



For mothers and their daughters

"Creating a Cycle of Power"



A new program facilitated through

Mission Statement:

Girl Talk's mission is to enable mothers and daughters to "create a cycle of power" by providing them with the tools to build healthy and supportive relationships through communication. Our workshops will teach them how to break down communication barriers and engage in healthy dialogue and exercises to foster trust, compassion and empathy in their relationships. As a result, we expect to produce women of all ages with noted higher levels of self-esteem, which will empower them to set higher goals and make confident, independent contributions to society.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Girl Talk believes that family is our community's most precious resource. When an individual is successful in adulthood, he/she is generally influenced by a strong role model within their family, just as individuals who really struggle in life reveal a breakdown somewhere in the family dynamic. We are responding to the immediate needs of young girls and women faced with life altering choices. Between the divorce rate and teens and women having children out of wedlock, single parent households have become the norm, mothers have had to take on dual roles in their home and society has, to an extent become desensitized to the issue and its effects on the family dynamic and its impact on society as a whole. Girl Talk feels that we, as a society should not suffer from the struggles of single parent homes, instead we choose to prepare women for the more challenging roles. We plan to actively take a role in preparing women for successful parenting and instilling positive family values that will act as a positive and powerful force for change. We are committed to making a difference.

Girl Talk will help women and girls define their identity and the characteristics that make each of them special so they learn to value themselves, as well as provide mothers and daughters with necessary tools to empower themselves to endure life's obstacles by focusing on healthy communication in the home. Our goal is to teach women that social pressures do not have to dictate their choices, sex does not determine their self worth, and that even as adults, they can learn to love and respect themselves regardless of their past circumstances and pass on those values to their daughters.

We strongly believe that supporting this program will empower our women and positively impact our community.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Girl Talk intends to serve the communities in and around Northern Virginia. Many neighborhoods in the Washington Metropolitan area are fragile places, with uncertain futures, and our mother's influences have the power to create the paradigm for our lives. Victoria Secunda, author of *Mending the Bough*, and family therapist - explains that power and control, intimacy, structure, flexibility, and emotion formulate the "Issues of Family Functioning". She further explained that the mother is not only the cornerstone of the family; she is a daughter's point of reference for how to be a woman, how to function in the context of a relationship and how to interact with the outside world. Dr. Barbara Zax, family therapist of Los Angeles, California quotes, "I've worked with many relationships, but few can provoke such powerful feelings of rage, guilt, resentment, sadness and frustration as one between a mother and daughter".

Every daughter needs a healthy relationship with her mother in order to develop a sense of value and become an independent, involved member of society. At the same time a mother needs a viable and active

relationship with her daughter to provide her with a sense that she has done her best - and hopefully succeeded - in managing a formidable task of mothering a daughter.

Authority comes with a "mother's voice" therefore a mother's influence has the power to sustain or devastate. It can be soothing, comforting, and emotionally grounding or can agitate, criticize, demean or paralyze. Therefore mothers need to focus on positively influencing their daughters and teaching them self-esteem and healthy boundaries, which means in many cases learning it themselves.

Self-esteem in women is a key issue due to the idea that culture values girls less and grants them fewer choices for their futures. Young girls need more self-esteem than boys in order to aspire to a nontraditional career, outside of what is expected by a member of their same sex. In 1991 the AAUW, (American Association of University Women) dedicated to the education of women and girls conducted a national self-esteem survey of three thousand elementary school girls. Based on their findings it is understood why in spite of drastic societal change and twenty years of "equal opportunity", so many girls and young women were clearly not working up to their potential or achieving their dreams.

According to the report, the sharpest drop in self-esteem in girls occurs in the years between elementary school and middle school. It's also important to note that trends in self-esteem differ by race as well as gender. African American girls start out feeling better about themselves than white girls do (65 percent of elementary school girls have high self-esteem), and most of them retain that feeling. The survey found only a seven-point drop in esteem level among older girls. Hispanic girls start out with the highest level of self-esteem of any female group (68 percent) but also record the biggest drop - thirty eight points - between elementary and high school (they still feel better about themselves than white high school girls, however).

In searching for the most conclusive definition of self-esteem we contacted the "National Council for Self-Esteem". They found that Dr. Nathaniel Branden's, *The Power of Self-Esteem* described self-esteem as:

1. *Confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the challenges of life.*
2. *Confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitlement to assert our needs and wants, and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts.*

Therefore positive self-esteem operates as, in effect, the immune system of the spirit, providing resistance, strength, and a capacity for regeneration.

Many people are taught what self-esteem is by definition, but many do not know how to achieve it, nor do they possess the tools to obtain it. Girl Talk has linked a significant connection to self-esteem in women to their relationship with their mother, and our goal is to empower these relationships through communication.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Goals and Objectives

The goal of Girl Talk is to help mothers and daughters learn to communicate effectively and openly with one another to create healthy and supportive relationships. The objective of the program is to improve self-esteem in girls and women to endure and overcome life's challenges and reach their potential as confident, independent contributors to society. Through this program we seek to improve family relationships and more productive communities.

Background of Program Staff

The Girl Talk staff is experienced in a wide variety of areas to insure the success of this program. Kim James, the Dream in Color Foundation, Inc. Founder, Board President & Program Director is one of the Girl Talk program coordinators and a key speaker. She has a degree in Speech Communications & Theatre Arts and several years of experience in both primary and secondary education. Mrs. James has been a teacher, a founder and a director of a number of programs involving adolescent girls over the past 12 years. She has worked in Social Services, the Division of Child Support Enforcement and as a professional dancer for an NFL team. Kim has spent a great deal of time serving the St. Louis community involving charity organizations that benefit children and more importantly her triumph over personal challenges qualifies her to share and teach on many

issues that hinder young women today. Debbie Wright, who will also serve as a co-coordinator and program facilitator, is the Program Supervisor for the City of Falls Church Department of Recreation & Parks. She has several years of experience in planning and facilitating youth programs, and programs specifically targeting adolescent girls. Girl Talk has the volunteer support on a consultation basis of Dr. Jeanie Taylor – Clinical Child Psychologist, and Stephanie Gray – Middle School Guidance Director at Mark Twain Middle School in Alexandria, VA. We are currently seeking community partners and city support to effectively serve the many families in the Northern Virginia area.

Program Enrollment

Girl Talk helps mothers and their school age daughters build self-esteem and healthy family relationships. The program will be promoted through commercial advertising in addition to working relationships with area Parent Teacher Associations; county and city family services programs, church congregations, and referrals from state welfare offices. Bi-monthly seminars and workshops will be held to offer personal, "hands on" lessons and discussions on healthy communication and self-esteem building.

Program Implementations and Projected Outcome

Girl Talk will hold a series of seminars beginning with positive affirmations to inspire and instill a receptive climate to the information and tools that will be provided to facilitate a commitment to change. The affirmation for the mothers is called "*Welcome to the World*", written by Pam Levin author of *Cycle of Power*. It reads:

*Welcome to the World, I'm so glad you are here,
Welcome to our family and home, I'm so glad you are a girl!
I want to be near you, to hold you and love you.
Your needs are O.K. with me, I'll give you all the time you need to get your needs met!*

*It's O.K. to wander and explore and it's O.K. to leave me and separate,
I won't leave you!
It's O.K. to test your limits, it's O.K. to be angry and to say no.
It's O.K. for you to do it your way, I'll be here.
You don't have to hurry; I'll give you all the time you need.
It's O.K. to practice holding on and letting go.
I won't leave you!*

The responsive affirmation for the daughters reads:

*Thanks Mom, for the gift of life,
for taking the time and energy to bring me into the world,
for your willingness to show me the beauty in life;
for making know that I belong here just like the birds and the trees,
for listening;
for giving me someone of my very own to love, cherish and respect,
because these are the things I most want to learn;
for providing me a safe place to live and grow.*

*I know all these things take your patience, your time and your energy;
and I am honored you are willing to give all that to me.*

I love you!

Girl Talk is all about communicating, because words can lift you. We will suggest additional affirmations that illustrate the depth of love and beauty that can exist between mother and daughter. It should

demonstrate that if you are serious about having a healthy relationship, then the egos will be left outside of the room, and all who come and open their hearts will learn.

It was clearly stated and demonstrated on a September 1998 episode of the "OPRAH SHOW" by Dr. John Bradshaw that children (especially girls) cannot deal with negative adjectives such as stupid, selfish, etc. They will change their behavior to please. However their self-esteem will suffer and create painful issues that carry into adulthood and into raising their own families.

Key note speakers with expertise in mental health and family counseling will speak on pertinent issues such as:

- Getting Started on the Right Foot
- Teaching Obedience and Respect and the Long Term Consequences of Defiance
- Reaching Puberty "My Body is Changing"
- When Your Daughter Gets Pregnant
- When Dad Wasn't There: Seeking Attention to Fill the Void
- Birth Control: When to Discuss It and How to Without Condoning Sexual Activity
- Having the Respect for Yourself and Your Body to Wait
- Surviving Rape
- Sexual Abuse Secrets
- Respecting Your Daughter's Privacy
- Remembering that "I Was Once Like You"
- Bridging the Generation Gap
- "Do As I Say, Not As I Do" Why It's Important to Set Good Examples
- The Power of Positive Thinking
- Establishing a Family "CODE OF HONOR"
- Appropriate Discipline and Setting Reasonable Limits
- Discovering Your Gifts and Using it to Impact the World

A panel discussion with question and answer periods for audience participation will follow. Prior to mothers and daughters breaking into groups for communication workshops, there will be role playing skits confronting sensitive issues to demonstrate both positive and negative responses to various situations. Each participant of our program will receive a copy of the Survival Guide which includes highlighted points from the speakers, most asked questions and answers, a list of suggested readings, and a list of local affordable resources to refer to should professional assistance become necessary.

Once we build the program, each session can accommodate a few hundred participants. In time we project the outcome to include a decrease in teen pregnancies and co-dependent behavior. We are geared to being instrumental in producing a society of confident, competent professional women capable of managing a home as well as a career in a male dominated society. And last, we expect our communities to benefit economically by engendering women with higher career aspirations and the means and confidence to achieve them. All of which are facilitated through communication and support in building self-esteem.

Comparison of Program to Similar Programs

While there are other community organizations that seek to improve family relationships, Girl Talk is unique in that it focuses on preventive maintenance in relationships with mothers and daughters. Some provide counseling services for women in crisis. Others focus on empowering through education, (which can be useful but not focused on the inter-personal aspects between mother and daughter). However, we choose to focus on self-esteem building through communication practices in the home. Teaching girls and women to help themselves and each other by creating relationships based on trust, compassion and empathy. We project to empower girls to make more responsible and progressive choices for their futures.

Evaluation

The Girl Talk staff will meet bi-weekly to discuss and evaluate our program based on the feedback of our participants. A questionnaire will be completed at the conclusion of each seminar to be reviewed and used to improve our program and evaluate our progress. We also plan to have our content audited by an independent source with expertise in our area of focus.

Conclusion

As a service to our community and our society as a whole, Girl Talk is designed to attract women who want and need to positively change the outcome of their lives, heal their past issues, and insure healthy and satisfying futures for their daughters. Girl Talk is a timely and creative response to social issues that threaten the mental well being and stability of our families. To implement this valuable program, we need the financial support and partnership of funding institutions such as yours. Awarding Girl Talk a grant is an investment in the lives of young girls and women in Northern Virginia and throughout the country. The result: a healthy family environment that will better our community and contribute to our society for generations to come. Our motto is “Girl Talk - Creating a Cycle of Power”.