

To begin, select fibers that list ingredients. Be sure they say, "non-allergenic" and don't contain asbestos, polyurethane, chrysolite or any other man-made fiber you are unfamiliar with. Test your homemade tampons for absorbency and compare them with what you are using now. If your homemade tampons are too costly or not as absorbent as what you are used to - it may not be worth your while. Lastly, pay attention to your body's warning signals. Itching, burning or discomfort are signs that your body is rejecting the material and it should be removed immediately. Continued irritation or discomfort may need the prompt attention of a physician.

SUPPLIES 1) Fill: Natural - 1/4 cup small pieces of sponge, virgin wool, and shredded cotton. A tsp of dried bits of seaweed (laminaria) or dried bits of leather (for added absorbency). Man-made - 1/4 cup fiber foam. 2) Plastic applicators: 10-20 recycled washed applicators from previously bought commercial tampons. 3) White string: Several yards of strong cotton string. Cut 30 cms each. 4) Outer layer: Soft, fusible cloth (to iron seams). Cut 12 cms wide and 13 cms long. 5) Wrapping paper: Buy lightweight non-metallic paper that is easy to work with. Cut 8.5 cms X 18.25 cms. Wrapping the tampon will keep it fresh after sterilization. (Discard tampon if wrapping paper becomes wet or soiled.) 6) Microwave: To sterilize homemade tampon. 1 min on high per tampon. Make sure everything is completely dry.

DIRECTIONS 1) Pre-wash and dry plastic applicators and remove plungers. 2) Tear or shred small pieces of natural or manmade fill to make 1/4 cup. Add 1 tsp of cut up dried bits of seaweed or leather (optional) and set aside. 3) Turn the iron on wool, medium, or #3 setting. a) Cut fusible soft cloth 12 cms wide and 13 cms long. b) Fold the width in half and iron the two sides together making a seam. c) Take one end of the tube-shaped cloth and bunch it all together. Iron about 2 cms of the end - this will become the bottom of the tampon where the string will be attached. d) With a large eye darning needle, draw the string through the needle eye making two 15 cm streamers. Bore a hole 1 cm from the end of the tampon and work needle and string through the hole; then tie a knot. e) Insert fill. f) Iron the top seam. g) Push the top of the tampon inside with your index finger making a depression. 4) Place the tampon inside the applicator. The string will be hanging out. Work the string through the center of the plunger and place the plunger inside the applicator until you hear it click. DON'T FORCE IT ALL THE WAY. 5) Wrap the tampon in lightweight paper 8.5 cms X 18.25 cms. Tape the ends and sides. 6) Place the completed tampon in a microwave oven. Turn it on high for 1 min. Discard if not used within several months.

ADVANTAGES: 1) Because factory tampons are not sterile and microwave kills bacteria, homemade tampons may be safer. 2) Homemade tampons provide another choice among marketed pads and tampons. 3) Making homemade tampons allows the screening of harmful chemicals and contamination.

DISADVANTAGES: 1) Homemade tampons may cost more than marketed tampons. 2) There may be a rare instance where allergic reaction can develop. 3) There may be a rare instance where TSS can develop even in the most careful circumstances.

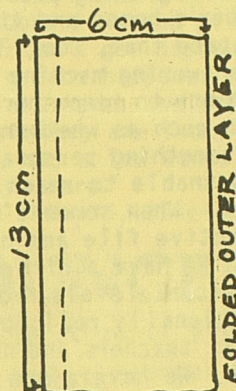
--Salem, OR

ORGANIZE A LESBIAN SUPPORT AND SINGLES GROUP

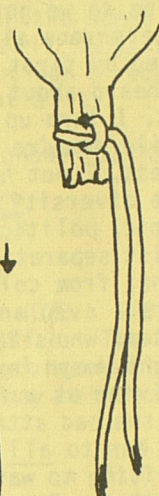
One year during a Singles workshop at the Michigan Festival, I asked "How many of you are feeling isolated and lonely in your own cities back home (as well as here at the Festival) as if you're the only single in a world of couples?" Almost everyone said, "Yes, I feel that!" Each had her unique experience. Some were grieving, some were single by choice and planned to remain single, and some were looking for a mate. But all felt isolated and lonely - the only single, or one of few. So, I launched into my story of how I coped with this problem.

When I first moved to Cincinnati I didn't know anyone, much less any organizations, places, or publications, or even my way around. But I had a national list of Slightly Older Lesbians (SOL) organizations I'd gotten the previous year in Michigan. When I called the Cincinnati contact, she arranged for an SOL member to pick me up for my first meeting. So on my third evening in town I attended an SOL meeting and that Friday my new friend took me to the gay bar. SOL was wonderful, but mostly comprised of couples. Single womyn would come to one or two meetings and then drop out because they felt, through no one's fault, left out. While the support existed in just being together, we didn't have time in the program for any in-depth sharing/support. So I began to feel a need for a

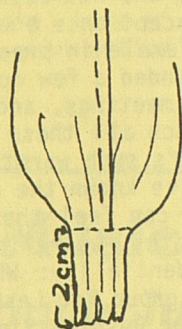
STEP #3d ↓



STEP #3c ↓



STEP #3b ↑



Lesbian Support Singles group that would include womyn of all ages and kinds and would encompass a process for some supportive sharing.

I decided to form two overlapping groups and alternate them every other Friday night. The Singles Group was to be for single Lesbians only. Because I anticipated some womyn would be pairing up, the second group, the Support Group, was open to all Lesbians. The concept formed, I set a date, time and place (my apartment), and advertised. I started by telling every Lesbian I knew to tell every Lesbian she knew. I announced it at SOL and put it into Dinah, our dyke newsletter. I made posters and flyers which I left at the bars, the feminist bookstore, the downtown womyn's center, and at special events, like Lesbian dances and picnics (and I kept replenishing supplies as they ran out, replacing posters as they got ripped down). To avoid crank calls, I chose to use the name Simone in all the advertising. When a new womyn calls I say, "Simone isn't here right now, but I can take your name and number for her and tell you about the groups." After I've called the womyn back and am satisfied with her sincerity, I tell her my real name and arrange for her to get to a meeting. I try to match womyn with and without cars who are from the same area, and with the permission of both parties, give them each others' phone numbers. (Two womyn became a couple this way before I had even met them.)

Right away, womyn responded positively to the idea of the group and about ten showed up for the first meeting. Now, a year and a half later, we have a phone list of 80 to 100 womyn with an average attendance of two dozen. We've had growing problems and low times, but have met consistently and expanded to meeting in each other's homes and the bookstore on a rotating basis. Instead of my facilitating every meeting, we rotate that, too. Rotating the phone list, though, proved to be a problem so we got a telephone answering machine to take calls and give information. Still I try to call everyone at least once a month to keep the personal contact. I keep an index card file, alphabetized by first name, with info such as whether or not they have a car, in what area they live, where they heard about the group and something personal about them to help me remember them. As I make calls, I turn up the ones I was unable to reach and the next time I call the turned up cards and so on, till they're all turned down. When someone misses a lot of meetings and doesn't seem to have any interest, I put her into the inactive file and don't call on a regular basis.

The diversity is phenomenal! We have a rich mix of womyn from every social, emotional, spiritual, economic, political, and intellectual level: from ultra-conservative to the most radical Lesbian feminist separatists; from traditionally religious Catholics, Protestants and Jews to atheists and wiccans; from college professors, teachers and nurses to non-traditional laborers and fast food workers - even an airline pilot. We have a mom who's in her 50's and just coming out, and her daughter, who's 22 and has been out for eight years. And, though we voted to exclude bisexual and straight womyn (except once a month at open meetings), we have a transsexual (still biologically male but living as a female in preparation for her operation next year when she will become a Lesbian). After she had attended a few open meetings and the womyn got to know her, we voted unanimously to allow her to all meetings, and she puts such good energy into the group. It is heartwarming as well as exciting to watch all these different minds interacting and all these diverse womyn reaching out to each other. There's such warmth and camaraderie within the group that everyone feels after only one meeting that they've known the others all their lives. And I can honestly say that I love every womyn in this group and can feel that love coming back. It's like a family. It's real Lesbian sisterhood.

Through the months, we refined and revised our format. 1)INTRODUCTION: a>Welcome to old and new members. b)Confidentiality: What you say here, who you see here, stays here. c)Scope of the group: This is a support group for Lesbian womyn of all ages and walks of life. On alternate Fridays, it is a support group for Lesbian Singles. It is not group therapy and we are not psychiatrists, psychologists or counselors. 2)CHECK-IN: Each womyn is encouraged but not required to talk about her life, problems, solutions, etc in an atmosphere of acceptance and loving support. Suggestions/criticism are constructive and helpful. 3)ANNOUNCEMENTS: a)Other groups of interest. b)Coming events. c)Miscellaneous - this month's birthdays, etc. 4) CHOOSING & DISCUSSING A TOPIC OF COMMON INTEREST 5)BUSINESS: a)We pass a hat for \$. b)We pass a birthday list - register your birthday on it. c)We pass a blank list for womyn to write their own telephone numbers if available to be called for support and encourage members to write down these numbers in case they need to call someone between meetings. d)We decide on a meeting place and a facilitator for the next two weeks. 6)GROUP HUG(S)? (optional).

After our meetings, we go to the bar together and everyone includes everyone in the dancing and makes sure everyone gets safely to her car afterwards. We occasionally have speakers. A Lesbian recreation therapist gave a talk on stress-management (guided fantasy and progressive relaxation), and a Lesbian psychologist doing research for a book on homophobia talked to a record crowd of over 50 womyn about the stages of internalized self-hatred Lesbians go through on their way to healthy self-acceptance and pride. I gave a demonstration of healing massage, and we plan to have the teacher of a womyn's martial arts class do a self-defense workshop soon.

Tentative topics at regular meetings include the following:

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| MASSAGE WORKSHOP | CUDDLE BUDDIES | STRESS & ANXIETY | ANGER & RAGE | KINKY SEX | MANAGING \$ |
| GOSSIP | COMING OUT | RELATING TO EACH OTHER | RELATING TO MEN | RELATING TO FAMILIES/FRIENDS | |
| BUTCH/FEMME ROLES | | ADDICTION IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS | | BATTERING IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS | |
| SPIRITUALITY/WITCHCRAFT | | RELIGION VS. ATHEISM | THREAT OF THE MORAL MAJORITY | LONELINESS | |
| WORST/BEST/SMARTEST/DUMBEST/FUNNIEST/MOST EMBARRASSING/BRAVEST THING I'VE EVER DONE | | | | S/M | CLIQUES |
| SEXUALITY/SENSUALITY | SURVIVING INCEST | BISEXUALITY | SEPARATISM | DEALING WITH HOLIDAYS | |
| "POLITICALLY INCORRECT" | ASTROLOGY & THE TAROT | STAGES OF LESBIAN IDENTITY | | HOMOPHOBIA | |
| SEXLESS LOVERS | MONOGAMY/NON-MONOGAMY | PORNOGRAPHY/EROTICA | HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS | HERBS | |
| WOMYN'S MUSIC/ART/POETRY/LITERATURE | MEETING NEW WOMYN | ENDINGS/BEGINNINGS | BRINGING SOMEONE OUT | | |

Besides weekly meetings, we have some special social events like potluck picnics and brunches, going out to movies, concerts and restaurants, showing videos, bike riding, swimming, bowling, camping and cabining, canoeing, hiking, and paddle boating. And we go to the Womyn's Music Festivals in Bloomington and Michigan together, sharing expenses and work.

In the past year and a half everyone has found friendship and a sense of family. About 20 couples have formed, some members have received help moving, a place to stay in time of need, job leads, etc. We're working on establishing a Lesbian "free-store" where members will donate old clothes, furniture, dishes, etc, for those who need them. And, eventually, we envision having enough capital to help needy members with housing and food, schooling, medical bills, etc. Our ultimate dream is to buy a building in a nice area and have a Lesbian coffeehouse, drop-in recreation and meeting center where we'll serve meals and feature Lesbian art, music and crafts.

IN SUMMARY: 1)Recognize the problems/feel the need. 2)Make some decisions - concepts, time, place, rough format, etc. 3)Advertise: Start with existing groups, publications, services, bars, etc. Also use the grapevine - tell everyone to tell everyone she knows. Use a phone number that remains constant, screen those who call, be conscientious about calling them back. Eventually, use those money contributions and/or have a fundraiser to get a telephone answering machine and keep the information concise and up-to-date. Encourage members to call the tape weekly for last-minute changes or cancellations, or new information you may not have time to call and tell everybody about (as membership expands). 4)Remain consistent, at least at first, about time and place of meetings - you can branch out to other locations after getting established. 5)Don't get discouraged if attendance is low, or if it dwindles after a while. Some of my best support groups happened when only one or two womyn showed up. 6)Give the womyn a chance to say their names (last names and occupations optional, so as not to threaten anyone) and a bit about themselves and where they are from. Encourage, but don't require everyone to talk. At the beginning of each meeting, say a few words about confidentiality. I use the AA motto: "What you say here, who you see here, stays here."

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ADS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

What Lesbians Are Doing Across The Continent

When responding to any of LC's Ads/Announcements please remember to mention LC. NOTE: SASE means self-addressed stamped envelope; ppd means the postage is already included in the price. The suggested donation for notices in this space is \$7.20 per line (more if you can, less if you can't). Do keep in mind, though, that if you send in less than the suggested donation, your notice may be edited for length. Each line is approximately 100 typewritten spaces across.

CONFERENCES, FESTIVALS & GATHERINGS

National Women's Music Festival

— May 29th through June 1 —

In-door housing, meals, workshops and concerts!



Three nights of main stage concerts including:

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- ▷ **Sue Fink**
- ▷ **Robin Flower Band**
- ▷ **Alix Dobkin**

Over 100 workshops including:

- Spirituality Conference featuring special guests: Starhawk, Margot Adler, and Diane Stein
- Writer's Conference featuring special guests: Barbara Grier and Pat Parker

"Showcase" daily featuring the best in up-coming women performers!

- Older Women Series
- Women's Classical Music Series
- Women's Fine Arts Gallery
- Coffeehouses
- Open Mikes
- Saturday night dance

For more information or registration brochure write:

NWMF, Dept. LC, P.O. Box 5217, Bloomington, IN 47402, or call 317-637-4938.

