A Woman’s Way through The Twelve Steps:
A New Approach

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RIKK - Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference
University of Iceland
September 1, 2015 Evening Presentation
Reykjavik, Iceland
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Women’s Issues: An International Perspective

- Shame and Stigma
- Physical and Sexual Abuse
- Relationship Issue
  - fear of losing children
  - fear of losing a partner
  - needing partner’s permission to obtain treatment

Women’s Issues: An International Perspective

- Treatment Issues
  - lack of services for women
  - not understanding treatment
  - long waiting lists
  - lack of childcare services

- Systemic Issues
  - lack of financial resources
  - lack of clean/sober housing
  - poorly coordinated services
Gender-Responsive Treatment

- Creating an environment through:
  - site selection
  - staff selection
  - program development
  - content and material
- that reflects an understanding of the realities of the lives of women and girls, and
- addresses and responds to their strengths and challenges.


Core Principles of Trauma Informed Care

- Safety (physical and emotional)
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

(Fallot & Harris, 2006)

Twelve Steps

**History**

- 1935 founded by Bill W. & Dr. Bob
- Early days – women were invisible
- Today – 126 self-help groups
- Women represent 1/3 of membership
Twelve Steps
Radical or Conservative?

• Free
• Non-hierarchical
• Spiritual

A Woman’s Way through The Twelve Steps

Book, Workbook, Facilitator’s Guide, & DVDs

A Woman’s Way through The Twelve Steps

• Facilitator’s Guide – adaption for girls
A Woman’s Way through The Twelve Steps

- Provides supportive female-centered environment
- Helps to interpret language
- Provides coping skills – grounding and self-soothing
- Acknowledges trauma

Opening Session

Beginning

A Woman’s Way through The Twelve Steps

Self-Soothing Exercise:

The Five Senses
Step One

*We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.*
Themes in Step One

- Awareness
- Unmanageability

(3 exercises)

The Spiral of Addiction and Recovery

Addiction (constriction)  Recovery (expansion)

Transformation

Activity: The Downward Spiral

Addiction (constriction)
Session 2

Step Two

*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
Themes in Step Two

- Faith
- Sanity

(3 exercises)

Activity:
The Power of Support

Session 3
Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
Themes in Step Three

- Control
- Surrender
- Decision Making

(5 exercises)

Activity:
Letting Go

Activity:
ORID
ORID
(Decision making)

- Objective
- Reflective
- Interpretive
- Decisive

Session 4
Step Four

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

Themes in Step Four

- Fearlessness
- Inventory

(2 exercises)
Step Four Inventory

- Assets/Strength
- Challenges/Limitations

Activity:
The Upward Spiral

Recovery (expansion)

Upward Spiral
Session 5

Step Five

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Themes in Step Five

• Admitting
• Naming
   (4 exercises)

Activity:
Secrets
Session 6

Step Six

We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Themes in Step Six

- Readiness
- Personal Knowledge (4 exercises)

Activity:
Readiness
Activity:
Planting Seeds

Session 7

Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
Themes in Step Seven

• Relinquishment
• Humility
  (4 exercises)

Activity:
Creating a Surrender Box

Self- Soothing Exercise:
Palms Down, Palms Up
Session 12
Step Twelve

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Women and Spirituality

(A Woman's Way through The Twelve Steps, pp 231-236)

Closing:
What is Blossoming in You?
...that we are always guided, always cared for, always healing, moving inevitably towards wholeness, even when we can not yet see it for all the pain and difficulty that surrounds us.

~ C. Galland
Dr. Stephanie S. Covington is a nationally recognized clinician, author, organizational consultant, and lecturer. She is a pioneer in the field of women’s issues, addiction, and recovery. She has developed an innovative, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed approach to the treatment needs of women and girls that results in effective services in public, private, and institutional settings. Her presentations, staff-development seminars, and technical assistance focus on systems change and the development of caring, compassionate, and empowering therapeutic environments. They provide professionals an opportunity to learn new skills for dealing with personal, institutional, and societal changes and are always in demand, both nationally and internationally.

Dr. Covington’s clients include the Betty Ford Treatment Center, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment in Washington, D.C., the Michigan Department of Corrections, and numerous other treatment and correctional settings. Dr. Covington was a workshop chair for the women’s treatment improvement protocol (TIP) and the trauma TIP (published by CSAT) and is the co-author of a three-year research project, Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders, for the National Institute of Corrections. This publication received the University of Cincinnati Award for its outstanding contribution to the field of corrections in the U.S. and Canada. She was selected to be the featured therapist on the Oprah Winfrey Network docu-reality show Breaking Down the Bars: Rockville.

Educated at Columbia University and the Union Institute, Dr. Covington has served on the faculties of the University of Southern California, San Diego State University, and the California School of Professional Psychology, and she is a former chair of the Women's Committee of the International Council on Alcoholism and Addiction. She is a board-certified Diplomate of the National Association of Social Workers and the American Board of Sexology and is a member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy and the American Psychological Association. She also served on the Advisory Council for Women’s Services for the federal agency SAMHSA.

Dr. Covington is based in La Jolla, California, where she is co-director of the Institute for Relational Development and the Center for Gender and Justice, which seeks to expand gender-responsive policies and practices for females who are under criminal justice supervision.

Among the many articles and books written by Dr. Covington are:
- Women and Addiction: A Gender-Responsive Approach
- Leaving the Enchanted Forest: The Path from Relationship Addiction to Intimacy

She also has program materials to help meet the needs of women and girls. The following curricula include training manuals for professionals and complementary materials for participants:
- Helping Women Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction (with special edition for the criminal justice system)
- Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women
- Healing Trauma: Strategies for Abused Women
- Voices: A Program of Self-Discovery and Empowerment for Girls
- A Woman’s Way through The Twelve Steps
- Beyond Anger and Violence: A Program for Women (with special edition for the criminal justice system)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: A Training Program for Correctional Professionals (USA and Canadian)

For a list of Dr. Covington’s recent articles, and descriptions of her current seminars for professionals, visit: www.stephaniecovington.com and www.centerforgenderandjustice.org.
Downward Spiral