

Study Guide Sample

This is a sample of selected pages from the study guide for this program.

The entire guide will be sent to you upon purchase of the entire program

SAFE: **Inside a Battered Woman's shelter**

Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION

When a woman leaves a batterer and enters a safe house or shelter she starts on a new path in her life. In a shelter she is finally free of abuse but she now faces the task of rebuilding her life and the lives of her children. The shelter is the first step in that task and the adjustments she must make are numerous. This video tells the story of three women who, having left abusive partners, learn to take their first steps on this new path, adjust to shelter life, and deal with their problems and those of their children. Each of the women develops their own coping mechanisms, has a different timetable, and different ways of rebuilding her life.

Shelters are safe, but living in them poses a new set of issues. There is less privacy. There are rules she and her children must follow. There is the need for secrecy and confidentiality that may be especially difficult for her children who are unable to bring friends home. Her children have been displaced from their homes, and may have to start new schools, adding additional stress to their lives. She and her children must learn to make their way around a new neighborhood, learn how to find new stores, new bus routes, and new community resources.

The residents in a shelter have lived through years of fear, and often terror. Although she and her children are safe, it may feel new to her. In the past she had to survive physical and emotional assault, and now she must learn to learn to live a new life. This process can not be accomplished without help and support from shelter staff and resources from the community.

BEFORE SHOWING THE VIDEO

Preview the video yourself, read this discussion guide, make copies of the handouts and introduce the video by summarizing the main messages of the program.

AFTER SHOWING THE VIDEO

It is a good idea to leave the lights off for a few moments after the video ends. This will also allow people to reflect and collect their thoughts and feelings before joining in the discussion. Be alert and sensitive to anyone who looks upset or distraught. If anyone does not want to join the discussion, respect that right.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

There are a number of issues that staff and residents may want to discuss, and they are listed below. In each section there is first is a short introduction to the issue, and then several questions to help promote discussion and reflection. It is important to respect viewers' feelings and give them a chance to talk. Guide the discussion with questions like, "Can you tell me more about that?" or "How did (does) that make you feel?"

DISCUSSION ISSUES

LIVING IN A SHELTER PROVIDES SECURITY AND SUPPORT AND ALSO PRESENTS CHANGES THAT MAY BE DIFFICULT.

- What is a safe house? What are the rules in this shelter?
- What is good about shelters? What is problematic about shelters?
- Does having to keep the location of the shelter secret make life difficult for you? For your children? For your family and friends?
- How do you feel about living in a new neighborhood? How do your children feel?

CHILDREN ARE IMPACTED BY LEAVING THEIR HOME AND MOVING INTO A SHELTER.

- What are the impacts on your children when you left your abuser?
- What are some suggestions on what to tell your children, how to tell them, and when to tell them about leaving?
- What are some of the problems and solutions concerning childcare and day care?
- Are the children experiencing ambivalence? (They love Daddy; they're having a difficult time adjusting to life in the shelter and the new neighborhood; life was easier with when Daddy was around.)
- Have you had problems dealing with social workers who believe you "did not protect your children"? What kind of help do you need to deal with this?

SURVIVORS MAY HAVE MANY CONFLICTING AND AMBIVALENT FEELINGS.

- Are you feeling ambivalent about your situation? How is it evidenced?
- Do you sometimes feel that you want to return?
- What is love? What is a healthy relationship?
- In the past how have you made the behavior of your batterer seem normal?
- In the video what are the conflicts experienced by the women with each other? Why are the women in the video judgmental toward one another?
- Do you ever feel ambivalent about "taking your children away from their father"?
- Women usually feel anger about the situation they are in. What can you do about it? Is anger "good" or "bad" or can it be both?
- Post traumatic stress disorder can occur even though the initial situation is over. How can you tell if you or someone else is experiencing this?

THE IMPACT CAN BE FELT BY MANY OTHERS, INCLUDING FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

- Who else in your family or which one(s) of your friends are impacted by your living in a shelter? Are they supportive of your decision?
- Are there members of your cultural group who feel you should not have left? Where can you find the kind of support you need?

AS AN IMMIGRANT WOMEN THERE ARE UNIQUE STRESSES OTHERS MAY NOT EXPERIENCE.

- If you are an immigrant what are the unique stresses that may affect you? (You may have a high risk for staying with your with abuser. He may be your only intimate connection.)
- What are your legal remedies? (If your abuser has a green card or is a citizen and you are married to him, then you are eligible for "self petition".)