Intimate Relationships: Changing Old Patterns

TI 026 - Thematic

By

Patti Follansbee, Jackie Hallissey, Sharon Kennedy

The Clearinghouse for Structured/Thematic Groups & Innovative Programs
Counseling & Mental Health Center
The University of Texas at Austin
100A W. Dean Keeton St.
1 University Station A3500
Austin, Texas 78712-0152
512-471-3515-Fax 512-471-8875
http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc
The format of each session is flexible and responsive to the particular needs of the participants. Exercises are primarily used to stimulate self-exploration and to elicit open discussion and sharing among group members. Other areas of focus include values clarification, communication patterns, and the influence of sex-role socialization patterns on (and in) relationships. The exercises: Self-Awareness Inventory, How I See Myself as a Woman, Guided Fantasy, Circle Exercise, Wise Woman Fantasy. 32 pages

GOALS: To assist in identifying unsatisfactory repetitive patterns in intimate relationships; to assess members’ relationship needs and values; to recognize and practice communication and behavior patterns that enhance or create satisfying relationships

TARGET: Females in late adolescence or adulthood

STAFF: Co-leaders

LENGTH: 8 sessions, 2 hours each

SIZE: 8 - 12

OTHER: Previous or present involvement in an intimate relationship should be a screening criterion. This is not an appropriate intervention for those experiencing severe emotional problems.

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Program Title: Intimate Relationships: Changing Old Patterns

Authors & Institution: Patti Follansbee Counseling Center
Jackie Hallissey A302 Woody Hall
Sharon Kennedy Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Goal Statement: The general objectives of this structured group are to assist members in identifying old patterns in intimate relationships that are not satisfying; to explore what they do need and value in relationships; and to identify communication patterns and other behaviors that may help them create satisfying relationships. The areas identified to focus on are self-exploration, values clarification, communication patterns, and the influence of sex role socialization patterns on relationships.

Pre-group Variables:

a. Target Population: Women over eighteen years of age who wish to improve the quality of their intimate relationships.

b. Selection Criteria: Previous or present involvement in intimate relationships. Screen out and refer any individual who demonstrates severe emotional problems requiring therapy.

c. Number of Staff: Two

d. Qualifications of Staff: Previous experience in facilitating structured groups.

e. Number of Sessions: Eight

f. Length of Each Session: Two hours

g. Limitations on Number of Participants: Eight to twelve

h. Publicity Considerations: See attached sign-up sheet and publicity sheet

Additional Comments:

This group is a theme-centered group rather than a structured, skill building group. Thus, the format of each session is flexible and responsive to the particular needs of the participants in the group. Exercises are primarily used to stimulate self-exploration, open discussion, and sharing between the participants.

A Woman's Journey: Experiences for Women with Women.
ABSTRACT

Intimate Relationships: Changing Old Patterns

Goals: The general objectives of this structured group are to assist women in identifying old patterns in intimate relationships that are not satisfying; to explore what they do need and value in intimate relationships; and to identify communication patterns and other behaviors that may help them create satisfying relationships. The areas identified to focus on are self-exploration, values clarification, communication patterns, and the influence of sex role socialization patterns in relationships.

Target: Women over the age of eighteen who wish to improve the quality of their intimate relationships. Screen out and refer anyone with severe problems requiring therapy to appropriate services.

Length: Eight weekly sessions, two hours per session.

Size: Eight to twelve participants

Procedure:

SESSION I  - Introduce group and set norms
             - Discuss expectations
             - Getting acquainted--focus on how they choose others
             - Getting acquainted--secret fears of group

SESSION II - Introduce additional new people
             - "Self-Awareness Inventory"--exploring feelings about self and others
             - "How I see myself as a Woman" exercise--how I relate to others as a function of how I view myself and them

SESSION III - Brainstorm socialization messages such as "shoulds" and stoppers
             - Identifying needs and values in an intimate relationship
             - Fantasy
             - Closure discussion

SESSION IV - Small group discussion on needs and values--becoming more specific and concrete from previous session
             - "Circle exercise"--Identification and discussion of who fills those needs

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SESSION V  
- Expectations of women friends, male friends, lovers  
- Discussion on expectations of others  
- Discussion on when partners disagree  
- Communicating and risks  
- Mid-group process check

SESSION VI  
- Defining honesty and risks in relationships  
- Honesty and how you value it for yourself and others  
- Six types of honesty (Adrienne Rich's thoughts on honesty)

SESSION VII  
- Defining risk taking  
- Identifying feelings that come with taking risks  
- Paranoias and strokes exercise

SESSION VIII  
- Wise woman fantasy  
- Sharing feelings about group and each other (verbal evaluation)  
- Evaluation (written)

Materials: Newsprint, exercises from Women's Journey, magic markers, evaluation form.
Pre-Session Screening

Goals:

1. To select a homogeneous group to foster group cohesiveness
2. To elicit and understand each applicant's needs and expectations for the group
3. To share leader expectations for the group
4. To refer applicant to a more appropriate group if necessary

Procedure:

Twenty minute interview for each applicant with one or more group leaders

Sample Questions:

1. Have you been in counseling before? Where? When? With whom? What issues were/are you working on?
2. What, in general, is going on in your life right now?
3. What is it you'd like to get from the group?
4. What is your age and marital status? Do you have children? Do you work? Are you a student?
5. Is the time the group meets convenient? Are you willing to make an eight week commitment?
6. What other groups have you been in before? Did you feel comfortable in them? Of what value were they for you?
7. Let me (facilitator) share my expectations for group members with you.
8. Do you have any concerns about the group in general?
SESSION I

I. Activities

A. Introduction to Group

Objectives:
1. to provide a general overview of the group
2. to take care of general housekeeping details
3. to establish norms and ground rules

Instructions:
1. Give a brief introduction as to the nature of the group. Ask group members to fill out name tags and attach to themselves.
2. Discuss ground rules such as being on time, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and attendance. Members are asked to add their own rules.
3. Provide an overview of the group with a review of the number of sessions, times, places, etc. Describe the group as a theme-centered group, in that structured activities would be provided to stimulate learning and discussion, but that the structure would be secondary. Participants are requested to state their needs so that the focus of the group can be developed to meet those needs.

B. Expectations Awareness

Objectives:
1. to make explicit the reasons why people came and what they are looking for from the group

Introductions:
1. Ask each member to share why she came to the group and what she is expecting from the group. Facilitators participate in this process.
2. Lead a large group discussion to process the similarities and differences in expectations.

C. Getting Acquainted

Objectives:
1. to provide an opportunity for participants to get acquainted
2. to become aware of how people get acquainted
3. to provide an opportunity for group members to begin sharing information and feelings about themselves.

Instructions:
1. Instruct group members to mill around the room to meet each other non-verbally. After several minutes, ask them to non-verbally find a partner and sit down. Ask group members to introduce themselves to their partners and to share what they would like the partner to know about them. After 10 minutes reassemble in a large group. Ask participants to introduce their partner to the rest of the group. Process the experience, including the following points.
   a. How they felt about the exercise
   b. How they chose the partner (active vs. passive choice, etc.)
c. What attracted them to the partner?

d. How this is typical or atypical of beginning relationships for them?

2. Ask group to again mill around the room non-verbally and pick a new partner. With the new partner ask participants to discuss how they were chosen and share a secret fear about being in the group. Reassemble into large group and share what they learned from their partners. Process this activity, focusing on:

   a. How the activity felt the second time as compared to the first time.

   b. Similarities in fears.

   c. Difference in choosing a partner when you have some information about them as compared to when you do not know them at all.
SESSION II

I. Activities

A. Introduce new people

Objectives:
1. to meet and learn something about any additional new women in the group.
2. to become acquainted with each other from the previous week.

Instructions:
1. We would like to welcome _____ and _____ to our group. Since we all feel kind of new and still getting acquainted, how about it if each say our name and give a three-word description of ourselves.

B. Self Awareness Inventory Exercise (see reference)

Objectives:
1. to become more aware of personal preferences and comfort level with self in various situations and with various people.
2. to stimulate thinking and feeling about self which can be generalized to situations other than specified in this exercise.

Instructions:
1. Please go through the inventory and rate yourself. Usually the first number that pops into your head is a pretty accurate assessment of where you are on that particular item. Later, after you have completed the inventory, go back and circle three items that surprised you. It may be that your answer surprised you, you see a pattern emerging, or perhaps it was something you'd never thought about before and it's really important to you. (later) Let's discuss in the large group what kinds of things have emerged for you from doing this exercise. Who would like to share something she's discovered about herself? (The large group processing is a time to find commonalities as well as differences among group members. General issues can be made more specific issues by being viewed in a broader context.)

Materials:
1. Self Awareness Inventory Handout
2. pencils or pens

Reference:
1. Women's Journey  p.53

C. How I See Myself As a Woman exercise (see reference)

Objectives:
1. to become more aware of how I view myself in relation to others.
2. to become better able to express feelings about how I view myself.

Instructions:
1. Six sheets of newsprint are taped on the walls, doors, etc. Each sheet has one of these unfinished stimulus items written in magic marker on the top:
   a. Right now I'm feeling....
   b. In regards to my total appearance I feel ....
c. When I first meet a man the first thing I notice is ....
d. Generally I feel I am ....
e. When it comes to another woman, I ....
f. I feel my sexuality is ....

The group members are each given a magic marker and are requested to go around the room and, without looking at other's responses, complete the stimulus items. Leaders participate also. This is followed by a large group discussion during which leaders and participants make comments about personal feelings they have about the exercise, observation within or across the items, individual differences and similarities within responses to one item, etc.

Materials:
1. Magic Markers and newsprint

References:
1. Women's Journey, Vol. I, pg. 68 (adapted)
SELF AWARENESS INVENTORY

Rate your present level of satisfaction with yourself in the following areas:

1. Myself as a man or woman
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. My relationships with people of my own sex.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. My relationships with people of the opposite sex.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Knowing what I want:
   a. from women
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b. from men
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Asking for what I want:
   a. from women
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b. from men
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Persisting in getting what I want:
   a. from women
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b. from men
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Taking care of myself.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Being aware of what I am feeling.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. My ability to directly and honestly express my feelings appropriately:
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. How I feel about my body the way it is right now.
    Low  High
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11. The way I express myself through my body.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Being able to experience my sexuality fully.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. How I am with myself when I am alone.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. Being able to give affection:
   a. to women
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b. to men
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. Being able to receive affection:
   a. from women
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b. from men
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. Ability to express my creativity.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. Satisfaction in my chosen work.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. Ability to have fun and enjoy.
   Low  High
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. Free from stereotypes or role expectations:
   a. from women
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b. from men
      Low  High
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. My ability to plan, order, and structure my environment.
    Low  High
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

21. My ability to use and express my own power.
    Low  High
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
"How I See Myself as a Woman" Exercise

Responses to stems:

A. "Right now I'm feeling. . ."
   - tired and hungry
   - content and "high energy"
   - listless yet anxious
   - stimulated but tired
   - coming down from "tension"
   - ready to sort out ideas and feelings
   - alive; high; slightly anxious
   - somewhat drained
   - intense, focused
   - on the brink of something
   - emotionally and intellectually stimulated

B. "In regard to my total appearance, I feel. . ."
   - unsatisfied
   - there are improvements I can make
   - OK!
   - pretty good, but there are improvements I would like to make
   - needs improvement
   - needy
   - alright at times, but often dissatisfied
   - sometimes attractive, sometimes plain
   - good
   - OK
   - alright

C. "When I first meet a man, the first thing I notice is. . ."
   - attitude
   - his sensitivity
   - the way he presents himself
   - his appearance
   - physical attributes
   - his eyes and his ability to communicate
   - his attitude and non-verbals
   - mixture of attitude and appearance
   - the way he relates to me
   - his face
   - comfortableness (me→him)
D. "Generally, I feel I am..."
- full of potential
- sure of what I'm doing
- learning and changing
- happy and fun to be with
- satisfied, at long last
- healthy and strong
- questioning a lot but getting stronger
- getting better all the time
- an OK person
- searching and changing
- feeling what I need and want

E. "When it comes to another woman, I..."
- generally feel a kinship
- seek common ground
- feel we have some things in common
- want to get to know and gain friendship
- like women
- want to know them
- hope it's a potential friendship
- feel a special bonding
- are open to her friendship
- feel a need to identify with her
- feel comfortable

F. "I feel my sexuality is..."
- one of the most important parts of my life
- blooming
- becoming more fun for me
- healthy
- secondary (somewhat suppressed)
- moving up front
- becoming more spontaneous
- slightly confusing to me right now
- not as important to me as other things
- enjoyable and healthy
- an important part of me and my relationships
SESSION III

I. Activities
A. Socialization Messages
   Objectives:
   1. to explore and recognize socialization messages about relationships.
   2. to explore the impact of these socialization messages on us and our relationships.
   Instructions:
   1. Introduce group, stating that today's meeting will be focus on what we want and need from relationships. "Sometimes it is difficult to identify our wants and needs, separate from what we have learned we are 'supposed to want and need'. Thus, first we'd like to focus on messages that we have received verbally or non-verbally from parents, friends and others about intimate relationships.
   2. Brainstorm messages - list on newsprint (see attached examples)
   3. Process discussion focusing on the following areas:
      a. How those messages may be conflicting with each other and are impossible to achieve
      b. Messages that are positively valued and those that are negatively valued.
      c. How those messages have impacted our past relationships.
      d. Different messages given to males and how that influences our relationships.
   Materials:
   1. Newsprint and Magic Markers
B. Discussion on what we want and need from the relationship
   Objectives:
   1. to explore our own wants and needs rather than those we've been socialized to believe are right for us.
   Instructions:
   1. Begin the discussion by stating that what we really want and need in relationships may be different from those given in socialization messages.
      Focus on:
      a. Difference between wants and needs
      b. What we individually want and what we need
      c. Wants and needs as a changing process
      d. How we may want and need different things in different types of relationships
      e. Expecting our wants and needs to be met by one or by several people
C. Guided Fantasy
   Objectives:
   1. to integrate ideas and feelings from the previous two activities
Instructions:
1. Introduce the fantasy. Request members to find a comfortable position and present the fantasy as written (see attached).
2. Discuss reactions to the fantasy by focusing on the following areas:
   a. What was the special person like?
   b. How did you feel towards this other person?
   c. What things did you identify that you liked about what the other person was giving you?
   d. What did you discover about your own way of giving?
   e. Are there things that seemed to be missing from your interaction?
   f. How did it feel to experience this kind of fantasy?

D. Closing Discussion

Objectives:
1. To obtain feedback on the session's activities.
2. To obtain information on the group member's needs, in order to revise future sessions to meet those needs.

Instructions:
1. Ask group members about their feelings and reactions to this session and whether certain topics have come to mind that they want included in future sessions.
Shoulds Brainstormed

- nice
- be a hostess
- entertain others for him
- non-demanding
- consistent
- ego builder
- mind reader
- supportive
- self-sacrificing
- comforter
- listener
- Madonna/maternal
- sexually responsive
- role play
  - social life is other than yours
- exclusive of other people
- meet all other's needs
- rational
- passive not strong
- stay within the feminine boundaries
- "know your place"
- dependent
- be sexy and beautiful
- be a turn-on for him and his friends
- be a turn-on for him but not his friends
- give up decision-making
- dutiful
- available
- worry
- responsible for the relationship
- be helpless
- don't be helpless
- don't have expectations (but read mine)
- be devoted but back off
- same emotional level
- can't have a good time without me

- no needs met by anyone else but me
- non-threatening
- can't be satisfied alone
Guided Fantasy

Let yourself relax...breathe deeply...let tension flow out as you exhale...let calmness enter as you inhale...enjoy the peaceful feelings as you inhale...enjoy the calmness as you continue to relax...now imagine yourself to be somewhere else...a very beautiful, quiet place...begin noticing the detail of the place you're in...are you outside or inside?...are you sitting, lying down, walking, running? is it dark, or light, or somewhere inbetween?...what kinds of things surround your private space?...are there any sounds?...explore your place...make it just the way you want it to be...

Your very comfortable in your place now...you're feeling very much at home...as your eyes drift around your special place you notice an image of someone coming slowly towards you...closer, closer the person is someone very special to you...it may be a friend, a lover, or maybe someone you've never seen before, but you know they're special to you...how does it feel to have them share your special place?...they begin talking to you in a gentle voice...telling you how much they appreciate you...listen to what they tell you...now they begin showing you how much they care for you...how do they express their feelings towards you?...think about your feelings towards this special person...imagine how you respond to this special person...What is this person giving you that you like?...What else do you want from this person?...What are you giving them that you like?...What else would you like to be able to give them?...

Focus on what else you would say to each other to make the feelings and experiences become complete...Take your time and focus on how you are behaving that makes your fantasy so complete...How is that special person helping to complete your fantasy?...

Take your time...make your fantasy complete...When it feels complete...open your eyes, and come back to the group.
SESSION IV

I. Activities

A. Here-and-Now Feeling Process

Objectives:
1. to help group members let go of the business of the day
2. to become focused on the here-and-now feelings and work of the group

Instructions:
1. Let's take a few minutes to let go of our business and concerns outside of the room. Let's take a few deep breaths and get in touch with what's going on for each of us here inside the group. Get in touch with how you are feeling at this moment in time and let's express it to each other in a few words or a short phrase.

B. Making Needs Explicit

Objectives:
1. to get in touch with individual needs and wants
2. to share there needs with others
3. to decide if we have rights in getting our needs met

Instructions:
1. Form into two small groups with one facilitator in each group. Have the groups free associate and openly share needs and wants in the small group for 20 minutes.
2. Have members of the small groups join together for a large group process. Ask members to report to each other in the large group. (15 minutes) During the large group process, facilitators can help group members focus on what rights we have in getting our needs met, and how we ask (or don't ask) to have our needs met. Have participants focus on this process both in and outside of the group.

C. Circle Exercise (see reference)

Objectives:
1. to identify people who are close or not close to us
2. to identify the people with whom we get our needs met
3. to become aware of the degree of or lack of satisfaction we experience in asking to have our needs met.

Instructions:
1. Ask group members to place their name in the middle of the circle handout. Then place friends, family, neighbors, etc. on the circles around you at the approximate distance they are to you. Later, notice the similarities and differences of those close and far. Are they all family members, all of same sex or same age, etc. What discoveries have you made?
2. Ask group members to identify what needs they get from whom. Is this arrangement satisfactory? What changes would group members like to make? Who would they like to move closer and who further away?

Materials:
1. Circle handout sheet and pencils or pens.
Comments:
1. Not enough time was allowed in this session for this exercise which was unfortunate. This exercise provides an opportunity to visualize one's own individual needs and wants and how one goes about meeting them.

D. Ending Process

Objectives:
1. To identify where the group members feel they are now and what they feel they would like to have happen as focus on next week in the group.

Instructions:
1. Let's take a few minutes to focus on how you feel about what we have accomplished thus far in the group now that it's the end of the fourth session.

2. What focus or topic would you like the group to concentrate on next week? What would you like to have happen next in here for you?

References:
SESSION V

I. Activities

A. Discussion on expectations of women friends, men friends, and lovers

Objectives:

1. To increase awareness of expectations that we have of others in relationships
2. To increase awareness of different expectations in different types of relationships

Instructions:

1. "Last week we identified some of our needs and wants in relationships and discussed who we want to fill those needs. Today we would like to explore expectations, both overt and covert, that we have of others in relationships. What expectations did you have or do you have of the other person in intimate relationships?"

As participants discuss their expectations, focus on whether the expectations are verbalized, or if they want the other person to "mind-read". Focus on similarities and discrepancies.

2. Continue the discussion by asking how their expectations in intimate relationships may be different from expectations in other types of relationships and what that means to them.

B. Discussion on expectations of others

Objectives:

1. To explore what is an expectation vs. what is a demand.
2. To explore what participants feel they have a "right" to expect from one another.
3. To become aware of what they feel others have a "right" to expect of them.

Instructions:

1. Give a brief summary on previous discussion, bridging into the difference between expecting something versus demanding something from another person.

2. Focus the discussion on what participants feel they have a right to expect from others and at what point are they perhaps interfering with another's rights. What do they feel that others have a right to expect from them.

3. When people's expectations are in conflict with each other, disagreements occur. How can disagreements be handled? How comfortable are you with compromise? How do your own disagreements in relationships get resolved? or not resolved?
C. Communicating & risk taking with expectations

Objectives:

1. To develop an understanding of how expectations are communicated within an intimate relationship.
2. To explore the risks involved with stating expectations.

Instructions:

1. "We have explored the importance of being clear about our own expectations in an intimate relationship." We have also discussed the impact which other's expectations have on us. What I would like you to focus on now is how it is we communicate those expectations. Suggestions for processing: Do we assume that our partner knows what we expect? Are others sometimes supposed to be mind readers? What is scary about telling someone our expectations? Is it easier sometimes not to state them? Why? How does it feel to communicate expectations? What are some of the ways you communicate (verbally & non-verbally) your expectations? Are there patterns that emerge?

2. Facilitators process with the group and go with the directions that the group finds important.

D. Mid-Group process check

Objectives:

1. To determine if the group structure is meeting the needs of the participants.
2. To obtain feedback and suggestions for the remaining three sessions.

Instructions:

1. We'd like to take the last few minutes of group today to find out if what we have been doing has been beneficial to you. We'd like your comments and feedback (negative & positive) verbally about things that have been helpful or not helpful. We would also like to know what directions or foci you would like to pursue for the remaining sessions.

SESSION VI

I. Activities

A. Defining Honesty

Objectives:
1. To help participants focus on the theme of honesty
2. To centralize a working definition that each participant can relate to.

Instructions:
1. "Since the focus of today's group is honesty as it relates to ourselves and to our intimate relationships, it would seem to be helpful for us as a group to define honesty. Through each of us sharing our perceptions of what honesty is, we will be able to obtain a clear definition and point of reference."
2. As participants share their perceptions of what honesty is, the facilitators draw together and clarify the concepts. The process is complete when the group has agreed upon the components of the definition.

B. How we deal with Honesty in our Intimate Relationships

Objectives:
1. To assist participants with clarifying times when it is easy to be honest in their intimate relationships ... to identify the dynamics.
2. To assist participants with clarifying times when they have difficulty being honest in their intimate relationships

Instructions:
1. Ask participants to focus on a current intimate relationship, a past one (if they are not presently in one), or fantasize for the future (if not currently in one).
2. Then ask them to take 10 minutes to write down the following:
   a. list 3 examples or situations when it is easiest to be honest in your intimate relationship
   b. list 3 examples or situations when it is hardest to be honest in your intimate relationship.
3. After they have finished writing their examples, ask them to look at what they've written and see if they can identify differences in the two sets of examples. Have them think about these for a few minutes.
4. Then have participants share what they discovered about themselves.
   Facilitators process:
   a. as you look at your examples, what do you notice? Did anything surprise you?
   b. what seems to help you to be honest?
   c. what things seem to help to keep you from being honest?
   d. how does this apply to your current situations?
   e. what could you do differently that would facilitate honesty in your intimate relationships?
   f. what kinds of feelings are involved with honesty?
   g. how does taking risks involve honesty?
C. Adrienne Rich's Six Points of Honesty

Objectives:
1. To clarify situations in which honesty is important and often difficult.
2. To assist participants in relating the 6 points
3. To identify motive as a component of honesty.

Instructions:
1. "We would like to share with the group Adrienne Rich's Six Points of Honesty. Perhaps these points will help you identify times in your own life when honesty is difficult, or when courses of action become unclear."
2. Facilitators list the 6 points and give a brief explanation of what they mean.

Six Points to be Aware of:

a. Honesty with self
   1) this is basic to any ability to be honest with others

b. Fear of Dealing with others' feelings
   1) this often keeps us from being honest, or from taking responsibility for our feelings and actions

c. Lying through silence.
   1) sometimes known as "taking the path of least resistance", this can often cause tension and resentments; also more pain may occur later as the honesty surfaces

d. Emotional Honesty vs. "letter of the law".
   1) this occurs when one is being cognitively/technically honest rather than emotionally honest; it is primarily an avoidance of one's true feelings

e. Compulsive Honesty (confessing vs. sharing).
   1) this deals primarily with one's motives for being honest

f. Honesty as a Process
   1) this is usually the recognition that honesty is something one works at over the period of a lifetime. It is not simply a quality one acquires and always has.

3. Facilitators ask group for comments or any discussion about the 6 points.

D. Closing

Objectives:
1. To check out how participants feel after today's session.
2. To assess the next step participants would like to explore in session VII.

Instructions:
1. "Before we leave today I'd like to check out how each of you are feeling about what we've done today, and what you feel the next step is for next time."

Materials
1. pencils, paper

References:
SESSION VII

I. Activities

A. Defining Risk Taking

Objectives:
1. To clarify what is meant by "taking risks" in an intimate relationship.
2. To obtain a working definition of risk taking for the group.

Instructions:
1. "Today we will be focusing on the theme of risk taking in intimate relationships. Before we begin to explore this, it is important that we define it for ourselves and as a group. It will help us to be clear about the issues involved if we all have some common groundwork."
2. Facilitators ask participants to begin verbalizing their definitions of risk taking. Process and clarify until there is a working understanding among group members.

B. Identifying feelings that come with taking risks.

Objectives:
1. To get the group to respond on an affective level.
2. To help group members identify their feelings, and when they occur.
3. To share common feelings group members have about taking risks.

Instructions:
1. Modeling of facilitators is important here. Facilitator can begin the discussion by talking about own feelings involved in taking risks. Example: "When I think about taking risks in my own intimate relationship, what comes to me more often than anything, is the feeling of fear. That fear can be lots of different things, like: whether or not the person understands what I mean, or if they're making certain assumptions about me, or maybe even a fear of how they'll react."
2. Facilitators encourage group members to share their feelings. Some possible questions might be:
   a. How do you know when it feels right to take a risk?
   b. What kinds of things are most risky? Why?
   c. What feelings do we experience that help us take risks?
   d. What feelings do we experience that keep us from taking risks?
   e. How does it feel once we've taken a risk?
3. Facilitators process risk taking discussion, trying to keep an affective level and personally important to individual group members.

C. Paranoias and Strokes Exercise (see attached)

Objectives
1. To give participants the opportunity to practice risk-taking behavior.
2. To provide participants with the opportunity to share their caring feelings about each other directly to each other.
Instructions:

1. "Part of what becomes clear about risk-taking is that it involves practice. It is often scary when we think about taking a risk, but often we find that after we've done it, it isn't nearly as bad as we thought. It takes practice to help decrease the fear we might be experiencing, and as we practice and experience more situations we are able to deal with them more capably."

2. Today we are going to use a group exercise to provide us with some practice in taking risks. The nice thing about practicing in this group is that we can feel like this is a relatively safe environment. And each of us is providing support for risk taking as well.

3. Introduce Paranoias and Strokes exercise (see attached)

4. Following the exercise, processing should focus on the points below:
   A. How did it feel to do this exercise?
   B. What feelings did you experience prior to stating your paranoia? Your stroke?
   C. How was what you did in group related to how you are in an intimate relationship?
   D. How did it feel to be the receiver of a paranoia? a stroke?

5. Close with the positive feelings given by strokes.
PARANOIAS AND STROKES EXERCISE

Directions: I would like each person in the group to think of a paranoia that they have, that involves another person(s) in the group. A paranoia is a fear or uncertainty you have come up with. This might be because of something someone said to you, or the way someone looks at you, or the way someone acted, etc.

Example 1: "I feel paranoid that you don't like me because when I passed you in the Student Center yesterday, I looked right at you and said hello and you didn't respond."

Each person in the group will take a turn telling their paranoia to the person they want to address. You must first state who your paranoia is for (group leaders are included). Ask if she would like to receive it. If she says no, then she is not willing to hear your paranoia. If she says yes, then you tell that person your paranoia. The person receiving the paranoia must then respond by telling you the "kernel of truth" in your paranoia. This gives you your answer and clears the air of any questions or doubts. This is illustrated by finishing example 1: "Yes, you're right. When I saw you in the Student Center, I wasn't nice. It was because I had just taken a hard test that I was afraid I'd flunked and I was preoccupied at the time. I'm glad you called that to my attention, because I do like you."

At the same time as each person is thinking of a paranoia, have each of them also think of a stroke (compliment) they would like to give another group member. The person receiving the stroke may not respond except to acknowledge it. This keeps participants from discounting their compliments. Each person in the group takes a turn giving someone a stroke, until everyone has given all the strokes they want.
SESSION VIII

I. Activities

A. Wise Woman Fantasy (see reference)

Objectives:
1. To bring into awareness any unresolved issues or questions group members may have.
2. To have each participant become aware of the wise woman inside herself; i.e. the answers to their questions are inside themselves.
3. To provide an exercise that participants can use on their own when they have some questions or issues about themselves or their lives.

Instructions:
1. Inform the members that we will be beginning the session with a fantasy. Request members to find a comfortable position and to relax. Follow the fantasy as described (see attached).
2. After the fantasy, process the activity focusing on the following areas:
   a. What were your general reactions to the fantasy?
   b. What were your surroundings like? What could you feel? Smell? Hear?
   c. Who was your wise woman? What was she like?
   d. Do you want to share your questions?
   e. What response did you receive from your wise women?
   f. How did you feel about this response?
   g. What did you learn about yourself?

Materials:
1. Wise Woman Fantasy (see reference)

B. Group Sharing

Objectives:
1. To begin to bring closure to the group
2. To allow the opportunity for members to share feelings about each other.

Instructions:
1. "During the fantasy, I became aware that in many ways we have been each other's "wise woman" throughout the group. I also became aware of how, after other groups, I often realize that I wished I had shared some thought or appreciation with another member. I'd like for us to take some time to share thoughts, feelings or appreciations that have been left unsaid."

C. Verbal evaluation of the group

Objectives:
1. To help bring closure to the group
2. To obtain information about how members feel about the group experience in general
3. To obtain specific feedback about the group's activities and sequence of activities
4. To obtain feedback specific to the facilitator's styles
Instructions:
1. "We would like to take some time to talk about your reactions to this group. We would appreciate receiving both positive and negative feedback from you, as this will help us in planning and facilitating future groups on intimate relationships." Have members focus on what was most helpful to them, what they would like changed, specific feedback to the facilitators, what issues they would have liked to explore that were not included.

D. Written Evaluations

Objectives:
1. To obtain specific feedback from the group members.

Instructions:
1. Request group members to complete the written evaluation forms before leaving.

Materials:
1. written evaluation forms (see attached)

References:
Wise Woman Fantasy

DIRECTIONS: This is a guided fantasy. Explain to participants they will each have their own fantasy, but that the facilitator will be guiding them through it. Instruct participants to listen to the facilitator's voice. The fantasy must be done slowly to allow participants the time to focus.

FANTASY: Close your eyes and begin to relax...focus on your breathing...as you begin to be more relaxed your breathing will become slower and deeper...Let tension flow out of your body as you exhale...let calmness enter as you inhale...(longer pause)...As you continue relaxing...begin to imagine yourself standing on a beach somewhere...it is deserted...you are all alone...(longer pause)...focus on what the day is like...can you hear sounds?...are there smells in the air?...can you feel anything?...take some time to enjoy your surroundings...(long pause)...now begin walking down the beach...you notice up ahead of you that there is a boat on the beach...there is no one around...so you decide to get into the boat...and you begin to drift out into the water...you're not headed anywhere in particular...you just continue to drift further and further from the shore...slow and easy...and you continue to relax and enjoy the peace and quiet...(long pause)...as you drift, a question pops into your head...a question that's been on your mind lately...but you're relaxing in your boat...and don't want to think about it right now...so you let the question slip out of your mind...you let it go...you continue to drift...when you look out on the horizon, and see a small island in the distance...you decide to head for the island...and you begin to head your boat in that direction...you get closer and closer to the island...What does the island look like as you approach it?...What do you notice about it?...You begin to realize that this is a very special island...it is totally deserted...except for a very wise woman who lives on the interior of the island...you're near the beach now, and you decide to get out of the boat...and explore the island...you begin thinking about the wise woman...and you begin to search for her house...you are walking along a path...moving toward the interior of the island...toward the wise woman's house...(long pause)...The wise woman knows you are coming...and she is waiting for you...she is very kind and very wise...(long pause)...You can see her house now...when you meet her, you can ask her one question...a question that you have been wanting an answer to...think about your question...what will you ask the wise woman?...(long pause)...You are at her house now...enter the house...(long pause)...ask the wise woman your question and listen for the answer...(long pause). When you have finished...leave the wise woman's house and return to your boat...Once in your boat, you begin to drift through the water...relax, as your boat takes you back toward the beach you came from...after you've drifted awhile, the beach comes into sight...closer, closer...until you are nearly there...(long pause)...now you've reached the beach...it is still deserted...there is no one else around...and you enjoy the quiet and the calmness around you...when you are ready...open your eyes and return to the group.
A WOMEN'S SELF-DISCOVERY GROUP FOCUSING ON WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE WANT WITHIN OUR INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS; OFFERS YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACTIVELY EXPLORE YOUR PERSONAL VALUES, COMMUNICATION PATTERNS, EXPECTATIONS FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS, AND THE IMPACT OF CHANGING SEX ROLES. THE GROUP WILL MEET FOR EIGHT WEEKS ON TUESDAY AFTERNOONS, FROM 3-5, BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY. FOR INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION CONTACT THE SIU COUNSELING CENTER, 453-5371.
Circle the letter that best answers the question.

1. Eight sessions was:
   a. too long
   b. too short
   c. just right

2. Two-hour sessions were:
   a. too long
   b. too short
   c. just right

3. I think the group would have been more productive if there had been:
   a. more participants
   b. fewer participants
   c. no difference

4. What do you think would have been the ideal group size? ____ members

5. The rotation of facilitators was:
   a. disruptive
   b. helpful
   c. no difference

6. I would have liked:
   a. more time spent on structured activities/less open discussion
   b. more time spent on open discussion/less on structured activities
   c. no change

Please take some time to write a few sentences about each of the following:

1. What I liked best and those parts that stand out for me are:

2. What I liked least:

3. What did you personally hope to get from this group prior to coming?

4. Did you get what you wanted from this group? Why or why not.

5. What did you learn about yourself interpersonally that you didn't know before?

6. How do you feel about your experiences in this group?

7. Feedback specifically to Jackie or Sharon or Patti — what would you change, add, subtract, what was valuable to you, etc.?