

NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES



Orientation Handbook
FOR FEMALE STAFF
WORKING IN
AN INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

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Diversity Management

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New York State Department of Correctional Services Policy
Statement on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
Governor Mario M. Cuomo's Executive Order No. 19 - New
York State Policy Statement on Sexual Harassment
Employee Assistance Program

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions are provided because these terms are commonly used:

1. **Cooperation** - Cooperation involves behavior which helps a co-worker perform his/her job. Components of cooperation include information sharing, openly supporting one another's decisions, as well as willingly and competently performing one's job duties.
2. **Over-Protectiveness** - Over-protectiveness in the correctional setting is unnecessary or premature protective behavior which results in the "protected" individual being perceived as weak or not able to take care of oneself with the inmate population. For example, if a staff member immediately intercedes to "make the inmate behave", the inmates may interpret that behavior as a message that the first staff member is unable to enforce the rules. When dealing with an extremely angry inmate who is on the verge of losing control, it is not inappropriate nor premature for one staff member to assist another.
3. **Professionalism** - Bud Allen and Diana Bosta, in their book, Games Criminals Play, defined professionalism as "communicating and acting in a manner which distinguishes a person of skill and knowledge from an amateur". A professional person views his/her job as an important societal contribution and does everything in his/her power to improve and enhance that contribution. A professional person also views the job as an arena for utilizing learned skills, rather than as an environment in which to have personal needs met.

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Security Level

A correctional facility is designated as maximum, medium or minimum security based upon the mix of physical characteristics of the facility which makes it capable of safely and securely housing inmates of a specific risk level.

Security level is evaluated in terms of the penetrability of the perimeter ranging from virtually impenetrable (a high masonry wall with manned, armed guard posts, such as is found at maximum security facilities) to easily penetrable (virtually non-existent), as found at our camps.

The range from maximum to minimum security in the area of housing units is essentially the range from single-cell living units with self-contained toilet facilities, to dormitory-type housing provided in minimum-security camps

Language

Profanity and vulgarity in speech and behavior are common in institutional settings. However, Rule 107.11 (Standards of Inmate Behavior - All Institutions) states: "inmates shall not verbally or in writing harass employees. This includes using insolent, abusive and/or obscene language and gestures." The

Department of Correctional Services' Employees' Manual states: "An employee shall refrain from the use of indecent, profane or abusive language or gestures while on duty or on State property." Regardless of the reason for the inmate's behavior, profanity should not be permitted by staff and inmates alike. At all times, you have an obligation to maintain a professional demeanor.

You may encounter resistance from other staff members who tolerate such behavior and/or who participate in such behavior themselves. You have a right to object and they have an obligation to support you and/or desist from such behavior in your presence.

SECURITY ISSUES

The primary responsibility of correctional facilities is SECURITY. All employees, regardless of title, share the responsibility of insuring the security, safety and welfare of the inmates, fellow employees and visitors.

Before working your first shift, your facility will have oriented you to rudimentary security issues. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT ANYTHING, ASK YOUR SUPERVISOR.

General Reminders

1. Read the unit log at the beginning of a shift to see if any significant problems occurred while you were off shift.
2. If you are working in an unfamiliar unit, ask staff about the inmates you will be supervising: Who are the troublemakers, the "weak" ones and those who follow Department rules and regulations.
3. Ask staff about the mood of the group; for example, have they noticed anything different, etc.
4. Do not mail anything for an inmate. All outgoing mail from inmates **MUST** go through facility channels.
5. Trust your instincts. Look comfortable, but be aware of everything. Try to sense things before they happen. Notice when something is different.
6. Always lock personal items in a safe place (this includes civilian staff).
7. Never, never let an inmate use your keys! Always know where the keys are. It is advisable to have some way of attaching your key ring to your clothing.
8. Keep your personal keys on a separate key ring which is locked up while you are working. If you have questions about where you can leave your personal keys, ask your supervisor. If an inmate takes your keys away, you don't want him/her to have the keys to your car and house, too.
9. When possible, do not allow inmates to become positioned behind you. For example, when supervising the TV area, sit in the last row. Try to position yourself with your back to the wall to adequately supervise the area without sitting and watching TV.
10. Never let an inmate hold the door open so that you precede him/her into a room. What may seem to be good manners can spell danger.
11. When possible, never let an inmate position himself/herself between you and the nearest exit.
12. Do not let inmates gather tightly around you.
13. Never enter a room, building or situation without being aware of possible set-ups. Look before entering.
14. Always communicate your whereabouts to other staff.
15. All Department employees in the facility should make concerted efforts to establish and maintain communication, rapport and mutual support in carrying out each one's duties and responsibilities. You are all on the same team.
16. Stay alert, and always leave yourself a way out.
17. Avoid making comments regarding an inmate's physique and/or figure. They are always inappropriate and can be dangerous.

18. If an inmate attempts to hold a conversation with you while he/she is in the nude, or partially dressed, tell him/her to get dressed and to talk to you later. Do not act shocked.

Protecting Personal Privacy/Safety

1. Do not give information about staff members or inmates to outside telephone callers (i.e., phone numbers, shifts, days off, etc.). Take the caller's number and have the appropriate staff person verify and return the call.
2. Never bring anything into the facility with your home address on it (i.e., magazines, periodicals, etc.).
3. If selling your car, remove any signs with your telephone number when the car is parked at work.
4. Do not put your name or address in newspaper advertisements. Use phone number only. (Inmates often read the local papers.)

Clothing and Security

In general, the following dress guidelines are suggested for both male and female staff who have inmate contact and/or custody responsibilities:

1. Wear shoes which are safe, comfortable and functional for your job duties.
2. Clothing should fit loosely enough to permit free body movement in the event of physical altercation.
3. If clothing or accessories are appropriate attire for a nightclub or the beach, you should question their appropriateness for the institutional work place.
4. Avoid wearing necklaces and chains that cannot be easily broken if grabbed by an inmate. It can be used to choke or restrain you. This is also true of ties and scarves.
5. Avoid long, dangling pierced earrings which may pose a danger to you if grabbed by an inmate.
6. Whenever you report to the facility (even when not on duty), you should be properly attired when entering the "gate area".

In short, staff should wear attire that reflects professionalism and good sense.

Masturbation

Inmate Rule 101.20 states, "Inmates shall not intentionally expose the private parts of their bodies." If an inmate is masturbating in his/her cell, and an officer happens to look into the cell from another area, it should be overlooked. However, if the inmate is masturbating in the shower area or performs it deliberately in front of staff, the inmate should be issued a misbehavior report. Staff should never act shocked or embarrassed and should not ridicule the inmate. Sexual contact between employees and inmates will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Homosexual Activity Between Inmates

Inmate Rule 101 10 states, "Inmates shall not engage in, encourage, solicit or attempt to force others to engage in sexual acts." Appropriate action should always be taken when confronted with this sexual activity.

SETTING AND ENFORCING LIMITS

Setting limits involves clearly letting others know what behavior you will/will not tolerate and why. You will need to set limits with both inmates and staff. Whenever possible, limit setting should be done in advance. If you have problems, speak to your supervisor as soon as possible.

Policy & Procedures Directive #4932, Chapter V, Standards, Behavior and Allowances, indicates, "All control of inmate activities, including disciplinary action, must be administered in a completely fair, impersonal and impartial manner and must be as consistent as possible (given the need for individualized decision). Disciplinary action must never be arbitrary or capricious, or administered for the purpose of retaliation or revenge."

Obviously, inmates and staff are required to abide by facility and Departmental rules and regulations. However, most potentially objectionable behavior is not codified; therefore, you must effectively and assertively communicate, to inmates and staff, your limits.

Some important things to remember in setting limits are:

1. Be knowledgeable of the Departmental standards of behavior and facility rules and regulations.
2. Know your own standards, and stick to them.
3. Always be fair, firm and consistent.
4. State your limits firmly, and look the person straight in the eye.
5. Before setting a limit, make sure you can and will enforce it. Never threaten!
6. Don't be forced into making snap decisions unless you are sure you want to permit the requested behavior. Don't be afraid to use the word "no" – avoid raising expectations.
7. Do not try to win a popularity contest or buy cooperation with favors.
8. Inmates may try to intimidate you by talking in loud tones of voice. This is a way of testing you. An effective way of dealing with this is to lower your own voice.
9. Become knowledgeable and recognize cultural differences (e.g., some groups normally speak in loud voice tones which are not meant to intimidate).
10. Be yourself. If you are clear about who you are and show respect to others, they will respect you.
11. Whenever possible, follow through when you say you will do something.
12. Whenever possible, leave inmates a way to respond or comply with your demands that does not cause them to lose face with their peers.
13. Be aware that you are a member of a team and, as such, may sometimes need to subordinate your personal likes and dislikes for the good of the team.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH INMATES

The development of a mutually respectful relationship with inmates is important to your being an effective staff member. The best way to achieve this kind of rapport is to display responsible adult behavior which includes setting firm limits, enforcing consequences consistently and fairly, and treating all persons with respect. Communicate to inmates that you believe they are capable of becoming fully functioning

human beings and that you expect them to do so. Let them know there are no acceptable excuses for breaking the rules. Be sure to let inmates know when they have done well.

Fantasies

Inmates will frequently view women in stereotypical roles, developing fantasies about their relationship with you. These fantasies may range from you as a mother to you as a girlfriend/sex partner. Inmates must be given clear messages that such fantasies are not reality. There are several ways to respond when these fantasies are verbalized to you:

1. If you are viewed as a mother figure, respond by saying that, while such wishes are normal, you are not going to fulfill that role. Do not build on the fantasy by playing a mother role.
2. If an inmate talks about wanting to date you, make your negative reaction firm and clear. Let your supervisor know about what happened and how you handled it. If the problem persists, your response must remain firmly negative.
3. Do not, under any circumstances, discuss your personal life with inmates. They may "test" you with prodding questions, particularly when you are new on the unit.
4. Do not permit yourself to listen to explicit sexual conversations being verbalized by inmates. These comments may be a form of manipulation, and disciplinary action ranging from a verbal reprimand to a misbehavior report may be necessary. Inmates who appear to have an excessive problem in the verbalization of sexual fantasies may require an intensive counseling program.
5. Be prepared for the fact that inmates may spread gossip about your personal life that are based on no facts whatsoever

Wolf Whistles and Obscene Remarks

Sometimes you may encounter wolf whistles and obscene remarks when you walk by a group of inmates. (This applies to both genders.) In general, you should ignore the behavior and do not allow any reaction to show on your face. If the problem persists, discuss the matter with your supervisor.

Compliments

Compliments, as opposed to sexual remarks and whistles, can be handled in this way:

Inform the inmate that complimentary remarks are inappropriate between staff and inmates and direct that he/she not make such personal comments to you again.

Touching

Touching is a very human activity which takes on great significance in an institutional setting. Do not touch an inmate or allow him/her to touch you, except when security measures require it.

Time Spent With Inmates

Do not spend an excessive amount of time with any one inmate. Misinterpretation can be made by the inmate, staff and other inmates. Obviously, there will be some inmates you like better or whom you see as being more receptive to counseling. However, it is important to monitor yourself to ensure the time spent with that inmate is not significantly greater than with other inmates in your unit, classroom, job site or caseload. Additionally, if you spend more time with members of a particular ethnic group, you may be perceived as behaving prejudicially.

Over-Familiarity

Over-familiarity is a trap into which many well-meaning persons fall. Basically, this involves the development of a "friendly" relationship with an inmate with whom you should keep a professional distance because of your status as an authority figure.

Examples of behavior which constitute over-familiarity include:

1. Talking about your personal life with inmates (especially your love life).
2. Relaxing rules for "certain inmates".
3. Doing special favors for certain inmates.
4. Routinely having certain inmates do special favors for you.
5. Talking to inmates about other staff or other inmates.

Any of the above activities, and many others not listed, can lead to your being asked to violate rules in the future, can lead to harassment, or can even lead to blackmail by inmates.

Don't set yourself up by becoming overly familiar with inmates. You can treat inmates with respect and concern, but insure that you do not become overly familiar. You will gain more respect from inmates if you do not.

Love Letters

Male and female staff may receive "love letters". These may range from romantic in nature to sexually explicit. Report this to your supervisor immediately! If you do not take positive and immediate steps to stop the inmate from sending you such letters, the inmate, his/her peers and other staff may think that you are welcoming the letters and the sentiments contained within.

If the inmate resides in your institution:

1. Show the letter to your supervisor and inform him/her that the letter is unwelcome and unsolicited (even if the letter is anonymous).
2. If you do not work on the inmate's living unit, inform your supervisor and/or the inmate's counselor that you received a "love letter" from the inmate.

3. Inform the inmate that you do not wish to receive any more letters from him/her; that such letters are inappropriate and unwelcome; and that disciplinary action will result if it happens again. Be firm in your statements. Do not ridicule or humiliate the inmate, and discourage other staff who might do so.

If the inmate has transferred to another facility or is on parole, show the letter to your supervisor and inform him/her that the letter is unwelcome and unsolicited. Your supervisor will indicate the appropriate action to be taken.

Other Correspondence With Inmates

As stated in the Employees' Manual, Rule 2.15, "except as otherwise authorized by the Commissioner or Superintendent of the facility to which the employee is assigned, no employee shall knowingly:

1. Associate or have any dealings with criminals or persons engaged in unlawful activities;
2. Engage in any conversation, communication, dealing, transaction, association or relationship with any inmate, former inmate, parolee or former parolee, or any visitor, friend or relative of same in any manner or form which is not necessary or proper for the discharge of the employee's duties.

Any contact or attempt to contact an employee as described above shall be reported to the Commissioner or the Superintendent."

EXAMPLES: If an inmate you knew from outside is incarcerated in the facility to which you are assigned, you must notify your Superintendent. Under no circumstances is information you learn during the course of your employment to be discussed outside the facility. A good rule of thumb is never discuss specific inmates when off-duty.

If you wish to maintain contact with a relative or friend who is incarcerated, submit a request to your Superintendent before contacting the other facility. Your Superintendent or his/her designee will tell you how to proceed. If your relative is incarcerated in the New York State Department of Correctional Services, notify your Superintendent.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF

In becoming an employee with the Department of Correctional Services, you must do so as a professional who is becoming part of a professional team. How you are viewed in relationship to other members of your work group, both male and female, will have an important bearing on your acceptance by co-workers. Here are some general recommendations for developing interpersonal relationships:

1. If you discuss your personal life, or date co-workers, expect everyone else to know it and, possibly, make value judgments.
2. It is not necessary to use profanity in order to be "one of the boys".
3. You should not tolerate, nor participate in, sexual comments or sexually explicit behavior with other staff members. Let fellow employees know in a clear, non-apologetic manner that you will not tolerate behavior or comments which are sexually explicit in nature, as they violate the Department's policy on sexual harassment and they are personally offensive to you.
4. Avoid participating in non-professional gossip about other staff members.
5. Monitor your own behavior and eliminate flirtatious mannerisms while on the job. Behavior which is clearly appropriate in the community can be perceived as seductive in an institution.

Communication

Communication is one of the keys to an effective work unit. It is especially important in the context of a 24-hour per day, seven-day a week, security operation because staff depend on the information gained from co-workers to maintain a safe environment. If applicable, use team meetings to further communication.

Male-female communication can be hampered due to cultural conditioning. Males may find it difficult to confront a female, especially about sex-related issues. They may back down if a female begins to cry, and they feel angry because they sense that have been "manipulated". Women may be similarly "manipulated" by the anger which men sometimes demonstrate. Both sexes need to expand their ability to hear the message that is being communicated and not react defensively to the feelings demonstrated.

People sometimes have problems asking others for advice. You must learn to communicate your need for information and support if you want to function effectively in the unit. You must also be willing to inform others when they are behaving in ways that are counter-productive. Such action should be taken in a way that does not needlessly antagonize the individual; i.e., in private, taking the form of a question/suggestion, rather than a direction or instruction. Learn to accept constructive criticism from your co-workers without becoming either defensive or overly apologetic. Learn from your mistakes.

Doing Your Job

1. Learn from your supervisor what is expected of you, and do it. Always be punctual. Check your shift assignments in advance, and know your responsibilities. In order to avoid potential problems, it is your obligation to ask questions.
2. Do not allow staff (either peers or supervisors) to treat you preferentially in assignments. You will find the short-term benefits of such treatment are far outweighed by the long-term drawbacks. Those drawbacks include less experience in all facets of the job; resentment from peers; and rumors about why you received the preferential treatment.
3. Be aware that some staff will feel protective toward you. Let them know in a firm but friendly manner that you need to demonstrate your competency and effectiveness to the inmates, and their "protective behavior" prevents you from doing that. Thank them for their good intentions and ask for their suggestions in handling problem situations.
4. Listen to more experienced staff who openly share their concerns about your job performance, status and role. Be willing to accept constructive criticism and make changes that will result in your becoming a more efficient and effective staff member.
5. Do not hesitate to ask for back-up help when needed. You do not have to be better or tougher than any other staff member.
6. Share any pertinent information about problem inmates with any staff who will be coming in contact with those inmates.
7. Check out your behavior and how you come across to others. Use your experiences to learn and grow.
8. Be a good team member. Support other staff. Be friendly and courteous. Give others the benefit of the doubt.
9. Be aware that occasions will occur while performing your job duties (i.e., clerical) when you will have to come in contact with the inmate population. No special security (i.e., escort) will be provided.
10. When you witness an inmate violating the rules, it is the responsibility of all staff (civilian and custodial) to report the incident to proper authorities and submit a written Misbehavior Report prior to the conclusion of your shift of duty. (See Policy Directive #4932 for further clarification.)

If You Have Problems

Sometimes, even when you are playing by the rules and doing a good job, there are those staff members who do not want to be cooperative or supportive. Some examples of this include:

1. Giving you difficult assignments without proper information, training or back-up support.
2. Failing to reveal significant information to you at the beginning of a shift.
3. Spreading rumors about you to other staff and/or inmates.
4. Laughing when inmates disrespect or sexually harass you.
5. Engaging in any verbal or physical sexually harassing technique or discriminatory behavior. (Refer to New York State Department of Correctional Services Policy Statement on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, October 20, 1983.)

To deal with such behavior:

1. Assess the situation as to severity and intent. Talk to that person regarding your objections to his/her behavior and specify what changes in behavior are desired.
2. If the behavior is hostile and appears deliberate, and you have doubt regarding the individual's willingness to discuss your objections, inform your supervisor before approaching the individual.
3. If your supervisor is the person with whom you are having problems, you should talk to that person's supervisor. This also applies if your supervisor does nothing to correct the problem behavior of one of your co-workers.
4. If the undesirable behavior continues, you can file an employee grievance through your Union; file a complaint through the Office of Affirmative Action; or, as a last resort, file a lawsuit. Be sure to file the complaints within the stated deadlines.
5. Whenever you experience harassment, keep a written record of dates and times of the occurrence of the harassing or discriminatory behavior. Also document remedial action, if any, you have taken to correct the situation. Persons you may wish to talk to include:
 - A. Your immediate supervisor and/or his/her immediate supervisor.
 - B. Your Superintendent.
 - C. Your Affirmative Action Officer.
 - D. Your Labor Relations Representative.
 - E. Your Union Representative.
 - F. Your facility EAP Representative.
 - G. Your spouse or other supportive family member.
 - H. Your clergy person.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FEMALE STAFF

Female staff can be a tremendous source of support to one another. The institutional setting, shift work and the small number of female staff members all work toward keeping female employees isolated from one another. However, it is possible to interact with one another via meetings, telephone calls and notes. Every female staff member was once new to the facility. Every new employee needs help in becoming acclimated to the unique environment of a correctional setting. Attempts should be made to help the new female employee feel comfortable.

There are several mistakes which females make in their relationship to one another:

1. Expecting all female staff to be "superstars". While it is true that women should be held to the same standards of competence as their male counterparts, all employees should strive to do their jobs to the best of their ability.
2. Participating in rumor spreading. The double standard worsens when we listen to or repeat gossip about another female. Instead, confront the individual spreading the rumors or, at the very least, do not listen or participate.

3. Jealousy - Being the only woman working in a given unit can result in a good deal of special attention. The arrival of another female on the unit diminishes the attention given to the first female. This sometimes results in jealousy and a lack of support or cooperation between female staff members. These feelings are common, but one should not act on them.
4. Classification snobbery - All females working in a facility, especially those interacting with inmates, need to support one another. Whether clerical, teacher, correction officer, etc., females share common problems. Do not get trapped into thinking "you" have nothing in common with them.

KEEPING YOURSELF MENTALLY HEALTHY

All staff who work directly with inmates should make a concerted effort to keep mentally healthy. Inmate contact positions are emotionally and physically draining. Many persons work straight shifts with no lunch break. Odd hours and unorthodox days off are normal working conditions. If you do not make productive and satisfying use of your free time, you will get "burned out".

Suggestions for Avoiding Burnout

1. Maintain personal relationships with non-Correctional, as well as Correctional, persons.
2. Plan to participate in one activity you enjoy each day (e.g., reading, tennis, eating ice cream, etc.).
3. Exercise regularly.
4. Plan specific activities for your time off (especially if you work odd shifts).
5. If you are lonely, join organizations which feature some of your favorite activities. You are sure to meet new people.
6. Limit the amount of overtime you voluntarily work. You cannot take care of your personal needs off the job if you are always at work.
7. Control your use of alcohol. Be honest with yourself, and get help if begin drinking or using drugs to deal with personal problems.
8. If you are depressed or "burned out", seek assistance (i.e., talk to a friend, seek professional help, etc.).
9. Do not hesitate to utilize the services of the Employee Assistance Program.

Your Personal Relationships and the Job

Persons who work in Corrections sometimes experience stress in their personal relations. This is particularly true for females. The strong assertive role you play at work may not be appreciated by your friends or spouse, who have been conditioned to appreciate other qualities in a female.

In addition to the stress in personal relationships, the area of familial responsibility may also be cause for concern (the needs of one's children). Females generally have the primary responsibility for the care of their offspring. Remember, you are not alone in terms of family problems. Don't hesitate to talk to other female employees. They may be a good source for obtaining information on desired support services.

All employees will have problems at one time or another during their career that may interfere with their job performance. Do not wait until personal problems cause irreparable harm to your life or employment status. Do not hesitate to utilize the services of your Employee Assistance Program Coordinator.

REMINDERS OF DO'S AND DO NOT'S

DO

1. Report any change in inmate's behavior or attitudes to security personnel. Examples include change in hygiene habits, personality changes, etc.
2. Keep up on current events, policies and directives. Check bulletin boards regularly.
3. Refer legitimate inmate problems through supervisors to proper channels.
4. Have a working knowledge of employee and inmate rules.
5. Ask questions whenever a situation arises that you cannot handle; ask a supervisor, a correction officer or a co-worker for assistance.
6. Always maintain a professional demeanor in performance and attire.
7. Always carry your I.D. card.
8. Always alert other staff as to your location or destination within the facility.

DO NOT

1. Carry large sums of money.
2. Give money to inmates.
3. Leave personal property unprotected.
4. Give or loan property to inmates.
5. Leave keys unprotected.
6. Take keys home.
7. Reproduce keys.
8. Issue keys to inmates.
9. Bring any item into the facility for inmates.
10. Take any item out of the facility for inmates.
11. Become involved in an inmate's personal problems (refer to chaplains, Service Unit).
12. Discuss your personal business with, or in the presence of, inmates.
13. Ignore infractions of rules.
14. Use foul language.
15. Allow inmates access to your phone. (The Home Phone Program is provided for the inmate population.)
16. Spread rumors.
17. Leave work area without permission.
18. Eat State food.
19. Bring cameras into the facility without prior clearance.
20. Leave car unlocked on State property.
21. Leave firearms, weapons or alcoholic beverages in vehicle.
22. Give out any information pertaining to an inmate or fellow employee without first obtaining permission from the Superintendent.

FINAL NOTES

- 1. Become totally familiar with the Employees' Manual, Department rules and Regulations and Departmental Directives. Ignorance is no excuse.**
- 2. Become totally familiar with your job responsibilities.**
- 3. Do not hesitate to ask questions. Learning is a continuous process.**
- 4. Keep an open mind. Be flexible. You may have to wear many different hats during a given workday.**
- 5. Learn from your own mistakes, as well as the mistakes of others.**
- 6. Remember, both male and female staff experience problems and discomfort over many of the same or similar issues. Be supportive of one another!**