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## LEADER'S GUIDE:

**'I Love You, I'm Sorry'** by Ilka Perez

I'm better off alone than with someone who hurts me.

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### DISCUSSION FOCUS:

Teaching your children by example.

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### ACTIVITY GOAL:

Participants will understand the impact of domestic violence on children and define the relationship characteristics they want to model.

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### STORY SUMMARY

*As a child, Ilka watched her father belittle her mother and restrict her opportunities, and Ilka vowed to have a different kind of relationship when she grew up. But as an adult, Ilka falls into similar abusive patterns before she finds the strength to end a relationship. Though it is hard to raise her children as a single mother, Ilka is glad she is teaching her daughter independence and teaching her son to treat those he loves with respect and kindness.*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### GROUP INTRODUCTION: 10 minutes

Today we are going to talk about the relationships we witnessed growing up and the example of what a relationship can be that we wish to set for our own children. When people have grown up witnessing domestic violence and emotional abuse, it is very difficult to imagine how couples can negotiate with each other and resolve conflicts instead of resorting to bullying and violence. Often, people fall into similar relationship patterns as adults, even when they do not want to. It takes a conscious effort to establish different relationship patterns and model positive relationship patterns for our children.

- 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
Ilka hates watching her mother please her father while being abused by him.	As a child, what lessons did you learn about relationships by watching the adults around you?
Ilka imagines having a relationship very different from her parents'—one based on equality.	How did you imagine that your partner would treat you when you had an adult relationship?
Ilka decides to leave her relationship because she does not want her son to live with fear.	What feelings might your children have experienced watching your relationship? What lessons about relationships might they have learned?
After she leaves, Ilka suffers as a single mother because she is unable to give her children as much as she hoped.	What losses did you and your children suffer while you were in an abusive relationship? What losses did you suffer after leaving?
Ilka feels good that she is teaching her children by example that they can expect independence, kindness and respect.	What lessons about relationships do you wish to teach your own children by your example?

## 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: 'I Love You, I'm Sorry'** by Ilka Perez

Ilka finds herself being emotionally and physically abused, just as her mother was, before she realizes that her partner's behavior is wrong and determines to set a different example for her children. Use this time for reflection to write about the example you want to set for your children.

What positive and negative lessons did you learn from the relationships you saw as a child?

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What positive and negative lessons have your children learned from your relationships?

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What do you wish to teach your children about relationships by your example?

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OVER 

How do your friendships or family relationships set a positive example for your children?

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### **ACTION STEPS**

Children learn about all relationships by watching how their parents behave. Write down three people you enjoy positive relationships with and what you hope your children will learn from these examples. Include how you plan to foster these relationships in the future.

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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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