



Female Offenders: What are they in search of?

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Cultural Composition of Women



- The women's community is rich with diversity and should not be assumed to be homogeneous.
- There are many ways to think about women's heterogeneity.
 - Political persuasion, sexual orientation, lifestyles, social environment, education, socioeconomic status, and cultural heritage are among the factors that influence women's identity and perceptions.

A silhouette of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, facing away from the viewer. The silhouette is centered in the background of the slide, which features a blue and green gradient with abstract circular patterns.

Group Characteristics, Attitudes, Behaviors

- Women share common experiences within their cultural context, whether feminist or not. Regardless of the extent to which they may be in touch with environmental influences, most women relate at some level to powerlessness, discrimination, and especially in their health-seeking encounters (mental/ medical).
- Women are often unable to articulate their emotions, feel misunderstood, unheard, and responsible for problems over which they have little control.

Group Characteristics, Attitudes, Behaviors

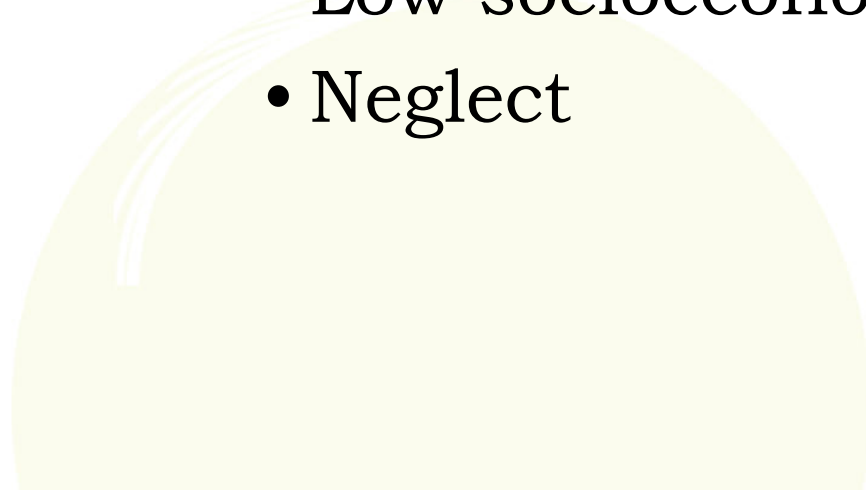
- This background information provided is very important when considering such things as the relationship of stress to alcohol and other drug abuse, the relationship of the care taking role of women to their own addictions (including the difficulty of entering treatment programs which do not provide child care), prescription-induced cross-addiction, and issues relating to working outside the home.
- Further, women are often victimized (physically/ mentally) by addiction in others close to them, inducing a vicious cycle of guilt, depression, and anxiety which in turn leads to their own addictive behaviors.

Group Characteristics, Attitudes, Behaviors

- This sort of sequence and interconnectedness is critical in analyzing and understanding women and addiction. The attitudes of helping professions can dramatically impact, for better or for worse, women's choices and actions.
- Research has repeatedly shown that punitive interactions affect behavior in women. Women are frequently judged more harshly than men for their addictions that may resort in self-defeating denial.

Group Characteristics, Attitudes, Behaviors

A silhouette of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, facing away from the viewer. The silhouette is centered in the upper half of the slide, overlapping the title and the first two bullet points. The background behind the silhouette is a soft, abstract pattern of overlapping circles in shades of blue and green.

- The road leading to addiction for women is very unique
 - Women share a common element leading to addiction
 - Low self-esteem
 - Trauma
 - Low socioeconomic status
 - Neglect
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- A large, light yellow semi-circle graphic located at the bottom left of the slide, partially overlapping the bottom edge of the text area.

Group Characteristics, Attitudes, Behaviors

A silhouette of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, seen from the back. The silhouette is centered in the upper half of the slide, overlapping the title and the first bullet point. The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping circular shapes in shades of blue, green, and yellow.

- Women are relational beings, it is important for women to establish a connection with others.
- No matter the circumstances, girls are socialized from early on to be nurturing beings, putting their own psychological and practical needs after those of others.

Family Issues

A silhouette of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, viewed from behind. The silhouette is centered in the upper half of the slide, overlapping the title and the first two bullet points. The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping circular shapes in shades of blue, green, and yellow.

- Moreover, we now know that family dysfunction is more prevalent than thought, and that girls have been abused (sexually or psychologically) at far higher rates than previously believed.
- The fact that the extended family is no longer so prevalent has resulted in increased burdens for girls, at the same time reducing their support system.
- These dynamics have profound implications for addiction professionals.

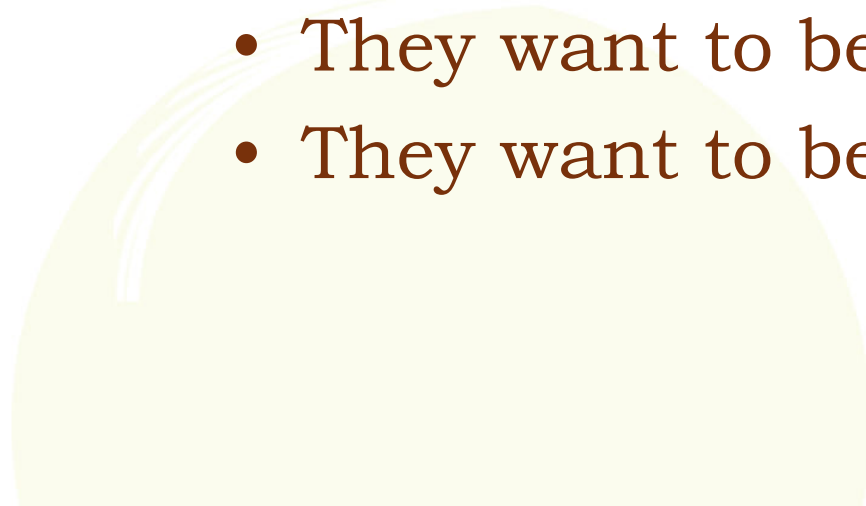
The Experience

- Experience feelings of:
 - Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Fear
 - Guilt
 - Shame
 - Unknown



What do women want?

A silhouette of a woman with long, dark hair, seen from behind. She is wearing a light-colored top. The background consists of soft, overlapping circles in shades of blue and green, creating a calm and abstract atmosphere.

- They want to be understood
 - They want to be the nurturer
 - They want relationship
 - They want to be the caretaker
 - They want to be accepted
 - They want to be appreciated
 - They want to be loved
- 
- A decorative graphic element at the bottom left of the slide, consisting of a yellow semi-circle with white curved lines radiating from its center, resembling a stylized sun or a light effect.



“Addiction is a chronic neglect of the self in favor of something or someone else.”

-Stephanie Covington, PhD



What do women need?

- **Women understand the need for change**
 - The way they think about self
 - Personal influences (friends, family, etc.)
 - Belief of way others view them
 - Self-forgiveness
 - Self-motivation
 - Changing Negative Beliefs
 - Physical Well-being
 - Set Boundaries
 - Begin or End Relationships



Building Blocks for Women in Treatment

- Trust: the basis for productive relationships.
- The treatment culture must promote trust in inmate/staff relationships and staff/staff relationships to be successful.
- Respect: Respect is only received as it is given.
- All individuals must be respected if they are to maintain self-esteem and a sense of identity that enables them to love or respect another.



Building Blocks for Women in Treatment

- Justice: The community only exists if there is a sense of “justice for all”.
 - Denial of justice is a major stimulus for aggression and abandonment of the commitment or interest in the community.
- Freedom: Freedom can be awarded as the individual has the capacity to handle it and make proper choices.
 - Freedom will be abused in the absence of justice and respect.

Building Blocks for Women in Treatment

- Truth: being dealt with truthfully erodes defenses against manipulation and anticipated abuse.
 - Accepting and facing truth enables one to interact with and gain some control over his/her environment and the future.
 - Without truth (the corner stone of all), trust, respect, and freedom will be seen as manipulation.

Understanding Gender

- Throughout history the role of a man and woman had significant distinctions.
- Women were the homemakers, the nurturers, and the silent partner.
- Women were not as outspoken as men nor did they commit acts that were seen as inappropriate or unacceptable through the eyes of society.
- Today, we see women working in professional settings that were once considered male-oriented careers.

Why the need for gender-specific programming?

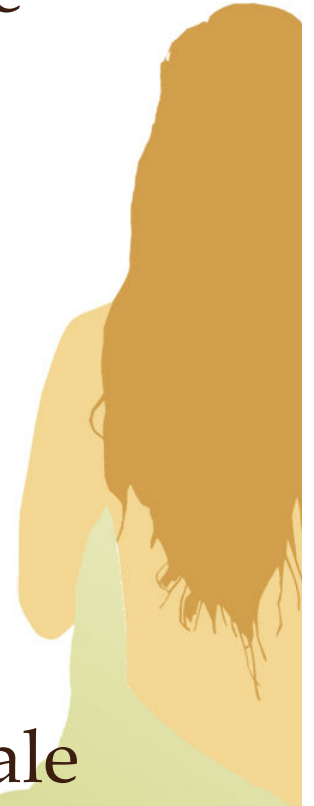
- Research shows that addiction for women is a multi-faceted problem that is composed of environmental and psychosocial challenges.
- Addiction becomes a woven part of the fabric that includes a woman's social, economic, political, and cultural forces that develops the context of her life.



Addressing the Common Stressors

Women need help in coping with their unique stressors, which include:

- Trauma
- Relationship issues
- Mental health issues
- Poor job skills
- Parenting
- Substance dependency/ abuse
- Difficulty sharing experiences in an all female group setting.



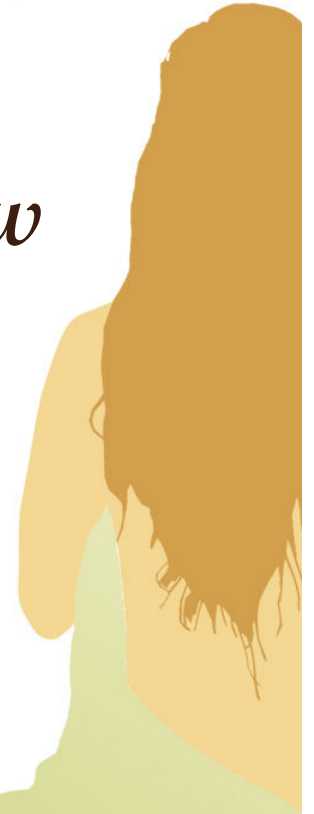
What do women need from treatment?

- Women need to be in an environment where they can learn the skills to be successful in society.
- The program should support women as they rebuild their character and self-esteem.
- The program should feel like a safe haven from the negative influences that impacted the women's lives prior to incarceration.



Treatment should be a time of Reflection

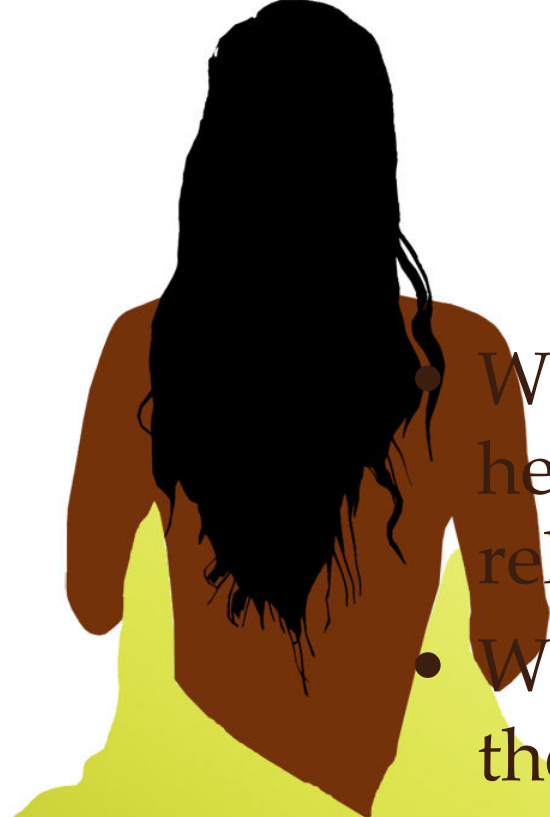
- *Remembering the past, developing anew in the present and moving on into the future.*



Definition of gender-specific programming

- The program environment should feel safe, a place of serenity that is free of stress in order to adequately address the issues and needs of women.
- The journey should include beginning the process of change through behavioral teachings of alternatives ways to manage emotions.



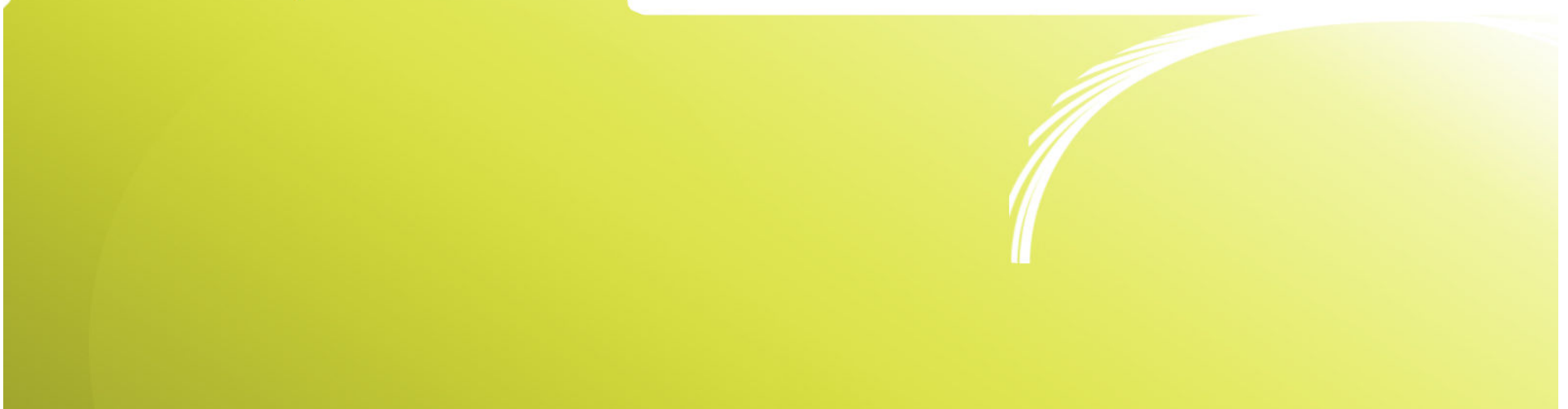


Definition of gender-specific programming

- Women should experience the process of healing from past trauma and unhealthy relationships.
- Women should learn how to forgive themselves as well as others.
- Learning how to reunify family ties and children is another program goal.

Definition of gender-specific programming

- Most importantly, women should gain an understanding of the process of addiction, relapse and the impact it has on criminal behavior.



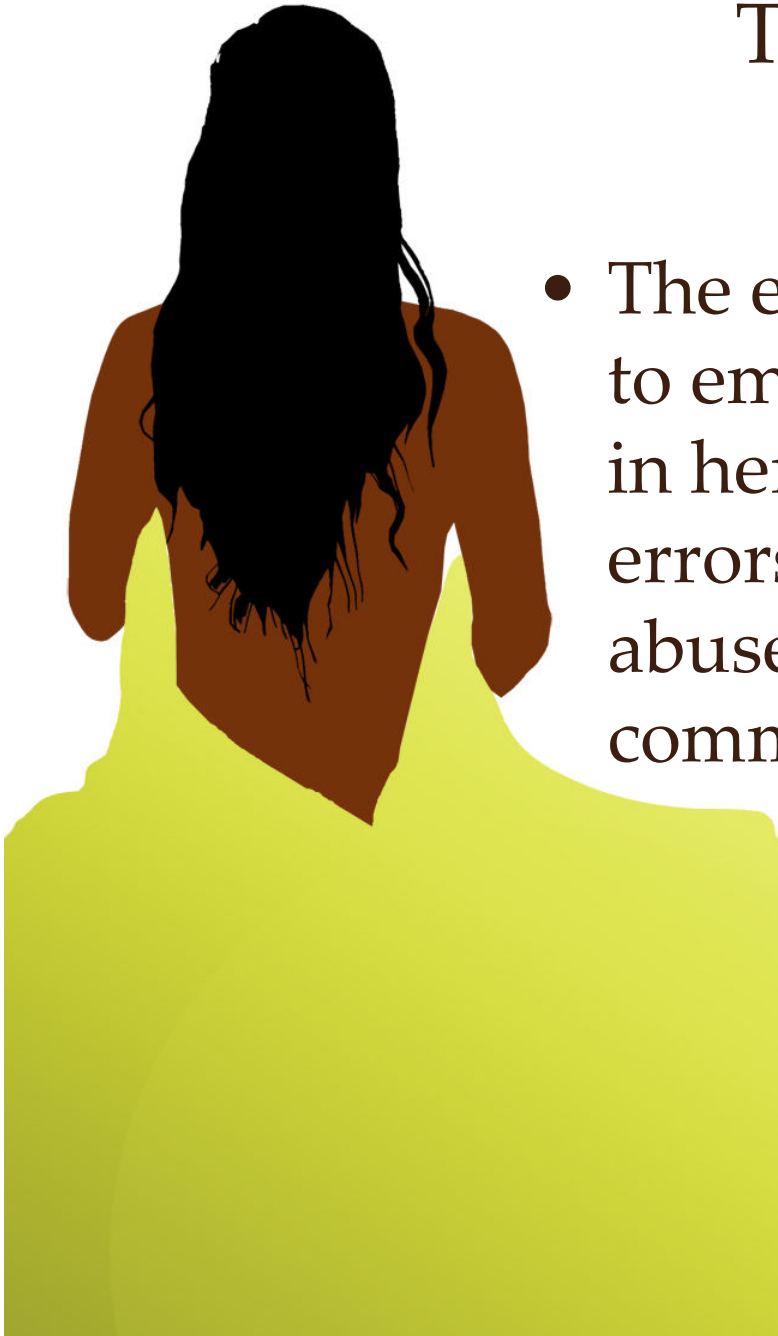


Purpose of Gender-Specific treatment

- Through the process of a gender-responsive programming the purpose of the program exclusively addresses issues and needs that may have a considerable impact on women during their time of healing in recovery.
- Helping women learn how to discover self-worth while rebuilding self-esteem during the journey of recovery is one of the main objectives of the program.

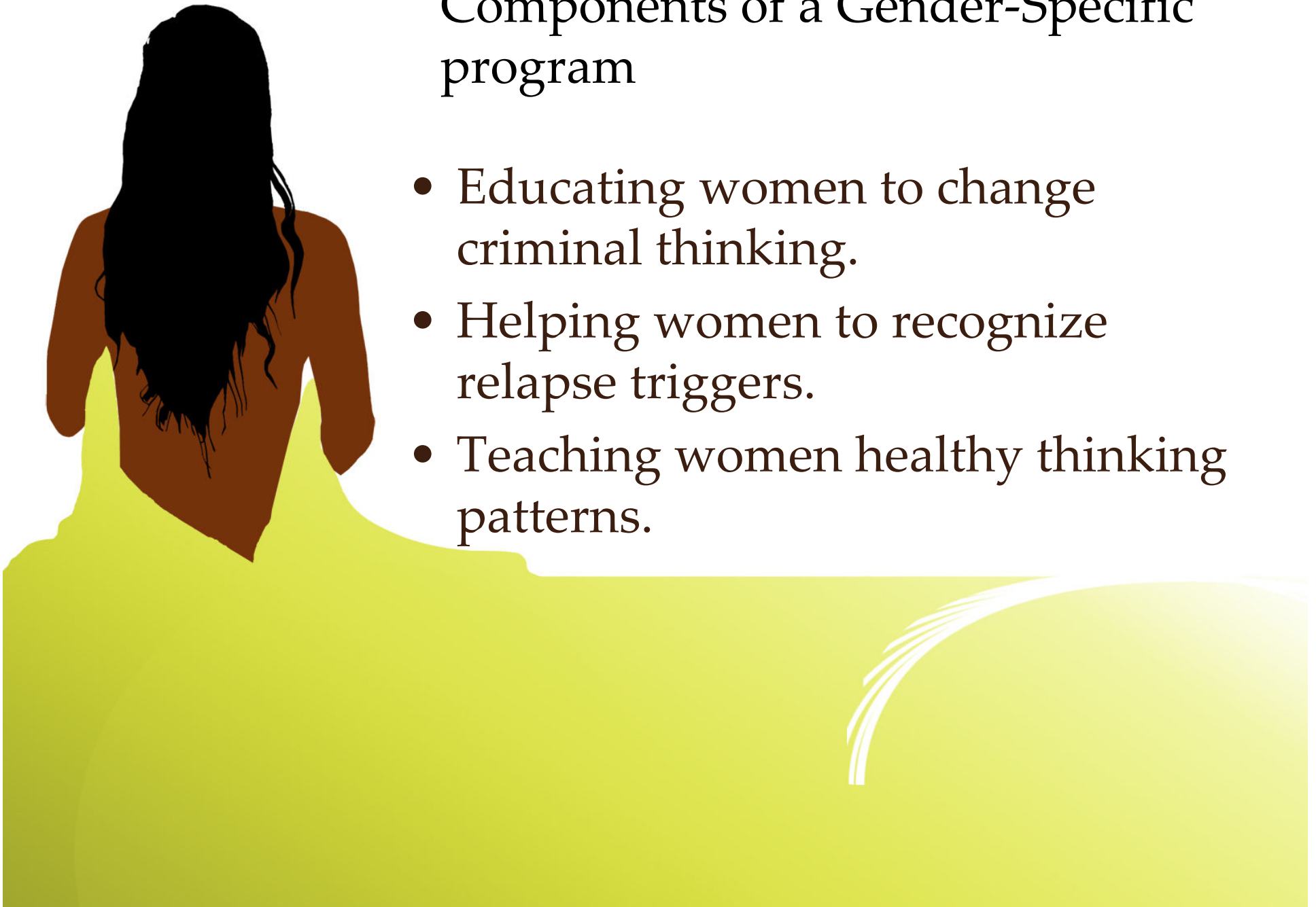
Treatment Outcome

- The expected treatment outcome is to empower the woman to believe in herself, change criminal thinking errors, and decrease substance abuse relapses when back in the community.



Components of a Gender-Specific program

- Educating women to change criminal thinking.
- Helping women to recognize relapse triggers.
- Teaching women healthy thinking patterns.



Components of a Gender-Specific program

- Help the women develop good decision-making skills.
- Provide the women with the opportunity to learn how to think responsibly.
- Encourage women to share their insights in a small group setting. Sharing affirms the strength developed through the journaling process.

Components of a Gender-Specific program

- Teach the women how to develop a mental mapping of the social networks needed to successfully thrive in the community setting.
- Provide trauma informed services and empower the women as they travel the pathways of healing.
- Enable the women to learn effective parenting skills.

Components of a Gender-Specific program

- Provide educational services that will afford the women the opportunity to earn a high school diploma/ GED.
- Provide job skills training classes
- Provide a continuing education network (e.g. college prep courses, accuplacer assessment testing, creative writing classes)



Programming: Assessment

- Intake Assessment

Clinical interview and testing determine gender-specific treatment needs: substance abuse, mental health, trauma history, family needs, employment, job skills and educational and vocational issues



Programming: Assessment Programming

Female offenders should be assessed in the following domains:

- Current risk for recidivism
- Criminogenic needs
- General and specific responsivity needs

A comprehensive assessment of female offenders should use a multiple-method format.



Reentry Challenges Women Face

- **Reunification of family**
- **Housing**
- **Employment**
- **Childcare**



Reentry Challenges Women Face

- **Fulfilling the conditions of parole**
- **Social Network**
- **Paying fines**



Reentry Challenges Women Face

- Medical Services
- Mental Health Services



This concludes the presentation

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