Feeling Like a Shadow in Relationships:
How to Achieve Love & Intimacy with Another Person without Losing Your Sense of Self

TI 078 - Thematic

By

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# Feeling Like a Shadow In Relationships

## Table of Contents

**Overview** .................................................................................................................. 3

**Group Theory and Description** .................................................................................. 4
  - Basic Components ........................................................................................................ 5
  - Description of Session Outline ...................................................................................... 9
  - Preparation to Lead the Group .................................................................................... 10

**Pre-Group Interview** ................................................................................................ 11

**Session I: Introduction** .............................................................................................. 12

**Session II: Emotional Connection** ............................................................................ 15

**Session III: Presence** ................................................................................................ 19

**Session IV: The Self** .................................................................................................. 25

**Session V: “Shoulds”** ............................................................................................... 28

**Sessions VI & VII: Reconstructing Beliefs** ............................................................... 31

**Session VIII: Exploring Within–Group Relationships** ............................................. 34

**Session VIII: Termination** ......................................................................................... 36

**References** .................................................................................................................. 38

**Appendices** ............................................................................................................... 39
  - Appendix A: Silencing the Self Scale ........................................................................... 39
  - Appendix A-1: Scoring for the Silencing the Self Scale ................................................. 41
  - Appendix B: Graphic of the Group Model ..................................................................... 42
  - Appendix C: Emotional Connection Questionnaire ...................................................... 43
  - Appendix C-1: Scoring for the Emotional Connection Questionnaire ......................... 45
  - Appendix D: The Self Questionnaire ............................................................................ 46
Overview

This group is designed for individuals who are having difficulty in their current or past relationships related to feelings that they are losing their sense of self. Frequently these individuals describe themselves as unable to talk openly with their partner for fear of losing the relationship, or they feel they are inadequate and flawed and therefore that they must conceal aspects of themselves from their partner. Individuals may also feel that they do not have needs and therefore defer to their partner only to resent them later. As a result of these issues, people feel they have to give up a part of themselves in order to maintain the relationship.

We developed a model to help explain the dynamics of these relationships. We believe that an individual’s view of their self impacts their presence and emotional connection in relationships. Through the use of focusing exercises and group processing, members gain a clearer understanding of how they are in relationships and ways to improve their presence and emotional connection.

After the initial session, the next four sessions focus on the particular components of the model: Emotional Connection, Presence, Self, and “Shoulds”. The sixth and seventh sessions help group members identify and re-sculpt a particular belief they feel is limiting or constraining. The eighth session is solely a process session which allows for the group members to explore how these concepts apply to the group experience. The final session is devoted to reviewing the concepts of the model, discussing how to maintain and extend the benefits and changes of the group, and exploring termination issues. [44 page manual with worksheets and references]

Goals: To help members gain a stronger sense of self in their relationships and to be able to express their self more freely in relationships.

Target: Undergraduate/graduate students who identify having unsatisfying relationships. Specifically, these individuals should be having difficulty expressing their needs, opening up to a partner, and/or feeling like an unequal partner. Participants do not need to be in a current relationship, but need to have had at least one intimate relationship.

Staff: 2 leaders, one male and one female (preferably)

Length: Nine 90-minute sessions (although the number of sessions can be reduced or expanded as needed).

Size: 5 to 10 members

Order Address: The Clearinghouse, The Counseling & Mental Health Center, 1 University Station A3500 . Austin , TX 78712-0152.
Group Theory and Description

A common problem people report about their relationships is the feeling of inequality. For instance, people often report feeling that one person has more power or control over the quality and content of the relationship. Additionally, individuals often feel unable to talk openly with their partner for fear of losing the relationship. This tendency to conceal self-identifying information in a relationship may occur for a variety of reasons. For instance, the individuals may feel inadequate about their self-worth and believe that if they reveal certain aspects of themselves (e.g. feelings, preferences, needs) their partners will shame or reject them. Relatedly, these individuals may have a tendency to create a false-image of themselves in order to conceal their perceived flaws. Or they might pretend that they have no needs or preferences and defer to the wishes of their partner. We feel that one of the important underlying issues with all of these descriptions is a tendency for individuals to sacrifice their self/identity because they feel it is the only way to preserve intimacy in their relationships.

We developed a model in order to facilitate an understanding of this pattern that individuals enact in their relationships. Our hypothesis is that an individual’s view of their self influences the behaviors they engage in and thereby the quality of their emotional connection in the relationship. The following graphic is a representation of our model.

As is apparent from the graphic, the key factors of this model are Emotional Connection, Presence, Self, and “Shoulds.” At a more basic level, Emotional Connection and Presence are both parts of one’s relationship style, whereas Self and “Shoulds” represent fundamental characteristics or beliefs held by the individual. First we will describe each of the components and then the important interactions for our model.
Basic Components

• **Emotional Connection:** This factor is probably the most face valid of all the concepts. Emotional connection is simply the nature of the bond and emotions one feels for others in relationships. For the purposes of the group, we like the analogy of a bridge. In other words, what is the nature of the emotional bridge one is building to their partner? Is it a tenuous rope bridge that is hard to cross or a bridge of wood or stone? What is the width of the bridge? A wider bridge will be more stable, it will be easier to cross, and it is less likely that things will fall off the bridge and get lost while crossing. All these concepts are easily transferable to thinking about the nature of the emotional bond with others. If you have a rope bridge, your emotional connection is likely to be relatively weak, you are likely to feel anxiety about the stability of your relationship, and your interactions are likely to be effortful and not very intimate.

For the purposes of this group, Sternberg’s Triarchic Theory of Love (Sternberg, 1988) was used as a way to break down the concept of emotional connection into distinct factors that would be more easily understandable to group members. Although this model was intended for intimate relationships, we feel that the concepts can be applied to friendships and other relationships as well. The following is a brief description of the three factors of the model:

• **Intimacy:** This is meant to reflect the friendship type feelings one has for another. For instance a feeling of knowing the other deeply, a willingness to share personal aspects of oneself (e.g., thoughts, opinions, interests, needs, emotions), strong feelings of trust, etc.

• **Passion:** This is an intense feeling of attraction towards another person. The reason for the attraction may be physical or due to perceived characteristics of the other. These feelings are often based on an idealized image of the other. Frequently, passion is relatively short-lived by virtue of the fact that as one gets to know another person, it is difficult to maintain the idealized image. If passion is based on intimacy and not on an idealized image of one’s partner, then it is likely to be much more stable. Temporally, the former type of passion occurs early in relationships, whereas the latter type of passion occurs later in the relationship after there has been time to establish a strong intimacy.

• **Commitment:** This refers both to the commitment of admitting feelings of love for another as well as a determination to work to maintain the relationship despite whatever challenges may appear.

Continuing with the bridge analogy, you can think of these different factors as different materials with which one is building the bridge. Our belief is that Intimacy is the strongest material to begin with and Commitment the weakest. Passion is somewhere in between, although it usually creates the illusion of being the strongest. A relationship built primarily upon intimacy means that both partners know and trust each other. This will often strengthen passion and commitment. Although group members may not all fit the same profile, most are likely to have built their past relationships primarily out of Commitment and Passion and very little Intimacy. Our assumption is that they don’t use Intimacy much due to fears that once they are known, they are likely to be rejected.

• **Presence:** Presence is meant to refer to the complete role one plays in one’s relationships. Presence consists of the behaviors one engages in that serve to create an image of the underlying characteristics of the individual. For instance presence is reflected in things like: 1) physical appearance, 2) non-verbal behavior, 3) eye contact when speaking, listening, or otherwise interacting with people, 4) the content, tone, and frequency of their speech, 5) emotions they express in front of people. Presence can take many forms. One’s behaviors can:
The analogy we chose for Presence is that it is like a banner that is hung to announce something to passersby. This banner is essentially designed to convey some image of one’s self. The banner can be clearly stating information about who the individual is, it can create a false impression, or it can be confusing. Additionally, banners vary in terms of the amount of information that is conveyed; from none to a great deal. It may be valuable to have group members think about the nature of the banner that they are flying.

Important to this concept of Presence is that it changes over time in relationships and depends on the types of relationships that are sought with others. For instance, the banner one flies early in a relationship is usually different than the one that is shown later in the relationship. For some members, their banners may not change very much because of fears about Intimacy or Commitment.

- **Self**: This is easily the most difficult concept to pin down. Ideally, the self is a unified sense of one’s own identity. Frequently, individuals may not have a unified sense of self. Given this difficulty, it is often useful to break down the concept of self into many different beliefs individuals hold about themselves. Examples of these beliefs are: the generally positive or negative appraisal individuals hold about themselves, where they think they fall along various physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions, what they believe their strengths and weaknesses are, and their ideas about their preferences (e.g. likes, dislikes, desires), needs, and wants. One’s behaviors, emotions, and thoughts are all expressions of various characteristics of their “self.”

Many of our beliefs about our self, develop out of our interactions with others (parents, siblings, other family members, peers, etc.). Over time the implicit and explicit messages we receive from others coalesce into relatively structured beliefs about the self. Additionally, self-reflection and introspection are likely to have an impact on the development of the self. Depending on the nature of these beliefs, we may feel more or less “acceptable” or “attractive” to others.

- **“Shoulds”**: By this concept we are referring to beliefs that individuals have regarding how they “should” behave, emote, think, and fundamentally “be” as a person. “Shoulds” are frequently based on outcome expectancies, or beliefs that “if I behave a certain way, then the following consequence will occur.” For example, if a man believes that he will be ridiculed for crying (an outcome expectancy) he may develop a rule that “men should not cry.” Like beliefs about the self, “Shoulds” are adopted from explicit, implicit, or inferred messages that people receive throughout their life. The source of these “Shoulds” can be external (e.g. from family, peers, & society) as well as self-generated. Although there are many different “Shoulds” for different situations, we are particularly interested in the beliefs people hold regarding how they should behave in order to be accepted. Gender roles are probably one of the most powerful types of “Shoulds.” Individuals are continuously bathed in gender role expectancies from birth. Because they begin so early, gender roles are likely to be incorporated into one’s view of oneself. Other “Shoulds” are not incorporated into the self, but are merely designed to dictate social behavior (e.g., “you should not chew gum with your mouth open”).

“Shoulds” attempt to box up the chaotic world of social interactions into a nice neat package. They are instructions to the self regarding how to negotiate through one’s social world. A major advantage
to adopting “Shoulds” is that they allow individuals to feel more in control of events in their world. Additionally, they help to reduce uncertainty and anxiety about what behavior, emotions, and thoughts are “acceptable” and “not acceptable.” They operate by inducing negative internal mood states such as guilt or anxiety when one’s behavior doesn’t conform to one’s “Shoulds.” In an effort to avoid such feelings, people rarely engage in behavior that is contrary to their “Shoulds.”

One negative consequence of accepting “Shoulds,” however, is that they reduce behavioral flexibility. They create the illusion that our behavioral options are limited, when if fact they are limitless. In this sense, a good analogy for “Shoulds” is that of a box. A box is a confining entity with sharp corners. Just like how objects with sharp corners tend to become rounded through exposure to the elements, the sharp corners of one’s “Shoulds” often create conflict and increased resistance. Relatedly, boxes don’t roll well or adapt to change. This is analogous to the way that people frequently apply the same “Shoulds” indiscriminately despite changes in one’s social world. In other words, their “Shoulds” are overgeneralized to situations or environments in which they are not warranted. For instance, “Shoulds” that were adaptive regarding how to be accepted in one’s family may be maladaptive in friendships and other intimate relationships. A portion of the group is designed to help individuals explore what “Shoulds” they have and to identify which of those they want to keep, modify, or throw away.

Integration:

Each of these components reciprocally interacts with the others in a complex fashion. A discussion of all the possible interactions is beyond the scope of this manual, therefore the model for the group has been simplified. Our model is entirely linear with a number of direct and indirect relationships. At its most basic level (as mentioned earlier), the model is intended to show how one’s beliefs (i.e. beliefs about the Self as well as “Shoulds”) impact one’s behavior (Presence) in relationships as well as the bond (Emotional Connection) that is experienced. The following description should provide a general synopsis of how the different components influence each other as well as several examples. More detailed descriptions and examples will be provided in the “General Considerations” sections and the outlines for each session.

The first component in the model is “Shoulds.” “Shoulds” are assumed to have two primary effects; one on the Self and one on Presence. Throughout development (particularly at early ages) “Shoulds” may be integrated into one’s general views about oneself. For instance, a male child constantly exposed to the explicit and/or implicit message that men should not show their emotions and should solve their own problems may over time incorporate these “Shoulds” into beliefs about the Self. Such an individual might describe their Self as independent, strong, and emotionally stable. Another way “Shoulds” influence the Self is when they are not followed. This tends to induce a variety of negative mood states such as guilt, embarrassment, feelings of shame, etc. For example, if the male child described above gets involved in a situation where he cries or talks about his problems in front of others, he may feel guilty or like he has done something wrong. Because these feelings are aversive, they tend to negatively reinforce the individual to comply with the “Should.”

Alternatively, rather than being incorporated into the Self, many “Shoulds” operate as instructions to the Self regarding which behaviors are appropriate and which are not. In this way “Shoulds” influence one’s Presence behaviors in relationships. For instance, a woman may have accepted the belief that she should not cause conflict in relationships because she will be shamed or rejected. Such an individual may consequently suppress mentioning her own interests and may not bring up perceived problems in the relationship. This may later contribute to feelings of both loneliness and resentment (i.e. indirectly influencing the quality of the emotional connection).
Although “Shoulds” can also influence Emotional Connection directly, we do not address this much in the group because such influences are less common. This is the case where a “Should” tells the individual which feelings they should or should not have in their relationship. For example, some people may believe that they should not feel needy or dependent in their relationship and consequently keep themselves at an emotional distance.

The Self and one’s beliefs about the Self develop largely from the individuals myriad experiences. One’s own appraisals are important in this process. However, the most significant of these experiences are likely to be social in nature. Some of these influences on the Self take the form of “Shoulds” (as described above), however, the large majority are probably based on internalizing other types of implicit and explicit messages we constantly receive from others regarding how they perceive us. From the perspective of this model, we are concerned primarily with negative beliefs about the Self and how they impact one’s Presence and Emotional Connection. Our hypothesis is that these negative beliefs can influence Emotional Connection either directly or indirectly through one’s Presence behaviors. For example, an woman who believes that her Self is inadequate, unattractive, worthless, or somehow flawed may not feel very emotionally connected to others because she feels that no one would want to have anything to do with her if they knew how “flawed” she was. Therefore, if people seem to be emotionally connected to her, she might assume they don’t really know her and may thus feel emotionally distant and disconnected from them. This is one way that beliefs about the self might directly impact one’s Emotional Connection.

The same types of negative beliefs that this woman has are likely to influence Emotional Connection indirectly via Presence. [Remember that we have defined Presence as the behaviors one engages in which convey an impression of one’s Self.] We believe the primary way in which this occurs is that individuals feel in a bind between wanting to have a relationship and yet not wanting the negative aspects of themselves to be known due to fears of shame and/or rejection. Assuming that relationships with others are desired, feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness may lead individuals to conceal aspects of themselves that they feel are “flawed” or problematic. This can take a variety of forms. Presence may be restricted to only displaying the things one feels are attractive or desirable and consequently an incomplete picture of a person is presented to the world. We will refer to this as the “tiny self”. Alternatively, one can create a false Presence (classically referred to as a “false self”) designed to convey an image that one feels is more attractive to others. Usually this “false self” consists of blending some true characteristics of the Self that are believed to be “safe” or attractive with a variety of other positive characteristics that are not true parts of the Self.

The consequence of presenting either a “tiny” or “false” self is that it limits the types of behaviors one engages in that build an Emotional Connection. For instance, anxiety about one’s “unacceptable flaws” may reduce one’s willingness to display feelings of passion for one’s partner perhaps because of fears of shame and/or rejection. Additionally, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness regarding the ability to have a successful relationship may lead the individual to not display signs of commitment in the relationship; i.e., neither openly admitting feelings of love nor making much of an effort to maintain the relationship in the face of difficulties. Most importantly, this anxiety is going to substantially reduce one’s willingness to be intimate. Since a fundamental part of intimacy behaviors involves being willing to be vulnerable and disclosing about the Self, individuals who feel strongly inadequate or flawed are unlikely to engage in such behaviors due to fundamental fears that they won’t be accepted. An important function of intimacy is that it is the vehicle whereby others learn about one’s needs, desires, preferences, and other important personal information. Without such information, it is nearly impossible for people to meet the needs of or even know how to support such an individual. A common pattern is for the individual to pretend to have no such needs or
preferences and merely defer to the needs and wants of the partner as a way to avoid conflict or some other perceived harm.

The extent to which individuals are restricted in their ability to display behaviors indicating passion, commitment, and intimacy directly influences the degree to which these feelings are experienced in their Emotional Connection to their partner. For individuals with these types of patterns, the primary goal is to explore and eventually counter the beliefs that create roadblocks to conveying a true Presence. The result will be a more fulfilling and stable Emotional Connection.

In effort to help the group members understand the model, we broke the first several sessions into the separate components. The group sessions begin with a didactic approach where the group leaders are teaching and discussing specific concepts. As the group progresses, the focus shifts to a more process-oriented focus with the impetus coming from the group members rather than the group leaders. Session 1 is devoted to introductions, expectations about the group and a brief description of the relationship model. We spend sessions 2 to 5 exploring the concepts of Emotional Connection, Presence, Self and “Shoulds.” The discussion of the components are in the reverse order of they way they are laid out in the model because we felt that it would be easier for members to grasp the concepts in this fashion. In sessions 6 and 7, we help the group members identify inflexible beliefs and then re-sculpt those beliefs. Session 8 provides an opportunity for the group members to discuss their role in the group and the successes and difficulties they had as members of the group. The final session is devoted to reviewing the model, discussing how to maintain changes as well as continue the change process, and exploring feelings about termination.

Another pattern that can mimic these same types of problems with Presence and Emotional Connection is when an individual does not have a clearly defined sense of Self. This pattern may arise when individuals are not given adequate developmental opportunities to explore and understand themselves or if primary caregivers tried to force them to be a certain way. In both cases, individuals are likely to have some degree of confusion regarding the Self. Consequently, their Presence is likely to convey their confusion, perhaps by presenting conflicting information about their needs, desires, and preferences. Their Presence may also convey a “tiny” self in the sense that they repeatedly defer to the wishes of the partner because they honestly don’t know clearly what they want or need. For these individuals it is imperative to create an opportunity for them to explore who they are, learn about their needs and wants, and in the process begin to define their Self.

Description of Session Outline

In effort to help the group members understand the model, we broke the first several sessions into the separate components. The group sessions begin with a didactic approach where the group leaders are teaching and discussing specific concepts. As the group progresses, the focus shifts to a more process-oriented focus with the impetus coming from the group members rather than the group leaders. Session 1 is devoted to introductions, expectations about the group and a brief description of the relationship model. We spend sessions 2 to 5 exploring the concepts of Emotional Connection, Presence, Self and “Shoulds.” The discussion of the components are in the reverse order of they way they are laid out in the model because we felt that it would be easier for members to grasp the concepts in this fashion. In sessions 6 and 7, we help the group members identify inflexible beliefs and then re-sculpt those beliefs. Session 8 provides an opportunity for the group members to discuss their role in the group and the successes and difficulties they had as members of the group. The final session is devoted to reviewing the model, discussing how to maintain changes as well as continue the change process, and exploring feelings about termination.
Preparation to Lead the Group

General Suggestions:

Be intimately familiar with the model itself. The best way to start this by reading the “General Theory and Description” section (above) several times and try to imagine different individuals or clients you have known who have displayed some of the behaviors or characteristics discussed. Take time to know each of the concepts as well as all of their interactions. If you want some of the background theory for this model, consider looking at some of the suggested readings listed below.

Prepare well for each session. Start by reading the “General Considerations” sections at the beginning of each session. These will target you into specific issues that may arise as well as topics that you will most likely want to address during the session. Plan out how you want to transition from one exercise or topic to another. The concepts and exercises are meant to flow into each other, but you may want to determine how you want to make these transitions so that the group feels as if it is less structured and the participants have less of a tendency to focus primarily on the co-leaders.

Lastly, make sure that you have all the session materials that are necessary before each session. This will occasionally require making copies and drawing the model on newsprint or a dry-erase board.

Suggested Readings:


Pre-Group Interview

Materials: Silencing the Self Scale (see Appendix A)

• Administer the Silencing the Self Scale to prospective group members – have them complete it immediately before coming into the PGI.

• Selection variables:

  1. The relationship status of prospective members is unimportant, as long as they are not mourning the loss of a prior relationship so intensely that it would interfere with their ability to participate in the group process.

  2. They must have had at least one intimate relationship (i.e. boyfriend/girlfriend) in their life.

  3. They are likely to be complaining of any of the following:

     a. a pattern of unsatisfying relationships

     b. being an unequal partner

     c. that their needs are not getting met.

     d. that they can’t be real or themselves (e.g. they avoid expressing self-identifying characteristics)

     e. that they feel their partner doesn’t really know them very well

• Exclusionary or Screening Factors:

  1. We are not looking for individuals who either avoid relationships or are emotionally distant in relationships because of fears of losing their sense of identity.

  2. If an individual appears to have a significantly impaired ability to trust the co-leaders and/or other group members
Session I: Introduction

Objectives:

- To begin to form connections among group members and discuss what each individual wants to achieve by participating in the group.
- To begin reinforcing the value of participant-participant learning by providing a limited amount of structure during this session.
- To normalize the idea that relationships are challenging.
- That group members understand the basic model behind the group and believe they can benefit from it.

Session Materials:

- Paper and pencils/pens for each member.
- Graphic of the model for the class (e.g. see Appendix B). You can either use the pre-printed graphic or draw it out on a dry-erase board or newsprint.

General Considerations:

1. Pay careful attention to common experiences, beliefs, and ideas that the group members express during the session and occasionally comment about these similarities in order to start building a sense of group cohesion and identity through sub-grouping.

2. As much as possible, try to reinforce communication among group members and try to create a sense that the group is relatively unstructured. Try to make transitions from each section of the session in a subtle and not overt manner. The reason for this is to minimize the extent to which members naturally tend to view the co-leaders as experts and thus the only source of therapeutic benefit.

3. Remind people that the model is referring to boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, but that it also applies to relationships with friends, family, etc.

4. If members tend to want to externalize their problems (e.g. it is their partner’s fault that they were not more involved in the relationship, etc.) it will be important to acknowledge that this may be part of the problem. More importantly, however, you should try to get members to see if there is a pattern across relationships and whether this may be due in part to how they behave and who they are in the relationship.
Session Outline:

1. Make introductions

2. Initiate Discussion:

   ASK: “To begin, take a moment to consider how you would answer the following sentence: I’ll consider this group a worthwhile experience if by the end I have accomplished __________.”

   Process group responses – If no one responds, group leaders may want to give an example (e.g. the ability to tell my partner my needs, being able to discuss upsetting or negative topics with my partner)

3. Exercise & Discussion: Identify 3 things that make a successful and satisfying relationship:

   a. Pass out the paper and pencils/pens & have members write down their answers to this question

   b. Once everyone has written 3 things, ask members to share what they came up with.

   c. Write members responses on newsprint or a dry-erase board.

   d. If members’ contributions don’t fall neatly into the model for the group, encourage the members to consider what things underlie the ideas they already have regarding what makes for successful relationships. In other words, have them articulate the basic elements that make up the things they already discussed. This is likely to get them much closer to the group model.

4. Group Discussion:

   ASK- “Based on your past experiences, what gets in the way of having a satisfying & successful relationship?

   a. Process group responses - Examples: I can’t get angry at my partner OR I don’t want to lose the relationship.

   b. Write members responses on newsprint or a dry-erase board.

5. Summarizing in the context of the therapeutic model:

   a. Normalize how challenging relationships are: For instance, use what members have shared previously as well as your own experiences to discuss how hard it is to be yourself in relationships, how much anxiety and frustration relationships can create, how difficult it can be to express your needs as well as have partners acknowledge one’s needs, how challenging it is to manage conflict in relationships, etc.

   b. Convey all or some of the following ideas:

      • The purpose of the group is to look at the pitfalls in relationships and to develop skills to recognize and create the possibility to avoid those pitfalls.
• The more you understand the structure of relationships, the more flexible you can be in your relationships; i.e. you reduce barriers and create a greater number of options to choose from and therefore you can be more intentional.

c. Summarize the model:

• Present the graphic of the model for the group.

• Explain the components – Refer back to the section “Group Theory and Description” for details (i.e., pages 2 – 5).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Style</th>
<th>Self:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasize this as a style and that it is malleable.</strong></td>
<td>1. Beliefs about yourself</td>
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<td>1. Emotional Connection</td>
<td>2. Beliefs about how you “should be” to be accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Presence</td>
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• Ask members to relate the model to their own experiences: e.g. “How does this model fit with your own experience?”

  If group members have difficulty starting, ask them for a “should” that they might have been exposed to early in their life.

  Provide a “should” if the group is unable and then walk through the model – e.g. that men shouldn’t cry or show their emotions.

6. **Briefly encourage members to share their reactions to the first session of the group.**
Session II: Emotional Connection

“What type of bridge are you building to your partner?”

Objectives:

- To come to a personal understanding of what “emotional connection” (EC) means.
- To explore both the quality of their emotional connection in past relationships as well as the type of emotional connection they desire.
- To understand some of the benefits and drawbacks of each type of emotional connection
- To begin to set up the impetus for change by having members contrast their current relationship patterns with how they would like to be. Ideally this will emphasize that intimacy is the key foundation upon which a fulfilling and stable relationship is built.

Session Materials:

- Copies of the “Emotional Connection” questionnaire and pens/pencils for each member (see Appendix C-1)
- Copies of the scoring sheet for this questionnaire. (See Appendix C-2)

General Considerations:

1. The “Bridge” analogy is likely to be useful throughout the session in discussing the topic of emotional connection. See the Overview at the beginning of the manual for ideas.

2. You will probably want to convey that everyone has different experiences of emotional connection as well as what type of emotional connection they would ideally like to have. Some members may be uncertain about what type of emotional connection they desire and therefore can benefit from listening to others in the group and trying on their ideas. This can be made explicit to group members if they appear to be struggling.

3. If anyone in the group indicates that they don’t want to or feel ambivalent about creating more intimacy in their relationships, it will be useful to empathize that intimacy often creates a great deal of anxiety. Additionally, you may want to convey that the purpose of the group is not to force them to be more intimate, but to have them explore the roadblocks to being more intimate in relationships and that they may want more intimacy when those roadblocks seem less significant.

4. If an individual’s Intimacy score is already high, it will be important to convey that the score may be accurate or it may be an overestimate. The latter is particularly likely given that the questionnaire used here is a modified and shortened version of Sternberg’s original questionnaire. In order to determine whether it is an overestimate, you can ask questions like, “Do you feel like there are certain things that you can’t tell your partner?” or “Do you ever hold back from saying certain things?”

5. If individuals indicate that their current relationship is full of passion (e.g. they have lots of good sex) and they are using this to somehow indicate that perhaps their current relationship is different then their past patterns, it will be useful to explore this in a not confrontational way. For example,
you could ask, “Have your past relationships had a lot of passion?” and “What happened in those past relationships, did the passion continue unabated or did it gradually fizzle out?” You can also use the bridge analogy here to discuss how a relationships build only on passion are limiting – like using a one-lane bridge.

6. The topic of sex is likely to be a difficult concept to pigeon-hole into either the intimacy or passion factor. In reality it has its feet rooted both in Passion and Intimacy and this may be useful for individuals to think about. For each individual and at different times, however, sex may fall primarily in one of the factors (e.g. if sex is used to foster greater intimacy or the person is having sex primarily due to being caught up in the passion of the moment). Some individuals will indicate that they have sex in order to foster intimacy in their relationship. It may be useful to point out how sex is only one aspect of what intimacy involves and that it takes a variety of other behaviors to foster true intimacy in a relationship.

8. Members are likely to talk about the behaviors they engage in their relationships rather than the emotions or bond they share with their partners (e.g., that they talk with their partners a lot, that they are intimate because they have sex with their partners). These behaviors are most likely presence behaviors. For the purposes of this session, it will be valuable to point out this distinction to members, let them know that you would prefer to defer these issues until the next session, and instead target them in on the emotions they are feeling.

• If members are focusing more on behaviors, you may be able to redirect them onto their feelings by asking something like, “What is the feeling that would generate that type of behavior?” You may want to follow this up with a question about the outcome of the behavior.

9. It may be useful to point out how relationships go through many transitions/transformations and that different types of emotional connection can be more important at different times. The first is usually the transformation from having an idealized image (based on passion) to having a realistic image of their partner (only achieved through intimacy). Successful relationships often involve being able to hold on to passion while maintaining a real image of the other. Later, as careers and children come along, time and other factors may get in the way of passion and intimacy and therefore commitment may play a more important role in maintaining the relationship. Consequently, all of these factors are not things that you attain in an ultimate/absolute sense, but rather need to be available to respond dynamically to the needs of the relationship. If you have difficulty in one or the other then the relationship may fall apart.

Session Outline:

1. Process prior session: ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”
   Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) & answer any questions

2. Initiate brief discussion: ASK – “What makes something a relationship?”
   Objective: This should prompt the members to talk in some way about emotions. This can be used as a segue into the topic of emotional connection.

3. Exercise: Complete the Emotional Connection Questionnaire
Once each person has completed the questionnaire, pass out the scoring sheet and have him/her score the questionnaire.

4. Explore Emotional Connection via the summary scores for the 3 factors of the “How have been” section of the questionnaire (let them know you will be focusing on the “Would like to be” section later).

   a. Encourage members to discuss and to ask questions about what each factor represents

      • When discussing the factors:

          a. Relate back to the items on the questionnaire.

          b. Ask them what they notice about the factors – use some of the questions below as prompts if have difficulty thinking about how to evaluate the factors

      • Possible questions to process each

          a. “How much effort does this form of EC require?”

          b. “How stable is this form of EC? OR “What happens with this type of EC over time?”

          c. “How strong of an EC does this seem to you?”

          d. “What are the benefits and drawbacks of this form of EC?”

          e. “In general, how do you think partners react to relationships based each factor?”

      • When discussing scores you may need to let them know that:

          a. There is no absolute score they should have or that is “right”. However, the lower the overall scores the less fulfilling their relationships are likely to have been.

          b. Ideally, you would like to have the different factors relatively balanced.

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**Brief description of EC Factors**

(See pages 2 to 3 for a longer description):

- **Intimacy**: Friendship, deep knowing of the other, willingness to share personally identifying information (e.g. thoughts, opinions, interests, emotions).

- **Passion**: Intense feeling of attraction towards another person. This is often based on an idealized image of the other. Frequently, passion is relatively short-lived/unstable by virtue of the fact that as one gets to know another person, it is difficult to maintain the idealized image. Given that passion is frequently based on a self-serving distortion, the individual may not be truly relating to the other person, but is rather relating to them as they would like that person to be.
• **Commitment**: This refers both to the commitment of admitting you love the other as well as a determination to work to maintain the relationship despite the challenges that may appear.

b. Ask members to share the relative strengths of each factor – e.g. “What form of emotional connection have your past relationships been based primarily on?”

- May want to ask several different questions about their connections:
  a. How close/connected have they felt with their partner?
  b. How frightened of a connection have they felt?
  c. How much do they base their connection on their partner’s connection?

- Explore what elements of each factor were apparent in their relationships.
- Try to see if there is a relative pattern across individuals (e.g. intimacy is low relative to some or all the other factors) and comment about it if you discover such a pattern.

5. Process the “Would like to be” scores for the 3 different factors

- At this point group members are likely to be relatively self-focused. Consequently, less structured questions may be useful to encourage exploration of this topic.

- Possible questions:
  a. “Is there anything about the “would like to be” scores in contrast with the “how have been” scores that surprises you?”
  b. “What do you see as the dimensions of growth for you? Were their things that you wanted to increase or decrease?”

6. **ASK GROUP**: “If Emotional connection or intimacy are so important to relationships, why is it so difficult to achieve or maintain them?”

   Purpose of this question: To have members discuss how there is often a considerable amount of fear and anxiety involved in being intimate with others.

7. Summarize Session: In the summary, it will be important to convey that the group will be exploring how to create the emotional connection they desire. Briefly discuss that the next session on Presence will provide useful insights into these things.
Session III: Presence

“What is the banner that you are flying?”

Objectives:

• To raise awareness regarding the concept of “Presence.”

• To understand how each member is present in relationships.

• To understand the differences between presence in close relationships and presence in public settings.

• To explore how participants want to be perceived by their partner and the presence behaviors they engage in.

• To see how their dissatisfaction in prior relationships is likely the result of not presenting an accurate or detailed picture of their needs, wants, and desires.

Session Materials:

• Paper and pencils/pens for each member.

• Graphic of the model for the class (e.g. see Appendix B). You can either use the pre-printed graphic or draw it out on a dry-erase board or newsprint.

• Newsprint.

General Considerations:

1. The following is a list of types of presence behaviors to keep in mind when discussing this topic. The list is by no means exhaustive and you will probably be able to think of others.

   a. Physical appearance: e.g. grooming, dress, having to look “right” or a certain way

   b. Postures and gestures

   c. Eye contact – e.g. look away, stare

   d. Greetings – verbal and non-verbal

   e. Speech topics: what do participants talk about and not talk about

   f. Speech quality: e.g. do they talk frequently/infrequently, loudly/quietly, rapidly/slowly

   g. Emotions displayed: e.g. do they smile a lot or are they serious in their demeanor

   h. Characteristics participants try to conceal and how they conceal them
2. At some point it will be important to convey that we all have needs and that part of being human is about getting one’s needs met (e.g. needs for social affiliation, for affection, for understanding, for sex, etc). Presence is about getting one’s needs met, because it is the way we communicate what it is we need. It is also important to convey that needs don’t have to be selfish (e.g. the need to help others).

3. Beware of beliefs like “I don’t have any needs, except to take care of others” or something to the effect that being needy is a sign of weakness. Try to encourage the individual to entertain the possibility that they may indeed have needs that they are unaware of. Also, it will likely be useful to have the individual reflect on how this belief has effected the quality and nature of their prior relationships (e.g. experiences of frustration and dissatisfaction).

3. Details regarding the false self or imposter syndrome: This can be described in terms of how people sometimes play a role that is inconsistent with some or many aspects of who they believe they really are. Consequently one usually feels like an imposter; e.g. that the other person really doesn’t know them. For example, after receiving a compliment about something, a person might feel ashamed or like they “pulled the wool over” that other persons eyes. The impression they have is that if the other person really knew who they were then they never would have made the compliment because they would have known it was inaccurate. Frequently, these feelings can lead individuals to further conceal aspects of themselves for fear that if the information was ever known the other person would not want to have anything to do with them and come to see the person as “flawed” just as the person believes about him/herself.

Session Outline:

1. Process prior session: ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”
   - Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) & answer any questions
   - Use the material that is raised to segue into the material for this session.

2. Discussion about Public Presence:

   Mini-lecture: Begin by mentioning how we do certain things in our relationships that are designed to convey who we are. State that our presence consists of the overt behaviors that convey who we are.

   - Let the group know that they will be doing a guided imagery exercise focusing on two different areas:

     a. The first part will be about how they are by themselves in an environment where there are a number of largely unknown individuals (Public presence)

     b. The second part involves how they are when they are in important intimate relationships (Private presence)

   - Inform them that they may find they are different in these two circumstances.
3. Guided Imagery Exercise: The idea behind this exercise is to have members imagine how they come across to others publicly as well as in intimate relationships.

Prepare members for guided imagery (GI):

a. Briefly encourage each group member to decide on the two primary components they will be thinking about for the GI:

   • Public presence component – Ask them to choose an environment/place in which they typically find themselves and which is important to them (i.e. where they are concerned about how they project themselves). You may even want to brainstorm several possible places where this may be. Make sure that the location they choose doesn’t have someone with whom they are in some form of intimate relationship.

   • Private presence component – Ask them to choose a person with whom they have or have had an intimate relationship

b. Let them know that they will be asked to write down things after the GI is completed. Specifically, let them know that you will want them to reflect and write down things that they noticed about several different presence domains (i.e. appearance, emotions, thoughts, and interpersonal interactions)

c. Hand out the paper & pencils/pens

Example GI:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speak slowly as you go through the GI so that members can think about each question and create an image.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a. Relaxation phase:</strong> “Close your eyes and make yourself comfortable in your chairs. Take several deep breaths. Breath in through your nose, out through your mouth. Notice the tension in your body and mind leave your body with each exhalation…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Create image of Public presence:</strong> Now, imagine that you are about to go to that important public place that you chose just before starting the guided imagery. What is this place going to be like? What will be happening? As you anticipate going to this place, what thoughts do you have? For instance, are you thinking about how others might view you or are you preparing to look or do certain things. How are you feeling now as you think about going to this place? Are you feeling excited, nervous, curious…?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now imagine that you have arrived at this place. Who are the people in the environment? Do they differ from each other? What are they doing? Do you feel like you fit in with others or do you stand out as different? Does your appearance make others pay attention to you… does it draw other people towards you or does it tend to push them away. If a camera was recording you, what would it see? In what way do you interact with the people around you? Do you make eye-contact or generally look away from people… are you making any gestures? Are you talking with anyone? If you are talking, what do you say and not say, how quickly do you talk… are you loud or quiet… how much do you look at the person you are talking with… are you expressing any emotions… are there certain emotions you don’t want others to see? How do you feel when you are in this place? What are the
emotions you are experiencing? What are you thinking about while you are there? For instance, are you evaluating yourself and what you are doing around these people?

Imagine that you have left this place. How do you feel now that you are no longer there? What are your thoughts about the the experience of being in this place and around those people?

c. Create image of private presence: Now fast-forward to later that day or evening. Imagine that you are about to be spending time with your boyfriend or girlfriend... Where are you going to be getting together? In an apartment, at a restaurant, playing sports, walking together... What do you think you will be doing with him or her? As you anticipate being with this person, what thoughts do you have? What are you telling yourself before you see him or her? How are you feeling now as you think about being with him or her? Excited, nervous, ...?

Imagine you are now with this person. Where are you and what are you doing? How do you feel about your appearance around this person? Think about your interactions with him or her. Notice if you make eye-contact or generally look away... are you making any gestures? Imagine you are talking with your him or her. How often do you talk... how quickly do you talk... are you loud or quiet... what do you talk about and what do you avoid talking about... how much do you look at him or her as you are talking? What emotions do you feel comfortable expressing around your partner... are there certain emotions you don’t want him/her to see in you? How do you express how you care for the person? Do you openly display your affection in public or do you prefer to keep it private... How do you display your affection? As you are with this person, focus inward on your thoughts and feelings. What are your thoughts about yourself and about your partner? Are you evaluating yourself and what you are doing around your partner? How do you feel as you do different things with your partner. Do you feel relaxed and at ease? Are you nervous, joyful, excited?

Imagine it is later that day and your boyfriend or girlfriend is gone. What are your thoughts about yourself and your partner now that they are no longer there? How are you feeling? Relieved? Lonely?

d. Ending the guided imagery: When you are ready and feel things are complete in the image, open your eyes and write down everything that you noticed that seemed significant about your presence publicly and privately. Think about the different areas that we went through both before, during, and after the event. Also, think about things like your appearance, your interactions with people, your thoughts and your emotions.

4. Process/discuss the outcome of the guided imagery: Let members discuss their reactions to the guided imagery. Have members refer to what they wrote down in the GI if they have difficulty getting started. Use some or all of the following questions to prompt the discussion of this topic.

Possible discussion questions: These questions can be used to ask specifically about Public or Private presence or can be used more generally. Make sure that individuals have sufficient time to process the Private aspects of their relationships since the purpose of this session is primarily to focus on their presence in intimate relationships.

a. “What did you notice about yourself regarding how you present yourself?”

b. “Did anything in the guided imagery surprise you?”
c. “What thoughts and feelings did you notice that seemed significant to you?”

d. “Is there anything about your presence in the guided imagery that you would want to change?”

e. “What differences did you notice between your public and private presence?”

f. Question specific to Private presence: “How well do you think your partner was aware of your needs?” OR “What needs might your partner be aware of given your presence?”

5. Articulate the importance of this exercise: Discuss each of the following to the extent that aspects of they were raised during the processing of the exercise.

• That we can often feel different inside than how we project ourselves to be. This is significant because it is what brings anxiety into our lives, because we may be concerned that others may discover how we truly feel.

• Additionally, we are sometimes so caught up with strategizing how we want to come across to others that we do things and react in rigid and inflexible ways. Some strategizing is normal, however, the less you strategize and think about what you are doing, the more flexible you will be able to be.

6. Discussion of Imposter or False Self: Usually this topic will flow naturally out of the discussion prompted by the guided imagery exercise.

• Briefly introduce the concept: Mention that we have a choice about how we interact with people. We can either develop and convey a presence that is an accurate reflection of who we are or we can develop a presence that is a façade, consisting of what we think others will want to see or perceive as attractive.

• Circle Exercise: Give each member a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to draw one circle to represent who they are as a person (i.e. their “self” circle) and a second to represent the role that they play in close relationships (i.e. their “presence” circle).

  a. Before they draw the “presence” circle, tell them to overlap the “presence” and “self” circles to the extent that the role they play is similar to who they identify as themselves. For instance, if the role they play in relationships was completely different than who they are, then the two circles would not overlap at all. The more they overlap, the greater concordance there is between one’s “self” and one’s “presence.”

  b. Also, tell them they can draw the second circle larger or smaller than their “self” circle depending on the nature of their presence in relationships (e.g. if their presence conveys little about who they are, then the circle will likely be smaller than the circle they drew for their self).

  c. Let them know that one possible combination is that their “presence” circle is completely within their “self” circle, but the “presence” circle is much smaller. This would indicate that they don’t present much about themselves in relationships but that everything that they present is accurate.
d. Process the Exercise: ASK: “How is the role that you play in close relationships different from what you see as who you are as a person?

[Option: The circle exercise can be become a demonstration performed by the co-leaders (rather than done by each member individually) in order to convey the concept of the false self. This strategy is best when time is limited.]

7. Summarize exercise in terms of the “Imposter syndrome or false self”: You may want to refer to the information presented in the “General Considerations” for this session. Things to include in this summary include:

• The implications of a false self in public vs. private relationships: i.e. that if one projects a false presence in private relationships, greater anxiety occurs than in public relationships primarily because there is greater risk of being exposed.

• That being more authentic (i.e. being more accurate in what they represent) will reduce this anxiety, because one know that their partners attraction to them is based on an accurate awareness of who they are.

8. Closure for session: Try to summarize the general content of the session and highlight how this session will relate to the next session on the self.

Possible things to emphasize:

• How one’s presence is often determined by one’s beliefs about oneself

• That greater authenticity can only arise once one discovers those beliefs about themselves that have hindered authenticity in the past.
Session IV: The Self

Objectives:

- To define and begin to understand the concept of self
- To evaluate and determine the personal characteristics that make up the self
- To understand how the self affects emotional connections and presence in close relationships

Session Materials:

- Paper and pencils/pens for each member
- Copies of the Self Questionnaire (See Appendix D)
- Dry erase board with model drawn on top
- Dry erase markers

General Considerations:

1. At this point in the group, the format becomes more process-oriented and is therefore less structured. The impetus should be coming from the group members, using the Self Questionnaire as a tool to start the conversation and interactions between the group members. Group leaders may need to encourage the group members to react to one another rather than waiting for the group leaders to direct the session.

2. The "Self-Questionnaire" was designed in order to direct self-discovery and understanding since the concept of self is frequently difficult for most people to grasp. The questionnaire addresses areas such as how they would rank themselves on a continuum of dichotomous adjectives. This provides an opportunity for the group members to examine strengths and weaknesses. The questionnaire has members think about the people in their lives who have influenced their sense of self as well as emotions they allow ourselves to express and/or have. The latter topic is important because individuals will occasionally have particular feelings that they will suppress due to fears about the consequences of it being expressed. The questionnaire tends to address the areas of the self that the group members wish to change rather than the strengths they already present.

3. Some people have difficulty accessing their self and they approach relationships without a defined sense of a sense. As a result, they decrease their chances of expressing their needs. This session can help members explore their own needs and wants. It will be valuable to have members consider how they relate to their needs and preferences. For instance, are their needs concealed or expressed. When they are expressed is it done directly or indirectly.

4. It may be useful to point out how people who use their sense of self well, may not understand a person who does not use their sense of self in relationships and vice versa. This can result in conflict and miscommunication.

5. It is important that the group members understand that both the positive and negative aspects of the self influence presence and the expression of needs.
Session Outline:

1. Process prior session: ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”

   Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) and answer any questions

2. Introducing the concept of Self: You may want to refer back to the “Group theory and description” at the beginning of this manual.

   Explain that the self is a sense of who you are as a whole. Let them know that it is often easiest to understand the self in terms of all the different beliefs one holds for one self. You will want to normalize for the group that the self is difficult to understand and define and for the most part we tend to understand certain parts of ourselves and not others.

3. Exercise: The “Self Questionnaire”

   a. Before completing the questionnaire, inform members that:

      • The questionnaire will be used as a way for them to get in touch with the concept of self and see how our sense of self can influence our relationships.

      • The questionnaire is designed primarily to explore areas of the self that may create problems for them or that they would like to change about themselves. It does not focus much on perceived strengths.

      • Participants will not be asked to turn it in or divulge information that they do not feel comfortable sharing from the questionnaire.

   b. Hand out the “Self-Questionnaire”

4. Process the “Self Questionnaire”:

   a. Process global concepts of self and then how these concepts relate to each member: BE AWARE OF COMMON THEMES WHEN MEMBERS BRING UP DIFFICULT ISSUES ABOUT THE SELF.

   b. Use the questionnaire to prompt group discussion.

      Possible questions include:

      • “What do you think the concept of the self means?”

      • “What did you notice about yourself in completing the questionnaire?”

      • “How difficult was it to fill out the questionnaire? Were certain areas harder than others?”

      • “Are you satisfied with your sense of self?”

      • “What parts of yourself are unsatisfying?”
5. Relate concept of Self to Presence and Emotional Connection:

a. This can be encouraged subtly in the context of the discussion about the questionnaire and beliefs about the self. In particular, it will be valuable to focus on how negative beliefs about the self impact the quality and nature of their relationships. For example, if you feel inadequate and unattractive, it may lead to minimizing one’s presence or presenting a false self which in turn diminishes the emotionally connected to others. You will not be able to express your needs, opinions, etc. As a result, you may experience feelings of loneliness and emptiness.

b. Possible questions:

• “How might that belief about yourself influence your presence?”

• “What does that type of belief make you want to do when you interact with others?”

• “How do you think that belief influences your emotional connection?”

6. Summarize the session

In addition, discuss how the next session will explore how “Shoulds” influenced the participants’ beliefs about the Self as well as Presence and Emotional Connection
Session V: “Shoulds”

“What type of boxes do you live in?”

Objectives:

• To identify beliefs about expectations about the self
• Differentiate between “Shoulds” that are helpful and “Shoulds” that are limiting
• Explore beliefs about how you should be in order to be accepted

Session Materials:

• Paper
• Pens/pencils
• Dry Erase Board with model drawn on the top
• Dry erase pens.

General Considerations:

1. “Shoulds” are self-augmentations. They are beliefs about the self which are adopted in order to provide control. For instance, a child may believe that if they were a better child, her parents will argue less. Unfortunately, many times these beliefs become part of who we are even when they are no longer needed.

2. The analogy of “Shoulds” as “boxes” that constrain the ways we interact in the world may be useful for members to grasp the concept. Refer to pages 4-5 for more details on this analogy.

3. “Shoulds” create negative feeling states and constrain our selves. “Shoulds” externally affect Presence by dictating which behaviors are “acceptable” and which are “not acceptable.” “Shoulds” internally affect the Self by inducing guilty feelings if the “Should” is violated. These feelings of guilt and wrong-doing can contribute to negative view about the self (e.g. feelings of inadequacy or that one is somehow flawed). Additionally, because these negative feelings are aversive, ones compliance and conformity to the “Shoulds” are negatively reinforced. This in turn perpetuates the belief that the “Should” is valid.

4. It is important to discuss with the group that there are positive and negative aspects of “Shoulds.” Many times “Shoulds” start out as positive— they serve a purpose, but over time these “Shoulds” become problematic and limiting.

For example: If you are with a group of people and a friend offends you, you may feel like you should not say anything, but over time you may feel resentment towards your friend because you did not state how you felt at the time.

5. “Shoulds” affect a person’s role in the relationship as well as the emotions they allow themselves to have and express.
6. When a person is influenced and constrained by the “Shoulds,” the “Shoulds” have become internalized and therefore become an ingrained part of the self. Once this happens, it is difficult to make changes. People become used to a familiar way of relating to others and the world.

7. In this session, we also examine the “Shoulds” and “should nots” in the group. We included this with the hopes of moving the group into exploring more deeply their role within the group as well as their presence and emotional connections.

Session Outline:

1. Process prior session: ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”
   
   Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) and answer any questions

2. Mini-Lecture: Discuss with the group that this session will focus on “Shoulds.” “Shoulds” are messages we get from others (family, society, etc.) that influence how we feel about ourselves. In essence, they are instructions about how the Self should be and what behaviors we should and should not perform. Many times “Shoulds” are developed for a purpose: They give us a sense of control. Unfortunately, these same “Shoulds” can constrain us and keep us from developing a true sense of self. As a result, “Shoulds” contribute to our false self.

   Process: “How do you think “Shoulds” influence the false self?”

3. Exercise: Have the group brainstorm the “Shoulds” that we develop based on our gender:

   Example: Men should not express emotions.

   a. Possible areas where gender roles might appear:

      • behaviors in relationships
      • emotions
      • academic achievement/work
      • dominant/subordinate

4. Exercise: Have the group members write at least 2 “Shoulds” that they would like to live without.

   a. It might be useful to remind them about the previous session regarding the false self as a way to get them thinking about problematic “Shoulds.”

   b. Tell the members that these responses will be shared with the other group members.

   c. Once everyone has finished, have participants pass their responses to the person to their left. Continue rotating the responses to the left until every member has had a chance to read everyone else’s “Shoulds.” The papers should continue to rotate in this fashion until each member has their original back.

   d. Have the members write any “Shoulds” they noticed from the other’s papers that they found meaningful and problematic for themselves.
e. Process: Encourage the group to discuss their “Shoulds”

Possible topics to use if needed to prompt a discussion:

- “Where do we get these beliefs from?”
- “When did you start having these beliefs?”
- “Why do we hold on to these beliefs?”
- “How do these beliefs affect your life?”
- “How do the “Shoulds” affect your presence and emotional connection?”
- “How do they affect your ability to make changes about yourself?”

5. Exercise/Process: “What type of “Shoulds” do you hold about the group?”

ASK: “How does that affect your presence and emotional connection?”

6. Summarize the session and relate it to the following session:

Encourage participants to think about a problematic belief they would like to address in the following session: e.g. “Next session we are going to resculpt a belief that each group member holds. So, during the week, try to think of a belief that you hold that you would like to work on.”
Sessions VI & VII: Reconstructing Beliefs

Objectives:

• To begin to recognize beliefs that they hold about themselves that are limiting

• Each group member will reconstruct/modify one particular belief with the assistance of the group and group leaders

Session Materials:

• Paper for each member

• Pens/pencils

• Dry erase board

• Dry erase markers

General Considerations:

1. The beliefs section is designed for two group sessions. It is expected that each group member receives between 15 to 30 minutes of time to explore their particular belief and to resculpt the belief with the help of the other group members.

2. At this point in therapy, the group members are more trusting of each other and are able to process the material brought up in group without much structure from the group leaders.

3. Beliefs are formed many times from “Shoulds.” They are ingrained in one's persona and therefore can be difficult to change. When the group members choose a belief they find constraining, they may resist efforts to change this belief. This resistance is normal given that the belief has likely served a self-protective and anxiety-reducing function. Although the belief was originally formed as a way to have control over a situation or to provide safety, it also can be quite limiting. Our goal is to rid the self of the constraints that this belief brings, while trying to maintain as much of the safety element of the belief as possible.

4. At the end of the guided imagery, we ask the group members to add the word "because" to the end of their belief. This is to help them identify why it is important to have this belief. For example, they may feel that they can't tell people how they feel, because they are afraid people will not like them.

5. Helping each member re-sculpt a belief will provide a model for ways to change other beliefs.

6. Examples of common problematic beliefs:

   a. I’m unworthy, undesirable, disgusting… – e.g. “if they only knew how screwed up I was, they wouldn’t want to have anything to do with me”

   b. My partner should know what I want. I shouldn’t have to tell them because if they really loved me they would know what I wanted.
c. My relationship will only be secure if I am always doing things for my partner (& ignoring what I want to do)

d. I can’t be alone. I can’t tolerate not having someone.

e. I can’t create waves or express dissatisfaction or negative emotions in general because it will harm the quality of the relationship.

• If I let the other person know how I feel, then it will cause conflict.
• I can’t tolerate conflict (e.g. fear of expressing anger and the consequences on the relationship).

f. I don’t know what I want, therefore I just do what my partner wants or I follow societal or role expectations

g. If I don’t have needs, then I am a better partner (i.e. I’m low maintenance).

h. People are too fragile or will be too upset if I were to share my problems or feelings.

Session Outline:

1. **Process prior session:** ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”

   Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) & answer any questions

2. **Guided Imagery (GI) Exercise:**

   a. **Inform members:** “We are going to do a brief guided imagery exercise to help you identify a belief you have about yourself that you feel is constraining.”

   **Example GI:** Speak slowly as you go through the GI so that members can think about each question and create an image.

   • **Relaxation Phase:** Close your eyes and make yourself comfortable in your chair. Take several deep breaths. Breath in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Notice the tension in your body. As you exhale, notice the tension leave your body.

   • **Focusing on a belief:** Now, think about a belief that you have about **yourself** that makes you uncomfortable/that you find limiting or constraining. Notice how you feel about yourself when you think of this belief. How does this belief affect your social interactions? How does it affect your presence and emotional connections?

   Continue thinking about this belief until you can state it in a whole clear sentence. Once you can do this, add the word “because” to the end of your belief and then finish the sentence. When you can do this, open your eyes and write the whole statement down on the piece of paper.
3. Processing each belief:

   a. Go around the room and have everyone say the belief that they would like to modify – ask members to include the “because” portion as well.

      Write each belief on the dry erase board.

b. Exploring and resculpting the belief:

   1. Have someone volunteer to go first

   2. Have participants state their belief again

   3. Make sure the belief is clearly stated: Sometimes, the reason that follows the “because” may more accurately reflect the problematic belief. If the stated belief is unclear, use the strategy of repeatedly asking “because” until the individual arrives at a self-oriented belief that seems to be fundamental to their problems relating to others.

   4. Ask the group to explore:

      • Why the person adopted this belief?

      • What are the benefits of this belief?

      • What are the drawbacks of this belief?

c. Have the group explore ways to re-sculpt the belief so that the belief is not as self-limiting and furthers their ability to relate more flexibly with others.

d. Complete this process for each group member.
Session VIII: Exploring Within–Group Relationships

Objectives:

• To process relationships within the group
• To explore the roles the members play within the group

Session Materials:

• Dry erase board with model drawn on top
• Dry erase markers

General Considerations:

1. At this point in the group, the focus moves from an information/teaching group to one that is more psychotherapeutic. It is important at this stage for the members to be able to explore their relationships with other members of the group.

2. It would be helpful to have participants focus on their Presence and Emotional Connection with other members. Explore how their “Shoulds” and their “should nots” have influenced their presence in the group. Also, explore the issues that they still would like to work on in the group.

3. The group leaders at this time act more like observers and facilitators when needed rather than instructors. The energy should be coming from the group members rather than the leaders. The group leaders will help identify patterns/roles that particular members are playing when needed.

Session Outline:

1. Process prior session: ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”

   Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) & answer any questions

2. Promote a discussion about within-group relationships and how the model applies to these relationships: Focus on what the members have learned so far in the group about emotional connections, presence, self and “Shoulds” and particularly how these concepts have played out within the group.

   a. Possible questions to prompt a discussion:

      • “What type of relationships have you built in group?”
      • “What type of role have you played in group?”
      • “How have your beliefs about yourself affected how you presented yourself in group?”

   b. It is important for the group members to be able to explore their relationships with other members of the group. It would be helpful to have them focus on their Presence and Emotional
Connection in the group environment. Explore how their “Shoulds” and beliefs about self have influenced their presence in the group.

3. **Foster a process orientation:**

   a. Help the group members give each other feedback.

   b. Ask participants to explore how other group members experienced them and if that is consistent with how they felt about themselves.
Session VIII: Termination

Objectives:

- Continue to process Presence and Emotional Connection as well as the roles they play within the group
- Review the skills that the group has learned
- Terminate the group

Session Materials:

- Post-test Appendix A: Silencing the Self Scale
- Evaluation forms
- Pens/pencils
- Dry erase board with model drawn on top
- Dry erase markers

General Considerations:

1. This is the final session and therefore it is important to be able to tie together, with the group, all the different concepts that have been raised.

2. It may be important to provide therapeutic definitions of strength and weakness. In other words, strength is the ability to show your weakness whereas weakness is the need to always appear strong even when you don't feel it.

3. Hopefully, since starting the group, group members will report having fuller connections with others and feeling more open about themselves.

4. Group members may feel frustrated that they haven’t seen any changes in their relationships. Encourage them to explore ways to have more fulfilling relationships and continue the process that was started in group.

5. This was an ambitious group. The understanding and integrating of the concepts usually takes two to three times as long in individual therapy. It has been a fast paced group, but has not gone beyond the group members’ abilities to integrate the concepts of presence, emotional connection, and beliefs.

Session Outline

1. Process prior session: ASK – “What stuck with you from the last session?”

   Allow for a brief discussion (e.g. 5 minutes) and answer any questions
2. Review the model.
   a. Ask members to explore how they have related the model to their own experiences during the group.
   b. If a reminder is needed, describe each of the components (emotional connection, presence, self, and “shoulds”) and how they affect each other.
   c. Summarize the topics raised in the context of the model. This may mean extrapolating or recalling other information from prior sessions.

3. Other possible topics to discuss:
   a. Have the group explore whether or not their Emotional Connection and Presence is the same or is different since they started group. Discuss what it is like letting others know more about them as they know themselves (true self). Is it a relief or a struggle?
   b. Compared to other groups of people, how connected/comfortable do they feel to others in the group? Explore the group experience for them. How do you achieve this with other groups?

4. Explore ways to maintain and continue the change process once group is over.

5. Discuss how it feels to be terminating.


7. Have members fill out the post-test (Appendix A).
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Silencing the Self Scale

Name:_________________________ Date:____________________

Please read the following statements and indicate the number that best describes how you feel about each of the statements listed below. Some of the items refer to a partner. If you do not have a current partner, please answer the questions based on your most recent relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ 1. I think it is best to put myself first because no one else will look out for me.

_____ 2. I don't speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause disagreement.

_____ 3. Caring means putting the other person's needs in front of my own.

_____ 4. Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish.

_____ 5. I find it is harder to be myself when I am in a close relationship than when I am on my own.

_____ 6. I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me.

_____ 7. I feel dissatisfied with myself because I should be able to do all the things people are supposed to be able to do these days.

_____ 8. When my partner's needs and feelings conflict with my own, I always state mine clearly.

_____ 9. In a close relationship, my responsibility is to make the other person happy.

_____ 10. Caring means choosing to do what the other person wants, even when I want to do something different.

_____ 11. In order to feel good about myself, I need to feel independent and self-sufficient.

_____ 12. One of the worst things I can do is to be selfish.

_____ 13. I feel I have to act in a certain way to please my partner.

_____ 14. Instead of risking confrontations in close relationships, I would rather not rock the boat.

_____ 15. I speak my feelings with my partner, even when it leads to problems or disagreements.

_____ 16. Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious.

_____ 17. In order for my partner to love me, I cannot reveal certain things about myself to him/her.
18. When my partner's needs or opinions conflict with mine, rather than asserting my own point of view I usually end up agreeing with him/her.

19. When I am in a close relationship I lose my sense of who I am.

20. When it looks as though certain of my needs can't be met in a relationship, I usually realize that they weren't very important anyway.

21. My partner loves and appreciates me for who I am.

22. Doing things just for myself is selfish.

23. When I make decisions, other people's thoughts and opinions influence me more than my own thoughts and opinions.

24. I rarely express my anger at those close to me.

25. I feel that my partner does not know my real self.

26. I think it's better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my partner's.

27. I often feel responsible for other people's feelings.

28. I find it hard to know what I think and feel because I spend a lot of time thinking about how other people are feeling.

29. In a close relationship I don't usually care what we do, as long as the other person is happy.

30. I try to bury my feeling when I think they will cause trouble in my close relationship(s).

31. I never seem to measure up to the standards I set for myself.

* If you answered the last question with a 4 or 5, please list up to three of the standards you feel you don't measure up to:
Appendix A-1: Scoring for the Silencing the Self Scale

***Do not include the following in the questionnaire given to members***

The questionnaire can be used in two ways:

1. **Obtaining the average score**: To get a sense of how much individuals tend to sacrifice themselves in general you can add up all the ratings and divide by 31 (the number of questions) to get an average. **Be aware that several questions need to be reverse scored in order to arrive at such an average. Those questions are 1, 8, 11, 15, and 21.**

2. Additionally, it may be valuable to look at the areas where each member has the greatest difficulty. Once the correct items have been reverse scored, areas of greatest difficulty will be indicated by ratings of 5 (Strongly Agree).

Appendix B: Graphic of the Group Model

Feeling Like a Shadow in Relationships

Should’s ➔ Self ➔ Presence ➔ Emotional Connection

Feeling Like a Shadow in Relationships
Appendix C: Emotional Connection Questionnaire

Read each question and then rate it according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completely True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
<th>Moderately True</th>
<th>Seldom True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each question, make two ratings. In the left box, rate how your relationships have been. In the right box, rate how you would like your relationships to be. Place the number of the rating in the corresponding box. Your responses should reflect your general appraisal of past significant relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>How have been</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Would like to be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I gave considerable emotional support to my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I could imagine no one else at the time making me as happy as my partner(s) did.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I always felt a strong responsibility for my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I experienced intimate communication with my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>There was nothing more important to me at the time than my relationship with my partner(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I expected my love for my partner(s) to last for the rest of my life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>I felt emotionally close to my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>My relationships were very romantic and felt almost “magical”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>At the time, I couldn’t imagine ending my relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I was willing to share myself and my possessions in my relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I found my partner(s) very attractive physically.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>I had confidence in the stability of my relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>I received considerable emotional support from my partner(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>I adored my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Emotional Connection (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completely True</th>
<th>Very True</th>
<th>Moderately True</th>
<th>Seldom True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>How have been</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Would like to be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>I felt that I would stay with my partner(s) through the most difficult times and was committed to maintaining my relationship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>I was able to count on my partner(s) in times of need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>I thought about my partner(s) frequently each day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>I felt I could not let anything get in the way of my commitment to my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>My partner(s) were able to count on me in times of need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Just seeing my partner(s) was exciting for me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>I was certain of my love for my partner(s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C-1: Scoring for the Emotional Connection Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love Factor</th>
<th>Question Numbers</th>
<th>Total How have been</th>
<th>Total Would like to be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Add up questions with the “*” (i.e., # 1 + 4 + 7 + 10 + 13 + 16 + 19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Add up questions with the “+” (i.e., # 2 + 5 + 8 + 11 + 14 + 17 + 20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Add up questions with the “~” (i.e., # 3 + 6 + 9 + 12 + 15 + 18 + 21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: The Self Questionnaire

1. Who have been the most important people who have influenced your view of yourself? Rank order your responses in terms of importance. Number 1 should be the most influential person.

_____ Peers  _____ Mentors/Teachers
_____ Parents  _____ Introspecting about self
_____ Other family members  _____ Other: Specify:____________
_____ Religious figure/individual

2. Place an "X" on each dimension closest to the adjective that best describes you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrovert</th>
<th>Introvert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically</td>
<td>Physically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive</td>
<td>Unattractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Boring/Dull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Unathletic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likable</td>
<td>Unlikable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Dumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Unreliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Lazy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Rate how freely and easily you express each of the following emotions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards Self</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. On the continuum below, place an "X" on the line which best describes how you usually feel about yourself:

Very Good | ----------------------------------------------- | Very Bad

5. How satisfied are you with your view of yourself?

Completely | ----------------------------------------------- | Not at All

6. At what age were you most content with your sense of self and when were you least satisfied with your sense of self?

7. If your view of yourself has changed significantly, what has contributed to this change?

8. If there was one quality you could change about yourself what would it be?