Between Women: A Group for Enhancing Women's Friendships

DP 002 - Developmental Intervention

By

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INTRODUCTION

The rationale for this group is that friendship with other women is important and central in women's lives, yet not often the focus of intervention or exploration. Thematic women's groups typically focus on developing individual skills, like assertiveness or dealing with anger, or they focus on relationships with family members or with a significant other or partner, whether heterosexual or lesbian. An overlooked but important source of support and reference for women as they deal with all those issues is their friendships with other women.

Especially in the context of a college campus, where students are struggling with autonomy and separation from parents and exploring their sexuality, friendships between women can be the most stable of current relationships for young women. There will be change occurring within women's friendships as well, however. In going away to college, for instance, there may be a shift from more childhood friendships to friendships with a diversity of other young women who are going through changes and taking on new responsibilities.

Friendships are also a rich source of information about one's self. How one acts in friendship with another woman says a lot about how she relates to herself. Exploring the roles we play with our friends can help uncover ways in which we limit ourselves, and strengths we rely on. Different friends can help draw out different parts of oneself.

In addition, relationships between female friends may parallel aspects of relationships with mother or another important woman. There may be an unconscious effort to satisfy needs in women's friendships that either echo or compensate for what was important or missing in the mother-daughter relationship. Exploring the extent to which this is true for individual women can help them to understand their yearnings and be more choiceful about ways of being with their women friends.

As the world changes for women—their roles, expectations, aspirations, frustrations—we can learn from and rely on female friends to both share and challenge our experience. It is our hope that this group helps members to do so.
**PRE-GROUP INTERVIEW**

The "Between Women" group on women's friendship was publicized throughout the Counseling and Mental Health Center, as well as in the campus newspaper and through flyers distributed around campus. To ensure appropriate referrals for this theme group we decided to interview interested individuals before the group began.

One purpose of the pre-group interview was to educate prospective members about the group so that they would understand what the group's focus was and what it was not. In this manner, the women could make some educated decisions about whether to participate. Another purpose was to gain a sense of what the most salient issues concerning friendship were for those women who responded to the newspaper ads and flyers, and those who were referred through the counseling center. One of our goals, as leaders, was to maintain a flexible stance throughout the group, and to tailor the group agenda to the needs of the members. Finally, we wanted to examine the "fit" with the rest of the group members. For example, we hoped to screen out individuals whose level of pathology was greater than that which could be accommodated in a six-week theme group focused on women's friendships. The following is an outline of our pre-group interviewing process. Both leaders were present.

1. Briefly introduce what the group is about. Emphasize the leaders' view that women cannot get all needs met from one person. Friendships are extremely important, but seem to be problematic in a number of areas. This serves as a type of advanced organizer for the group which would begin a few weeks after the pre-group interview.
2. Ask what the client's hopes are for the group.
3. Who are the significant women in her life?
4. What are her specific issues? What brought her in today? What is the catalyst?
5. Is there anything about her that she would like the leaders to know?
6. Has she ever been in therapy before?
7. How would she characterize her friendships?
8. Assess how the interview felt for the client. Was she anxious? What was her degree of comfort?
9. Check for anything else that she would want to let the leaders know.
SESSION #1
Getting to Know Each Other and Introduction to the Group

I. Introductions.
Distribute name tags and say names aloud several times, while sitting in the circle.

II. Discussion of Group Norms.
Purpose. To make the norms of the group explicit; To model open discussion of these norms and make them available to be modified; To demonstrate from the start that the leaders are informed and flexible; To begin to establish safety in the group.
Process. The leaders will take turns in talking briefly about the following norms:
* confidentiality.
* the importance of feelings and reactions to each other.
* importance of bringing issues which arise back to the group.
* each session will begin with "leftover" issues from the prior session.
* flexibility of group leaders; this is their group.
* respect your own emotional boundaries; learn your pace in the group.
* remember, too, that learning is about risks.
* our goal is to create a climate safe for risk-taking.
* attendance is of utmost importance; call if you must cancel.

III. Overview of the Group
A. How the Group Came to Be
Purpose. To share with the group the evolution of the leaders thoughts about women's friendships; to initiate, at an information level, the process of reflection upon their friendships.

Points Covered.
1. Friendships between women have a long and rich historical precedent and yet, they are often fraught with difficulties.
2. Although women are often central in each others' lives, there are few sanctioned outlets to discuss difficulties which arise in female friendships. This is contrasted with the many
workshops/books/interventions that are directed towards family relationships and romantic relationships.

3. There has never been a group on this specific topic on campus, although response to the group indicates a great need for this type of intervention.

B. Overview of the topics and goal of the group

1. Main focus of the group.
The main focus of the group is not to learn how to make new friends. Rather, the goal is to explore who you are in relation to your female friends. We will explore what barriers prevent you from deepening your friendships. Indirectly, this will impact the ways you make friends.

2. Preview of the topics.
* Introduction
* Support
* Speaking Up
* Competition and Envy
* Similarities and Differences
* Wrap-up and Goodbye

IV. Exercise #1: Introduce Yourself as Your Mother Would.
(Grenard-Moore & Vasquez, 1990)

Rationale. We view mother/daughter relationships as the foundation for other relationships. This has many implications for how women relate to each other in friendships. In this exercise, members will begin to explore the messages they received about themselves from their mothers.

Goals.
1. To increase awareness of the mother/daughter relationship which affects members in their present circumstances.
2. To facilitate introductions in a creative manner.
3. To set the norm of talking about mothers and daughters as the building blocks for other relationships.
4. To set the norm for member-to-member feedback.

Instructions.
"Take turns and introduce yourself in the way which your mother would. After you introduce yourself the person on your right will respond with a feeling statement to what you've said. An example of that is, 'the way that makes me feel is ______'. Then, that person will introduce herself as her mother would."

Process Questions.
After introductions are completed, open the process discussion with some or all of the following questions:
1. What feelings emerged in this exercise?
2. Does this introduction feel to you as though this is who you really are?
3. Do you think other women would introduce you this way?
4. How did you feel about speaking up in the group?

Approximate Time. 20 minutes.

V. Exercise #2 Introduce Yourself as Your Friend Would.

Purpose. To highlight the similarities and differences in how members believe they are seen through their friends' eyes and through their mothers' eyes. This exercise begins the process of examining the self in relation to female friendships.

Instructions.
"Now, take turns and introduce yourself in the way which your best friend might introduce you. Think about this in terms of a current best friend. If you don't have a best friend, imagine what one might say. Afterwards, like before, the person on your right will respond with a feeling statement before introducing herself."

Note: If participants are unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable with giving feedback, it helps to keep this exercise structured and limited to one feeling statement.
Process Questions.
1. What feelings emerged during this introduction?
2. How was this different than your mother's introduction? How was it similar?
3. How do you feel about the introduction? Are you pleased or displeased by it?
4. What parts of you aren’t seen by your best friend?

Approximate time. 20 minutes

VI. Exercise #3: Friendship Time Line

Purpose. To recognize patterns in friendship over time; To share histories with each other.

Instructions.
Distribute newsprint and a marker to each member. Ask the members to draw a line, and mark significant events on it. Examples include when the member was born, when she started school, when she graduated from high school, when she graduated from college, and every 5 year segment thereafter. At each point on the time line, instruct members to list significant life experiences with female friends.

Processing.
Ask each member to share her timeline and the important experiences. Encourage group members to interact with each other. Some process questions include:
1. What did these friendships mean to you?
2. How did you feel about yourself at these times?
3. Was there a time when there were no important friends in your life? What was that like for you?
4. What were the positive and negative aspects of these friendships?

Approximate Time. 20-30 minutes.

VII. Wrap-up.
Ask members to share how being in the group was for them. Acknowledge that group work can feel risky, but that this is a good place for them to experiment. Remind
them that feelings may emerge during the week, and that you will begin the following week with asking about leftover issues from this week.

You may want to pass around a sheet of paper so that members can write their names and phone numbers for distribution to each other.
Notes for Session #1

1. Our main goal in this session was to begin to create a safe environment for the members. This involved a number of factors. One factor was the setting of limits. Another was flexibility in the group agenda and with the group leaders. Another way to create safety was to plan and delegate amongst co-leaders so that transitions in the group could run smoothly.

2. In this session, as well as in all the subsequent sessions, a number of friendship issues arose. It worked quite well to relinquish a rigid linear sequence of topics in favor of acknowledging how multi-faceted friendships are. For example, even though envy and competition were topics slated for the fourth session, they were relevant in each of the three preceding sessions.

3. We decided to pass a sheet of paper around so that members could write their names and phone numbers. The leaders distributed copies of the roster in the following week.

4. Exercises 1 and 2 became somewhat repetitive, given that we had eleven members. There was virtually no time left for the friendship timeline. Remember to allot generous amounts of time for processing of the exercises.
SESSION 2

Giving and Receiving Support

I. Time for Leftovers from the previous session.
   
   **Purpose.** This was a time to process feelings and reactions which may have surfaced after members left the previous group. It was important to keep as much of the group "energy" or member's reactions within the group process as possible. Another purpose was to convey in the here-and-now that members' thoughts, feelings and reactions are valued.

II. General Goals for the Session.
   * To facilitate the sharing of experiences of both giving and getting support.
   * To examine how difficult asking for support is, even in the group.
   * To explore the origins of discomfort around asking for support.

III. Exercise #1: Imagery

   **Purpose.** To access the feelings involved with wanting but not receiving support; to observe emotional and cognitive reactions to the experience.

   **Instructions.** In a soft voice with plenty of pauses, say the following.

   "Find a comfortable position in your chair. Close your eyes. Imagine that you've just arrived home from school....you've had a very very hard day. Something happened today that upset you, and you need to talk about it. No one is home at your house. So, you decide to call a friend. You're hoping to get some support...be listened to...be understood. You're dialing the phone. The phone is ringing. One ring...the second ring. It picks up. Your friend answers, and says, 'Hi! I'm glad that you called. I wanted to tell you what happened to me today. You won't believe it, it was great!' She goes on...and on....about what a wonderful day she had. How are you feeling as you listen to her?...What stops you from speaking up and asking her to listen to you?....There may be many feelings in you right now...Anger....guilt...relief to not be the focus of attention, sadness.....Try to locate your feelings....Remember, you called because you needed something. How are you going to get it?"
Processing.
Ask members what they were feeling during this imagery exercise. What, specifically, were the tensions? Anger? Sadness? Resignation? Can they remember times like this in their own lives? What did they do in that situation? How difficult or easy is this to talk about in the group?

IV. Lecturette--Main points.
Although woman are cast mainly in supportive types of roles, support is a difficult concept for most women. The socialization of women leads to difficulties in asking for support, and a predisposition towards primarily giving support to others.

There is great ambivalence involved with asking for support. Some women feel "one down" when they ask for support; others feel guilty and unentitled when they ask for support. Yet, our connections with other people and human needs are essential for a complete self.

This ambivalence often has its origin in the mother/daughter relationship. It is likely that mothers modeled caretaking of others, but not asking for support. Like any new behavior, asking for support will bring up self-doubts. In this session we hope to examine these feelings in a safe atmosphere. Remember, feelings and reactions are the work of this group. The goal is to strive for a balance of giving and getting support.

V. Exercise #2. Recasting of the Imagery.
In a soft voice, with plenty of pauses, say the following,
"Find a comfortable position in your chair. Close your eyes. Imagine that you've just arrived home from school....you've had a very very hard day. Something happened today that upset you, and you need to talk about it. No one is home at your house. So, you decide to call a friend. You're hoping to get some support...be listened to...be understood...You're dialing the phone. The phone is ringing. One ring...the second ring. It picks up. Your friend answers, and says, 'Hi! You say, 'I had a horrible day. Can I talk to you for a while?' She says, 'You do sound kind of upset. What's going on? How can I help out?'

Processing.
What different feelings emerged in this imagery exercise? Does this feel real? Can you imagine asking for support?
Notes for Session #2

1. We decided to weave the lecturette into the processing of the imagery exercise. The reasoning is that the basis, for the group and for this session, is the experience of the members.

2. It's helpful to group process to point out, in this session, the ways that people ask for support within the group. This may involve some coaching and practice, but the experience within the group is tied directly to the topic of giving and getting support.

3. Relatedly, group members will feel their barriers to asking for support in the here-and-now; this makes for a rich and potentially volatile session. In our group it brought up members' yearnings to be cared for and their frustration in not having tools to ask for nurturance. It was important to maintain a climate of safety to allow those feelings of anger, frustration, rebellion and sadness to surface.

4. We found that imagery was a very powerful exercise and stirred up many feelings and concerns amongst the members. The processing of this exercise can last for the entire session. In processing, we focused on the feeling level of the group with regard to asking for support. Often, this was met with statements, such as, "I can't ask for support anyway." or "I should know better." or "It's shameful to have needs." This session was one of the more difficult and poignant in the group.
Session #3
Speaking Up

I. Follow-up and processing leftovers from previous session.

II. General Goals for the Session
* to educate about the importance of speaking up
* to identify and heighten awareness of patterns of speaking up or not
* to identify areas in which individuals have difficulty speaking up
* to facilitate discussion of fears about speaking up
* to facilitate development of new skills in speaking up
* to provide an atmosphere of safety which fosters speaking up about issues within the group
* to deepen group process and facilitate member-to-member interaction

III. Introduction of Topic: Speaking Up

Purpose. (The following may be presented in a brief lecturette, or may be more informally woven into the process of the session.)

Difficulties between women are exacerbated by our hesitation to speak up about feelings. Issues discussed in group so far (and to be covered later), such as wanting support, feeling envious or competitive, feeling hurt or angry, feeling sad or disappointed or abandoned, even feeling love and appreciation, are all difficult to talk about directly between friends. Yet, the airing of such feelings and issues is important if a friendship is to deepen and grow. It is also important in consolidating a sense of self that is accepting of one's personal needs and instrumental in getting them met. It is an area in which both separateness and dependency are highlighted.

Women in particular may be anxious or afraid about speaking up with a grievance, though we are often expected and willing to listen to the concerns of others. Women learn to place importance on others' feelings and disregard their own. Turning the focus onto our own wants and needs may feel like a role change. It is helpful to discern the roles or patterns we've gotten into with regard to speaking up about feelings. With that awareness, and some practice, one can be more choiceful.

The benefits of being more able to speak up in relationships are many. Once issues are out in the open between friends, there is the opportunity to clear up misunderstandings.
Keeping silent may lead to problems growing out of proportion, perhaps involving projections based more on previous situations or fears than on reality. Speaking up can challenge projections and offer relief from pent up fears. Speaking up allows us to be in the relationship rather than in a fantasy about them. Successfully airing difficult feelings in a friendship provides the experience of seeing that the relationship is strong enough to survive differences. It confirms that one can have a separate self and remain connected to a female friend simultaneously.

**Process.** Session three focuses on speaking up to friends when there is conflict or feelings that persist. The previous week's session may have generated much energy that fits nicely into this topic, for members are likely to have gotten in touch with unmet needs and old injuries they'd not spoken up about. Some may come in announcing things they have begun to do differently in certain relationships. This session does not include a structured exercise. It is run more like a process group, but the leaders have in mind various stimulus questions for when the discussion lacks focus or energy. They include:

What are things you're aware of having difficulty speaking up about with women friends? What do you do instead of speaking up? Is it difficult to speak up to your mother? Your sister? Does that generalize to relationships with other women? Do you have childhood memories of speaking up? Do you tend to do more listening or taking about your feelings? If you stopped speaking up, when did that happen and why? Are there things in the group that you'd like to say to each other? To the leaders? What are the benefits of speaking up? What are the fears about it?

Processing should focus on feelings that come up and facilitating speaking up to one another as well as devising strategies for speaking up to other friends. The last question, about fears, is likely to generate a host of responses—feared consequences that inhibit women from speaking up about their feelings.
Notes for Session #3

1. This session involves less structure and more process than previous sessions. Ideally, it comes at a time when the group is ready for this kind of work. It gives members an opportunity to speak up with their reactions to one another. It also gives them an opportunity to react to the leaders and the group structure as a whole. If there are feelings about how the group is going so far—and if there is an atmosphere of openness and safety—members may voice their likes and (particularly) dislikes to leaders. They may range from thinking there has been too little structure, to thinking there has been too much. Some members may be feeling unsatisfied or left out and use the opportunity to speak up. This is a sign of a healthy working group. It also signals a deepening in the group's commitment and level or work.

2. The last question is likely to generate powerful responses which reflect many of the themes in women's socialization that had been mentioned the previous week. Another outcome of this session was that some members were able to voice feelings toward other group members, and toward the leaders, including things they had not liked about the group so far. (This ranged from too much structure to not enough structure).
Session #4
Competition

I. Purpose of the Session.
This session is designed to generate and explore feelings about competition and envy between women. Leaders should make an effort to emphasize the neutrality of the concept of competitiveness itself. That is, that competitiveness is not inherently good or bad, but that we attach a lot of meaning to it in our lives. Women are socialized to downplay their competitive strivings, unless it is in a sanctioned area, such as competing for the attention of men. Even when competing in traditional arenas, women tend to be concerned about the impression they are making and the feelings of others. Women also compete for the attention and approval of one another. Winning "over" another woman may feel uncomfortable. Some women feel bad about themselves for winning over others, while some make sure to not be in that position.

It is useful to distinguish between feelings of envy and feelings of competition, drawing on the ideas presented in the Orbach and Eichenbaum book. The basic distinction they make is that envious feelings are a signpost to feelings of deprivation, of wanting but not being entitled or able to get something another has. Competition, on the other hand, signals a desire to be recognized, wanting one's achievements to be visible.

It is healthy and desirable for women to achieve and to want their achievements to be recognized. Fears about competition inhibit that process. And, in friendships between women, there may be added discomfort with the competitive feelings that inevitably arise. Fears about losing the relationship, fears of hurting the other, confusing feelings of anger and resentment might enter into the friendship as part of unexpressed competition or envy. Women do not typically have a history of dealing directly with competition, and may have learned early on to squelch competitive feelings. There may have been a taboo against competing with mother, for instance. Developing the ability to acknowledge these feelings in a friendship can free women to realize more of their desires, while experiencing that others do not necessarily lose as a result, or that even if another loses, they do not necessarily lose the relationship as a result.

The ideas presented here should not be discussed prior to the exercise in this session, but should be woven into the processing afterwards.

II. General Goals for the Session.
* To get members interacting in a playful manner
* To elicit and heighten awareness of feelings and attitudes about competition
* To discover what members actually do in competitive situations
* To process feelings that arise during the exercise
* To facilitate expression of feelings of competition which exist within the group
* To normalize feelings of competition, including within women's friendships
* To educate about the meanings of feelings of competition and envy
* Increase response flexibility in competitive situations

III. Follow-up with processing of leftovers from last week

IV. Exercise #1 - Balloon Bursting Competition
(adapted from "Women's Therapy Groups" by Grenard-Moore & Vasquez)

Instructions. This exercise is designed to elicit feelings, approaches and attitudes about competition between women. It also serves to get members interacting in a fun and playful manner, making a potentially heavy topic a little lighter, and normalizing it. Each member is given a string and a balloon and told to blow up the balloon and tie it to her ankle. When a leader says "begin", members are to protect their own balloons while trying to break other's. When their balloons are broken, they sit down. The goal is for there to be one person left with her balloon intact on her ankle. There are no further instructions, although members are likely to ask for clarification and for more rules. Leaders should remain silent to these requests, leaving members to negotiate or figure out for themselves how to handle the situation. Leaders should observe group process throughout the exercise in order to facilitate discussion and heighten members' awareness of their own issues in approaching competition.

Processing.
Questions may include: What feelings did you have as you engaged in the exercise? Were you surprised by your own actions? What feelings did you have about your position of having your balloon popped, or protecting your balloon, or popping other's balloons, for instance? What did you notice about the way you and others protected yourselves? How did you react to the instructions? How does this experience relate to other situations? How does this group deal with competition? How would you like to deal with competition? What messages would you need to change in order to handle competition more effectively? What fears are related to being competitive or being perceived as competitive?
Notes for Session #4

It is a challenge to the leaders' comfort with authority in this session to maintain a stance of withholding further instructions for the exercise. The instructions are purposefully sparse and vague so as to draw out more individual responses. Responses might range from a refusal to participate and a call for a boycott, to a devaluing of the experience, to active enjoyment with abandon. The processing should be rich, and can be facilitated with observations that leaders are able to make during the exercise. All the responses are opportunities for members to learn. The differences and similarities among members will provide material for subsequent sessions. Also, the prior work on speaking up may be referenced in helping members to talk about their feelings.
SESSION #5
How are We Alike and How are We Different?

I. Leftovers from last week.

II. General Goals for the Session.

The were several goals in this session. First of all, the group was operating in its working stage. One goal was for members to talk honestly to each other. Another goal was to think about outside friendships and what happens when friends are different from each other? Can their friendships support diversity? Another goal was to continue to integrate insights from previous sessions, and to address issues related to the upcoming separation due to the last session in the following week.

II. Rationale for the topic.

Often the psychological boundaries between female friends blur to the extent that the friendship can tolerate only similarities between friends. Women often bond as cozy allies, whether this be positive or negative. Differentiation can feel extremely threatening to self-esteem. However, for a friendship to be a growth experience, it must be able to tolerate differences between friends without activating a deep loss experience. Group members in prior sessions had spoken evocatively about how little disappointments from people feel like large losses, so they must defend against any small disappointment.

III. Exercise #1. Sentence Completions.

Purpose. To examine similarities and differences in a safe and structured context; To continue to improve member-to-member communication.

Instructions. Have members complete the sentence completion form. When they are finished, ask members to share their answers. You may want to go around the circle on particularly relevant sentences or have individuals simply speak up. Begin with the first half of the sentences; these are less “loaded” than the second half.

Processing. Members will surely have reactions to this exercise that they may not surface. Some questions to guide the processing include:
1. What feelings emerged in this exercise?
2. How was the first half of the exercise different from the second half?
3. What were your fears in speaking up about the second half of the sentences?
4. Think about the first few sessions. How has your safety level and comfort level changed?

5. Specifically, what was it like to ask for feedback from the group? What fears? Were they realized?
Write the first thing that comes to mind....

1. My friend would describe me as ______________________

2. The best thing about me, as a friend, is ______________________

3. The way that I’m most like my mother is ______________________

4. When a friend is not available to me I feel ______________________

5. When a friend and I have different opinions, I feel ______________________

6. When a friend disappoints me, I feel ______________________

7. I am most comfortable around people who are ______________________

8. Asking for support from my friend makes me feel ______________________

9. When a friend asks me for support I feel ______________________

10. What I need in a friend is ______________________

Now, think of group members as you complete the following sentences...

11. I feel envious of _______________ because ______________________

12. I would be comfortable with ______________________

13. I would trust ______________________


15. I am most similar to ______________________

16. I am most different from ______________________

17. I feel competitive with ______________________

18. If I needed support I would turn to ______________________

19. Some feedback about myself I would like from the group is ______________________
Notes for Session #5

1. This session was largely process-oriented. Group members were becoming increasingly skilled at member-to-member interaction.

2. Part of processing members' differences from each other was acknowledging that individuals had different ways of dealing with separation. (The next session would be the final one.) We encouraged members to explore their reactions to each other. Some members expressed their way of separating as hanging on to the group in any way possible. Others said that they cut themselves off prematurely to guard against disappointment when the group ends.
Session #6

Integration, Separation, Termination

I. Purpose

Session six is designed to continue integrating insights and helping members to think about how they might apply what they've learned, while at the same time attending to feelings and issues generated within the group and by the group's ending. This is another opportunity for members to practice acknowledging separateness and connection simultaneously. The impending physical separation of the group may generate feelings based on individuals' personal history with important women in their lives, be they friends or relatives. Members should be encouraged to explore those feelings as they arise. At the same time, an effort to remain in the present, aware of the feelings generated within the group, is important. Leaders might model for members by expressing (as appropriate) some of their own feelings about the group process, reactions to individuals, reactions to working with co-leaders, and feelings about the group's ending.

II. Goals

* to help members integrate what they have learned in the group
* to facilitate continued member to member interaction
* to explore feelings about separation as they arise
* to give feedback to individuals about their presence in the group
* to make appropriate referrals and recommendations for members continuing individual or group work

III. Follow-up and processing of leftovers from last week

IV. Leaders' discussion of separation and termination issues. (as well as suggestions for integration of what members have learned.)

V. Group exercise #1: Sharing of Impressions and Wishes

Instructions. Form two concentric circles. Have people in the inner circle and outer circle face one another and share an impression they had of one another as well as a wish for what they hope the other might take away from the group. Rotate the circles in opposite directions every two minutes until every member has spoken with each other. Reconvene and process.
VI. Exercise #2. Strength Bombardment

Instructions. Have ready an envelope for each person (members and leaders) containing blank slips of paper in equal number to the number of participants. Have each person write their name on the front of their envelope and the rotate the envelopes around the room so that each person gets a chance to write a quick message on one of the slips of paper in each envelope about strengths they saw in that person. This gives each participant something to take away from the group with them.
Notes for Session #6

1. Leaders should use the last session as an opportunity to give as much individual feedback to members as possible about how they've been experienced in the group, what they have gained and recommendations and referrals for continued work. This may be an opportunity to gently confront issues that came up but were not consistent with the theme of the group.

2. The strength bombardment exercise ends the group on a positive note, something not always possible or appropriate in unstructured groups. It may be instructive for leaders to acknowledge this as a wish that operates among women especially. Leaders may also take the opportunity to speculate on some of the directions the group might have taken had it lasted longer, including a more honest look at some of the differences that emerged between members in the last few sessions. This helped members to put the strength bombardment exercise in perspective. It acknowledges that only one aspect of their feelings toward each other are covered in the exercise. It also acknowledges that members can hold both positive and negative feelings toward one another simultaneously, without discounting either. This makes explicit the choice to end on a positive note.
**General Notes**

1. While a age-diverse group offers richness, too much of an age range presents a limit in the capacity for the group to change. We found that older members could be bored by issues and challenges to the developmentally younger members, and by the same token, younger members could not grasp issues of the more mature members.

2. Our guiding principle, even in light of the theme of friendship, was group cohesion. We strived to model within the group the points we were making about friendship. Six weeks is not many, so from the beginning, the leaders modeled flexibility and capacity to disagree with each other without severe consequences.

3. While the group was quite successful with six sessions, we believe that eight sessions would be optimal due to the breadth of the topics covered. Additional topics to include in a women's group on friendship might be Female Friendships and Men, Juggling Multiple Relationships, How Do Family Roles Figure in to My Friendships?

4. The order of topics was important. Particularly in this population, safety in the group must precede discussion of conflict and diversity. We began with a different order than was actually implemented. This was based on the needs of this particular group.

5. Instead of a strict order of lecturette and then an exercise, we opted to weave the points of a lecturette into the processing during the group sessions. This was based on a viewpoint that, as group therapists, we did not want to command the role of lecturers. Rather, we were committed to a group which responds to the experience of the women themselves. As such, we highlighted didactic information but did so in a manner which connected it to their on-line processing in the group.

6. The co-leader relationship was reflected, we believe, in the group process. It was imperative to spend generous amounts of time processing the issues between the leaders which emerged in the group. Some of those issues were identical to group’s agenda: competition between leaders, how much air time to use, supporting each other in risk-taking, demonstrating how we are different, etc.
7. Publicity is paramount for this type of theme group. Women's friendship is a topic which is growth-oriented rather than crisis-oriented. As such, a need for the group may be difficult to detect at first. It is strongly suggested that leaders devote plenty of time and effort to publicity. This includes word of mouth, campus newspaper ads, flyers to academic departments, and flyers to campus activity leaders. In addition, group leaders should be aware that clients referred via the counseling center (who often are in individual counseling simultaneously) may have qualitatively different styles and presenting concerns from those who come from other referral sources.