



Girl Connection

For those who serve adolescent females

June 2006

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Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force

Addiction and Empowerment

"In the traditional 12-step approach to addiction (known as Alcoholics Anonymous), basic assumptions about addiction and addicted people are based on observations, made over 50 years ago, of *100 white, primarily upper middle class, professional men who were alcoholic*. These theories were then adopted, without examination, for a multitude of other addictions and problems, and presented routinely to people of different races and social strata as the *one and only way to overcome addiction*." *

The 12 steps rely heavily upon giving up individual power to a Higher power. For young women, this surrendering of personal power is reflective of their experience of having power taken from them through sexual, physical and emotional abuse as well as other trauma, including involvement in controlling and abusive romantic relationships. It also reflects their experience of a culture that does not recognize let alone respect feminine power but instead ridicules, inhibits and attempts to undermine that power.

An alternate method for dealing with the issue of addiction comes from Dr. Charlotte Kasl, Ph.D. In her book, *Many Roads, One Journey: Moving Beyond the 12 Steps*, Dr. Kasl discusses the 16 Steps and the nature of empowerment groups. Further detail about running such groups can be found in her follow-up workbook *Yes, You Can! A Guide to Empowerment Groups*.

In *Yes, You Can!* empowerment, which is the driving force behind these group processes, "is based on love, not fear; is a wholistic approach to a problem; works toward transformation; is about choice; means living with complexity; supports flexibility and change; encourages creativity; takes us beyond labels; teaches us to trust our wisdom; and is a community effort".* This empowerment process is also done within a group context. This makes it conducive to the relationship development and verbal process time that is crucial for young women. It is an excellent fit with gender-specific programming for young women. Check out the 16 Steps and judge for yourself!

The 16 Steps

1. We affirm we have the power to take charge of our lives and stop being dependent on substances or other people for our self-esteem and security.
2. We come to believe that God/Goddess/Universe/Great Spirit/Higher Power awakens the healing wisdom within us when we open ourselves to the power.
3. We make a decision to become our authentic selves and trust in the healing power of the truth.
4. We examine our beliefs, addictions and dependent behavior in the context of living in a hierarchical, patriarchal culture.
5. We share with another person and the Universe all those things inside of us for which we feel shame and guilt.
6. We affirm and enjoy our intelligence, strengths and creativity, remembering not to hide these qualities from ourselves and others.
7. We become willing to let go of shame, guilt, and any behavior that keeps us from loving ourselves and others.
8. We make a list of people we have harmed and people who have harmed us, and take steps to clear out negative energy by making amends and sharing our grievances in a respectful way.
9. We express love and gratitude to others and increasingly appreciate the wonder of life and the blessings we do have.

The 16 Steps (cont.)

10. We learn to trust our reality and daily affirm that we see what we see, we know what we know and we feel what we feel.
11. We promptly admit to mistakes and make amends when appropriate, but we do not say we are sorry for things we have not done and we do not cover up, analyze, or take responsibility for the shortcomings of others.
12. We seek out situations, jobs, and people who affirm our intelligence, perceptions and self-worth and avoid situations or people who are hurtful, harmful, or demeaning to us.
13. We take steps to heal our physical bodies, organize our lives, reduce stress, and have fun.
14. We seek to find our inward calling, and develop the will and wisdom to follow it.
15. We accept the ups and downs of life as natural events that can be used as lessons for our growth.
16. We grow in awareness that we are sacred beings, interrelated with all living things, and we contribute to restoring peace and balance on the planet.

*Information for this month's newsletter was taken from www.charlottekasl.com/16steps.html
& *Yes, You Can!: A Guide to Empowerment Groups*.

Please visit the website for details about available publications and other information/resources.

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The Girl Connection

newsletter is provided as a service of the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force.
For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Gender-Specific Services Task Force,
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