

University of Idaho Women's Center

corner of Idaho and Line streets 885-6616

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The Women's Center Newsletter is published six times during the academic year. It includes announcements and information about the many services and programs offered by the Center to the University and Moscow communities, as well as items of general interest about women's issues. If you have announcements or information you would like included in subsequent issues, please let us know. Suggestions for changes, improvements, or additional items are welcome.

Women's Center Hours
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Once in a Cabinet we had to deal with the fact that there had been an outbreak of assaults on women at night. One minister suggested a curfew: women should stay home after dark. I said, "But it's the men who are attacking the women. If there's to be a curfew, let the men stay home, not the women."

Golda Meir, 1974

Women's Center Hours
 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

April/May Programs 1988

Women's Center programs educate, enrich and entertain. Bring your lunch and join us! Unless otherwise specified, programs begin at 12:20 in the Women's Center lounge and are open to the public. If you have any suggestions for future programs, please call or stop by.

Tuesday
 April 5

MIDWIFERY Lisa Litton, certified Nurse Midwife will educate us as consumers on what services we can expect from a certified nurse midwife. Lisa will also discuss problems encountered in setting up a practice as a midwife and how this affects us in the terms of options available for medical care.

Wednesday
 April 6

LIFE IN A NEPAL VILLAGE Sheri Decker, Peace Corp Representative will share music, slides, costumes, and her perspective on village life, the culture and how women fit in this environment. Sheri was a Peace Corp volunteer who served in Nepal for two years as a teacher.

Tuesday
 April 12

PSYCHOSPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT Andrea Steffens, Ph.D. is a writer, educator and counselor. This should be an inspiring and fun time as Andrea discusses her concept of the psychospiritual development model. Psychological development, theory and therapy are only a beginning -- what about the healing powers within us?

Wednesday
 April 20

VICTIMS RIGHTS Craig Mosman, Latah County Prosecuting Attorney will discuss the legal rights of victims. Craig will give us an idea what options are available through the legal system and how victims can best tap into it.

Tuesday
 April 26

AFTER AGATHA CHRISTIE...? Kay Keskinen, avid mystery reader, discusses recent novels by women mystery writers. Kay will give us her insightful opinions on the quality (was it any good), perspective (the usual male perspective or refreshing feminist view), and much more. This may be a good chance to line up some summer reading ideas!

Tuesday
 May 3

PINKS AND BLUES A 1981 film demonstrating that from the moment parents wrap a newborn baby in either a pink or blue blanket, they start a socialization process that lasts a lifetime.

Wednesday
 May 4

SEASON OF GRANDMOTHERS A 1976 film for The Real People Series, produced by KSPS-TV, Spokane. The topic is the revival of Indian traditions. This is a new film for us but it has come with good reviews. There will be time for discussion after the showing.

WE HAVE THE PROGRAMS ON AUDIO TAPE AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER FOR THOSE WHO ARE SIGHT IMPAIRED. LET US KNOW AND WE CAN ARRANGE FOR YOU TO HEAR THE TAPE.

Mandatory "Niceness" An Impediment to Justice and the Healing Process by Frances E. Wood

"I understand that women who have experienced abuse have been hurt deeply, but why do they have to be so angry?"

Does this question have a familiar ring to it? It is one that we all have made at some time. Women's anger makes us uncomfortable; women's victimization makes us uncomfortable. On the surface, the above quote may seem relatively benign - an expression of discomfort with another's attitude or behavior. But when examined a little more closely, the question for me becomes: "Why is this response so prevalent when we encounter the anger of a woman victim?" One close on its heels is: "What does this say about women expressing anger?" In order to get a better understanding of anger or its suppression as a part of women's experience, it is important to examine the social framework which shapes our beliefs about anger and women.

An examination of women's social conditioning with regard to anger reveals the blatant and subtle lessons we are taught. Women growing up in the United States, regardless of racial, ethnic or religious differences, are exposed to the rhyme of little girls being made of "sugar and spice and everything nice". Translation of the four-letter word "nice" means, above all else, that girls are to suppress any feelings or behavior which causes discomfort in others. That message is reinforced in homes, schools, synagogues and churches. It may have many variations, but, the essence remains the same - "nice girls do...: nice girls don't..." The message is reiterated by most of the all-wise and all-knowing figures in the child's life. The consequences of breaching the "code of nice" range from exclusion from a group of playmates to being struck by one's parents. The resultant feelings in the child range from isolation to terror. And, although these consequences may befall boys as well as girls, boys are provided socially acceptable options for expressing those feeling in ways that are socially prohibited to girls. Girls learn that the behavioral expectation for them is that of pleasing others, usually at their own expense. In their efforts to avoid the social "punishments" for expressing so-called negative, "not nice" feelings, girls learn to suppress.

We are taught that our "niceness" will protect us. Social ethicist Beverly Wildung Harrison has suggested that women cooperate with misogyny to avoid the rage that non-compliance looses,¹ But the evidence around us — particularly the pandemic of violence against women - flies in the face of the illusion that women who are "nice" are immunized from harm. The statistics on the physical and sexual abuse of girls and the battering and rape of women do not permit the luxury of this illusion. Make no mistake. The penalties meted out to women who dare to express their anger are swift and specific. Name-calling is a mild form of punishment used to discount angry women: "witch", "hag", "dyke", "bitch", "castrator", "nag", "man-hater". The more extreme penalties are institutionalization and murder.

If religious tradition and societal proscription collude to insure that a woman has no place to express her anger, what are the options for the angry woman? It seems to me that one of the options lies within the context of faith communities. Those of us who are members of those communities have an obligation to go beyond our insistence that "nice" be the primary criterion for women's behavior and examine what changes in attitude and practice need to happen in order to provide a place for safe expression of anger. Harrison suggests further that:

"We need to recognize that where the evasion of feeling is widespread, anger does not go away or disappear. Rather, in interpersonal life it masks itself as boredom, ennui, low energy, or it expresses itself in passive-aggressive activity or

*in moralistic self-righteousness and blaming. Anger denied subverts community. Anger expressed directly is a mode of taking the other seriously, of caring. The important point is that where feeling is evaded, where anger is hidden or goes unattended, masking itself, there the power of love, the power to act, to deepen relation, atrophies and dies."*²

Atrophy and death are the antitheses of growth and life. Being aware of one's feelings — however so-called negative they may be — is critical to the process of healing in the aftermath of victimization. The anger which is felt and expressed as a result in injustice and loss caused by abuse deserves the same kind of respectful, compassionate response from a caring community which it so generously offers when the pain is due to the death of a loved one.

Faith communities need to examine the messages which are conveyed about the existence — let alone the expression — of anger in women. The labeling and discounting of abuse survivors needs to be understood in the context of a society which has no derogatory epithets or slang for male anger which place responsibility on men — but has many for women. Communities of faith do not exist in a societal vacuum. Neither do their members who are struggling with the need to express feelings of anger as they seek justice.

It is essential to the process of justice-making and healing for abuse survivors to have places where the truth of their lives, including their anger and rage, can be expressed without fear of reprisal. Survivors of abuse do not need platitudes which serve only to lessen our discomfort at their expense. We need to learn to live with our discomfort and not allow it to suppress a woman's anger to impede her healing process.

Let us get on with the work of creating those places in the community where a victim's anger is heard and respected as legitimate and appropriate. In those places victims would be relieved of the requirement to be "nice". In those places we can move together with victims beyond sense of powerlessness in the face of pain toward a place where truth-telling can provide motivation towards acts of justice from which healing can come.


1. Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1985), p. 14.
2. *Ibid.*, p.15.

(Excerpt from **Working Together to prevent sexual and domestic violence**, Vol. 7, No. 6, Winer, 1988)

CORNELL SURVEY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT A survey conducted by the Institute for Social and Economic Research at CORNELL UNIVERSITY (NY) finds that 61 percent of upperclass and graduate women students have experienced "unwanted sexual attention" from someone in authority at the university. The most frequently cited form of harassment were sexist comments that a majority of respondents report having experienced one of more times. More than 12 percent have avoided classes with faculty members who have a reputation for harassing students, and 7 percent said that unwanted sexual attention has interfered with their academic performance. According to the report, when students wrote about their feelings many used words such as "scared," "intimidated," "self-conscious," "isolated," "disgusted," "nervous," "frightened," and "threatened." Less than 1 percent of those who experience harassment filed a complaint. Copies of the report are available free from the Office of Equal Opportunity, Cornell University, 234 Day Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.

(Excerpt from *On Campus With Women*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Winter 1988)

APRIL/MAY NETWORKING CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5 12:30 Women's Center Program	6 12:30 Women's Center Program	7	8	9
10	11	12 12:30 Women's Center Program	13 AAIW Branch Mtg 6:30 Dinner 7:30 Program Cavanaugh's	14 5:30 Women's Network Mtg Alex's Restaurant	15	16
17	18	19	20 12:30 Women's Center Program	21	22	23
 VICTIMS RIGHTS WEEK						
24	25	26 12:30 Women's Center Program	27 AAIW Board Mtg	28	29	30
May 1	2	3 12:30 Women's Center Program	4 12:30 Women's Center Program	5	6	7

For more information about these events, see this newsletter or call the Women's Center, 885-6616

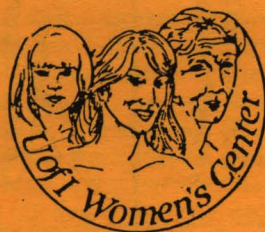
VICTIMS We talk about many kinds of victims: incest, domestic violence, rape, child abuse, sexual harassment, and victims of crime. We talk of many ways to help and prevent victimization: self-defense, more and better laws, individual, group and family therapy, rape centers, crisis center, etc... We ask questions of why? What can we do? Ann Wilson Schaefer and Sonia Johnson offer thought provoking perspectives on the "big picture" of victimization and oppression in their books, "When Society Becomes An Addict" and "Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation," respectively. Ann Wilson Schaefer points to the pervasive system of addiction in Western society today as she discusses the addictive process, explores its attributes, and points the way to functioning outside the system. Schaefer's definition of victim includes us all in one way or another as she puts forth an argument for abandoning a system in which self-centeredness, dishonesty, the illusion of control and constant crises are the norm. Sonia

Johnson speaks to the oppression of women and the patriarchal attitudes of both men and women that promote the status quo. Johnson says that women who pour their energy into changing the patriarchal system in "approved" ways are like co-alcoholics. Instead of just getting on with their own lives, they maintain their partner's alcoholism by trying to control their partner and fix or cover up mistakes. Johnson proposes that women can transform the system by transcending it in their feelings and attitudes about themselves and locating what she calls The Goddess Within. Schaefer and Johnson give us expanded visions that at once unite us in a global arena and offer us the opportunity and joy of taking back the responsibility for our future. "Society Becomes an Addict" is available for loan at the Women's Center. "Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation", by Sonia Johnson is available through The Crossing Press, Freedom, California.

—S.J. Erickson—

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

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