

Opening Session: Introduction to the Program

Your facilitator's name is: _____

After today's session, your group will be meeting for nineteen more sessions on
_____ [day of week] at _____ [time].

Introducing Yourself

Here are some things to include in your introduction:

1. My name: _____
2. When and where I was born: _____

3. How I identify myself (including culture, ethnicity, race, and my preferred pronoun): _____

4. The people in my family (can include a husband or live-in partner, children, mother, father, brothers, sisters, or whomever you consider your immediate family): _____

5. One thing I like about myself or a special gift that I have: _____

The Sessions in this Program

The twenty sessions in this *Helping Women Recover* program are:

Opening Session: Introduction to the Program

Module A: Self

Session 2. Defining Self

Session 3. Sense of Self

Session 4. Self-Esteem

Session 5. Sexism, Stereotyping, and Power

Module B: Relationships

Session 6. Family of Origin

Session 7. Mothers

Session 8. Mother Myths

Session 9. Fathers

Session 10. Understanding Abuse and Trauma

Session 11. Interpersonal Violence

Session 12. Creating Supportive and Loving Relationships

Module C: Sexuality

Session 13. Sexuality and Addiction

Session 14. Body Image

Session 15. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Session 16. Challenges to Healthy Sexuality

Session 17. Healthy Sexuality

Module D: Spirituality

Session 18. What Is Spirituality?

Session 19. Mindfulness, Prayer, and Meditation

Session 20. Creating a Vision

Group Agreements

At the beginning of this first session, your group discussed agreements that will be maintained during the group's meetings. When everyone agrees to them, the sessions will have the most benefit for all group members.

The most typical group agreements are listed here. You can add any additional agreements that your group makes.

1. *Timing.* Our sessions will start on time and end on time.
2. *Attendance.* Regular group attendance is important. We all agree to show up at all the sessions. If there is an emergency, and you cannot attend, please contact the facilitator ahead of time.
3. *Confidentiality.* Group members need to honor one another's confidentiality. What is said in this room stays in this room. No personal information revealed in this room may be repeated outside this room.
4. *Sobriety.* No one may attend a group session while under the influence of alcohol or another drug.
5. *Safety.* There will be no physical or emotional abuse. Part of safety is showing respect for one another and for the uniqueness of every person's thoughts, feelings, experiences, and responses. Respect is essential. We will let people express themselves in their own ways. Being rude or abusive to another group member is *not* okay.
6. *Eating or drinking.* There will be no eating or drinking during the group sessions [except, perhaps, for bottled water].
7. *Sharing.* Everyone in the group should have the time to contribute and share the experience. We will try to let everyone have a chance to talk. We will not interrupt other group members but will let them finish before we respond or add something.
8. *Respect.* When you tell the truth about what you think, please do so in a way that respects others in the group. That means no criticizing, dissing, judging, or talking down to anyone.
9. *Participation.* We will try to assist one another in feeling safe enough to share and participate. We will ask questions to help us learn and grow. However, everyone is entitled to "pass" when asked a question or when asked to do an activity that requires participation.

What has your group decided will happen if someone breaks one of the group agreements?

What Is Addiction?

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM, 2011) defines addiction as a chronic disease involving the circuits of the brain that deal with reward, motivation, and memory. When there is a problem with these circuits, there are biological, psychological, social, and spiritual difficulties. A person with an addiction pursues reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. ASAM says, “Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.”

Basically this means what are called the ABCDEs of addiction:

- A. The person is not able to *abstain*;
- B. The person has reduced *behavioral* control;
- C. The person has a *craving* or increased “hunger” for drugs or addictive experiences;
- D. The person has *diminished* recognition of significant problems with her behaviors and interpersonal relationships; and
- E. The person has a problematic *emotional* response.

A person can be addicted to a substance, such as alcohol, heroin, opiates or opioids, caffeine, tobacco, and sugar. A person also can be addicted to a behavior, such as shopping, exercising, gambling, having sex, viewing pornography, and using social media.

The author of this program calls addiction “The chronic neglect of self in favor of something or someone else.”

What Is Trauma?

Many women who have addictions also are survivors of trauma. The American Psychiatric Association (2013, pp. 271–280) defines trauma as: “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of four ways:

- 1. directly experiencing the event;
- 2. witnessing, in person, the event occurring to others;
- 3. learning that such an event happened to a close family member or friend;
- 4. experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of such events, such as with first responders.”

Trauma also is defined as a *reaction* to an event that overwhelms people physically and psychologically.

There are many forms of violence and other trauma, including:

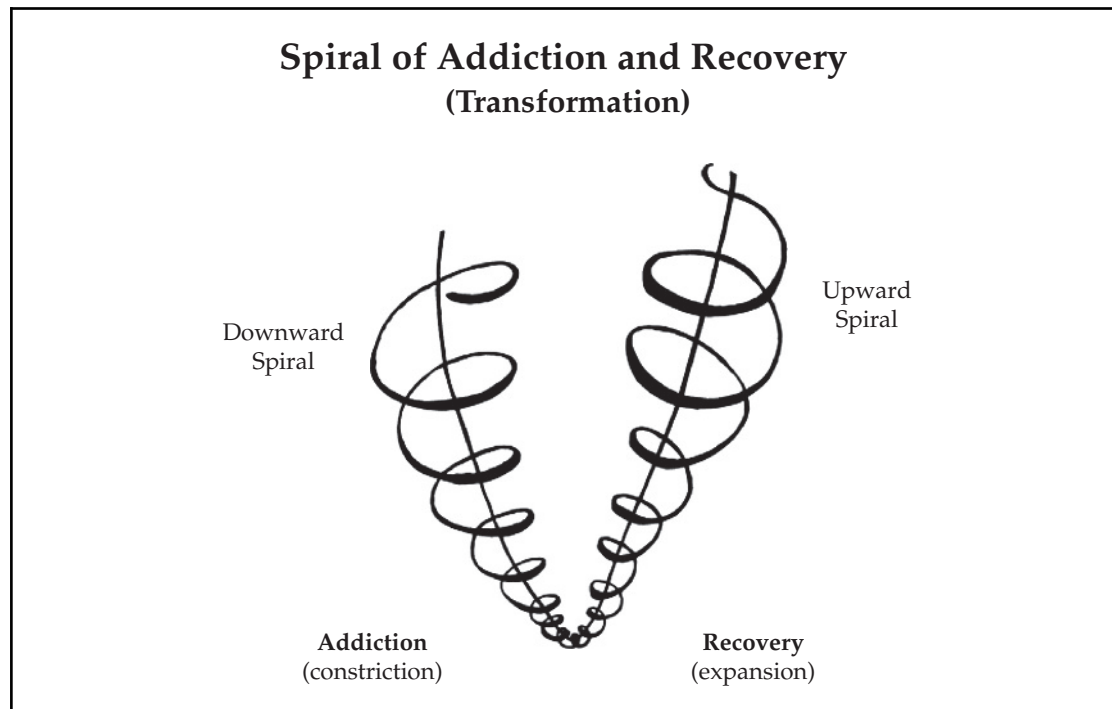
- Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, floods, and volcanoes
- The oppression of an entire group of people, such as economic and religious persecution and genocide
- Immigration, which often can be traumatic
- Discrimination based on race, poverty, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age
- Child abuse, whether it is emotional, physical, and/or sexual
- Elder abuse
- Domestic violence, such as physical abuse and rape
- Abandonment (especially for children)
- Witnessing violence, such as a parent harming another parent, and witnessing murder
- Being the victim of a crime such as burglary, robbery, mugging, assault, and rape
- Street and gang violence
- Automobile accidents
- Catastrophic injuries and illnesses
- Extremely painful and frightening medical procedures
- The loss of a loved one, including a pet
- Kidnapping
- War and combat
- Terrorism and torture

Intergenerational or cultural trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, spanning generations, that emanates from a massive group trauma.

Helping Women Recover is designed for women with addictive disorders and for those who may have experienced threatening events that have overwhelmed their psychological and/or physiological coping mechanisms—especially suffering inflicted by others. It is very common for women who have been abused to use alcohol or other drugs to numb their pain.

The Spiral of Addiction and Recovery

There is a model for what happens in addiction and then learning to recover from addiction. This is the basis for this program. It is called the Spiral of Addiction and Recovery.



The downward spiral represents the limitations and constrictions that addiction can create in a woman's life. The line through the middle represents the object of her addiction. It can be alcohol, heroin, meth, gambling, shopping, and so on. It becomes the organizing principle in the woman's life. She organizes her life around this drug or this behavior.

This program represents a turning point, a place of change, at the bottom of the downward spiral. Here a woman steps onto a new path, the upward spiral. It represents the process of recovery, in which a woman's life begins to expand. The experience of addiction is still the line through the middle, but it has less influence; it has loosened its grip. There is space now for new activities and new relationships. Her addiction is no longer the core of her life; it is just one of her many life experiences. The image of the spiral (and the picture of the lotus on the cover of your journal) helps us to see that recovery is a transformative process. As women sustain their recovery they are able to say, "Who I am today is not who I was."

Grounding and Self-Soothing Activities

There are times when any of us may feel uncomfortable or anxious, in the group or elsewhere. This happens to all of us at times, especially in unfamiliar settings and with new experiences. Your facilitator will teach you three techniques that you can use if

you are feeling this way. These activities can help you to comfort or soothe yourself and feel more grounded. Being grounded means being able to stay in the present instead of being knocked off balance by your emotions, including emotional memories and fears. These activities also can help you to detach from your inner, emotional discomfort by becoming more aware of the physical world, of the here and now.

Five Senses

1. Close your eyes or lower your eyelids.
2. Relax for a few moments. Take a few deep breaths and exhale slowly.
3. Open your eyes when you are ready.
4. Silently, identify five things you can see around you.
5. Now identify four things you could feel or touch.
6. Identify three things you can hear.
7. Identify two things you can smell.
8. Finally, identify what you can taste right now.

Five Senses Activity

5 things

4 things

3 things

2 things

1 thing

Source: Stephanie S. Covington & Eileen Russo, *Healing Trauma: A Brief Intervention for Women*, (rev. ed.), 2016, Center City, MN: Hazelden.

How do you feel after doing this activity?

Breathing and Exhaling

1. Stand with your feet a little distance apart so that you feel stable.
2. Take a few deep breaths.
3. Relax your shoulders and drop your hands to your sides. Let your arms and hands just dangle, relaxed. Relax your shoulders and arms.
4. Take in a long deep breath through your nose and blow it out through your mouth like a big gust of wind or like blowing out a candle.
5. Now inhale again as if you are smelling a rose and then let the air out by blowing it out of your mouth.
6. Remember to relax your shoulders and arms.
7. Do the inhaling and exhaling three more times.

How did you feel after doing this activity?

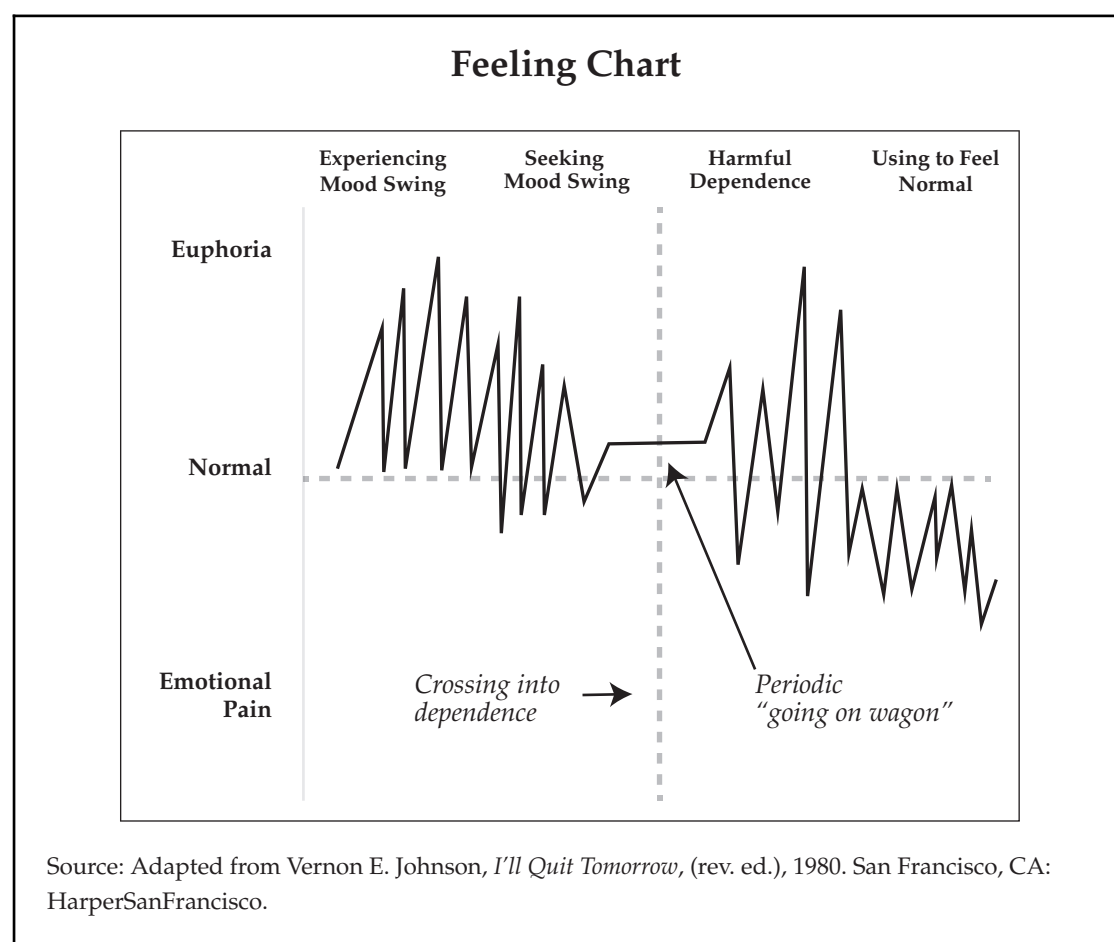
Focusing on the Here and Now

1. Relax. Take a deep breath.
2. Look at the room around you.
3. Focus on the size of the room.
4. Focus on:
 - the color and texture of the walls
 - the height of the ceilings
 - the lights
 - the windows [if there are any]
 - the doors
 - the furniture
 - the decorations
5. Now focus on yourself.
 - Think of your name
 - Think of your age
 - Think of today's date and what time it is
 - Think of what city and state you are in
 - Think of the program you are in with this group.

How did you feel after doing this activity?

Feeling Chart

This chart shows what can happen emotionally in the process of addiction.



1. The first reaction is *experiencing* the mood swing and is brought about by the addictive substance or behavior. At this early stage, the swing is in the positive direction and is pleasant. People experiment with dosage—the amount of the drug or behavior—and are learning to control the degree of the mood swing in this way.

2. Next comes *seeking* the mood swing and looking forward to it. The person's behavior becomes directed toward experiencing euphoria. At this stage, for example, drinkers or drug users are waiting for the party or the fix, and gamblers are looking forward to the casino. They are needing more and more of the substance or behavior in order to get the good feelings. Some mood-swing experiences begin to be physically negative, including hangovers, feeling nauseated, losing money, and embarrassment at reports of their behavior. Because the swing back to normal can still be made, they are not paying a significant emotional price yet.
3. At the stage of *harmful dependence*, an invisible line is crossed between misuse and actual dependence or addiction. Drinking or using for pleasure, for the fun of the mood swing, is no longer primary. Much of the time it is just to reduce the stress of not having the drug or doing the behavior. The emotional cost is increasingly great. When the person swings back, often she is unable to make it back to normal. She is in pain and has lost control, yet she may be unaware that she is in trouble. Typical indicators of harmful dependence and addiction include these indicators of a downward spiral:
 - *Obsession*, meaning that her thoughts are constantly directed toward the addictive substance or behavior;
 - *Compulsion*, meaning that her behavior is directed toward the addiction most of the time;
 - *Increased tolerance*, meaning that she needs more and more of the substance or the behavior to obtain the same effect;
 - *Decreased tolerance*, meaning that she is no longer able to use as much alcohol or other drugs;
 - *Anxious protection of the supply*, meaning fear of running out; and
 - *Withdrawal*, meaning negative physical symptoms when the supply is not available.
4. The fourth and final stage is *using to feel normal*. The person is in a state of chronic emotional pain and depression. The behavior originally aimed at feeling euphoric no longer provides a high. The person is just trying to feel normal.

What were your reactions to this information?

What Would You Like To Get from This Group?

You may want to make some notes here.

Between-Sessions Activities

Because *Helping Women Recover* can be used to explore a variety of addictive behaviors, it will be helpful for you to identify clearly what addiction you are working on. *If you are concerned about several drugs or behaviors, please choose one or two to focus on by using a check mark.* Some examples are:

- alcohol
- heroin
- cocaine
- methamphetamine
- opiates or opioids
- other drug(s) _____
- caffeine
- tobacco
- sugar
- shopping (in real life, on television [for example, QVC], or online)
- exercising
- gambling
- having sex
- viewing pornography
- using social media
- other behavior _____

On the downward part of the spiral illustration earlier in this section, make a list of the constrictions or limitations created in your life by your addiction.

Practice the three grounding activities you learned in the Opening Session: the Five Senses, the Breathing and Exhaling, and the Focusing on the Here and Now. Try to do each of them at least once each day between now and your group's next session.

