

In The Field

Rape— Relationships and Recovery

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Rape—Relationships and Recovery is a group counseling model designed to intercede when crisis-oriented rape counseling ends. Major aspects of the model include (a) giving factual information and dispelling common myths surrounding rape; (b) recognizing and working through the grief process following rape; and (c) aiding the expression of the intrapersonal and interpersonal feelings that result from rape.

In most states forcible rape means "the carnal knowledge of a woman by a man, carried out against her will and without her consent, extorted by threat or fraudulence" (Amir, 1971). Recent changes in the laws of many states make conviction easier because women no longer need to produce corroborating testimony (which is almost always impossible to obtain) or to defend their sexual history (Goldenberg, 1977). Reactions to rape vary, however, and continue for short or long periods, depending on the victim. Freiberg and Bridwell (1976) contended that the first reaction after rape is the grief process, in which there is overt denial of the situation. Grief

is followed by depression, anger, and, finally, resolution. Sutherland and Scherl (1970) emphasized the predictable nature of the following three-phase reaction: an initial acute reaction that usually lasts several days; a second phase of outward adjustment and denial, which lasts weeks to months; and a third phase, which is characterized by depression and the need to talk, preceding possible integration and resolution of emo-

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tional trauma. Medea and Thompson (1974) outlined a similar three-phase reaction pattern and contended that only when a woman reestablishes a sense of security and resolves feelings about the assailant, her world, and herself will she return, psychologically, to where she was preceding the act of rape.

Counselors must be alert to the possible occurrence of a variety of emotions of the rape victim, ranging from fear, humiliation, and embarrassment to anger, revenge, and self-blame. (Woodling, Evans, & Bradbury, 1977). Findings in the literature reviewed by us suggest that there is a definite need for postrape counseling and for a follow-up that will help the rape victim handle the grief, denial, and depressive stages and return to normal relationships with her family and friends, and in her work setting. This article presents a group counseling model—Rape—Relationships and Recovery—that was designed to intercede when crisis-oriented interventions (involving medical, legal, and police assistance) end. The model is multifaceted because the goal of the counseling is to resolve the rape victim's personal feelings and to enhance her family's and friends' understanding of their own psychological conflicts. The proposed model is based on a combination of our counseling experience and the implications of the professional literature.

Major aspects of the group sessions include: (a) factual information that dispels common myths surrounding rape; (b) recognizing and working through the grief

process; and (c) aiding the expression of the intrapersonal and interpersonal feelings that result from the rape. The crux of the program format is partially indicated in the title "Rape—Relationships and Recovery." *Rape* is included to remind the victims, families, and friends participating that there can be no room for denial; that an act of violation and violence has taken place. *Relationships* is included to remind the victims that the act of rape against them will have significant effects on others besides themselves, whether they are family or friends. *Recovery* is included as the last word in the title to help everyone realize that the victims' recovery will be reached only after the rape and the relationships are dealt with, and will culminate in the integration of feelings about what has happened.

WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION

SELECTION OF GROUP MEMBERS AND LEADERS

Participant recruitment for the group should be directed toward adult female rape victims who feel they have not fully dealt with their rape, regardless of how long ago the rape took place. The training of group leaders can be done by university or college counseling centers, local mental health centers, counselor or psychology education departments, the community's special interest groups that investigate women's health issues, and local hospital sexual assault units or police divisions trained to deal with sexual assault. An ideal arrangement is to have a

team member from each of the previously mentioned segments participate in a conjoint leader training program so that information can be given from psychological, medical, and legal perspectives.

Screening interviews for members is encouraged to provide the group leader with individual background information and knowledge of personal needs, and to ensure both the leader and the prospective member that expectations will be met. If the leader recognizes severe psychological dysfunctioning in prospective members, appropriate referrals should be made.

GROUP SIZE

Ideally the group should not fluctuate beyond eight victim members, because several sessions include relatives and friends of each of the victims. The number of friends and relatives who attend sessions (after the first two sessions) is the decision of the victim and should not be regulated or limited unless an unreasonably large group may attend. In this case, the victim should be allowed to choose a few significant people to attend the session with her. If the group is much larger or smaller than eight initial participants, and one or two significant other people attend with each victim, the leader should consider feasible alternatives. The decision of whether to require victims to bring family and friends, or just family into the group should be at the leader's discretion. If a victim has no friends or relatives to bring, the leader can become the significant other and aid the victim in group exercises.

LENGTH, FREQUENCY, AND DURATION

We suggest six sessions, two weekly for three weeks. Each session is approximately two and a half hours. We encourage follow-up sessions to provide further opportunity to share feelings about the group's outcome.

Group sessions are likely to bring out reactions from members that may require additional counseling time. The group leader should provide time after the reg-

ular meetings for individual discussion or counseling according to individual group member needs.

SETTING

Any large, comfortable room that is free from distraction is an adequate setting. A room that is not reminiscent of an institutional setting and that is large enough for small groups to form with ample space between them is optimal. The large recreation room of a group member would be ideal if a group member could provide such a setting. It is imperative to provide an atmosphere that is relaxed, homelike, and nonthreatening.

GROUP LEADERSHIP

We believe that a female leader who is a rape victim would pro-

the victims' choice(s) of significant others. The last session includes guest speakers, answers to remaining questions, and an inclusive summary of session highlights.

SESSION 1—FOCUS ON RAPE: DEVELOPING SELF-AWARENESS

Purpose. To establish guidelines for group functioning; to acquaint group members with one another; to establish what happened during the rape, and, to explore individual beliefs and commonly held myths surrounding rape.

Materials. Name tags, including age; refreshments, as desired; nine blindfolds; nine chairs; a set of crayons or markers for each individual; sheets for compiling significant events during the session (to be kept like a log by each

gether for discussion of how it felt to be forced into a vulnerable position again after the rape. *Time:* 10 minutes.

4 Briefly lecture on the historical background of rape, emphasizing universality and commonality of occurrence. Cover myths commonly believed, such as:

You asked for it, wanted it, and you are to blame.

Your dressing seductively or accepting rides gives a man the right to rape you.

It is not really rape if you did not resist.

You are vile, dirty, and unclean because of the rape.

Nice girls don't get raped.

Rapists are maniacs.

Rapists are strangers.

If you're careful, you won't get raped.

Myth: Rapists are strangers.

mote the best response from group members. She could most easily establish empathy between herself and the members. Of course, the stipulation that a leader be both female and a rape victim limits the possibilities. If such a leader cannot be found and trained, an adult female leader who is not a rape victim is acceptable, or an adult male who is not a rape victim. A male leader should engage in additional training on possible transference of anger from group members and would have to be sensitive to a different range of problem possibilities arising because of his gender (Silverman, 1977).

SESSION FORMAT

Individual sessions are designed to provide an opportunity for both total group and subgroup experiences. To increase a sense of group trust the first two sessions are for victim members only. The remaining four sessions include

member). The logs will be gathered at the last session and compiled into pamphlet form and distributed to each member.

Activities.

1 Briefly introduce yourself as group leader and introduce the purpose of the group. *Time:* 5 minutes.

2 Have each member pair up with another person and ask one to blindfold the other for a "trust walk." Explain the purpose of the trust walk as being an exercise to heighten one's vulnerability in a comfortable, safe atmosphere. Instruct the blindfolded person to allow the sighted partner to lead her around the room and outside the room. Instruct the sighted partner to continue talking to the blindfolded partner, reassuring her that although she is completely vulnerable, she is safe from any harm. Instruct the blindfolded partner to switch places with the sighted partner and repeat the same process. *Time:* 10 to 15 minutes.

3 Bring the entire group to-

After this lecture, form groups of two to discuss the myths that the victims believe. Make sure the two victims do not know each other. *Time:* Allow 20 minutes for historical fact lecture, universality of rape, and myth dispelling. Allow 10 minutes for discussion of myths that the victims themselves believe.

5 Introduce the topic of the Gestalt empty-chair technique. Model it for the group. *Time:* 10 minutes.

6 Ask each victim to sit in an empty chair facing the wall away from the group. One at a time, instruct each to relate verbally or nonverbally any hostile, angry, or confused feelings she has toward the group, self, or family. Allow each individual to express some feeling related to the rape, group, and so on. *Time:* 45 to 50 minutes, depending on group needs.

7 Instruct the members to break into groups of four and discuss what was revealed in the empty-chair experience. *Time:* 10 minutes.

Myth: You asked for it, you wanted it, you are to blame.

8 Allow a questioning period or time for follow-up on any previous activities. *Time:* 15 minutes.

9 Briefly outline the structure and procedures for the following session. *Time:* 5 minutes.

SESSION II—FOCUS ON RAPE: DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF HOW RAPE AFFECTS YOU

Purpose. To bring out the implications of rape for each member and to make the grief process recognizable. To encourage reflection and self-awareness of body changes as well as psychological changes in the individual.

Materials. Name tags; batik equipment, including eight clean white cloths, brushes of varying sizes, melted paraffin, and Rit dyes of various colors (if this is too expensive, ask members to contribute a small fee or bring supplies to share); plastic containers for dyes; eight large pieces of construction paper made to resemble targets; straight pins; newspapers; tape; clothespins; clothesline.

Activities.

1 Discuss feelings about the first meeting. *Time:* 10 to 15 minutes.

2 Lecture on the grief process and tell members about manifested symptoms involved in the process. Lead a discussion on the grief process, covering denial, anger, and resolution as well as depression. *Time:* 25 minutes.

3 Call members together for a discussion of apparent symptoms within the group. Ask members to discuss these symptoms in two groups of four individuals each. *Time:* 25 minutes.

4 Have each member take a target and pinpoint the body area on her person that is most affected physically by the rape. Ask them to pin or tape the targets on. Allow time after this exercise for each member to explain the positioning of her target. *Time:* 15 minutes.

5 Lead the group with an explanation of the batik process while they become familiar with the materials. (If the batik process, an Indian method for making designs on cloth, is not familiar to you as the group leader, substitute another activity of your choice in this time slot.) *Time:* 15 minutes.

6 Give members clean pieces of cloth and instruct them to compose a drawing of (a) how they see themselves in relation to their family and friends after the rape, or (b) how they picture their body or environment since the rape, or (c) how they saw themselves before the rape as compared to how they see themselves now. If members do not feel inclined to do this exercise, or cannot draw, allow them to help or watch another member. *Time:* 40 minutes.

7 Let members who finish their drawings dip their cloths in various dyes and hang them on a clothesline to dry over newspapers. After doing this, let them discuss anything that occurred in the group with one another, or ask questions, or discuss the drawings. *Time:* 30 minutes.

8 Ask members to bring one or two significant family members or friends to the following session. *Time:* 2 minutes.

SESSION III—FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS: HOW THE RAPE AFFECTED OTHERS

Purpose. To begin the integration process between victims and families or close friends. Essential focus of the group now switches from viewing rape as a personal tragedy to viewing it in the context of its effect on significant others. The scope of concern moves beyond self to include others and their feelings.

Materials. Family members and friends of each group member, batiks from the previous session.

Activities.

1 Begin with a discussion on what happened in the first two sessions. Instigate the introduction of each new member by suggesting that they tell a little about themselves and why they were asked to join the group. *Time:* 20 minutes.

2 Follow with an explanation of role playing and a demonstration. Explain the purpose behind the role playing as getting members to express their feelings openly. *Time:* 10 minutes.

3 Instruct victims and the people they brought into the group to divide up in different sections of the room. Ask only family units to associate with one

another. Have one member of each group, who is not the rape victim, explain to the other mini-group members how they feel about the rape experience. Ask them to consider how the experience feels from the victim's point of view, and verbalize these feelings. Instruct the victim to listen closely to these verbalizations. (If necessary to minimize noise, send the small groups into different rooms.) Finally, ask the rape victim to explain to other family members her own feelings about the rape. *Time:* 35 minutes.

4 Promote discussion by the whole group about the misconceptions revealed by family members in the small groups. Ask participants to brainstorm as a whole group on resolutions to the misconceptions or any feelings that were revealed. *Time:* 25 minutes.

5 Briefly lecture on and demonstrate directed daydreaming. Explain that the group will use it as a method to conjure up times when family/friend relationships were harmonious. *Time:* 10 minutes.

6 Lead the group into a directed daydream with the lights turned out and the curtains down. Allow ample space for individual comfort. Use an appropriate relaxation technique to begin this exercise. Ask all group members to concentrate on a time when everything was peaceful between them and the significant others (before or after the rape when all significant others were involved). Suggest they consider physical body responses and their feelings of well-being during this time. Ask them to bring this peaceful situation to mind again whenever family relations seem strained because of the rape. *Time:* 40 minutes.

7 Have victims resume the dyeing process on batiks, while giving explanations about the process to new group members. Have the family members contribute to the drawings in any way possible by adding their own ideas to it or designing new elements for it or aiding in the waxing process. Emphasize joint effort between the victims and significant others. Allow groups to associate freely with one another, and to mingle and discuss drawings. *Time:* 10 minutes.

SESSION IV—FOCUS ON
RELATIONSHIPS: PULLING THE
VICTIMS AND FAMILY OR
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS TOGETHER

Purpose. To begin the integration between victims and members they brought into the group. This is accomplished through sculpting, a mock sympathy symposium, and demonstrations of various family member positions in the rape experience.

Materials. Ball of string, scissors, markers for each person, blank cards about the size of flash cards, construction paper letters, P, B, C, and D—eight sets of each.

Activities.

1 Introduce Satir's explanation of family positions involving placators, computers, distractors, and blamers (Satir, 1972). Explain what is involved in these roles and how it affects the families' feelings about the rape and each other. *Time:* 15 minutes.

2 Divide the group into eight segments with family units separate from one another. Give each unit a set of construction paper letters with P standing for Placator, B for Blamer, C for Computer and D for Distractor. Instruct family members to wait for a signal, then pick up the appropriate letter describing their reaction to the rape. Have them verbalize from these positions. Call time and ask each member to choose another letter and verbalize feelings about the rape from this perspective. Continue this exercise until each person present has experienced and verbalized from all four positions. *Time:* 30 minutes.

3 Discuss reactions to this experience in the small groups. Instruct members to remain in their small groups. *Time:* 15 minutes.

4 Call a midpoint discussion of all the family units to reflect on what happened so far this session and to ask any questions or offer comments. Instigate an evaluation of activities that transpired in previous sessions since the families and friends joined the group. *Time:* 20 minutes.

5 Introduce the sculpting process. *Time:* 10 minutes.

6 Ask members to divide into eight groups again, each taking along a ball of string. Now instruct the family to allow the rape victim

to place them around her according to her feelings about them. (Different groups may need more space, so allow them to break up into different rooms.) Have the victim connect herself and her group members with the ball of string according to how tightly knit or how loose she perceives their bonds to be. Have her explain to them her reasons for placing them in these positions. (This sculpting process is pictorially explained in Woodward and Gelman's 1978 article, "Saving the Family." It can be referred to in the explanation process if necessary.) To conclude this exercise, ask the significant others in their small groups to try to unravel themselves in their present positions and move into the spot where they would like to be in relation to the victim. Finally, give ample time for them to experience the difficulty of this unbinding process when physical bonds hamper their progress. *Time:* 40 minutes.

7 Conclude with the total group discussing feelings about this exercise. Allow them to work on the batik project to help unwind. Offer the opportunity for the victim group members to form a living sculpture among themselves before adjourning. Do this to reaffirm initial bonds that are unique to the victims.

SESSION V—FOCUS ON
RESOLUTIONS: RECOVERY AND
RETURNING TO NORMAL

Purpose. To begin the termination phase of the group through experiences designed to unite family/friend groups in closer bonds, to establish futuristic goals for both family and victims, to offer information on protective measures, and to offer suggestions on continuation of open family communications after the group terminates.

Materials. Paper and pens, crayons, Magic Markers, paint brushes, a few tubes of acrylic paint, eight sets of tinker toys, plastic containers, water, construction blocks.

Activities.

1 Briefly introduce the upcoming exercises and follow up on events of the last session. *Time:* 15 minutes.

2 Instruct each mini-unit to break into their small groups in different sections of the room. Have them each take a set of the tinker toys or construction blocks. When you signal, ask them to begin sculpting some structure around the victim in their group. Instruct the victim to join in the building process if she desires to do so. After completing their design, have the small groups come together as a large group for discussion. (This exercise is especially appropriate for the small children or adolescents who might be involved in the group.) If the adults present want to do something else in the meantime, have them take paper and acrylic paint and make a mural depicting their relationship with the victim. (Alternatives to this exercise involve having materials available to make a banner or scroll of a related theme. Dowels, felt of different colors, scissors, material scraps, etc., are suggested materials.) Let the family as a whole or as individuals work on their own ideas about the family's relationship. *Time:* 30 minutes.

3 Discuss as an entire group

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If you have no label handy, print old address here	Member # _____	Zip _____	Please print
	Name _____	State _____	
Old Address _____	City _____	State _____	Please print
New Address _____	City _____	Zip _____	

the merit and results of this activity. *Time*: 15 minutes.

4 Call in an appropriate guest speaker to speak on rape prevention or self-defense or future protection. *Time*: 25 minutes.

5 Follow-up guest speaker's lecture with questioning and brainstorming. *Time*: 15 minutes.

6 Instruct each group member to assemble in the family unit group to compose a poem about the rape experience. Ask them to include current and past feelings in the poem. Ask the victims to compose a separate poem to their families. An optimal suggestion is to encourage the family unit as a whole to compose a poem, song, or skit about their interactions since the rape. Suggest that they include changes in daily life patterns, surfacing emotions, and current relationships. If this exercise is not acceptable to all group members, suggest that each unit compose a 15-minute skit or pantomime depicting relationships and feelings. Allow time for each group to present their activity in front of the entire group. Follow this by group discussion as a whole. *Time*: 30 minutes for planning; 30 minutes for presentations.

7 End the session with a brief summary of events, and questions and explanation of the upcoming concluding session.

SESSION VI—FOCUS ON RESOLUTION: INTEGRATION OF THOUGHT, TYING LOOSE ENDS, AND RETURNING TO NORMAL

Purpose. To tie the former sessions together, to discuss training for rape victims as crisis counselors, to provide any guest speakers requested by the group, and to include pertinent medical or legal information.

Materials. Blindfolds; refreshments for a large group provided by members, a large room that is easily accessible.

Activities.

1 Allow time for guest speakers as requested. Provide follow-up time for questions and discussion. *Time*: 50 minutes.

2 Discuss training for future volunteers or some other facet of rape prevention or services. *Time*: 20 minutes.

3 Tie highlights of former sessions together, and ask for

feedback. Summarize and tie together loose ends. Finish batiks, and gather member notes for the joint pamphlet project. *Time*: 25 minutes.

4 Ask victims only to join in a circle facing inward. Instruct them to link arms after blindfolding themselves. Ask other family members to retreat from the room. Allow the next 10 minutes for victims to remain alone and discuss their bonds. (Meanwhile, any relatives, co-workers, close friends, parents, ministers, or related acquaintances of the victims should be gathering together outside the room with the other group members. They should have been contacted by family members and friends in the group before this session and told to meet at a predetermined time.) Now instruct the victims to remain blindfolded, but to turn around facing outward from the circle. Signal those waiting outside the room to rush in together and remove the blindfolds of their victim acquaintances. (This technique is called Break-Through by College Catholic SEARCH groups. It is used primarily after an intense emotional group experience, or a marathon encounter group. It can be very moving, extremely touching, and an excellent tactic for reintroduction into normal life functioning. It is not merely therapeutic, but it also serves to integrate the original group back into society as a whole.) During break-through instruct the people coming in to bring along letters of condolence, encouragement, friendship, or love from people who were invited to attend but could not. Allow time for the victim to read these messages. Use the remaining time for sharing refreshments.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

We offer the rape victim group model presented in this article as one way for professional counselors and trained paraprofessionals to address the rape crisis in the United States. The spirit of the model is not preventive, but rather aimed at the resolution of problems arising in the aftermath of a rape incident. Specific approaches to skill development in the "Rape—Relationships and

Recovery" model draw heavily on theories borrowed from marriage and family counseling. Ideas presented developed initially out of general counseling theory. Difficulty arises in trying to attribute ideas to specific theorists or practitioners. We made no attempt to trace theoretical development of the techniques mentioned, beyond their direct sources, for example, Satir.

Our philosophies, professional preferences, and personal biases are reflected throughout the model. This factor obviously limits use of the model by other professionals or trained volunteers. What is comfortable for us may not be appropriate for another individual. Obviously, if someone using this model as a reference were not familiar with art techniques (batiking), it might not be feasible to use the model activities involving art. Adjustments and adaptations would be necessary to fit any other leader's preferences. A different victim group would also require inevitable changes in the model. Yet the model is of general value in its adaptability to various theoretical frames of reference and different situations. We hope that other counselors and their clients can benefit through knowledge of the "Rape—Relationships and Recovery" model.

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