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## Guidelines: Consciousness Raising Group Meetings

National Organization for Women. Jacksonville Chapter

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### CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GROUPS

Consciousness-raising groups are the backbone of the Women's Liberation movement. All over the country, women are meeting regularly to share experiences each has always thought were "my own problems". A lot of women are upset by remarks men make to us on the street, for instance, but we think other women handle the situation much better than we do, or just aren't bothered as much. Through consciousness-raising, we begin to understand ourselves and other women by looking at situations like this in our own lives. We see that "personal problems" shared by so many others--not being able to get out of the house often enough, becoming exhausted from taking care of the children all day, perhaps feeling trapped--are really political problems. Understanding them is the first step toward dealing with them collectively, whether in forming a day care center, exploring job possibilities, or planning the best strategy for getting our husbands to help with the housework.

A consciousness-raising group consists of a small number of women (8-15) who meet informally once a week at a member's home or women's center. Ask friends to bring friends--it isn't necessary to know everyone. Sisterhood is a warm feeling!

A different topic could be chosen each week, and everyone discusses it in terms of her own life. Go around in a circle, each woman talking in turn so that everyone speaks; this keeps anyone from dominating a discussion and helps keep on the topic. After everyone has talked (when you start in your own group you will find it isn't hard to speak in a small, close group), you might want to discuss the information you gained as you went around the room.

At the first meeting each person usually talks about why she wants to join Women's Liberation, what she thinks the group will be like, and talks a little bit about her own background and how she came to be at the meeting. This breaks the ice very effectively.

Topics: a different one each week or so. They are usually both specific and basic. Here is a partial list of topics that other groups have discussed:

- Why did you marry the man you did? (Or date the man you do?)
- How do you feel men see you?
- How do you feel about housework? What does your husband do around the house? Do you feel guilty when your house is dirty?
- Do you think that what you do with your day is as important as what your husband does with his day?
- What did you want to do in life? What kept you from doing it?
- How did you learn as a little girl what "feminine" meant? Do you worry about being "truly feminine"? What does "femininity" mean to you in terms of your own life?
- What did you do as a little girl that was different from what little boys did? Why? Did you ever want to do anything else?
- What did your parents teach you about sex?
- How do you feel about menstruation? How did you feel when you had your first period?
- What was your first sex experience?
- What is a "nice girl"? Were you a "nice girl"?
- Do you pretend to have an orgasm?