Overcoming Rejection in Romantic Relationships

TI 034 - Thematic

By

David J. Drum and Alice Lawler

The Clearinghouse for Structured/Thematic Groups & Innovative Programs
Counseling & Mental Health Center
The University of Texas at Austin
100A W. Dean Keeton St. (W. 26th St.)
Austin, Texas 78712 • 512-471-3515 • Fax 512-471-8875
http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc
Overcoming Rejection

Like it or not, rejection is something everyone has to cope with throughout life. At times, rejection in romantic encounters can so overwhelm people that it reduces coping capability, stalls development and lessens self-esteem. This group on overcoming rejection is designed to give mental health professionals an alternative to traditional intervention methods.

The purpose of this manual is to describe in detail an eight-session group that has as its sole intent helping people overcome rejection experiences with minimum dysfunction and without elaboration of unnecessary, self-limiting beliefs. It is specifically designed for those who have been rejected in a love relationship and have not recovered to their own satisfaction.

Heartbreak knows no age limit, but the most common group age is from late adolescence through early adulthood. Ideally, the co-facilitators and the group members will represent both genders. The group can run efficiently with as few as eight members and as many as sixteen. Pre-screening of potential participants is essential; for individuals with substantial psychological problems independent of their rejection histories should not be selected for inclusion.

Session I is actually a double-length session of approximately 3.5 to 4 hours duration; the remaining sessions are two hours in length. Since sessions are sequential, attendance at every session is essential to derive maximum benefit from this group.

Content and process goals have been identified for each session and precede the instructional material as a further guide to leader emphasis and rationale.
Session One

CONTENT GOALS

• to inform participants about how common an experience rejection is
• to educate participants about rejection's impact on thoughts, feelings and actions and how it often overwhelms coping capability
• to help participants assess rejection's personal effects, such as modified self-image and unnecessary extension of pain
• to describe the four phases of emotional decline brought on by rejection in romantic relationships

PROCESS GOALS

• to reduce anticipatory anxiety by explaining procedures and rules
• to begin the establishment of a therapeutic milieu from which feelings of trust, safety and acceptance emerge, and of an atmosphere of optimism in which full recovery is seen as possible
• to establish a feeling of common purpose
• to accustom participants to the exchange of feedback and self-disclosure
• to ensure that all members are involved and included in the activities of the session
• to carefully conduct the facilitative activities so that participants are not confused about how to complete exercises and share information

INTRODUCTION

Purpose To introduce the leaders and their reasons for facilitating this group, and to provide information that will encourage participants' belief that their feelings of rejection are resolvable
Process

Disclose the following:
1. Who the leaders are
2. Why they are interested enough in rejection to run a group on the topic
3. What they share as a group, based on pre-group screening interviews; that they have had different experiences yet they are united by their strong desire to overcome a significant rejection experience; that they may be at different stages of resolution but all will go through those stages; and so on

GROUND RULES

Purpose
To familiarize each participant with the leaders' expectations of them as group members

Process
State clearly to each participant the following expectations:
1) Confidentiality of and for the group
2) Regular attendance and involvement; each session and activity essential to overall change effort; contact leader for necessary information and assignments if session is missed
3) Advance notice to leaders of need to be absent
4) Participation of each member; giving and receiving feedback; sharing reactions and feelings; participating in activities and exercises; trusting leaders to carefully guide process of change

OPPOSING CIRCLES EXERCISE

Purpose
To begin the self-disclosure, trust-building, feedback process among participants, specifically intended to reduce interpersonal distance between members

Instructions to Participants
[Note: quotation marks indicate leader speaking, but do not use instructions verbatim; adapt them to your personal style and the particular group.] “We are going to divide the group into two circles, with half forming an inner circle and half the outer. Members of the inner circle will be facing outward and members of the outer circle will face inward, thus you will face members of the opposing circle. Please form two opposing circles at this time. We want the inner circle members to be listeners and the
outer circle members to be disclosers. Look at the group members in front of you. If you are in the outer circle disclose or share one thing, fact, or belief about yourself. Members of the inner circle are to listen carefully to make sure they understand what is being shared. Take around 30 seconds now to share one thing about yourself. (Wait thirty seconds.)

"Now, each member of the outer circle please move to the left until a new member of the inner circle is in front of you and share once again the information you gave the last person plus a second disclosure." (Repeat instructions until all members of the outer circle return to their original positions. At each shift, members of the outer circle are to disclose all previously shared information plus one new item. When the outer circle has returned to starting place, the inner circle members become the disclosers and the process is repeated.)

Process After completing the exercise, reform into a large group and allow participants to share reactions they had to the exercise. Reinforce the importance and value of their getting to know each other.

REJECTION LECTURE

Purpose To state and restate the universality of rejection experiences; to educate participants about the impact of rejection and how it alters the course of people's lives; to emphasize that people can and do recover from these painful experiences without being diminished.

Process Cover the following points in lecture form:

1) Rejection is a process common to everyone's life. Everyone experiences rejection and everyone is a rejector in the course of a lifetime.

2) Rejection causes predictable feelings and actions which can be resolved or changed when fully understood.

3) An experience as powerful as rejection often changes one's self-image and creates negative, inaccurate self-images that later become problematic.

4) Rejection experiences tend to uncover existing apprehensions and vulnerabilities in people; these fears complicate the recovery process.

5) While rejection is almost always painful, people typically extend its pain beyond normal and necessary limits.
After presenting the lecture, engage in a free flowing discussion about the information covered.

THOUGHTS/FEELINGS/BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH REJECTION

**Purpose**  To help participants discover the various thoughts, feelings and behaviors caused by rejection and to help them assess how they react to these experiences.

**Instructions to Participants**  “Form into groups of no more than four this time. Now that you are in your small group, I want you to answer the following questions which are typed on the handouts I am distributing. Think about each of these three questions and then have someone in your group list all of the answers and reactions you discuss for each question. Do the questions one at a time. We will keep track of the time and tell you when we think you should be finished with each question.”

The handout contains the following three questions:

1) In your own experience or in the experience of friends you've helped cope with rejection, what are the feelings a person who has been rejected must face?

2) If you could read the mind of someone who has been rejected, what would those thoughts be a few weeks after the rejection? (For example, “I'll get even” or “He'll live to regret this” or “I know she didn't like ______ but. . .” ) What would they be?

3) How can you tell when you look at someone that they are struggling with rejection? How do people behave differently after they've been rejected?

**Process**  After the question period, begin processing answers by asking the recorder for each group to state one answer listed for the first question. Go from group to group asking for a new or different answer until there are none. Record the items on newsprint and affix to the wall for the remainder of the meeting. Repeat the same process for questions 2 and 3. Use active listening to clarify what group members are stating and to emphasize the effects rejection experiences exert on thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
PROCESSING REACTIONS TO THE GROUP THUS FAR

Purpose To gain feedback from participants regarding the pace of the group in order to determine if any resistance is building to either the content or the procedures being employed.

Instructions to Participants “You’ve learned by now that being in a group requires you to share things and take some risks at a rather rapid pace. If you’re like most of us, you prefer to share more selectively. Now is your chance to vent your feelings about this required risk-taking. Take a few moments to complete the following sentences in your mind:

1) One good thing about the process we’ve been using is__________________.

2) One reason this is difficult for me is ______________.

Process Allow two to three minutes for sentence completion, then have each member share the completions with the group. Leaders should actively listen and comment upon the normal inhibitions and apprehensions that commonly arise when people begin to share formerly private thoughts and feelings. Also, leaders should become aware of dysfunctional reactions, problems or resistance present or beginning to build.

GUIDED RE-CREATION OF PREVIOUS REJECTION EXPERIENCE

Purpose To vividly recreate each participant’s most powerful and significant rejection experience through mental imagery in order to identify key emotional and cognitive reactions; to create an experience-based foundation for later presentation of a model describing the ways rejection causes people to go into emotional decline; to begin individual discovery and assessment of the effects the rejection experience has had on participants’ lives.

Instructions to Participants [Note: Because new leaders sometimes need more help with the sustained “patter” used to conduct a group’s guided imagery than with general instructions, we include a script with this exercise. As with the general instructions, we urge you to create your own method and style and to be ready to adjust it to each group. After distributing the sheet entitled Session I: Guided Imagery Worksheet, tell participants you are going to take them through a guided imagery in which they re-create their rejection experience.]
experiences. Let them know you will ask them to stop at several points to respond to stimulus questions on the sheet and then return to the guided imagery. Encourage them to make themselves comfortable, then begin your script.

"Relax. Close your eyes and concentrate on calming your mind. Now, I want you to bring to mind an important relationship you were in that resulted in your being rejected. It may be the one you are still trying to resolve, or it may be a past situation. Begin by visualizing in your mind's eye what town you're in. Picture a calendar that shows the year and month. Imagine what the weather is like—hot, humid? Bring back to memory the person you were involved with—things you did, places you went.

"Focus on those feelings for a minute or two. Dwell on those memories and especially remember some really good times you had together.

"Now, think of those first indications of 'trouble in paradise.' For some of you, realizing there was trouble may have been fairly easy; others may have realized things were not on an even keel, yet you still felt comfortable in the relationship. How was it for you? When did you begin to suspect something was not quite right?"

*Emotional jarring (Phase 1)* "Move on to the point in time when you were actually told, directly or indirectly, that the relationship was over or very likely to end. Picture where you were when this happened. Were you at the beach? In your apartment? At a restaurant? Were there other people around, or were the two of you alone? Do you remember the time of year or what you wore?

"You have the bad news. Recall your feelings immediately after you learned. Were you stunned? Confused? Angry? Sad? How did you feel? Think of a word or phrase that captures for you your immediate emotional reaction to the ending of this relationship.

"After you learned and reacted emotionally to the news, what did you do? What action did you take? How did you handle the situation? Picture for a minute or two what you did about it.

"Open your eyes now and write down your immediate emotional reaction and how you handled the situation so we can talk about it later; then close your eyes again and return to your thoughts about the relationship."

* Titles of the relationship phases are for the leaders' information only.
Experiencing vulnerability (Phase 2)  “As time unfolded, how did your feelings change? Initially you may have felt anger, shock, hurt—did those feelings become more intense or less? It is common to feel hurt, upset, confused. Did the original feeling of surprise disappear and other feelings take its place? As time went by, did you feel yourself change in terms of how you felt about yourself? Did your habits change at all? In what ways? Did you begin to wonder about yourself?

“Open your eyes again and jot down what you remember about how you felt about yourself; how your habits changed; how you came to view the person who rejected you; and if you came to believe something about you or something you did played a major role in causing the rejection.

“As you finish jotting down brief phrases or reminders for these questions, relax and close your eyes again.”

Despairing (Phase 3)  “Refocus your attention on yourself. Try to take yourself back to that time when you clearly learned the relationship was over. You were probably feeling vulnerable. You were upset and still unsure exactly what was going on and what to do about it. Identify, if you can, the lowest emotional depth you reached. What was making you feel so low? If you're like most people, you were probably beginning to wonder just what it was about you that contributed to this rejection.

“Sometimes when a person is rejected, the rejector will make a clear statement or give clues about why he or she ended the relationship. At other times you're left to search inside yourself for what might have gone wrong. Regardless of which way it happens, most of us are propelled into a self-critical phase. Typically, this is the time when your self-doubts rise and you sink into an emotional quicksand of despair.

“If you can place yourself at one of these emotional low points, try to remember what you were thinking and feeling. Characterize that emotion in your mind now and remember those thoughts about yourself. Get them firmly fixed in your mind. As soon as you do, open your eyes and write them on the sheet of paper; we'll come back to them later.”

Obsessing and feeling adrift (Phase 4)  “Look inward once more. Concentrate on getting back to your memories of the relationship and then on to the breakup and the period of time directly after it. Find your low point again. Are you there?
"At the heart of the rejection experience for most people is a tremendous sense of loss. Try to list in your mind what you felt you lost when this relationship ended. Picture four important things you lost. They may have to do with the other person or with yourself. List more than four if you want to, but come up with at least four. Take a few minutes to think of each of those losses.

"As soon as you've done this, begin writing those four losses on the last section of your paper and then sit restfully until everybody completes the process."

**Process** The leaders will begin processing this exercise by asking participants to share their reactions to being guided through this review of their former relationships. Leaders print the questions asked during the guided imagery at the top of newsprint sheets and attach to walls. Have participants move about the room placing their answers to the questions on the appropriate piece of paper. After this is completed, lead a general discussion of the answers given to each question and follow it with a summary which corresponds to a phase in the 4 stage model. For each of the four phases, the leaders watch for themes or patterns in the ways the male and female participants may have experienced or reacted to the rejection experience differently. If these themes arise, Gilligan's theory of different developmental paths should be presented. Finally, give each participant a handout describing the four stages in the emotional decline process, called Session I: Summary of the Coping-with-Loss Process. Help the participants understand that the emotional detachment process the rejector went through affects how their former partner now treats them.
HOMEWORK FOR SESSION I

Purpose and Instructions to Participants The purpose of this homework exercise is to make you aware of how frequently and in how widely varied situations we must cope with rejection. To accomplish this, we want you in a quiet reflective atmosphere where you can review your life in terms of encounters with rejection. We want you to think of rejection in a broader sense—not just love relationships but family relationships, and not just parents and brothers and sisters but friends, employers and teachers. Think of rejection also in terms of competitive events, of times when you tried out for sport teams, parts in school plays, or leadership positions.

As you come across an event that felt like rejection to you, list it on this sheet. Please do this exercise thoughtfully since the more you understand about rejection, the more complete will be your recovery from and resolution of the particular rejection episode that brought you to this group. Please bring this handout to the next session.
Session Two

CONTENT GOALS

• to help all participants review their personal history of rejection
• to determine how previous rejection impacts the resolution of current rejection episode and participants' changed or changing self-images
• to inform members of various factors affecting the length of recovery time
• to introduce concept of belief-making and its role in overcoming rejection

PROCESS GOALS

• to focus participants' immediate energy on this session activity with a warm-up exercise
• to continue the trust and acceptance building process among members by fostering group cohesiveness
• to monitor the pace of movement through each activity for indication of members' ability to handle the interpersonal give and take expected in this and future sessions
• to deepen the level of self-disclosure and feedback among participants
• to help (gently and sensitively) the group manage what they are learning so that each member can extract the greatest personal meaning from each exercise

OPENING EXERCISE

Purpose To build trust and acceptance among group members and to focus them on the group; also to continue encouragement of feedback and disclosure
Instructions to Participants  “Close your eyes, and focus on being here. Spend fifteen to twenty seconds remembering something you liked or found interesting about each member of this group. It might be something they said to you, the way they made contact with you, or even something you imagine about someone. We’re going to give you about five minutes to quietly review your impressions of the people in this group, then we’re going to ask you to move about the room and share those reflections with other group members.”

Process  After the exercise is completed ask group members to share their answers to these questions: (1) What was it like for you to give and receive this feedback? (2) How does giving it differ from what you normally do?

PERSONAL HISTORY OF REJECTION EXERCISE

Purpose  To help participants remember the many ways in which they have had to cope with rejection in their lives by reviewing their past experiences, and to help them understand the influence of this history of rejection experiences and certain other factors on the intensity of their current feelings of rejection.

Instructions to Participants  “Break into groups of four and try to join groups composed of others you haven’t had much contact with. When you are in your small groups, take out your homework sheet and designate someone in the group to go first, then proceed from left to right around the group. Each person will describe the various ways he or she has coped with the possibility of rejection. The listeners will attempt to understand the ways the speaker has been affected and also ask themselves if what the speaker describes applies to their lives as well. Each speaker will have about three minutes and we’ll let you know when it’s time to go on to the next.”

Process  After each small group completes the task, leaders should elicit from group members the various types of rejection experiences people have dealt with in the past. The leaders write the comments on newsprint under the categories of: love relationships, family, friends, competitive, work, and others. Summarize the input. Give examples of how one’s history of past rejections influences coping methods in future rejections. Point out how personal histories can decrease or prolong the length of time needed to resolve current dilemmas.
PROCESSING REACTIONS

Purpose To keep group members focused on extracting personal understanding from previous experience and on exploring alternatives that minimize the likelihood of rejection

Instructions to Participants “Rejection experiences are demoralizing, at least temporarily, if not in some more permanent way. We want to use the rest of the group time to share the different ways each of us has been affected by rejection. We also want you to think about and then share how rejection has changed you or how you’ve managed to prevent rejection from changing you in unwanted ways.”

Process Leaders facilitate open therapeutic discussion about participants’ personal battles with rejection and their consequences. When only 15 minutes remain, leaders should summarize and highlight the following factors that affect the length of the recovery period from a rejection episode:

- The degree to which separateness or connectedness is more central to one’s life
- Degree of immersion in the relationship
- General emotional state
- Personal vulnerabilities
- Amount and necessity of contact with the other person after the rejection
- Degree to which emotions are internalized or externalized
- Presence of unhealthy patterns of relating
- How the rejection episode took place

HOMEWORK FOR SESSION II

Purpose To continue the process of educating participants about the role of belief-making in overcoming rejection experiences

Instructions to Participants “Review a significant rejection experience in your past in terms of how it affected future relationships. What did you come to believe would be the best way to relate in a new relationship based on your past experience? How did you reach that conclusion?”
Session Three

CONTENT GOALS

- to begin discovery of dysfunctional beliefs formed as a result of rejection experiences
- to present the stages of recovery
- to help participants understand the concept of "self" and its need for protection from disintegration
- to highlight the central roles maneuvering and belief-making play in recovery and protection of self
- to point out that adopted beliefs can either increase or decrease the self's adaptive powers

PROCESS GOALS

- to focus quickly on the task of the session with an introductory exercise
- to add to the acceptance and trust necessary to a therapeutic milieu
- to evaluate informally the group's grasp of the concepts and information transmitted
- to maintain relatively equal participation rates of members as insurance of healthy group dynamics and cohesiveness

OPENING EXERCISE

Purpose  To focus participants on the task of the group and to help them discover dysfunctional beliefs they may have formed as a result of rejection

Instructions to Participants  “Close your eyes and complete in your mind the following sentence stem:

'Due to the rejection experiences I've encountered in my life, I've decided that in my next relationship I . . . .’
"Sometimes it is hard to immediately sense what you've decided. If that is the case, just sit calmly in a relaxed manner and search your mind for the first word or phrase that emerges. As soon as you have the rest of the sentence in your mind, open your eyes and write it on your paper. Don’t worry about whether it is the same as or different from what you came up with for your homework assignment.”

Process Leaders should focus on finding out not only what participants concluded, but also how easy it was for them to see what they concluded and how surprised they were by what they discovered.

THE RECOVERY PROCESS—PHASE 1, MANEUVERING

Purpose To begin discussion of the stages in the recovery process by reviewing how people typically recover from rejection experiences

Instructions to Participants “I want you to break up into groups of four and take a piece of newsprint and a marker. We’re asking you to brainstorm as many different ways as possible how people lessen the emotional jarring rejections bring to us. List as many of the automatic, reflexive, self-protective actions, behaviors, attitudes and thoughts we exhibit as you can. You should include anything that provides immediate relief from the pain. We’re not concerned right now with how long the relief lasts, only that relief be achieved. List all the ways you can imagine to relieve the pain, whether you’ve used them or not.

Process Make sure each group takes a piece of newsprint with the exercise instructions written at the top of the page. The instructions will direct them to list the various maneuvers people use to deflect the pain and anxiety of a rejection episode. After each group makes its list and the leaders put the pages on the walls, direct the members attention to them and ask for help in separating the various maneuvers into two types: 1) those which offer self-protection by externalizing the problem or by blaming others and 2) those which allow the person to shield him/herself from some inner feeling of vulnerability. Processing continues with the leaders presenting a brief lecture on what the self is, why it needs protecting and how people protect and defend the self from potentially fragmenting injuries. Next, the leaders describe how natural it is to try to lessen the impact of a rejection on one's self through shielding the self by
externalizing blame and causes. Several important points should be made about how maneuvering is designed to lessen disintegration of the self:

- Maneuvering protects the self by helping people to externalize or blame others, or by helping people circumvent a critical introspective self-analysis.

- Some people succeed in avoiding the introspective phase of a rejection experience by successfully employing defensive maneuvers. If successful, maneuvers help them avoid dealing with a painful set of circumstances, avoid losing their equilibrium and avoid feelings of being adrift, obsessing and despair. They might also protect them from drawing sweeping dysfunctional conclusions about their need to redirect their lives to avoid more pain.

- Maneuvering also can protect the self from disintegrating or shattering. To some extent, maneuvering is necessary in most traumatic events; the problem begins not when maneuvering is used as a temporary device to keep people intact during the traumatic phase of a crisis, but when its use continues well past the crisis phase and becomes incorporated in the personality.

- Why isn't maneuvering the best way to fully recover?
  1. It is done while a person is in a state of shock. Maneuvering, if it occurs at all, is done very close in time to the emotionally jarring event and often at this stage, people are so anxious to eliminate pain that any maneuver, no matter how disruptive it may be later in life, will be used.
  2. Over-reliance on maneuvers causes us to avoid necessary self-examination.

THE RECOVERY PROCESS—PHASE 2, BELIEF MAKING

**Purpose** To focus upon the role belief-making plays in the recovery process and to inform group of the benefits and hazards involved in forming new beliefs about oneself.

**Instructions to Participants** “Before going on to the second stage of the recovery process, take out and review your homework assignment. It was aimed at getting you to think about a significant rejection episode in your past in
terms of how it affects the way you have approached all your relationships since then. What lesson did you learn or what conclusions did you draw about relating to people from that past rejection? Was it a constructive or destructive lesson?

"Let's stay in the same small groups. Take no more than two minutes per person to share your information with the others. Focus on that rejection's effect on relationships that followed it and place on the newsprint the ways it changed you."

Process Before giving these instructions, give a short lecture on belief-making that includes the following points:

- Experiences as traumatic and overwhelming as rejection in an important love relationship almost always cause us to draw from them some personal meaning. Often we conclude we must change ourselves or the kind of people we relate to. We reach these conclusions at a time of shock and turmoil, when feelings of despair are creating a great deal of insecurity. Rejection produces a great reluctance to fully engage with someone new until our inner confusion is clarified.
- People gain the added measure of security they need at this time by forming beliefs, the purpose of which is to prevent exposure to a similar set of painful circumstances.
- The tendency to form such beliefs is a natural, normal reaction to rejection.
- Beliefs formed after traumatic events provide immediate help and relief but they may have some long term hazards which will be discussed later in the session.

After making these points and giving participants the instructions for their homework assignments, allow enough time to complete the exercise then place the information sheets on the walls and initiate a discussion about specific beliefs and belief-making. Highlight the following if appropriate:

1. Hastily drawn beliefs can have certain drawbacks:
   - They cover up weaknesses and defects better discovered and resolved.
   - Once developed, beliefs about what one must do to be safe are staunchly defended and noncompliance with the instructions of a belief may lead to considerable anxiety and fear.
   - A belief or conclusion based in a traumatic experience usually reduces one's ability to act as and be a fully feeling adult. People
become, to greater or lesser extent, actors playing the same role even when the rest of the cast and the play itself have changed.

2. By nature, belief-making goes on outside the conscious awareness. We seldom hear ourselves say, "Don't ever trust someone this much again" or "I'll never let someone see the real me again." That which happens outside conscious awareness is harder to change and control and its adverse consequences are often hidden from view.

3. Because they are messages that encourage avoidance, vigilance, covering up or other protective actions, beliefs are designed to reduce frustration, fear and anxiety.

4. Many people who are rejected tend at some level to believe the rejection occurred because something is wrong with them.

5. Belief making, despite all the hazards, plays an important part in enabling people to let go of the relationship. Beliefs fortify the self and allow it to go on functioning during traumatic events.

As a summarizing technique, point out that beliefs people form based in rejection experiences usually take one of these forms.

- I must forget about the relationship and put it behind me as fast as I can and the only way to do that is to tough it out and go on immediately.
- I must look inward to find the flaw, the inadequacy or other defect that probably caused the termination of this relationship.
- I'm ok, but the person I was involved with was flawed or otherwise defective, and I must not seek out people so carelessly in the future.
- My ex-partner and I happened to invest in a relationship that wasn't meant to be and the ending of it doesn't say anything negative about either of us.

LECTURE ON FINAL THREE STAGES OF RECOVERY

**Purpose** To make certain group members are introduced to all stages in the recovery process before the end of the session

**Process** Present the final three stages of recovery (letting go, objectifying and reemerging), respond to any questions and give examples to help participants remember the unique qualities of each stage.
HOMEWORK FOR SESSION III

Purpose   To aid participants in the discovery of how the beliefs they have formed affect future relationships

Instructions to Participants   "Look at the newsprint on the wall and take from there two beliefs you share. You will use them for your homework. We want you to examine both beliefs for the help they give you and for the difficulties they create in your recovery process. Identify and write down at least two ways each belief either helps or hinders good healthy relationships."
Session Four

CONTENT GOALS

- to continue the deepening understanding of personally held beliefs formed as a result of rejection
- to identify the benefits and drawbacks of those beliefs
- to highlight specific facts about how beliefs operate

PROCESS GOALS

- to help participants refocus from other tasks to those of the group
- to evaluate members' attitudes toward and satisfaction with the group thus far
- to deepen the self-discovery process about beliefs without sparking resistance
- to encourage risk taking and reduce the fear of inner discoveries

FOCUS EXERCISE

Purpose To help participants shift gears and focus on being present in the group to discuss their personal reactions to the group experience

Instructions to Participants “Before we begin to focus on the recovery process and the role our beliefs play in the recovery, we want to learn how well this group is working for you. We’d like you to complete a couple of sentences in your mind and then we’ll go around and ask you to talk about how you completed it. The first sentence begins, ‘What has been most helpful in this group is . . . ’”

Process Elicit sentence completions from each member.

Instructions to Participants “Now we would like you to complete the following sentence stem to yourself:
It would be especially helpful to me if in this group we . . ."

**Process** Again, ask each person to respond. This time reverse the order so those who came first now go last. Comment on similarities and themes of the responses.

RECOVERY PROCESS REVIEW

**Purpose** To re-acquaint members with recovery stages

**Process** Briefly review the stages from maneuvering, through belief making, letting go, objectifying, reemerging. Define each stage and remind the group of the key aspects of each. Give each group member a handout summarizing the stages of recovery.

BELIEF-MAKING

**Purpose** To identify the benefits and drawbacks of specific beliefs formed

**Instructions to Participants** “We’ll stay in the large group for now while each of you chooses one of the beliefs you’ve created for yourself and writes it on the newsprint we’re giving you. Below your belief write the pros and cons you discovered during your homework assignment and then affix it to the wall and stand beside it.” [Call on a member.] “Would you begin by telling us which belief you chose and what you see as its benefits and its drawbacks? [Repeat for all members.] “While we listened to these beliefs, you may have agreed or disagreed with what was said; you may even have thought what one person described as an advantage seemed to you a disadvantage. You also may have seen some advantages or disadvantages to others’ beliefs that they have not seen. We want you to share those differences for what we can learn from them. “Please move to the paper on your left, read what is there and then add to it your own pro or con. Keep on moving about the room until you’ve read and added to all the other papers. When you’ve done so, return to your own.”

**Process** Choose one belief to start with and have the person whose belief it is explain again the belief, personal pros and cons and what has been added by the group. Ask those who added to explain their reasoning. Repeat for all members. Discuss reactions and lead an open discussion about beliefs, all
the while trying to help participants remake rigid beliefs into changeable ones (the resculpting process). The summary at the end of the discussion should cover these points:

- Beliefs are nested; one belief feeds another we put in place and understanding them is like untangling fishing line, not so much difficult as painstaking and time-consuming.
- Beliefs are addictive and hard to give up.
- Beliefs actually work, so changing a belief will have consequences in your emotional life—not necessarily bad consequences, but ones that may require some emotional response.
Session Five

CONTENT GOALS

- to explain how beliefs become rigid at given points in life and operate at a subconscious level affecting people in ways they don't comprehend
- to help members reframe beliefs and thereby minimize their negative influence while retaining their protective value
- to inform participants of the connection between belief-making and the letting-go phase of the recovery process
- to increase emphasis on the recovery process by helping participants draw associations between beliefs and dysfunctional behavior

PROCESS GOALS

- to maintain the trusting and close interpersonal group atmosphere
- to attend with sensitivity the various feelings (anger, hurt, loss) brought about by the exercises
- to monitor personal progress and minimize resistance and to engage each participant in the change process

THE HUMAN KNOT

Purpose  To demonstrate how beliefs become entangled in our lives; to keep interpersonal closeness at a high level by continually building trust and acceptance among members

Instructions to Participants  "We are going to start this session by having everyone stand up and move to the center of the room. Your task is to join hands in such a fashion that you are clasping the hands of two different people, but not the people standing next to you. Now that all hands are joined,
we want you to start untangling yourselves without letting go of anyone's hand. Take as long as you need!"

**Process**  Lead a discussion of this experience by asking "What is it like to be physically close? What is it like to be interdependent?" and so on.

**RESCULPTING BELIEFS**

**Purpose**  to assist members in redesigning their beliefs to minimize negative effects of former rejection experiences.

**Instructions to Participants**  "Take a few moments now to review your list of beliefs and their pros and cons. After you've done your own thinking, ask anyone in the room for help in refashioning those beliefs in a way that retains the helpful advantages yet eliminates the disadvantages. Go to more than one person, please. Problem-solving is easier if you have lots of options. Also, feel free to ask us for suggestions as well.

"You can change only part of an old belief or you can choose a new belief that works better for you. When you have come up with some combination which gives you what you need without the problems of the old belief, go to your newsprint on the wall and write the changed belief along with its benefits. At that point we want you to forget about the rest of the group and what's going on around you. Try to focus on what you've put on your paper and go inside yourself to try the new belief on for fit. Does it fit better than the old? Is it perfect? Probably not. As you see the drawbacks of this new belief write them down alongside the benefits. How is it better, more protective, less restricting? Does it make you more vulnerable? When you are finished, please wait quietly until we are ready to go on."

**Process**  Ask for a volunteer to begin, then have each member recite what they have added to their belief charts. Facilitate a general, free flowing therapeutic discussion aimed at reinforcing the basic disadvantages of using self-limiting beliefs as protection against vulnerability. All members should be encouraged to help each person identify other benefits and drawbacks of the new beliefs. Emphasize the need for an effective and functional belief as a prerequisite to letting go. Point out that letting go also requires dealing with the key feelings involved with rejection: anger, hurt, loss. Help participants rid themselves of one major source of resistance to recovery—a dysfunctional belief which impedes their moving into the next stage of recovery.
Session Six

CONTENT GOALS

• to continue resculpting dysfunctional beliefs
• to point out participants' methods of clinging to their former relationships
• to identify ways members have begun to let go
• to emphasize the advantages of letting go

PROCESS GOALS

• to remove resistance to change by encouraging detachment from the former relationship
• to provide support for change through informative and motivational feedback
• to reinforce changes made and to stabilize new gains to ensure continuation of the therapeutic milieu supportive of open, trustful, spontaneous and genuine exchanges
• to extract as much personal meaning as possible from each exercise so that participants can detach from their former relationships

INTRODUCTION

Purpose  To summarize the work of the previous sessions and reinforce participants' new beliefs; to introduce them to important next step, letting go

Process  A short lecture that covers the following points: reflection on how members fortified themselves with newer, more functional beliefs; announcement that they are now ready to let go, especially to let go, especially of the longings, obsessions, anger and revenge associated with their former relationship; they are also ready to begin to accept the loss, to rediscover stability, to recognize their vulnerability and to realize that they can be okay in
spite of the loss; and the development of useful, functional beliefs facilitates the letting go and, thus, recovery.

LETTING GO EXERCISE, PART 1

Purpose To identify the ways by which people cling to former relationships and further aid each participant in recognizing how they are still caught up in the failed relationship as well as how they have begun to detach from it.

Instructions to Participants “Let’s brainstorm how we hold onto relationships already ended by rejection. . . ways you use, ways you observe others using. I’ll record them as we go along.” [Be certain to elicit response from every member of the group.] “Take the handout labeled Session VI: Letting Go, Part 1. You will make a personal profile on this sheet. The sheet is divided into two columns. In the left column, list the ways you have separated from the relationship; in the right, the ways you are still holding on.” [Examples may be needed: they have stopped calling the other person; they have taken pictures of the other out of wallets or off the wall; they don’t dream of the other, or at least not as often, etc. The opposite actions are examples of hanging on.]

Process Begin by having a participant describe her personal profile to the group in general terms. Is it lopsided? Equal? Was it a surprise to find one side longer than the other? Then, after the general description and reaction, the participant should read off both. Repeat until all have contributed. Intervenors should point out similarities and themes that arise as the group discusses the lists; they should praise individuals for progress in letting go and let them know the areas still troublesome to them will be their next target.

LETTING GO EXERCISE, PART 2

Purpose To help participants specifically identify some of the ways they are still holding on to the former relationship and to begin to appreciate the emotional and personal gains invested in not letting go.

Instructions to Participants “Look at your hanging-on list while we distribute new sheets of paper. Now that you all have paper, begin a sentence. Write: ‘I still . . . ’ and insert the first item on your holding-on list, then write: ‘because . . . ’ and follow it with the first explanation that occurs to you. Make a
new sentence for each of the items on your list. Some will be harder to complete than others and that's okay. Do the best you can.

**Process** Have each person read several of their sentences to the group, publicly affirming why they are doing what they are doing. Help the group identify the feelings each person is struggling with and the personal gains that may accrue as long as the person continues to hold on to the relationship. Then, leaders and group members join in trying to decipher the primary emotion running through all of a person's sentences. **Summary comments:** The primary emotion, which differs from person to person, can lock a person into a 'relationship with a relationship.' There are other factors at work that we will address in the next exercise.

**HOLDING ON—AT WHAT COST?**

**Purpose** To point out the price people pay to hold on to former relationships

**Instructions to Participants** “Think for a few minutes about this question: ‘How would my life be different if I let go of the things that bind me to this relationship?’ When you've given yourself enough time, jot down your thoughts on the paper we're handing out.”

**Process** Give each person the opportunity to describe how life would be different if he or she let go. Point out they have identified many of the fairly obvious and positive ways life could change but there is another less obvious category of change that feels disruptive and frightening. The challenge is to uncover some of those deeply hidden things which prevent their letting go. Lead them to discover and admit just what deeper lesson they are trying to avoid learning.
Session Seven

CONTENT GOALS

- to assist participants in recognizing the value of and need for viewing their previous relationship objectively
- to teach members an understanding of the life cycle of a relationship
- to free individuals from emotional attachment to their former partners, thus increasing readiness for reemergence to the social scene

PROCESS GOALS

- to continue the change and rebuilding process
- to work through the emotions associated with loss of the image of the former relationship
- to clarify and apply new awarenesses
- to manage the interpersonal dynamics of the group to avoid needless conflict and resistance

INTRODUCTION TO THE OBJECTIFYING STAGE

Purpose To help participants analyze their former relationship to identify the type of love relationship it was and to become more objective about it's strengths and weaknesses.

Instructions to Participants After making some introductory remarks about the importance of developing an objective understanding of the nature of your broken relationship, state the following to the group: "We have devised a brief self-assessment device to help you understand the type of love relationship that you and your former partner formed. Follow the instructions on how to answer and take as much time as you need."
Process As soon as the last participant has finished, have each person score his/her own inventory following your instructions. Once scoring is completed, pass out the scoring sheet and have members transfer their scores to the scoring sheet. Following this, present a mini-lecture on Sternberg’s theory of love relationships, a brief synopsis of which is provided for those leaders unfamiliar with his work.

Synopsis Sternberg (1986A) developed a triangular theory of love, in which love relationships and the bonds that form between people can be understood in terms of the relative emphasis placed upon three component elements of love: passion, intimacy, and decision/commitment. By analyzing relationships in terms of which of the elements or combinations of elements it is founded upon, seven kinds of love relationships emerge:

Infatuated Love - is based upon passion alone. Intimacy and commitment are largely absent. This type of love is similar to Tennov's description of limerance in which a person is obsessed with the love object and can not get enough. The love object is idealized rather than seen realistically. In addition, infatuated love has an asymmetrical passionate arousal component.

Liking love - is based upon intimacy, in the absence of passion and commitment. It has a sense of caring, closeness, attachment, and deep friendship.

Empty love - results from a commitment to love someone in the absence of intimacy and passion. This is a love style that some relationships evolve to over time as passions and intimacy decrease and only commitment and obligation remain.

Romantic love - is based upon high levels of passion and intimacy with either low levels or an absence of commitment. Passion, physical attraction, arousal, openness, and sharing are typical of this love style. In the early stages of this type of love, one of the components may be dominant but as the relationship progresses, it becomes more balanced between passion and intimacy.

Companionate love - has a high rating on intimacy and commitment, and a low rating on passion. This type of love is based upon feelings of commitment and a genuine liking and acceptance of one's partner. Physical attraction, if it is present, is not an overriding
force in the attachment. Companionate love is the type of love that romantic relationships often evolve toward.

**Fatuous love** - results from blending passion and commitment, with the intimacy component missing. As is the case with infatuated love, this is a highly unstable style of love: for without a genuine basis for intimacy, when the passion wanes commitment alone remains to maintain the attachment.

**Consummate love** - is the form of love that occurs when all three components of love have sufficient emphasis.

Sternberg, in addition to identifying these seven types of love, describes the different times for origination and importance for each of the three components of love and the importance of that timing to relationships. For example, in romantic relationships passion develops quickly, plateaus and undergoes decline as familiarity and habituation occur. Once passion declines it is difficult to rekindle. In companionate love, commitment is thought to develop slowly at first, then accelerate until it plateaus. If problems arise or stresses prove disruptive to the relationship, then commitment will likely decline and can ultimately disappear, destabilizing the relationship.

Following the mini-lecture, begin the process of helping each participant understand how the information applies to them by saying something like the following: *Well, how can we use this information to understand and resolve the rejection we experienced? Perhaps, most importantly you can identify your preferred style of attachment in love relationships? If you can, then compare your love style with the type of attachment your partner wanted, valued, or offered. Were you ships passing in the night, offering each other types of love relationships that were incompatible? Were you perfectly matched in style, yet had a love style, like infatuation, that was like a sprinter’s love - fast, fun, but brief? Did your love relationship die in transition from one type to another? Did the major component of your love disappear or decrease, causing the breakup?*

*By understanding your attachment style, you have a framework for reviewing your relationships and the disappointments and satisfactions experienced. Do you tend to form single- or multiple-component love attachments? do you form those relationships with people who are similarly matched? How did the components emphasized affect the stability and duration*
of your relationships? What would you change if you could start over? Will you change in future relationships, or select a better match?

Use as many of these stimulator questions as necessary to launch a full-range general therapeutic discussion on what each participant discovered about his/her former relationship and himself or herself. Encourage group suggestions of successful methods of dealing with this special area of vulnerability. Summary comments should include the value of objectivity in relationships; the need for objectivity in the recovery process; objectivity require a balanced view of the pluses and minuses of the other person and of the relationship; key dimensions that can make or break a relationship, and awareness of such dimensions and the ability of the participant to deal with them flexibly.
Session Eight

CONTENT GOALS

• to continue preparing members for new relationships by identifying and removing any remaining barriers
• to ensure clear understanding of the recovery process
• to close the change process in such a way that key information is understood and retained indefinitely

PROCESS GOALS

• to ensure group awareness that this is the final session
• to provide an opportunity for sharing personal reactions to other members of the group, the leaders and the workshop itself
• to end, gently and sensitively, the members' dependence on the group to terminate the group process and provide final summation and comments

BARRIER REDUCTION EXERCISE

Purpose To remove any remaining barriers to reemergence to the social scene

Instructions to Participants "Now that you have become more aware of relationships and how they go through cycles, imagine that tomorrow you are going to begin a new relationship. Did your breath come a little too quickly, or your stomach muscles tighten, or your heart skip a beat? That's not unusual. You may still have some difficulty making yourself fully available to a new relationship; some barriers, some areas of uneasiness, still remain. Visualize a computer screen with the heading: 'Barriers to Overcome.' List on that screen any barriers you feel still exist for you. They might be difficulties with
techniques such as 'where do I go to meet people, and how do I show someone I'm interested in them?' They may be more personal and general such as an overall anxiousness. Picture your list on that computer screen and when you can remember it, open your eyes and write your list, then hang it on the wall as usual.

**Process** Check the lists for the most common barriers. Lead a large group discussion concerning ways to overcome those specific areas.

**REVIEW LECTURE**

*Purpose* To recall and reinforce the critical elements of recovering from a rejection experience

*Process* Brief remarks that include these: Rejection experiences consist of predictable phases especially in terms of how emotional well-being dissolves and how reconstitution of recovery occurs. Essential elements of handling a rejection experience include: avoiding or resolving dysfunctional beliefs about yourself, developing the capacity to let go, acquiring an objective view of what happened in your previous relationship. You are in control and you have dominion over yourself and over your problems with rejection. Questions, if any.

**INTERPERSONAL WRAP-UP**

*Purpose* To give each participant, at both individual and large group level, an opportunity to express personal reactions and areas of concern resulting from the ending of the group

*Instructions to Participants* "Now that the group is coming to a close, it's important for you to express the personal feelings you've developed for each other. We'd like you to stand up and mill about the room, making contact with each member of the group. Share some personal feeling or reflection that you consider appropriate. You will have ten to fifteen minutes and we will encourage you to keep moving about and try to keep you on schedule."

*Process* As the closing exercise, have the group sit down together one more time and share any general personal feelings which they deem appropriate. Leaders simply facilitate these final expressions and, finally, ask participants to complete an evaluation of the leaders and the group experience.
APPENDIX TO MANUAL

OVERCOMING REJECTION IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS
SESSION 1

PHASES OF EMOTIONAL DECLINE

A. Emotional jarring
   1. The rejection experience causes an initial emotional jarring and is likely to tap one of the primary emotions of fear, hurt, or loss.
   2. These feelings can lead to secondary feelings of anger, abandonment, guilt, shock, sadness, depression, helplessness, and a loss of control.
   3. These jarring feelings inspire a coping response to protect oneself and maintain one’s integrity.

B. Experience vulnerability
   1. A rejection experience is a direct attack on the self; it thus arouses feelings of vulnerability.
   2. The challenges of a rejection experience bring into focus the faults and flaws we may have tried to cover up, compensate for, and deny.
   3. This vulnerability is the hardest phase of overcoming rejection because it brings on feelings of humiliation and uncovers our weakness to ourselves or others.
   4. When confronted with their failings, people take one of two paths. They tend to externalize the failings and see the situation as driven by external circumstances. (Even with this path, there is some experience of vulnerability). The other tendency is to internalize the sense of failure and get in touch with that sense of vulnerability.

C. Despairing
   1. The experience of vulnerability propels those who have been rejected into a despairing phase.
   2. Sometimes the rejection fuels this process by pointing to those things we should be vulnerable about—failings, deficiencies, and so on.
   3. At other times, despairing is fueled by self-aggression, as we examine ourselves for internal flaws and shortcomings.
   4. Regardless of which reaction fuels the despairing process, once internalized, it begins to take on a life of its own.
   5. In this stage, one feels unprotected and unable to stabilize.
D. Obsessing and feeling adrift

1. Obsession with the lost person; for example, obsession about turning the tables and becoming the rejector, or idolizing the rejector and seeing him/her as perfect or too good for you.

2. Obsession with the lost ideal; a fear-based obsession in which the rejected person feels that an irreplaceable someone has been lost and that the lost relationship was a peak experience never to be attained again. (People may feel this way because they think they'll never allow themselves to get this intimate again.)

3. Obsession with the loss of self: a belief that one has been fundamentally changed by the rejection and will never be the same again.
SESSION I

THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH REJECTION WORKSHEET

1. In your own experience or in the experience of friends whom you've helped cope with rejection, what are the feelings of someone who has been rejected?

2. If you could read the mind of someone who has been rejected, what would those thoughts be a few weeks after rejection? (For example, "I'll get even!" "He'll live to regret this." "I know she didn't like___ but...") What would they be?

3. How can you tell when you are looking at someone that they are struggling with rejection? How do people behave differently after they've been rejected?
SESSION I

GUIDED IMAGERY WORKSHEET

1. What was your immediate emotional reaction to the rejection?

What did you do? What actions did you take? How did you handle the situation?

2. How did you feel about yourself? How have your habits changed? How have you come to view the person who rejected you? Did you come to believe something about you or something you did played a major role in causing the rejection? If so, what was it?

3. What were you thinking and feeling at the lowest point, this moment of vulnerability and despair?

4. List four important things you felt you lost when this relationship ended. (They may have to do with the other person or yourself.)
SESSION I

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT

The purpose of this homework exercise is to make you aware of how frequently and in how widely varied situations we must cope with rejection. To accomplish this, we want you in a quiet reflective atmosphere where you can review your life in terms of encounters with rejection. We want you to think of rejection in a broader sense—not just love relationships but family relationships, and not just parents and brothers and sisters but friends, employers and teachers. Think of rejection also in terms of competitive events, of times when you tried out for sport teams, parts in school plays, or leadership positions.

As you come across an event that felt like rejection to you, list it on this sheet. Please do this exercise thoughtfully since the more you understand about rejection, the more complete will be your recovery from and resolution of the particular rejection episode that brought you to this group. Please bring this handout to the next session.
SESSION II

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT

Review a significant rejection experience in your past in terms of how it affected future relationships. What did you come to believe would be the best way to relate in a new relationship based on your past experience? How did you reach that conclusion?
SESSION III

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT

Look at the newsprint on the wall, and note two beliefs you share. You will use them for your homework. We want you to examine both beliefs for the help they give you and for the difficulties they create in your recovery. Identify and write down at least two ways each belief either helps or hinders good, healthy relationships.
SESSION IV

Summary of the Recovery Process

A. Maneuvering

1. Maneuvers are those actions, attitudes and behaviors we use to lessen the importance/impact of rejection and protect the self from pain.

2. Maneuvering protects the self by helping people to externalize or blame others, or by helping people circumvent a critical, introspective self-analysis.

3. Some people succeed in avoiding the introspective phase of a rejection experience by successfully employing defensive maneuvers. If successful, these maneuvers help them avoid dealing with painful circumstances, losing equilibrium, and feeling adrift, obsessive, or despairing. Maneuvers may also protect them from drawing sweeping dysfunctional conclusions about their need to redirect their lives to avoid more pain.

4. Maneuvering can also protect the self from disintegrating or shattering. To some extent, maneuvering is necessary in most traumatic events and is a temporary device to keep people intact during the traumatic phase of a crisis; the problem begins when it continues well past the crisis phase and becomes incorporated in the personality.

5. Why isn't maneuvering the best way to fully recover?

   a. It occurs while one is in a state of shock. If maneuvering occurs, it closely follows the emotionally jarring event; at this stage, people are often so anxious to eliminate pain that any maneuver, no matter how disruptive it may be later in life, will be used.

   b. Over reliance on maneuvers causes us to avoid necessary self-examination.

   c. Some successful maneuvers depend on adoption of a self-restricting belief.
B. Belief-Making

1. Belief-making means forming a belief about the need to change oneself or the kind of people to whom one relates in order to prevent a similarly painful situation in the future.

2. Experiences as traumatic and overwhelming as rejection in an important love relationship almost always cause us to draw some personal meaning from them. We often conclude we must change ourselves or the kind of people we relate to. We reach these conclusions at a time of shock and turmoil, when feelings of despair are creating a great deal of insecurity. Rejection produces a great reluctance to fully engage with someone new until our inner confusion is clarified.

3. People gain the added security they need at this time by forming beliefs, the purpose of which is to prevent exposure to similarly painful circumstances.

4. The tendency to form such beliefs is a natural, normal reaction to rejection.

5. Hastily drawn beliefs can have certain drawbacks:
   a. They cover up weaknesses and defects better discovered and resolved.
   b. Once developed, beliefs about what one must do to be safe are staunchly defended, and noncompliance with the instructions of a belief may lead to considerable anxiety and fear.
   c. A belief based in a traumatic experience usually reduces one's ability to act as and be a fully feeling adult. People become, to greater or lesser extent, actors playing the same role, even when the rest of the cast and the play have changed.

6. By nature, belief-making goes on outside conscious awareness. We seldom hear ourselves say, "Don't ever trust someone this much again," or "I'll never let someone see the real me again." That which takes place outside conscious awareness is harder to change and control, and its adverse consequences are often hidden.

7. Many people who are rejected tend at some level to believe the rejection occurred because something is wrong with them.

8. Belief-making, despite all the hazards, plays an important part in enabling people to let go of the relationship. Beliefs fortify the self and allow it to continue functioning during traumatic events.
9. Beliefs people acquire as a result of rejection experiences usually take one of these forms.

a. I must forget about the relationship and put it behind me as fast as I can, and the only way to do that is to tough it out and go on immediately.

b. I must look inward to find the flaw, the inadequacy, or whatever other defect probably caused the termination of this relationship.

c. I'm o.k., but the person I was involved with was flawed or otherwise defective, and I must not seek out people so carelessly in the future.

d. My ex-partner and I happened to invest in a relationship that wasn't meant to be, and its ending doesn't say anything negative about either of us.

C. Letting Go

1. Letting go means letting go of the other person, and regaining perspective on one's vulnerability.

2. Developing a belief allows you to start letting go. That belief allows you to picture yourself in a different light - a light of more equal stature.

3. As you feel and believe you're safe and okay, you no longer need to cling to the tattered relationship and can start letting go.

4. You know you're letting go when: your heart stops seeking revenge, you obsess less and feel less adrift, the sinking feeling stops and the elevation of spirit grows, and your sense of vulnerability comes into perspective again.

D. Objectifying

1. In this stage, you establish a more objective view of the relationship you had, the person involved and on yourself and your role in the relationship.

2. Objectifying comes about through the following: the fortification of a belief, decreased emotional investment, time intervening, life experiences with others, and the return of your amorous feelings.

3. As you get a more objective perspective, you can go back and reexamine your belief and allow yourself to continue letting go.
4. Letting go is releasing but with no real perspective. In objectifying, you know what you let go of, refuse to idealize that old relationship, and understand why you let go and why the relationship didn't work.

E. Re-emerging

1. In this stage, you go forward with your life in one of two ways:

a. because you have completely resolved the experience and are ready to face the future, or

b. because you have adopted a "helping" belief which gives guidance about how to approach new relationships. There is potential vulnerability here, however. As long as you stay within the limits of the belief system, you will avoid the vulnerability but because of the belief, you may be excluded from some kinds of relationships or some levels of intimacy.
SESSION VI

LETTING GO EXERCISE WORKSHEET, PART 1

The ways I have separated myself from the relationship:

The ways I am still caught up in the relationship:
SESSION VII

MY RELATIONSHIP WORKSHEET

1. How did you meet and learn about each other?

2. What made you feel there was a good foundation for a lasting relationship?

3. What problems haunted your relationship? Were there problems with intimacy, openness, communication, sexuality, decision making, trust, honesty, faithfulness, caring, consideration, etc.

4. How did each of you try to resolve these problems?

5. What finally proved unsurmountable?
Session VII

Read each question on the following pages and then determine if you believe it is very true, moderately true, seldom true, or not at all true about your former relationship. Circle the appropriate response on the answer sheet below. Please answer all questions.

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<th>Very True</th>
<th>Moderately True</th>
<th>Seldom True</th>
<th>Not at all true</th>
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<td>When there were problems in our relationship, I could not think about anything else.</td>
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| 16 | VT | MT | ST | NT | It was really easy to sympathize and give my full emotional support to _____.
| 17 | VT | MT | ST | NT | It was important to me that the love and affection I felt for _____ be fully reciprocated.
| 18 | VT | MT | ST | NT | Expressing our physical attraction and intimately sharing feelings was not as vital to forming our relationship as ensuring that it had long term viability.
| 19 | VT | MT | ST | NT | I had a strong desire from early in our relationship to have my relationship with _____ be exclusive.
| 20 | VT | MT | ST | NT | We feared that becoming emotionally close could cause problems and complicate our relationship and therefore we gave each other a lot of space to pursue personal interests.
| 21 | VT | MT | ST | NT | Most of the time we were going together, I felt free to ask directly and honestly for what I wanted.
| 22 | VT | MT | ST | NT | I felt a lot of passion in our relationship before I knew much about _____.
| 23 | VT | MT | ST | NT | It was characteristic of our relationship that I could hardly wait to tell _____ about my day and its frustrations.
| 24 | VT | MT | ST | NT | At the start of our relationship, we were quite practical in considering what we had to offer each other in terms of being a good match.
| 25 | VT | MT | ST | NT | Similar values, attitudes, and interests were essential to our decision to become a couple.
| 26 | VT | MT | ST | NT | It seemed that my love relationship with _____ grew out of our friendship.
| 27 | VT | MT | ST | NT | During our relationship, there were times that I couldn’t sleep because I felt so excited about being in love.
| 28 | VT | MT | ST | NT | I was careful in this relationship to limit physical involvement until I fully knew and understood _____.
| 29 | VT | MT | ST | NT | I was so infatuated with _____ that I felt insecure and jealous on a number of occasions.
| 30 | VT | MT | ST | NT | It was hard to imagine that I could love _____ unless I was sure it would be a permanent relationship.
Session VII

SCORING SHEET

Passion score

Intimacy score

Commitment score

Intimacy (liking love)

(Romantic Love)

Consummate Love

(Companionate Love)

Passion

(Infatuated Love)

(Fatuous Love)

Commitment

(Empty Love)
SESSION VII

PHASE OF A RELATIONSHIP HANDOUT

I. Initiation
A. Begins with the initial meeting and ends with the decision to start relating.
B. Some initial attraction that seems compelling enough to seek another meeting and to explore the possibility of a relationship.

II. Exploration
A. The initial attempts to determine if there is a basis on which a relationship can be built.
B. Attempting to give and get an expanded view of who you are and who your partner is.
C. A highly active phase (doing lots of things, exchanging lots of thoughts, feelings, and information)
D. Allows for the deepening of a relationship or provides the first critical juncture at which the relationship can terminate.
E. Decision making still seems uppermost (whether to have a relationship)

III. Establishment
A. Begins with the decision having been made to have a durable relationship that can be mutually satisfying and fulfilling.
B. Typical issues of a relationship are confronted:
   1. Equanimity (power and control)
   2. Intimacy
   3. Expressiveness
   (At this point, the relationship deterioration process becomes individual to some extent.)
IV. Discovery
Discovery is the uncovering of needs, beliefs, fears, hopes that are just becoming clear (because of developmental reasons or because of things going on in the relationship), as well as revelations about your partner.

V. Redefinition
A. You attempt to act on your new discoveries in a way that would enhance the value of the relationship to you and increase your bond with the other person.
B. A stormy time because partners don't usually show an equal desire to redefine the relationship; usually one partner feels asked to give up more than his or her fair share.
C. Failed attempts to redefined the relationship are the seeds of discouragement.

VI. Discouragement
A. One or both persons in a relationship feel they have made an honest effort and as many compromises as warranted, but things still haven't improved enough
B. People feel they are down to one of three options: settle for the relationship as it is; allow the discouragement to inspire a redefinition effort; allow discouragement to lead to emotional withdrawal and detachment, with or without obvious external cues.

VII. Rejection
A. The rejector has withdrawn the emotional investment from the relationship and has probably privately been working on withdrawing for some time; during this time, affectionate feelings may or may not have developed toward someone else.
B. Depending on the degree to which both redefinition and discouragement are openly discussed, dissolving the relationship will seem more natural if there has been an open understanding of the discouragement and redefinition attempts, and more jarring and inexplicable if discouragement and redefinition have gone on privately in the discouraged person's mind.