



Philosophy Committee's Joint Statement – May 19, 1998

We begin by calling the women who come to Rosie's Place guests. Our philosophy affirms and acknowledges each woman's uniqueness and her own inherent value. Our philosophy connects us, as we all seek to challenge oppression and in our own ways, bring despair and misery to an end. We do this by welcoming poor and homeless women to Rosie's Place. We call her by her name. We greet her with a smile. We ask her about her day. We welcome her and invite her to stay. By creating a sanctuary within our walls, we recognize the realities of poverty. We acknowledge that the world is not a safe place for poor and homeless women. We know that many of the women's experience in trying to access help are negative.

We use our philosophy as a tool to prevent us from growing complacent, as a way of staying grounded in a crisis, and as an instrument in which to measure our interactions with the women. The language that we use, the goals that we set, and the belief that we have in women we are able to work with – these things set us apart from other places in which poor and homeless women seek help. Clients. Cases. Diagnosis. People use these words to create distance between us and them. We do things differently at Rosie's Place. We try to do the work with the knowledge that every moment is valuable, because our words have the power to create real change. What we say or do will eventually touch many lives, affecting each and every one. When we speak to a woman or about the women of Rosie's Place, we are careful to speak as though we are the recipients of our own words.

When we think of the women, we keep in mind the complexity of the human character. We refuse to reduce women to illness or addiction. We respond to the women with unconditional love. We see the woman's inherent strength and goodness, just as we see her problems and self-destructive behavior. We see the whole woman. We believe that the more we hold a vision of her as strong, capable, and beautiful, the greater likelihood that she will come to hold this image of herself. Unconditional love is not about ignoring problems and self-destructive behavior, but rather that problems are changeable. Unconditional love sees the woman beneath the illness, addiction, violence, and never confuses the woman with the problems and behaviors that are holding her down.

Perhaps the real expression of unconditional love comes with an unconditional acceptance of ourselves. Coming to terms with our limitations, acknowledging those limitations and trying nonetheless. Working from a place of non-judgement requires us to first recognize that our experiences impact our behaviors. We must be able to put aside our own personal baggage or at least recognize that it's there in order to make room to look beyond ourselves, and to offer what we have without expectation or holding onto the outcome.

The more we try to be freely present, the more we come to realize that our work raises more questions than it answers. We ask ourselves if we make the right decisions on behalf of the women. We wonder if we are being fair when we feel that we have to say no. We occasionally question our ability to do the work. The questioning should reassure us that we are in line with the mission. Our philosophy challenges us to think. It challenges us to carry of the mission of Rosie's Place. And it allows us to continue to welcome women to Rosie's Place.