

COLLECTIVITY

The Health Collective is committed to the concepts of sharing information, power and responsibility. The logical result of these ideals is that we are organized as a collective rather than having a traditional hierarchical structure. This means there are no bosses; all members are valued and expected to take responsibility for our activities and participate in decision making.

We make decisions by consensus rather than by voting. Consensus decision making takes more time and energy and therefore is not as efficient as traditional structures. However, the end result is a product of the whole group, with which everyone is, presumably, satisfied. And, of course, people are more enthusiastic about implementing decisions in which they have fully participated. When we have disagreements within the group, we take the time to thoroughly explain our positions, and then the dissenter(s) either change their minds, or we arrive at a compromise. We do not see compromise as negative; often compromise results in a new and better solution which would not have been sought out in a different structure. Sometimes individuals concede to the will of the group because of their respect for the members of the group, and their commitment to the group.

Collectivity does not mean that everyone does everything, but it does mean that no one person controls any aspect of our work. We delegate responsibilities to individuals, but these responsibilities are rotated periodically. For example, we all take turns chairing meetings, and several women rotate being the coordinator at the weekly Self Help Clinic. We share undesirable duties such as clean up and typing.

One of the main purposes of the Health Collective is to disseminate information to women so they can take more responsibility for their own bodies. This information sharing is important not only for women coming to the Health Collective as "clients" but also to women within the Collective. Experienced members avoid being seen as experts; knowledgeable members are expected to educate newer members, so new members can quickly become equal participants.

We recognize that not all members are completely "equal". We each bring different skills and information to the group, and some members do emerge as quasi leaders because of greater information, special skills, charisma etc. However, we are dedicated to the principle of giving each individual woman the opportunity to develop to her full potential. Women who see themselves becoming leaders have the responsibility to combat this trend in themselves.

In our society collectivity is a relatively new concept with which we are still struggling. So far, it seems to work better than other systems our members have experienced. Please feel free to ask us for more detailed information about collectivity.