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# SEXUAL ASSAULT AND GRIEF RECOVERY

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# **Sexual Assault and Grief Recovery Program**

This program is designed to help women that have suffered trauma and grief in their lives. The program is specifically targeted toward women that have been victimized sexually through trafficking, incest, rape, or molestation. The content provided can be used across a broad age range and cultural background. Facilitation to ensure understanding and age appropriateness is suggested.

Topics covered in this material include grief, guilt, shame, trust, anger, self-esteem, the importance of boundaries, and moving forward from trauma.

When working with victims of sexual assault, it is important to create an environment where they feel safe to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This can be accomplished through listening, offering helpful coping strategies, and avoiding condemning discussions due to their experiences. Confidentiality is imperative for successful trust building, so it is recommended that you remind the women that the group is a safe place to share, and that no information shared in the room should be shared with anyone outside of the group.

This program is designed to be a guidebook, and you are encouraged to change what is necessary to ensure cultural sensitivity and maximum benefit to participants.

Finally, be encouraged that healing from trauma is a journey that each woman will walk for a lifetime. You are an important part of this journey. Thank you for your compassion and courage.

## **Tips For Program Implementation**

- Create a safe space for the women to share their experiences.
- Make the room comfortable and inviting.
- Invite each woman to share only when she is comfortable. Encourage, but do not force full participation.
- Ask the women to make a commitment to stay in the program until it is finished.
- Make sure that each person understands the importance of complete confidentiality.
- Don't allow your emotions to get in the way (Often, the stories you will hear are difficult, so it is important that you not show too much of your own emotion. The women need to be able to express their emotions fully without having others feelings projected on them.)
- Always listen. Each woman in the program needs to feel that she has a voice, and that what she has to say is important.

- Create a fun environment where the women can laugh and be themselves.
- Don't allow others in the group to make fun of or put down any participant. There should be a zero tolerance policy for this.
- Make their time special with either a food that they love, a special drink, or a small gift that they can take home.
- Remember that physical touch may be difficult for these women, so be sure to respect their boundaries!
- Remember that these women have been through a lot of trauma. Offer what you can, and if need be, refer more serious concerns to a professional counselor or doctor.

## **How This Program Works**

- Play a game that is culturally relevant and fairly quick to break the ice and bring out the smiles.
- Start by asking each woman how they have been feeling using five words or less. This helps women learn how to identify and express their own feelings in a non-intimidating verbal way.
- Read through the provided topics for the session. Reading through by yourself prior to the meeting may help you become more familiar with the topics and materials. This is suggested.
- Read the story provided about Anaya, and feel free to change the story names to make sure that they are culturally relevant.
- Ask the provided questions and allow the women to answer freely. Remember to encourage but not force participation. Try reminding the women that the more they participate, the farther along their journey to healing they will get.
- Let conversation flow. Don't be afraid to stay on one topic longer if that is what the group needs.
- Do the activity provided at the end of the session.
- End on a positive note, and remember to let them know how excited you are about the next session.

# Introduction

- If you have a group that does not know you, or each other, take a few minutes to go around the room have everyone introduce themselves. Also, remember to start with a fun little game to get everyone comfortable!
- Remind everyone that we are going to be sharing personal stories and talking about difficult topics. Everyone needs to be respectful and sensitive to others story and emotions.
- Encourage sharing and let them know that sharing will lead them down the path to healing!

## Week One Truth

Today we are going to start by talking about sexual abuse and rape. Sexual abuse and rape is when any person, a family member or a stranger touches your body sexually or has unwanted sex with you. It happens to many women when they are children, and it happens to women as they grow up. This may be done to pay a debt, to get money for your family, or just because of another person's sexual desire for you. This is always wrong no matter what the reason is for it. No one should ever touch you or have sex with you unless you say that they can.

Another form of sexual abuse is sex trafficking. This is where a person is forced to have sex with many people for little or no money. Sometimes women are kidnapped and forced to have sex, and other times, women decide to have sex for money, but are later not allowed to leave that job. Even if you were paid or given something in return, like food, clothing or drugs, that does not mean that you wanted to have sex, and it does not make it okay for anyone to make you have sex. It is always wrong for a person to make you have sex when you do not want to.

Many countries have different rules, and they say that it is okay to make someone have sex, or to touch someone sexually when they do not want you to. Sometimes, the police even say that it is okay. Even people in the village may say that it is the woman's fault, or that she deserved it because she was drinking or flirting. But, your body belongs to you and no one has the right to touch you sexually or have sex with you unless you want to.

Sometimes, after being raped or experiencing sexual abuse, women do not feel like themselves. They become sad, or scared. Sometimes they are easily angered, or they do not even want to leave the house. These are normal ways to feel, and these feelings do not last forever. You are taking the first step to healing and recovery from the abuse you have experienced. You are brave and strong!

Let's start reading about Anaya's journey through hardship and healing!

# Anaya's Journey

## Chapter 1

Anaya had dark brown eyes and beautiful long dark brown hair. She was beautiful, and everyone in the village admired her. Anaya always had a smile on her face, and she was known in the village for being kind and helpful. After her housework was done, Anaya would run through the fields singing and dancing. When the day was hot she would climb high up in a tree for shade, and she would dream about what she would do with her life and how she would change her village. She was a dreamer.

One morning early, Anaya woke up and saw that her mother looked sad and had eyes full of tears. Her family needed money to buy food and they did not have any. They were hungry, and finding work was hard in the village. Anaya knew she had to help, so the next day she left for the big town far away. She heard that there were good jobs at a hotel in the big town, and she heard that she could make lots of money for her family.

When Anaya reached the town she saw all of the tall buildings, and many people running around doing their work. Her eyes had never seen anything like this before. She was scared and excited to be in a big town. She heard about a man that owned a hotel and was hiring people, so she walked around the town until she found the hotel and the man that owned it. When she saw him, she thought that he was kind. He was nice to Anaya, and he seemed to want to help her. He told her that he could get her a job and even told her she could stay in a room at the hotel for free. Anaya was so happy! She could see her mothers face with no more tears. She thought about the table at their house and how it would be full of food. Anaya's beautiful smile just got bigger and bigger as she thought of how much her new job would help her family.

That night, tired from her long journey, Anaya was laying down to sleep. She was so excited that it was hard for her to close her eyes. She was dreaming of the town and the many adventures she would have there. Suddenly, her door opened. She sat up and looked through the darkness and saw the hotel manager standing there. He walked in and closed the door. Her room was very dark and it was very quiet. Anaya's heart started to beat very fast and she felt scared. He told her that she was very beautiful and that he liked her. Anaya was so happy to have a job and she did not want to make her new boss mad, but she knew that he should not be in her room. She told him to leave in a strong voice, but he would not listen. She tried to get up and leave the room, but he pushed her down and told her she had to stay. Anaya could not believe what happened next. She cried and cried and told him "no", but he would not listen. He raped her.

When he was done, he told Anaya not to tell anyone, or he would hurt her family. He left the room and Anaya could not move. She thought he was a nice man, but a nice man would not hurt her like that. The room felt darker than it was before,

and Anaya felt alone, scared and ashamed. “Why did this happen to me?” she wondered. “How can I ever tell my family?” She fell asleep with tears filling her eyes and sadness in her heart.

After that terrible night, Anaya knew she should not stay in the hotel. She made up her mind to leave the big town, so she walked the long road home. As she walked, she watched her many tears hit the ground, turning the red dirt on the road into mud. When her mother saw her walking in the distance, she ran to greet her. As she got closer, she saw that Anaya had been crying. She asked her, what was wrong, but Anaya did not feel like she should tell her mother. She was afraid that her mother would throw her out of the house because of shame. She thought that she had made her family look bad because she was raped. Anaya felt like she had done something wrong, and that it was her fault that she was raped.

For many days Anaya just wanted to sleep because she was so sad. Food did not taste good to her and she felt like she was never hungry. After she was raped, Anaya lost her smile. She did not want to laugh, climb trees, or sing. She felt like all of her big dreams were gone. Her heart was sad. When she closed her eyes she could see the hotel manager’s face, and she felt like she was back in the room where she was raped. Anaya became scared of men and afraid that they would hurt her. She did not feel like she could trust them, or trust herself.

## Questions Week One

1. Can you see yourself in Anaya’s story? Where?
2. How many of you have experienced rape or some sort of sexual abuse?
3. Would anyone like to share their story?
4. How many of you have been threatened not to tell the truth about rape or sexual violence against you?
5. How has rape or sexual violence against you shaped your life?
6. How are you different now, after that experience?

## Activity Week One

- Start this activity by telling the women that it will take strength and bravery to complete this activity, but that you know they are all brave and strong women.
- Break the girls up into groups of two or three. Ask the girls to share their stories with one another about their sexual assault.
- Remind them that they do not have to share their story, but that as long as they stay silent about what has happened to them, the abuse will have power over them.
- End on a positive note by playing music and having a snack. Try to give each woman a heartfelt compliment as they are leaving. Try to pick a unique quality you noticed about them, and try to make them all different!

## Week Two

# Shame and Guilt

Guilt and shame are feelings that you get deep inside your heart when you have done something wrong. If you have ever hurt someone with your words, or taken something that did not belong to you, you probably had this feeling. This is normal when you have done something wrong, but sometimes after abuse, we experience guilt and shame when we have done nothing wrong. It is easy to feel that you have done something wrong after rape, or sexual abuse because it is an act against your body. It is dirty, full of darkness, and it is wrong. It is important for you to remember that you are not guilty because of someone else's actions against you.

Shame can also be something that we believe our families will have if they know about the rape or the sexual abuse. This can be because of religion, or just the normal beliefs in the village or town. This type of shame should not be placed on you if you have been raped or sexually abused because it is not your fault. The shame belongs to the person that raped you or sexually abused you. It is him alone that deserves to feel shame.

Shame is something that can be moved out of your life if you look it in the eye and choose to believe the truth. The truth is, you have done nothing wrong. You did not deserve to be raped or sexually abused. You are not dirty, or a bad person because of what happened to you. It does not matter what you were wearing, if you were drunk or on drugs, or whether or not you told your abuser "no". The truth is that you have not done anything to deserve to be sexually abused.

When you look back at the abuse, you may wish that you would have done something differently, or you may have learned some hard lessons. Walk forward, knowing that next time you will do it differently for yourself. Don't let those lessons be a reminder of what you wished that you did, but take what you have learned, and let it strengthen and prepare you. Remember, the blame belongs to the abuser, not to you.

One of the most powerful ways to get rid of shame is to tell your story. Stories of sexual abuse can feel very dark, and it can feel like they have power over you. Once you share your story, it is in the light, and darkness cannot stay around it. Find someone that you trust, and share your story with them. Shame no longer has the power to hold you down and make you feel guilty.

# Anaya's Journey

## Chapter 2

Early in the morning, Anaya would walk down to the river to bathe. She would wash herself over and over. After being raped she felt dirty, and she never felt like she could get clean no matter how much soap she used and no matter many times she washed herself in the river. She always left feeling just as dirty as she did before.

Anaya thought over and over about what she had done to deserve being raped. She wondered if she smiled too much at the hotel manager, or if she made him think that she liked him. She told herself, "I should have been stronger." "I should have yelled 'NO' louder." She thought that she must be a bad person for this to happen to her.

In Anaya's town many girls were raped, but no one ever talked about it. Many people would not blame the man that raped the girls, but they would blame the girl instead. Sometimes the village would stop talking to the family of the girl that was raped, or they would make them leave the village. Anaya had all of these thoughts running around in her head. She did not want her family to have shame, or to have to leave the village because of her. She remembered the words the hotel manager said to her about hurting her family if she told, so she decided not to tell anyone.

One day Anaya was walking in the village and she saw Eva. Eva had long flowing white hair that she tied up on top of her head. Little pieces always fell down to blow in the wind and brush her cheeks. Her eyes were bright blue and full of strength and wisdom. She had seen many years with those eyes. All the sunlight in the world was not as bright as Eva's smile. Even the darkest day could be made light when Eva smiled. Her face was wrinkled with the deepest wrinkles Anaya had ever seen, and Anaya often thought about the many years it must have taken to get so many wrinkles. She was a very old woman, but her spirit was young.

Anaya sat studying Eva as she swept, gathered water, and prepared her meals out in the hot sun. Soon Eva looked up from her work and saw Anaya staring at her. "Hello Anaya!" Eva said with a smile. Anaya looked back at her, unable to smile and said, "Hello." Eva thought it was very strange that Anaya did not smile at her because Anaya was known for her beautiful smile. "Come over here Anaya." Eva said with a strong but kind voice. Anaya slowly walked over, not really wanting to talk. When she got to Eva's doorstep, Eva stood up from her cooking pot, held Anaya's hands and said, "Let me look into your eyes." Anaya stopped looking at the ground, and looked into Eva's bright blue eyes. She was trying to fight the tears, but soon, tears filled her eyes. "You are hurting Anaya." Eva gently said, "And you look like you have lost your smile." Eva, being very wise said, "I think maybe you have not lost your smile, but that your smile has been stolen." Anaya burst into tears. All of the tears she had held inside ran down her cheeks. She cried so much she wondered if she could ever stop. Eva surrounded her with a strong hug and just let her cry.



Once Anaya's tears dried up, Eva said, "Tell me where all of your tears came from." Anaya knew she could trust Eva, and she knew she had to tell someone if she wanted to find her smile again. Anaya gathered all of her bravery and before she knew it, she had told Eva everything. Part of her felt relief, and part of her was afraid of what Eva would think of her.

Eva took a deep breath, and paused for what seemed like a lifetime to Anaya. "What will she say?" Anaya wondered, "What is she thinking?" All of a sudden, Eva's gentle voice broke through the silence. Her eyes were full of tears, and as she spoke, her voice trembled, "Anaya, I am so sorry this has happened to you." "It was wrong for him to do this to you Anaya. My story is very much the same, and I know the hurt you feel now in your heart. It is not forever, but you have to choose to walk forward; you cannot let this stop you." Anaya responded with broken hope, "I just feel so much shame Eva." "I feel like such a bad person."

This was a road that Eva knew well. She had felt shame's burden, and at times wondered if she would survive the darkness. "Anaya" she said in a firm tone, "If you remember anything that I tell you, remember this; you did nothing wrong. You did not deserve this. You have no need to hold onto shame. Shame belongs to the hotel manager, but it does not belong to you. You tell shame to leave you alone because you are not guilty, and you tell shame that every time he tries to lie to you and say that this is your fault."

Anaya trusted Eva, and she believed her. She stood up and walked out the door thanking Eva for listening. On the walk home she repeated over and over, "Shame, you leave me alone because I have done nothing wrong and I am a good woman." By the time she reached her door she was holding her head a little bit higher, and she felt like the darkness of shame was beginning to leave.

## Questions Week Two

1. Have you ever felt shame like Anaya?
2. Do you fear that your rape or sexual experiences will bring shame upon your family?
3. Do you have anyone in your life like Eva that you can talk to?
4. Would anyone like to share their story?
5. Is rape acceptable in your home town or village?
6. What can you do to change this?

## Activity Week Two

Offer space for anyone that did not share their story last week, and would like to this week. Once again, remind the women that sharing their story will help them heal.

- Give each woman a piece of paper with a stick figure on it. Have them write down all of the bad things that they believe about themselves on the picture. Ask each woman to share one of their words if they are comfortable. Now take the women outside and have them tear up what they have written to symbolize that those words are not true, and that they should not be holding on to them. Burn these words in a fire, or bury them.
- Next have the women draw another stick figure, and have them write as many nice things as they can about themselves (smart, beautiful, funny, good cook, good friend etc.) Have them color the picture and encourage them to put it up in a place where they can see it and read the words on it every day. Remind them that it will take awhile for them to believe all of those words, but the more they say the truth, the faster they will believe it!

## **Week Three**

### **The Cost**

When someone is sexually abused, they can have many feelings and emotions. They may feel sad, lonely, angry and many other emotions. Abuse can make people feel that they cannot trust anyone, they can never be happy again, they are worthless, or even that they want to die. This is the cost (effect) of abuse. This cost is not the same as the cost of buying something; it is a personal and emotional cost. It means that you, as the victim of abuse, have to live with the consequences of someone else's actions.

For example, if your best friend tells you a lie, the cost (effect) of that lie is that you do not trust her any more, and maybe it is harder for you to trust others because of that lie too.

It is important to count the cost of what has happened to you because it allows you to see what has changed in your life. It allows you to fully see what that person that hurt you did. This is the only way to move forward. This is how you move past the hurt and the shame, and begin to gain your life back. Once you can see the cost, or the effects, and what has been taken or changed in your life, you can begin the journey of rebuilding.

For example, a man who is building a house has many tools that he leaves there for the project. Late one night many of his tools and supplies are stolen. He comes the next morning and he sees that many things have been taken and the building project is stopped. It is not until the man looks around and sees what has been stolen, that he can begin working to get all of those things back. The same is true with sexual abuse and rape. Until you look at what has been broken down or stolen in your life, you will not know where to start rebuilding.

Let's listen to Anaya's story as she learns how to count the cost.

## **Anaya's Journey**

### **Chapter 3**

The hot sun was beating down and warming the back of Anaya's neck as she sat by the river watching children splash around and play, and the village women washing their clothes. She felt frozen in time there as if life was happening around her, but she could only watch. She turned her eyes to a young girl playing in the water. The girl was laughing and smiling. "She is happy." Anaya thought to herself. "I want to be happy." Her smile still had not come back since that dark night at the hotel. She wanted so badly to smile again, but she felt numb, and the world around her didn't make her smile anymore.

"Anaya!" a bright voice called from down the river. It was Eva. Anaya knew the happy and loving sound of her voice. She moved down the river to where Eva was washing her clothes. Anaya was happy to see her because her heart felt so heavy and her mind had a fog inside that made it hard for her to think. She needed help.

Eva was bent down over her washing bucket scrubbing her clothes so hard that Anaya thought she might tear a hole. "Why do you scrub so hard Eva?" Eva looked up from her work and said, "Anaya, I scrub hard because I want my clothes to be clean and free from all the dirt they gather as I use them. If I don't work hard, the dirt will stay forever and my clothes will never be clean." Anaya could tell that she was using the clothes to teach her a lesson, but she did not understand what the lesson was. She just stared back into Eva's smiling face waiting for her to explain. "Anaya, these clothes are like our lives. If we don't put in the hard work to clean up the dirt in our lives, it will stay there forever and wear us down. You want to be free of all this dirt don't you?" Anaya shook her head. She wanted to be free more than anything she had ever wanted.

"The first step to being free is to look at the mess that has been made. Then you can start to scrub away that mess. You have to look at the ugliness, and you have to look at the cost." "The cost?" Anaya said, not understanding what Eva meant. "Anaya, when someone does something to hurt you, it costs you something. Maybe the cost is that you don't feel safe, or you don't trust; maybe it is a dream you had that is stolen. What has this rape cost you?"

Anaya looked out over the water and she felt tears fall down her cheeks. "It has cost me everything." she said with a heavy voice. "Trust, my smile, working in the city, my body, laughter, feeling safe, my happiness, and my youth. Sometimes I even want to die." Anaya could not believe how much one night had cost her. One man's thoughtless actions had caused her so much pain. "How can only a few moments destroy so many days, and tear down so much of my life?" Anaya asked, but Eva knew she wasn't looking for answers. She just needed to say the words so she could count the cost.

Eva sat down on the riverbank next to Anaya, and they both looked out over the water in silence. Both women had known so much pain; the pain of someone else's actions. After many minutes of silence Anaya looked over to Eva with questioning eyes and a heart longing for hope. "Will I ever get those things back? Will my smile ever come back? Will I laugh again? Will I trust again? Will I dream again?" Eva looked deep into Anaya's eyes and she began to smile. "Yes Anaya, those things will come back to you in time. But you will gain so much more on this journey. You are gaining strength and wisdom. You will help other women, just like I am helping you. You will begin to dream of the future again, but I have a feeling that your dreams will be much bigger. The hotel manager thought he could break you Anaya, and I think that you thought he did break you. Soon you will see that what was meant to harm you will be turned to good in your life. You are not broken Anaya, you just need time to mend." With strength in her voice, Anaya turned to Eva and said, "I will build up what he has broken. I will become stronger, and I will be happy again. I am choosing not to let him steal away my life." Anaya had a new found hope. She would be whole again, but first she would have to fully count the cost.

## Questions Week Three

1. What is the cost in your life of the abuse you experienced?
2. How do these losses make you feel?
3. Do you have hope? Why or why not?
4. How can the experiences of abuse make you stronger?

## Activity Week Three

This week will be very emotional for the women. They will begin to see the devastation that has been caused by their victimization. This is a gateway to their healing, and will often lead into feelings of hopelessness and anger. It is crucial for them to look at the cost, and for them to be reminded of the hope they have to rebuild.

- Have the women draw a picture about how they feel.
- Ask the women to write down all of the costs (effects) that their abuse has had on them.
- Ask them to share some of those costs if they are comfortable.
- Encourage them to keep the list for a few days and look it over, adding to it anything that comes to mind.
- If possible either have the women make a little twine bracelet, or provide them with one. Tell them that this is a reminder to them that they have hope, and that they are rebuilding their lives. They have seen the cost now, and that means that they can start their journey to rebuilding! Emphasize the excitement of this rebuilding!

# Week Four

## Anger

Anger is a natural emotion or feeling that comes after someone has hurt you. Once you see that what happened to you was wrong and that it should not have happened, you give yourself permission to be angry.

Last week we looked at the cost of what has happened to you. When you fully look at the cost, you can see how much pain the person or people that hurt you caused. Seeing all of this pain can make anger rise up inside of you. After feeling so sad, anger can make people feel powerful. It may feel uncomfortable to be so angry, but if you allow yourself to fully feel the anger, it will not last forever.

When going through this part of the journey, you may feel like small things, that have nothing to do with the rape or abuse, make you mad. You may feel like it is hard to talk nice to your friends and family. You may feel easily bothered by what people say or do. These feelings are all very normal.

It is very important to let yourself feel angry, but it is also important to keep that anger focused on the person that has hurt you. You do not want to hurt others as you are trying to heal.

Many times people are afraid to feel anger because it makes them feel out of control or not like themselves. But, if you can find ways to deal with your anger instead of verbally or physically hurting others, then you will be able to move through this part of the journey in a healthy and safe way. It is important to make a plan about what you will do when you feel those angry feelings starting to happen inside you. If you feel yourself getting angry, it is good to find a healthy way to deal with that anger. Maybe take a walk, call a friend and talk to them, do some physical activity, or write about your anger. Whatever you do, don't ignore it or try to push it away. If you do that, the anger will stay there.

Anger hurts you the most because it fills your mind and heart. It can hurt those around you too. In this journey, you must be willing to feel the anger, but you must also be willing to let the anger go if you want to live a free life that is not forever tied to the people that hurt you.

Let's read about Anaya and the anger that she felt.

## Anaya's Journey

### Chapter 4

Thump, thump, thump, Anaya's heart felt like it would beat through her chest. Her feet were running so fast she could hardly keep up with them. The faster she ran, the faster she wanted to run. Her hands were tightly held in fists, and her mouth felt full of fire. People were calling out as she passed, "Hello Anaya!" but she pushed past them without responding. She just kept running faster and faster and faster.

She burst through the door, "I hate him!" she said. Eva was surprised by Anaya's entrance into the room, but she was not surprised by her words. Eva remembered the hate she felt for the man that hurt her. She stopped her work and asked Anaya to sit down and tell her all about it. Anaya said in a strong voice, "Every time I think about him, I just want to yell or hit something. I feel all of the anger running around inside me and trying to get out. I ran to the river and yelled as loud as I could. I even hit a tree with a stick to try and feel better. Nothing has worked! I don't want to be nice at home. Everything makes me mad, and I don't know why."

Out of breath she finally sat down and put her head in her hands. Eva smiled gently at her and said, "I know how that feels because I have felt the same way. It will go away Anaya, but it will only go away if you let it." Anaya looked at her with wide eyes filled with surprise. She was not trying to hold on to the anger, and she did not want it. The anger felt better than the sadness. It felt more powerful, but still Anaya wished it would go away. "I don't understand." she said in a frustrated tone. "I am not trying to be angry, I just am! I see what he did and now I know that it was wrong, and all I can see when I think of the hotel manager is the hate in my heart for him."

"Anaya, anger feels powerful and strong, but it actually will end up hurting you. Do you like who you are when you are angry like this? Do you like how it feels?" Anaya thought about her words and said, "No, I feel like I am not myself, and like my smile cannot shine when I am so full of hate." "Do you think the hotel manager can feel the hate you have for him? Does he feel your anger?" Eva asked. Shaking her head and looking down, Anaya said, "No." They sat in silence for a moment, Anaya still trying to catch her breath.

"What do I do with all of this anger?" Anaya asked, hoping for a quick fix to how she felt. "You need to feel it for awhile Anaya. You cannot just rush through getting rid of anger. What the hotel manager did was wrong, and for the first time you are starting to see the true cost of what he did. I want you to feel this for a few days and then come back so we can talk about the next step. Try to be kind to your family and neighbors, but don't be too hard on yourself. You have been very hurt by this man Anaya. He hurt your body and your mind. You must look at this anger in the eyes, or you will never be able to get rid of it." Anaya was upset that she did not have a quick fix, but she knew deep down that Eva was right, and that she had to let herself feel this anger if she ever wanted to truly be rid of it.

Walking down the road, Anaya thought about what Eva said about looking anger in the eyes. She was scared to do that. She was scared of what she would do if she looked at the anger. Would she hurt someone? Would she be able to really get rid of it? Stopping at the riverbank, Anaya looked into the water twirling and rushing over the rocks. "The water looks angry." Anaya thought. Reaching down into the cool, rushing water she pulled out a stone. She smiled as she ran her fingers over the smooth edges and said, "I will be unmoved by this anger, but I will let it wash over me for a time. Then, like this stone, I will be made smooth." She stepped down into the water and decided to look anger in the eye. "Just for now." she said to herself, "But not forever."

# Questions Week Four

1. Can you understand Anaya's anger?
2. How does anger make you feel?
3. What makes you most angry about the rape or abuse?
4. How do you deal with your anger about the rape or abuse?
5. What are some healthy ways of dealing with anger?

## Activity Week Four

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions that people feel. It can feel like a lion inside your chest that is roaring and wanting get free. This can be a very dangerous feeling. Make sure that in this activity you are providing a safe place for the women to unleash this anger productively. This is a way that they can fully express how they feel without being worried about who they will hurt, or if they are being judged.

This activity may take an extra hour, or you may need an extra session depending on group size. Be sensitive to the needs of the group here. We can't rush anger. It must be fully felt and fully expressed so that these women can be free of it. It may be good for you to write an anger letter to share with the group before this exercise. If you choose to do this, be vulnerable and brutally honest. Don't hold back, and that way, they won't hold back.

- Read your anger letter out loud to the group (If you choose this portion of the activity) or just give them a verbal example of being honest in their letters.
- Give each woman some paper and tell them that you want them to write a letter to the people that hurt them. Encourage them to write one to each individual.
- Encourage complete honesty in the letters. They do not have to be nice or hold back.
- Encourage the women to read their letters out loud to the group. Remind them that this is a powerful way for them to say what they need to to the people that have sexually assaulted them without ever saying it to their face. They get to release all of their words without repercussion.
- Remind the women to bring their anger letters to the next session for an activity.

### **Alternate Activity**

- If you feel that letters are too difficult for this group due to timing or literacy, then encourage the women to write down the names of the people they are angry at for their abuse.
- Encourage them to stand up and say what they would say to that person if they were in the room. This is an opportunity for them to confront the abuse and the pain without risk.



## Week Five

### Moving forward/forgiveness

Moving forward after anger is very hard. It is a choice because after being sad for so long, anger can feel good. If you stay in anger you become it's prisoner, and it keeps you from moving forward into happiness and joy. Letting go of anger does not mean that you suddenly don't feel like what happened was wrong, or that you become friends with those that hurt you. It means that you are deciding not to live an angry life. You are deciding to live a life not based on the hurt you have lived through, but you are choosing to live life for the new and beautiful things to come.

People call this stage moving forward, letting go, moving on and forgiveness. This is all done the same way. You have looked at the cost of the abuse, you have expressed your anger, and now, you must choose to let go of the anger and not hold on to the cost. You choose not to be held prisoner by what has happened to you.

If you believe in God and want to walk through forgiveness, that is beautiful and very healing. Just remember that forgiveness does not mean that we are friends with those people that hurt us, and it does not mean that they should not be responsible for what they did.

The problem with pain is that if you hold on to it, it will become who you are. After abuse happens, it can become who we are, the shame and the pain and the anger can surround us and make us feel like who we are is wrapped up in this one event. This is not any way to live a happy life. You become tied to the pain, the abuse, the rape forever. When you choose to move forward and let go of the hatred, you are choosing freedom. Moving forward does not mean that you forget what has happened, or that everything is all better all at once. This event in your life will always be a part of you, but you do not have to be a slave to it. You can be free!

You are strong, you are beautiful, and you will begin to dream again, to laugh again, and to smile again. Your life is more than the bad things that have happened to you. Your life is beautiful, and just like Anaya is building her new story, you are also building a new story for yourself. Choose to live! Choose to be free! Choose to move forward and start a new story!

## Introduction Week Five

In this chapter in Anaya's story there is talk of Eva going to the police about the man that raped her. This is also discussed in the weeks questions. Please be culturally sensitive in this discussion and do not encourage the women to do anything that would put them at risk. All cultures are different, and the legal system is different. Just make sure we are keeping them safe!

### Anaya's Journey Chapter 5

Anaya sat in anger for many weeks. She had finally allowed herself to see what the hotel manager did to her, and she saw how much it had changed her life. Eva told Anaya, "You will have to choose to let go of the anger when you are ready. You cannot hold on to this anger forever and be truly happy."

One morning, the rooster outside woke Anaya up very early. Even the sun still seemed to be asleep. As she opened her eyes, she knew today was a different day. She was ready. She didn't want to hold on to anger any more. She wanted to be free from the hatred, and free from the rage. She sat up and put her feet on the floor, stretching and preparing for this new part of her journey.

She began her walk to Eva's house, and her steps felt light. She had an excitement about what this part of the healing journey would be. Suddenly, she stopped walking, completely stunned. She realized that she was smiling. It wasn't a small smile either, she was smiling as big as she could remember ever smiling. She was ready to be free.

"I caught myself smiling!" she said as she entered Eva's home. "Ahh, you are ready Anaya. You are ready to move forward." "How did you move forward out of anger after you were raped Eva?" "Well Anaya," Eva started, "People call it many things, some call it letting go, some call it moving on, but I call it forgiveness." "I have to let the past be the past, and I have to let the man that hurt me deal with his own wrongs. I will not hold on to a ticket saying that he owes me something for what he did. You know why? Because then I live my life holding a ticket and wishing that he would pay for what he has done to me, or that somehow it would be made right. It cannot be made right, or wiped away, so I have to let go of what he owes me so that I can be free to live my life."

Eva continued, "It is a journey Anaya. I have had to forgive that man so many times. Daily I must choose not to pick up that hatred and anger. Daily I choose to let his wrongs fall on his shoulders, and not be my master. I will not be a slave to what he did to me Anaya. I choose to let go of my desire to make him pay for what he did." Anaya looked confused. She asked, "Does this mean that you don't want that man to get in trouble or have to answer for what he did?" "NO!" Eva firmly answered. "In fact, after that man raped me, I went to the police and I sat outside the jail until they heard my story. Then I sat outside that jail until they did something about it. The man that raped me went to jail for many years. I had to

stand up! I did not want him to hurt another girl, and the truth is Anaya, I am worth standing up for!"

Anaya had never heard anyone talk like this. She had never heard of a woman standing up against a man like that. "You are so brave Eva. I want to be brave like you." Eva smiled, "Anaya, you are already brave. You have spoken your story into the light. You are choosing to be free. That makes you brave."

"Anaya, choosing to be free from anger does not mean that you say the man that hurt you did nothing wrong, and it does not mean that he should not have to answer to the law for what he did. Forgiveness and moving on means that you no longer hold on to what that person did like they owe you something, or like you will somehow make them pay or get even. You choose to release it to the law and into God's hands. Then and only then can you be truly free. Just remember it is a process. You will have to choose to lay this down every day until you no longer want to pick it up."

Anaya took a deep breath. It sounded like a lot of work, but it sounded wonderful. She did not want to be tied to the hotel manager by the wrong things he had done to her. She wanted to be free. "I'm ready Eva, I'm ready to be free."

Eva smiled and bent down to pick up a large basket on the ground. She struggled to lift it, and Anaya wondered what in the world could be inside the basket. "Take this," Eva said, "and follow me." Taking the basket from Eva's hands, Anaya realized just how strong Eva was for such an old woman. Anaya thought this must be the heaviest thing she had ever carried. The two women stepped outside and began to take a walk down to the riverside. The river was so beautiful, always new and always changing. Anaya liked that. It was like a fresh start each day. Anaya wanted a fresh start. As they walked, Anaya thought about how the basket seemed to be getting heavier and heavier. "I don't think I can carry this anymore." She said. "Just a little further." Eva said reassuringly.

When they reached the riverbank, Anaya threw down the basket completely exhausted. "What was in there, rocks?" Anaya was joking of course, she did not really think Eva would make her carry a basket full of rocks. Eva tore off the cloth covering the basket and let out a big laugh. "It is rocks!" she laughed again. To her surprise Anaya started to laugh too, and it felt so good to laugh. "Why?" Anaya said as she giggled. "This is the burden you have been carrying Anaya. This is the burden of hurt and anger. Did you notice that it got heavier and heavier the longer you carried it?" Anaya shook her head and wondered if Eva could read her mind, or if she had said something out loud. "Anaya, I had you bring this basket to the river so you could feel what it is like to carry this burden and so that you could feel what it is like to let it go."

Bending down Eva picked up a large rock from the basket. "Anaya, if you are really ready to let this burden go, then I want you to throw these rocks back in the river where they belong." Anaya took the rock from Eva's hand and threw it as far as she could out into the river. It felt good. She picked up another and then another until all of the rocks were gone.

Bending down to pick up the empty basket, Eva laughed and said, "Don't throw in the basket, I need that for my laundry." They laughed and returned to

Eva's home. The basket was lighter of course without the rocks in it, but Anaya felt lighter too. Her soul felt lighter. Her spirit felt free.

## Questions Week Five

1. Do you see yourself in this story? Where?
2. Are you ready to move forward into freedom?
3. What are you most excited about in moving forward?
4. What scares you about moving forward?
5. What are some ways that you can keep laying down the past and decide to move forward?
6. Has the person that hurt you been brought to the police?
7. Can this happen? Why or why not?

## Activity Week Five

Remember those anger letters? Those are going to be destroyed this week as a symbol of moving forward. This activity may change depending on where you are and what resources you have.

- Ideally, it would be good to replicate Anaya's experience. Have the women gather rocks, and tie their anger letters to the rocks. Then have them walk the rocks to a body of water and throw them in.
- If this is not possible, then have the women burn the anger letters as a symbol of letting go.
- You can then encourage each woman to speak out loud to the person that has hurt them (In this group setting, not in person) that they are letting go of the anger and hatred they have for them, and they are choosing to be free.
- If you did the alternate activity last week, then this week have the women gather rocks and throw them in the water or out into a field. This is to symbolize letting go of the anger and choosing not to carry it with you any longer.

# Introduction Week Six

This week you will be discussing the journey of healing. This will include many topics, including a description of PTSD. Many women that have been victimized can suffer from this. It is important that they are not pushed beyond comfort. In addition, during this section, it is important to make it clear that they should not confront their attacker or trafficker as a part of this exercise. This is strictly about outside triggers to be overcome. Safety first!

## Week Six Coping

The focus of this week is coping. Coping means, what you do to deal with or handle the way that you feel about what has happened to you. Because healing from sexual assault is a journey, there can be ups and downs. Many people feel times of sadness and depression, times of anger, and times of feeling unsure about how to handle the memories of what has happened to them.

These are all natural feelings, and it is important that you recognize these feelings along the journey so that you can deal with them in a way that is healthy for you and not destructive.

There are a few signs of depression that are important to recognize:

- Not feeling motivated to do normal activities for weeks at a time
- Feeling a sense of hopelessness
- Having thoughts of hurting yourself, or taking your life
- Not enjoying what used to make you happy
- Wanting to sleep for longer than normal periods of time

It is important to remember that because of what you have been through in your life, you will experience depression for a period of time. This is normal because of the trauma you have been through. However, even many years after the event has occurred, this depression can come back because of a memory or an experience. This is why it is important to know how to cope so you can move through these feelings and not get stuck in depression.

It is also important to remember that little things in your life may cause you to remember the events of your abuse. It may be a sound, or a street, or even a color. You may not even know why something scares you or makes you feel uneasy. You may feel fear, sadness, or anger. Your heart may start to pound fast, or you may just want to get away from the situation. Listen to yourself when you feel this way. This is your body and your mind remembering. When you feel safe, go back to what caused that feeling. Do this until you feel less and less anxiety and fear. This is best to do with someone you trust to stand beside you and be a support.

Some valuable and healthy coping strategies include:

- Talking to a doctor or trusted friend about your feelings. When you talk about how you are feeling, it can take away the feelings of loneliness that hold you down in depression
- Keep activity levels up, such as exercise to keep your mind and body healthy. When you are active, your body produces a happy hormone that gives your mind a boost of energy that can help with feeling of depression
- Write about what you are thinking and feeling. Sometimes all that is needed is to express your feelings and give yourself a voice.
- Be creative! Write, draw, paint, cook, or make something. Letting that creative side of yourself out can be a very healing way to cope with the difficult circumstances in life.
- Change your environment. Sometimes, just a quick change in the place that you are can be helpful. If an unpleasant memory comes back to you, it can help to walk outside, or move to a different room.
- Remove things that remind you of the abuse. The eye reminds the heart, so remove things that you will see that will open the doors to memories of the abuse.
- Don't be afraid! Sometimes, when a thought about the past abuse comes up, you may want to avoid it, or be afraid that it will bring up too much pain. Remember, that as long as you allow your memories to be in the darkness, they have power over you. When you are in a safe place, don't be afraid to remember what has happen and go through the steps that we have already been through in this program. Remember, you are stronger than your memories, and you are stronger than what has happened to you.

## Anaya's Journey

### Chapter 6

A thick cloud of white flour filled the air as Eva tossed and kneaded the dough for her bread. She was covered in the fine white powder from head to toe. Eva was a wonderful cook, but she was a messy one too! As she stood there working on the bread she thought to herself, "It has been five days since Anaya has stopped by the house. She usually comes every day rain or shine." "This is very strange!" Eva blurted out to the empty house. She put down the dough and walked through the cloud of flour filling her home. She was going to see Anaya.

When Eva was trying to get somewhere she had a determined march; she put her head into the wind, and swung her arms forward and back as if they would mover her faster down the road. Of course it did not help, but she was a sight to see, and her determination could not be missed.

Knock, knock, knock. Eva had finally reached Anaya's home. It was quiet and still. Eva thought they must not be home. She knocked again. Something told Eva that Anaya was inside, and that she needed help. Eva opened the door and called out, "Anaya! Anaya are you here?" There was no answer. "Anaya, it's Eva!" She began walking from room to room looking for Anaya. The last door she tried, she saw her. Curled up on her floor mat in the corner crying.

"Anaya!" Eva said with relief, "Where have you been?" She knelt down on the floor next to Anaya and began to wipe away her tears. "Forgiveness changed everything for me." Anaya said, "I thought it would all be better now and the memories would stop. I thought the sadness would go away." "I see." said Eva softly, "You thought this would all go away with forgiveness." "Well Anaya, this is a journey. It is like a long road. You cannot get to the end without going through the middle." Eva continued, "The whole road must be walked for the journey to be complete. This is a continuing journey. You will have days of sadness, days of anger, and wonderful days, all mixed together." Anaya slowly turned to look at Eva. "What have you been doing?" Anaya said as she began to laugh a little. "Eva, you are covered in flower from head to toe. You look like a great white cloud in the sky!" They both began to laugh, and Eva tried to brush off the flour and sprinkle it on Anaya.

"Eva, sometimes the darkness reminds me of that night. Even the silence can take me back to that hotel room and the horrible things that happened. I don't want to think about it. I want to be happy again." Eva took a deep breath and said, "Anaya, you must face this, but I can help. Take a walk with me." The two of them walked outside and down the road to a quiet place. "Sit down here Anaya, what do you hear?" Anaya listened for a moment. She listened hard, trying to hear the sound she thought Eva wanted her to hear. "I don't hear anything." Anaya said. "The silence here is beautiful isn't it?" Eva said with a smile. "The silence cannot hurt you Anaya. You do not have to be afraid of it. I know that the room where you were hurt by the hotel manager was so silent that now that silence reminds you of that night, but silence can be beautiful too." "If you want to stop being afraid of the silence, you must get used to it in a place where you feel safe. Come and sit out here every day in the silence until you are no longer afraid of it."

"What about the dark?" Anaya said, "I don't think I could get used to that." "Anaya, you will get used to it when you learn that the dark did not hurt you, and the dark cannot hurt you. For now I will put a candle in your room at night. When you feel safe, you can blow it out. We will do this until you are no longer afraid."

"What about the memories Eva? Will those ever go away?" Anaya had so much hope in her eyes. She wanted so badly to be rid of those painful memories. Eva smiled, "Some of them will go away, but some will stay forever. But I do know this Anaya, you will begin to think of these memories less and less as you build new and happy memories. Soon, you will be surprised at how long it has been since you had one of those bad memories."

"it is okay to be sad Anaya. It will not be like this forever. You must have hope. You are on the journey, and you must walk every step. But every step is one step closer, and there is such beauty along the way."

“Let’s walk back to your home.” Eva said holding out her hand. “No.” Anaya said, “I am going to sit here in the silence a little bit longer. I want to hear the beauty in the silence again Eva.”

## Questions Week Six

1. How do you cope?
2. What are some ideas you have about healthy coping?
3. Do you have memories that you are scared to think about?
4. Is there anything that triggers your memories, or makes you remember your abuse?
5. What could you do to expose yourself to these triggers safely?

## Activity Week Six

This week, we are going to do some role play!

- Have each woman write down some of the triggers in her life, whether its things that make her angry, or things that cause her to remember the abuse.
- Gather all of the answers that each woman wrote down, and set up a role play for the women to practice healthy coping mechanisms.
- REMEMBER, this is a time to be very sensitive and in tune with what the women are experiencing. If you sense at all that this activity is too much for the women, then back away and do a discussion about how each woman plans to cope with her particular triggers.
- Also, insert some physical activity in this session to show the women how much a little activity can help with feelings of depression. Try 15 min of a physical activity of your choice!



# Week Seven

## Self Worth

This week we are going to be talking about self worth. Self worth is what you think of yourselves, how capable you believe you are of doing something, and how much self confidence you have. It is important to have self worth because it allows you to stand up when someone is treating you wrong because you know that you deserve better. Self worth helps you go after your dreams because you believe you can.

Many of you have been treated unkindly, or told that you are worthless. Maybe you have had some self-hatred, or unkind things to say about yourself because of what has happened. These life events can erode away any self worth that you have had. It is common for women that have been abused to feel dirty, unwanted, not good enough, or not valuable.

The first step to rebuilding self worth is to begin to love yourself, and think about the many good things about yourself. This will take a lot of effort because it means that you have to change your patterns of thinking. When a thought comes into your head about being dirty, bad, or unlovable; picture yourself stopping that thought, grabbing it out of your mind, and throwing it in the garbage. Then replace that thought with something kind. For example, if you are thinking over and over again, "No body would love me if they knew my past." Stop that thought and say to yourself instead, "I am a strong woman, and I am lovable no matter what has happened in my past!" Perhaps you believe that you are not smart, not beautiful, or that you are dirty. Stop these thoughts and replace them by saying, "I am smart, I am beautiful, and I am not dirty."

Stopping these thoughts takes much effort and energy, but it is very important if you want to rebuild your strength and self worth. Many of you have believed lies about yourselves for so long that it will be hard for you to find the words to replace the lies with, and even more hard to believe them. Just keep going, and press on because soon, the lies will begin to look like lies, and you will start to see yourself for the wonderful woman that you are!

Once self worth begins to rebuild, you will find that you start dreaming again, you have more confidence, and you feel less like a victim and more like a woman that can conquer even the worst of circumstances. Without the rebuilding of self worth, you will find it hard to move forward in a happy life. You cannot live a full and happy life if you are filling your head with words and beliefs about yourself that are unkind and untrue.

Let's read about Anaya's journey to finding self worth!

# Anaya's Journey

## Chapter 7

"Worthless, stupid, ugly, used, unlovable, dirty." The words ran through Anaya's mind over and over again, each new word wounding her heart more than the last. She felt like she could not escape. The words started as soon as she opened her eyes, and they seemed to follow her even into her dreams at night.

"Anaya!" Eva's happy voice rang out. Anaya slowly lifted her head and gave Eva a kind of half smile. "Now Anaya, where is that big beautiful smile? I've never known you to give such a tiny smile!" Anaya smiled a bit more, but Eva could see that there was a heavy feeling resting on Anaya. "Okay, tell me." Eva said. "Tell you what?" replied Anaya with an almost firm tone. "You can't hide from me Anaya, I know you too well. Tell me what is bothering you."

Anaya paused for a moment looking back to the dust on the ground and feeling even more worthless than it was. "Okay fine!" Anaya said looking back into Eva's deep blue eyes. "I just feel so bad about myself every day. I feel dirty, and I feel like I am a bad person. I feel used, and I feel like no one will ever want to marry me because of what has happened. I just hate the way I feel about me." Eva shook her head and said, "Now Anaya, I have to say that I can hardly believe that such a beautiful, wonderful and talented girl could actually say those terrible things about herself, but I understand why. Anaya, when someone hurts your body it is an act that violates who you are. Rape does this. It can make you feel dirty when you are not. It can make you feel like you have done wrong when you have not. Soon, a rape can have you questioning if you are even a good person or not. Of course, none of these things are true, but that does not change that your mind plays tricks on you and tells you lies."

"Anaya, you must retrain your mind and your thoughts." "How do I do that? And why would I want to tell myself what I don't really believe about myself?" Anaya said in confusion. "Anaya, you have to understand that what you are saying to yourself, and this self hatred is not based on truth. You are living a lie. Those words seem true because you have been saying them about yourself for so long, but they could not be further from the truth. For awhile, this is going to feel strange, but soon you will start to see the truth about yourself again. Trust me Anaya."

"Well, I am willing to try." Anaya said with a deep breath, "Teach me what to do Eva." Eva let out a yell for joy and began to dance, grabbing Anaya's hand and twirling her around. Anaya laughed, "What are you doing?" Eva stepped back and clapped her hands together, "Anaya, you are about to be free, and I cannot wait to see what happens when you realize what a wonderful person you are! I am so happy, I just had to dance!" The two danced a bit more and laughed as they walked back to Eva's home.

Entering the small house, they both sat down at the table. The air seemed to be filled with different spices and smells from whatever it was that Eva was cooking that day. Anaya breathed in and got lost in the mix of spices floating in the air. "Now for that lesson!" Eva began. "Anaya, you have to replace the bad with the good; replace the lies with truth. When a bad thought comes into your head about

yourself, I want you to say out loud “STOP” and then throw that thought away and say out loud a truth to replace it.” “Eva, I am going to look crazy!” Eva stood up and put her hands on her hips, and Anaya knew she was serious. “Anaya, you want to be free, and this is how it happens. Let people think what they want, but you have to get your mind free!” “Okay, I’ll do it.” Anaya said with conviction, “I will start right now!” She wanted so badly to be free, to believe the truth, to see herself as she really was. Anaya gave Eva a big smile and turned to walk out the door. “STOP!” “I am not used up, I am worthy of love!” Anaya shouted it as she was leaving the house. She turned back and looked at Eva, “That actually felt really good to say.” The whole way home Anaya was stopping thoughts and replacing them. It took many days and weeks, but soon, Anaya began to see herself as the woman she was, beautiful, wanted, worthy of love, clean, smart, and capable of anything. She was discovering who she really was again. She was becoming free!

## Questions Week Seven

1. What lies have you been believing about yourself?
2. How would your life be different if you believed the truth about yourself?
3. How does seeing yourself in a positive way change the way you feel about yourself?
4. What stops you from believing the truth about yourself?

## Activity Week Seven

- Ask the women to write down all of the negative words they say to themselves and negative things they think about themselves.
- Take these pieces of paper outside and have the girls put them in a metal bin or a fire safe pit. Then stand back and set those words on fire until they are completely destroyed.
- Now, to replace those words, ask the girls to get into a big circle. You are about to play the compliment game! Grab a ball or something that can be easily tossed around the circle. Have each girl call out another girls name and then say something nice about them and throw them the ball. Then it is her turn to say something nice about someone else. Make sure each woman is getting lots of truth fed into her. Sometimes it is good to give the girls topics, like physical beauty, the mind, the heart, or character. This way the girls are being told more than just about their beautiful eyes and smile. We want deep truth here!

## **Week Eight**

### **The Journey**

Healing and recovery after sexual assault is not something that will happen over night, and it is not something that will take place fully through this program. Healing is a journey. A cut on the arm may take days, weeks, or months to heal, and it may leave a scar. The same is true for your heart and mind after assault. Parts of your heart and mind may only take days to get better, but some areas may take weeks, months or years to heal. Even then, for deep emotional hurts, there may still be memories or challenges that you must overcome.

When you remember that this healing is a journey, you remove pressure to feel better all at once. You cannot expect to go back to who you were before the abuse, but you can expect to move forward and CHOOSE to have a better life than you did before. It is easy to allow yourself to live like a victim after sexual assault. Living like a victim means that you live in the pain. You let it surround you, and it becomes who you are. It becomes your identity.

You can choose not to live like a victim. This means that you look at the abuse as something that has happened to you, but you do not allow the abuse to define who you are. You choose to live as a strong conquering woman that has experienced much pain, but has overcome the sadness, the anger, and the guilt. There is power in choosing not to live as a victim. You begin to feel stronger, and it opens your eyes to how capable you are.

Overcoming sexual assault, and walking the journey to healing is one of the most difficult tasks you will ever do. Once you begin walking this journey, you will realize that there is nothing you cannot do. Since you are strong enough to survive what has happened to you; you are strong enough to do anything.

Now is the time to begin dreaming again. This is a time for you to see how capable you are and begin building new dreams and a new life as the new woman you are. Your dreams did not die when you were abused, but they may have changed. For many women, their dreams become bigger.

Let's read about Anaya's journey to dreaming big again!

## **Anaya's Journey**

### **Chapter 8**

The warm sun poured through the window of Anaya's small room, begging her to wake up and greet the new day. Anaya opened her eyes and she began to smile her very big bright smile. "What does this day have in store for me?" Anaya thought to herself. She was excited to be awake. She was excited to be alive.

As quickly as she could, Anaya began getting ready for the day. She could not wait to run out the door. She had some big news to share with Eva. A dream was growing in her heart.

Out on the dirt path to Eva's house, Anaya was skipping and singing. People saw her and smiled. She finally felt like she could smile back at them and really

mean it. Her heart was full and she was happy. “Eva” Anaya called out before she reached the house, “Eva, I have some news!” A big smile came to Eva’s face when she heard Anaya’s words. Eva ran out the door saying, “It has happened hasn’t it? A dream has grown hasn’t it?” Anaya laughed out loud wondering how it could be that Eva always knew what she was going to say before she said it. “Yes!! A dream is growing, and has grown Eva! If I don’t tell someone, I will just burst!” The two women hugged one another and Eva gave an extra long hug this time. Her joy was full.

“Well, tell me all about it Anaya!” Eva said as she brought her inside the house. Anaya’s smile was the biggest Eva had ever seen it. In fact, it seemed that Anaya could not stop smiling even if she wanted to. “Oh Eva, I am going to start a safe home for women that have been abused!” Eva’s smile began to grow. “And I am going to do it in the big city.” Anaya continued. “I am going to make a place where women can get the same help you have given to me. A place where they can be safe and loved.” Eva clapped her hands together and let out a loud cheer of excitement. “Anaya, I am so proud of you! This is a very big dream, and it is a beautiful dream.”

Anaya smiled at her and said, “Eva, I would never have had this dream if I had not been through this struggle. I am not fully healed in my heart and mind, but I am on this journey, and I want other women to take this journey too. What was meant to hurt me, bring me down and destroy me has only made me stronger.” Eva’s eyes began to fill with tears of happiness. She could see that Anaya was free, and she smiled thinking of all the other women that would be free too. “Eva, will you go with me? Will you help me?” Eva was surprised by the request. “Anaya, you do not need me to go with you; you are strong enough to do this alone.” Anaya smiled even bigger. “I know that Eva.” She said, “I am strong enough to go alone, but I want you to come too. These women need you like I needed you.” Eva took a deep breath. She had never even left her small village. She thought to herself, “Am I too old to leave now? Too old to make such a big change? Could I make a difference?” Her smile grew, “Anaya, I will go with you. In fact, I would love nothing more!”

The two women began to make plans and get ready for their new adventure.

Early in the morning before the roosters began to crow, Eva and Anaya met on the dirt path. Each one had a suitcase in one hand, and with the other, they tightly held each other’s hand. “Are you ready?” Anaya said as she looked into Eva’s wise bright blue eyes. “Ready!” Eva said with a smile. The two women began their journey walking down the long dirt road; walking toward their dream, walking toward freedom.

## Questions Week Eight

5. How does it feel to know that healing is a journey and does not happen all at once?
6. Do you have a dream growing in your heart? What is it?
7. How do you feel about your future (excited, scared, happy, sad)? Why?
8. Is there anything that you feel is holding you back from having a dream or pursuing a dream?
9. If you could follow any dream in your heart, no matter how big, what would that dream be?

## Activity Week Eight

This is a time to encourage the women to dream big!!! Remind them that there is no limit to their dreams. They can dream as big as they want! This is also a time to encourage them to stay on the path for this journey, and to continue to use the tools they have received during this program.

- Write down or draw a picture of your big dream, your hopes for your future now that you are on the road to healing.
- Get into small groups and have the women share their big dream. Remember to encourage the women to take seriously every dream and remind them that no dream is too big, too small or too silly to dream.

# Introduction Week Nine

Healthy sex is a very important topic to discuss. For the purposes of this class, we are going to be specific, but also respectful of cultural differences when talking about sex. It is important to cover all topics unless there is something listed that is not culturally appropriate.

## Week Nine Healthy Sex

Sex is a wonderful experience, but it is often used inappropriately, or in harmful ways. It is important to understand what healthy sex is so that you can have healthy boundaries to protect yourself and give yourself a voice when it comes to sex. Many of you have had very painful sexual experiences. Because of those experiences, you may have developed some unhealthy sexual habits, or some wrong ideas about what healthy sex is. It is important for you to know that sex can be healthy, fun, enjoyable, and full of love.

Sex should be fun! It is an act of love and caring from one person to another. Sex should be done when both partners want to have sex, not just when one does. You should not enter into having sex when you do not want to. It is okay to say no, and if the person you are with cares about you, they will accept that no and not push you to have sex. Sex should not be done as a form of punishment or in a way to discipline another person. Violence and pain does not belong in sex! Sex is about feeling safe, and should always be an expression of love, never anger or revenge.

Sex and intimate touching should not be between two people that are related within the same family. This means brothers, fathers, uncles etc. This is not healthy, and can cause harm to you and to a baby if you get pregnant.

Sex should not be done in order to get money, drugs, or as payment for anything. This is YOUR body, and it is priceless. That means that no one should be able to buy you, or buy sex from you. Selling sex can cause a lot of emotional pain, and can lead to unwanted pregnancy and disease.

Sex should not be done because a family member demands it. No one has the right to force you to have sex to pay their debt, or to get money for themselves.

Sex should not be done because someone threatens you, or makes you feel guilty. Again, sex is an overflow of love and caring. No one should make you feel guilty, or threaten you if you do not want to have sex with them. If you feel guilty or obligated, you should not have sex!

It is also important to talk about intimate touching, or sexual touching. No one should touch you anywhere on your body unless you have told them that they can. No one has the right to put their hands on your body in any way unless you invite them to touch you. This includes friends, family, strangers, co-workers, and employers. This is YOUR body and that means that you get to decide what kinds of touch you are comfortable with and who gets to give you those touches.

Healthy sex is safe, enjoyable for both people involved, free, full of love, gentle, and fun!

Now that you have idea about what healthy sex is, let's talk about saying NO! Saying no is important if you find yourself in a situation where someone wants you to have unhealthy sex. Many times as women, we are taught to always say yes, and do what the people around us want. This is not the way it should be. You have the right to say no whenever you want to. Saying no is sometimes the most healthy thing you can do. If someone is not respecting you when you say no, then you keep saying it and get away from that person. People that do not listen to you when you say no, are not safe people. It takes courage and bravery to tell someone no. You are a strong woman, but saying no may not come easily. It takes practice!

## Questions Week Nine

1. Is it easy or hard for you to tell people no? Why?
2. When is it appropriate to say no?
3. When you tell someone no, how does that make you feel? Why?
4. How often do you say yes when you really want to say no?
5. What would happen if you said no every time that you wanted to, or felt like you should?

## Activity Week Nine

Let's do some role play! The more they practice, the easier it will become, so make a safe space for them to practice. This is a time where you can be very influential by saying the word no! If you go first and show the women that they can say no and have fun in this setting, they are more likely to relax. Below are some circumstances for each woman, but add more if you would like to!

If you can't hear the "NO" then tell them to say it loud and to have authority and attitude. Show them what this looks like, and have fun with it. NO should not be scary to them, it should be empowering!

Have one of the girls come to the front of the room and then give them the scenario, or have two come up, one can act out the scenario, and the other can say no!

- A stranger walks up to you and asks you to get in his car and he will drive you home.
- A man promises you a job if you will give him your money, passport and birth papers.
- You are in need of extra money, and a man tells you he will pay you for sex.
- A family member tries to touch you sexually.
- Your relative needs some extra money for food and asks you to have sex with someone for money.



- A boyfriend you like tries to touch you sexually, but you are not ready for that.
- A boyfriend you like asks you to have sex with him, but you don't want to. He keeps asking.
- A man in the street touches you sexually and you do not want him to.
- You are out with friends, and a stranger keeps trying to get you away from your friends and to be alone with him.
- Someone wants to use your daughter for sex and they promise you money.

Now, have the women think of some scenarios. Ask them to write the scenarios down or just call them out. Give them the opportunity to set the scene because no one knows better than them what they face every day. This is also a great time for you to formulate some scenarios from the things that you have learned about or heard about the culture.

## **Introduction Week Ten**

This week is to be a beautiful celebration of the journey that these women have been on and are continuing on toward freedom. Some of them may feel discouraged that they are not feeling completely better, or that they are still sad. This is your opportunity to remind them that they have started a new journey toward being free. They are strong, and they are becoming more free every day that they continue on this journey.

## **Week Ten Celebrating The Journey To Freedom**

Today you are celebrating your strength! You started a very hard journey. You have looked at the hurts, you have looked at the past, and you have chosen to walk forward and have a future based on truth, freedom and healing! This is a celebration of your choice to be free!

When we started this journey together, we talked about the long journey this would be. This program is only ten weeks, but your healing and freedom will come throughout your lifetime. You have the tools to walk forward in life without being held down by the past hurts you have experienced. You are walking forward and choosing not to live like a victim! You cannot be held down by the chains of the past hurts you have experienced.

There will be times along this journey that you may start to feel sad, angry, or have those feelings of loss. Don't let that discourage you. You have the tools to walk through those hurts, feelings, and memories. Take the time to deal with how you feel. Ignoring how you feel will not make it go away. Continue to face the truth and choose freedom.

Find someone that you can trust who will check in with you every week to see how you are doing. This should be a person that you fully trust, and a person that makes safe choices for themselves and others. If you like to write, journal about your feelings. This can help you to go back and discover patterns in your thinking or behaviors that are harmful. It can also show you how far you have come on your journey to healing.

Don't rush yourself. Healing takes time. Cry when you need to cry. Rest when you need to rest. Give yourself the permission to heal how you need to.

As a woman you will be faced with many situations and people in your life. Listen to yourself. If you do not feel safe, then walk away. When something deep inside tells you not to trust someone, then listen to that voice. You are smart and capable. Have confidence in yourself!

Most importantly, you have experienced and begun to walk through one of the hardest things any woman can experience in her life. You are on the other side of it now. You are conquering and overcoming this circumstance. You will not be held down any longer. Your strength should be celebrated. You should be celebrated! Well done! Continue on this journey, and now go forward and help other women on their journey just like Anaya and Eva did.

## Questions Week Ten

1. What is the most exciting part of being on this journey?
2. What is the scariest part of being on this journey?
3. What is or will be the most exciting part of being free from your past?
4. How have you seen your life changing since you started this program?

## Activity Week Ten

This is a time of celebration! Have a party! Bring food and drinks, and celebrate the journey. As stated before, this can feel like a sad time for the women, or they may feel uneasy about not feeling completely better. Emphasize the fact that they are choosing to walk the path to freedom! This is exciting! They cannot be held down by the chains of the past hurts they have experienced. Remember you are celebrating not just how far they have come, but also where they are going!

- Ask the women to gather in a circle and talk about what the greatest lesson they have learned during this program is. Give each woman the option of contributing to the discussion.
- Ask the women to write down how being free from the past will change their lives. Ask each woman to share with the group if they are comfortable.