or a ride to the hospital. Most likely she will want and need to talk about it and to share her pain but will be reluctant to do so unless you encourage her. Ask her if she wants to talk about it, if she is in pain, and if there is any particular way that the group can support her. Then, if she does not want to talk about it but wishes to focus on other things, your talking about it will relieve the discomfort of the group.

SESSION VIII

This closing session focuses on goal-setting and includes evaluation of the group experience. You will need paper and pencils for everyone.

exercises to include:

1. "Draw your life-line (a line to represent your life from birth to death) and place yourself on it." Then each woman shares with the group her drawing and her position on her life-line. This confronts people with the reality of life and death and conveys the idea that we have just so many years left and we have a choice as to how to spend them.
2. In three minutes, write down three fantasies - anything, anywhere, any time if all things were possible (no limitations of money, responsibilities, age, etc.). Share with the group.
3. Ask the following questions one at a time and give everyone time to write the answers before asking the next one.
 1. Write down three goals for the next ten years (allow 3 minutes maximum).
 2. Write down three things you would like to accomplish in the next 12 months (allow three minutes maximum).
 3. Write down everything you have done in the last 3 days (allow 5 minutes).
Go-round: Share what you have written and look for constant needs and patterns. Are there relationships between your needs and goals and what you have done in the past three days?
4. Discussion and evaluation of the goal-setting exercises. Each woman should summarize what has happened for her and share how she has changed today and over the course of the group experience.
5. Evaluate the entire group experience (take notes on the discussion or have a form for members to write down their comments and suggestions. Include questions about how they would plan an eight-week session. What would they keep and what would they change?)
6. Discuss the possibility of continuing after the formal ending of the group. Sometimes members (some or all) wish to continue meeting and develop their own exercises or have unstructured

discussions. Other groups meet from time to time for a "reunion", while in still other groups, everyone is ready to move on to other activities.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 James Bannon, "Social Conflict Assaults", Part II of Police Foundation Study.
- 2 Del Martin, Battered Wives, (San Francisco; Glide Publications, 1976), p. 14.
- 3 J. C. Barden, "Wife Beaters: Few of Them Ever Appear Before a Court of Law", New York Times, October, 1974, p. 75.
- 4 Jennifer Fleming, Stopping Wife Abuse, (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979), p. 156
- 5 "Wife Abuse and Police Response", FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, May, 1978, pp. 4-5.
- 6 Mindy Resnick, M.S.W., Wife Beating: Counselor Training Manual #1, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1976, p.2.
- 7 California Homicides, 1971.
- 8 FBI, "Uniform Crime Reports", 1973.
- 9 "San Diego County Battered Women's Pilot Project Final Report" (hereafter referred to as BWP), Elizabeth Conklin, ed. (San Diego: Regional Employment and Training Consortium, 1978), p. 33.
- 10 BWP, p. 39
- 11 Jennifer Fleming, op. cit., pp. 272-3.
- 12 BWP, p. 36.
- 13 Jennifer Fleming, op. cit., p. 80.
- 14 Ibid., p. 270.
- 15 Ibid., p. 291.

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