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## Guidelines: Consciousness Raising for Women

National Organization for Women, Inc

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## CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING FOR WOMEN

### I GOALS

1. To understand how you have been personally affected as a result of being born female in a patriarchal society.
2. To give support to women struggling to take charge of their own lives and to eliminate sexism in our society.

### II GUIDELINES

1. Speak from personal experience. Most of what has been written about women, until very recently, has defined woman chiefly in terms of being not man. For women to learn the truth about themselves, they must look to each other for the shared experiences that describe woman.
2. Confidentiality at CR meetings is an absolute. No information expressed by CR members must leave the group.
3. No men are allowed at women's CR groups. Women have been defined only in relation to men for so long that they will not speak openly if men are around.
4. Encourage self-expression and assertive behavior. Women have seldom been listened to seriously or allowed to stand up for their opinions. Women have important things to say and do. They need the support of their sisters to develop their potential. CR is not an encounter group. Don't advise or criticize your sisters. Give every woman the freedom to follow her own path at her own chosen speed.
5. Interaction among particularly close friends should be minimized during CR. Popularity is not a criteria for CR membership. Differences of age, opinion, and lifestyle are welcome. Everyone gains from the intellectual and social stimulation of diversity. Everyone has strengths to be developed and weaknesses to be dealt with.
6. Once CR has begun, there should be no announcements. CR is a place to think about oneself, one's sisters, and one's society. Conduct business or action planning at another time.
7. Children are everyone's concern. Do not exclude a woman from CR because she cannot afford child care. A collection of what each woman feels she can contribute should be taken at each meeting to furnish a child care fund. Since it is difficult to think with children roaming around the room, child care should be provided in another room or at another home.

8. Choose a neutral building or rotate meetings among the homes of the CR members. No one home should become the regular meeting place for CR. The woman at whose home the CR is being held is not the hostess. If members want refreshments, they should bring their own.

### III CR STRUCTURE

1. 5-10 members
2. Everyone sits in a circle and speaks as her turn arises through rotation. Anyone not wishing to speak may pass.
3. Do not interrupt your sisters. If you think of a comment while another woman is speaking, write it down and wait your turn.
4. The first time around there is a 10-15 minute time limit on individuals speaking. The group may go around the circle a second time if they wish, after which the topic is open to general discussion.
5. During the general discussion, try to pick out the underlying themes or generalizations running through the women's individual statements. Draw conclusions.

### IV CR CO-ORDINATOR

Each week a different woman, chosen by rotation, should maintain the guidelines at the CR. Her job is to get the CR started, make sure no one abuses the time limit for speaking, or interrupts, propose at least one topic for the next CR, and initiate the drawing of conclusions at the end of CR.

### REFERENCES

Women's Collective  
c/o Eileen Sarkissian  
Stratford, Conn. 06497  
published by KNOW, inc.

"Rapping in Small Groups"  
Sappho Collective, New York