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## LEADER'S GUIDE:

**The Company of Women** by Ella Veres  
Support groups and art therapy helped me heal.

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### DISCUSSION FOCUS:

Healing through activities and support groups.

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### ACTIVITY GOAL:

Participants will explore what social and solitary activities they enjoy that help them feel positively about themselves and find joy in life.

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### STORY SUMMARY

*After entering a domestic violence shelter with her son, Ella finds herself longing to feel happy again. Group therapy reminds her of the feeling she had in sewing sessions with village women while growing up in Romania.*

*Ella feels weighed down by the violence that has marked her life, but being with other women and engaging in creative activities stirs her desire to feel lighthearted and free-spirited once more.*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### GROUP INTRODUCTION: 10 minutes

Today we're going to talk about activities we enjoy, and explore how doing those activities, both alone and in the company of others, can bring joy back into our lives. Sometimes when we have thrown all our energy into a relationship that has hurt us, it is hard to remember that there are simple things that we can do that make us feel better. This story is about a woman taking small steps to bring joy and exuberance back into her own life.

- How do you feel about this topic?
- Do you have experiences related to this topic that you'd like to share before we get started?

## READ AND DISCUSS STORY: 15 + 30 minutes

Read the story out loud as a group. Help participants recognize the writer's emotions and coping mechanisms and their own. Go back over important moments in the story and ask the participants about how they've handled similar experiences:

STORY MOMENT	DISCUSSION QUESTION
Ella is inspired by the spirit and style of one woman in the shelter to dress up and be vibrant herself.	How has someone inspired you to find joy in your life?
In art therapy, Ella and the other women put their lives back together by making collages.	What simple activities—styling your hair, going for a walk, attending church, singing, etc.—soothe you and make you feel happy?
Ella gains strength by listening to other women's stories.	What social activities help energize you?
Ella creates plays and poems out of her experiences, which she performs for other women.	What do you do to share your experience or connect to other women that makes you feel good about yourself?
Ella hopes that reconnecting with joyful memories will help her heal.	Do you have any memories that help you reconnect to your own feelings of joy?

## JOURNAL TIME: 15-30 minutes

By writing in their journals, participants can more deeply reflect on their experiences and the steps they can take to strengthen themselves and their families. Hand out the "Journal Reflections" worksheet and give participants 15-30 minutes to write. They can share their responses with the group or in pairs, or after the workshop with a counselor, therapist, or peer.

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

**JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: The Company of Women** by Ella Veres

Sometimes when we are feeling hurt, it can be hard to find the motivation to do activities that we might otherwise enjoy. It can also be hard to find the energy to be around other people. But pushing ourselves to do those activities and to find social situations that we enjoy can be an important part of healing.

Ella engages in many different kinds of activities that help her put her life back together. Write about what activities might energize you and bring joy into your life.

What memories from your past help you reconnect to your feelings of happiness and joy?

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What activities do you already do, or did you used to do, that made you feel happy? How do/did those activities make you feel?

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What new activities would you like to try that would help you focus on your feelings, dreams and desires?

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OVER 

What kinds of social situations make you feel happy and how can you make time to socialize?

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### **ACTION STEPS**

Making time for activities that bring us joy is an important part of healing. Write down 2-3 steps you could take to motivate yourself to do those activities.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **A SUPPORTIVE CONNECTION**

I plan to get support and encouragement by talking about my reflections and action steps with:

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