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Radical Feminism

edited by Anne Koedt • Ellen Levine • Anita Rapone



An anthology of radical feminist writings from the current women's movement. Forty-five articles ranging from the personal to the theoretical and drawn largely from the feminist annual NOTES.

Consciousness Raising

This introduction can serve as a working sheet for a beginning consciousness raising group.

The typical consciousness-raising group is composed of six to twelve women who meet on an average of once a week. Groups larger than ten or twelve are less conducive to lengthy personal discussion and analysis. The consciousness-raising process is one in which personal experiences, when shared, are recognized as a result not of an individual's idiosyncratic history and behavior, but of the system of sex-role stereotyping. That is, they are political, not personal, questions.

Generally consciousness-raising groups spend from three to six months talking about personal experiences and then analyzing those experiences in feminist terms. Thereafter they often begin working on specific projects including such activities as reading, analyzing and writing literature; abortion law repeal projects; setting up child care centers; organizing speak-outs (rape, motherhood, abortion, etc.); challenging sex discrimination in employment, education, etc.

The following is a list of topic areas generally discussed. Although listed by week, they are not in any particular order, nor is it necessary to rigidly adhere to a one-week/one-topic schedule. The questions are examples of the kinds of areas that can be explored.

Week 1 GENERAL: What are some of the things that got you interested in the women's movement?

Week 2 FAMILY: Discuss your parents and their relationship to you as a girl (daughter). Were you treated differently from brothers or friends who were boys?

Week 3 FAMILY: Discuss your relationships with women in your family.

Week 4 CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: Problems of grow-

ing up as a girl. Did you have heroines or heros? Who were they? What were your favorite games? How did you feel about your body changing at puberty?

Week 5 MEN: Discuss your relationships with men—friends, lovers, bosses—as they evolved. Are there any recurring patterns?

Week 6 MARITAL STATUS: How do (or did) you feel about being single? Married? Divorced? What have been the pressures—family, social—on you?

Week 7 MOTHERHOOD: Did you consider having children a matter of choice? Discuss the social and personal pressures you may have felt to become a mother. What have been your experiences and thoughts regarding such issues as child care, contraception and abortion?

Week 8 SEX: Have you ever felt that men have pressured you into having sexual relationships? Have you ever lied about orgasm?

Week 9 SEX: Sex objects—When do you feel like one? Do you want to be beautiful? Do you ever feel invisible?

Week 10 WOMEN: Discuss your relationships with other women. For example, have you ever felt competitive with other women for men? Have you ever felt attracted to another woman?

Week 11 BEHAVIOR: What is a “nice girl”? Discuss the times you have been called selfish. Have you ever felt that you were expected to smile even when you didn’t feel like it?

Week 12 AGE: How do you feel about getting old? Your mother getting old? What aspects of aging do you look forward to? Fear? Do you think it is a different problem for men and women?

Week 13 AMBITIONS: What would you most like to do in life? How does being a woman affect that?

Week 14 MOVEMENT ACTIVITY: What are some of the things you would like to see the women’s movement accomplish?