

**MOTHERS' GROUP COMPONENT
OF THE COMMUNITY GROUP
PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN
EXPOSED TO WOMAN ABUSE:**

***Rationale and Benefits Of The
Concurrent Model***

2009

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Children Exposed To Woman Abuse***



OVERVIEW

1. THE BASIS OF THE MOTHERS' COMPONENT OF THE CGP
2. ENGAGING MOTHERS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE PROGRAM
3. HOW DOES THE MOTHERS' PROGRAM WORK?
4. CHALLENGES AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

**I. THE BASIS OF THE
MOTHERS'
COMPONENT OF THE
COMMUNITY GROUP
PROGRAM**



CON•CUR•RENT

1: OCCURRING AT THE SAME TIME

2 : RUNNING PARALLEL

3: ACTING IN CONJUNCTION

The Mothers Group Program Is Unique In Nature . . .

**Not a parenting group or a woman
abuse group in the traditional sense -**

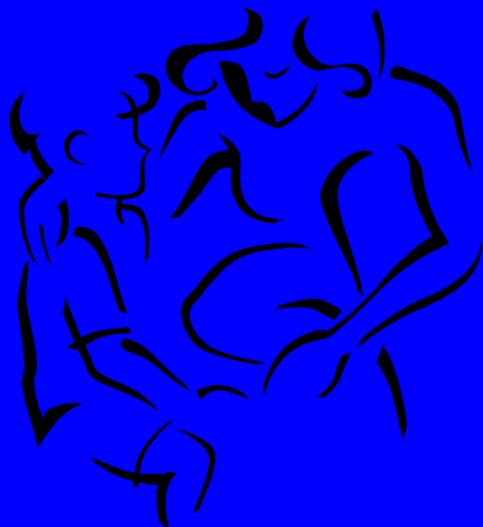
In a safe and supportive environment,
women who have been abused
connect with other women as parents

The Mother's group guides women in reflecting upon their personal experiences of abuse to the extent that best enables them to then have a greater understanding of their children's perspective . . .



so as to be better equipped to support them in healing from the impact of abuse

**The primary purpose of the
Mothers Groups is to support
women in understanding how to
help their kids . . .**





**When women make connections
with each other, by it's very nature
the Mothers' group becomes
a therapeutic intervention
in itself . . .**

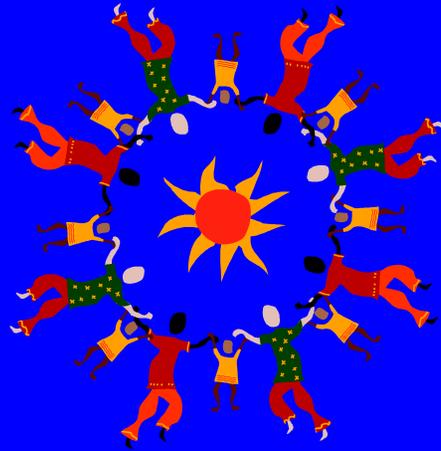


MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR ABUSED WOMEN IS A KEY CONCEPT THROUGHOUT THE GROUP PROCESS ...



- ◆ **To their own experience as it relates to “theory” about woman abuse**
- ◆ **To their children**
- ◆ **With each other**
- ◆ **To concepts about how children’s healing process is reflective of mother’s healing**
- ◆ **To information and resources in their community**

*Children will go as far as women are
able to go –
they are a reflection of mothers and
their own healing*



"When I first came here, I wanted to
help my daughter. Now I realize
how much help I needed for myself
too."

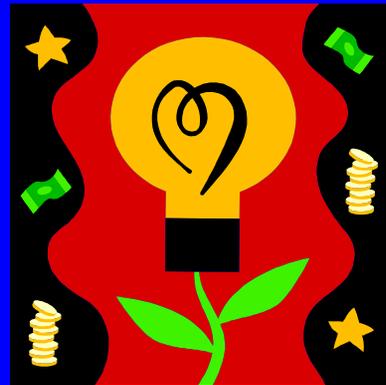
IN ADDITION TO HELPING WOMEN WITH THEIR OWN HEALING, THESE AREAS CAN ALSO BE HELPFUL:

- **Positive Parenting Practices Such As Non-Physical Discipline**
- **Parent / Child Communication Skills**
- **Parenting Skills Designed For Children Who Lived With Violence**
- **Modeling of Constructive Problem-Solving and Management of Emotions**

WHAT MOTHERS CAN WORK ON TOGETHER WITH THEIR CHILDREN:

- **Mapping out expectations for healthy non-violent family relationships**
- **Strengthening healthy communication and practicing problem-solving**
- **Establishing safe ways to talk together about the past.**
- **Working to heal and move forward as a family**
- **Identifying activities and engaging in family “fun”**

II. ENGAGING MOTHERS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE PROGRAM



MESSAGES TOWARDS ENGAGING MOTHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GROUP PROGRAM:

- **PROCESS OF BUILDING TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT BEGINS WITH VERY FIRST CONTACT**
- **CHILDREN'S GROUP IS MORE THERAPEUTIC WHEN MOM ALSO PARTICIPATES IN HER OWN GROUP**
- **MOTHERS ARE THE EXPERTS IN UNDERSTANDING THEIR CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE –THEREFORE MOTHER'S PARTICIPATION SEEN AS INVALUABLE**
- **RENEWAL OF MOTHER'S CREDIBILITY AS A PARENT**
- **BEHAVIOUR CHANGES MAY OCCUR FOR CHILDREN DURING THE GROUP PROCESS – OPPORTUNITY FOR SUPPORT**
- **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

Principles To The Mother's Group Program:

1. To promote a child-centred model

whereby a mother participating in her own group enhances the therapeutic experience of the group for her child

2. To support women in recognizing their right to live without violence,

and in making positive choices to strive to eliminate violence from their lives and their children's lives

3. To provide opportunities for women who have experienced abuse to feel less isolated as mothers

by facilitating connections related to parenting children who have been exposed to abuse

**4. For women to have
information about personal
safety planning**

*in order to increase their ability to
keep themselves and their
children safe*

5. To provide opportunities for women to make significant personal connections

- Women Connecting With Each Other

- Mothers Connecting With Their Children

- Community Connections

**6. To validate the importance of
self-care, self-esteem
enhancement, and personal
support for mothers**

*as directly related to her
children's own emotional healing
process*

*“When women can truly understand and connect
with their child’s experience,
through the desire to help their children,
they are also helping themselves”*

Sandra Graham-Berman



III. HOW DOES THE MOTHERS' PROGRAM WORK?

Program Logistics



- **Referral Process** – Mothers offered opportunity to participate when children registered for group
- **Assessment for Group Readiness** – Information upon referral, contact to register child in group, pre-group meeting with mothers
- **Group Content** - Mothers' group sessions parallel children's material and resources
- **Group Milieu / Facilitators** – Safe community settings, trained facilitators, closed group
- **Group Format** - Standard weekly format for each group session (see handout)

Circumstances in which program staff may have concerns about women participating in the Mother's Group:

- **Women coping with significant emotional stress not conducive to the group process**
- **Women experiencing current abuse and personal safety issues**
- **Women presently involved in other groups or supportive interventions**

Women choosing not to participate in the group:

- **Decision NOT to participate preferably should be guided by the woman herself**
- **Essential that program staff not present as the “experts”**
- **Program staff can supportively make assessments and acknowledge concerns in a manner that does not undermine a woman’s own sense of insight and knowledge about her needs and personal best interests**

If a woman is NOT to participate in the group:

- **Children may still participate**
- **Individual contact with mother may be planned**
- **Woman may choose to take part in the group at another time**
- **Program staff to make referrals, suggest other more appropriate resources, and to support women in developing safety plans**

IV. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

UNIQUE NATURE OF THE MODEL

- ◇ *Lends itself to both the strengths and challenges of the program*
- ◇ *Not a woman abuse group, nor a parenting group – something distinctly in the middle of these*
- ◇ *Potentially complex balance that requires effective facilitation*

How facilitators can respond:

- ◇ Maintain essential balance in addressing both women's own personal abuse issues combined with child-focused concepts
- ◇ Be consistent about the parameters of group
- ◇ Validate women's own personal issues, discuss the value of seeking additional support – while staying true to the primary goal

DIVERSE NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS

- ◇ *Women at different stages of transition from an abusive relationship*
- ◇ *Women who have survived many different types of abusive situations*
- ◇ *Differing ages and abilities*
- ◇ *Diverse range of social, cultural, and religious backgrounds*

How facilitators can respond:

- ◇ Facilitators to address perceived sense of isolation by emphasizing the value of diversity in the group
- ◇ Support women in bridging the gaps
- ◇ Deliver group material in a way that is inclusive, relevant, and meaningful to all participants

EFFECTS OF ABUSE ON WOMEN

- ◇ *Women at both ends of the continuum & impacted differently depending on their experience*
- ◇ *Post Traumatic Stress, Flashbacks, Anxiety, Depression*
- ◇ *Emotional and physical responses to recalling own experiences or hearing women's stories*

How facilitators can respond:

- ◇ Normalize experiences
- ◇ Avoid pathologizing – reframe as “coping” – support women in recognizing strategies for managing their responses
- ◇ Careful assessment of whole group is key
- ◇ Supporting women in context of group is ideal – access wisdom of group, reduce isolation

**ADDITIONAL
QUESTIONS FROM
WORKSHOP
PARTICIPANTS**