

Survivors

Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION

BEFORE SHOWING “SURVIVORS”

Preview the video yourself, read this Study Guide, make copies of the handouts and introduce the video by summarizing the main messages of the program.

Research local domestic violence shelters and centers, and local hotline phone numbers. It is a good idea to create a handout with your local phone numbers on it (See Resources, below) and to write the numbers on a board. Ask everyone to write down the numbers so that no one is forced to write alone, thus singling them out. This protects each person’s privacy. If possible, ask an educator at a local domestic violence shelter who specializes in issues of domestic violence to come to the presentation to provide information and answer questions. Make sure that each person has paper and pencil to take notes during the video.

AFTER SHOWING THE VIDEO

It is a good idea to leave the lights off for a few moments after the video ends. This will also allow people to reflect and collect their thoughts and feelings before joining in the discussion. Be alert and sensitive to anyone who looks upset or distraught, whether they are male or female. You may be surprised at the impact this video will have on the males and females in the audience.

If anyone does not want to join the discussion, respect that right. Do urge everyone, however, to contact the resources you have mentioned if they would like more help or information on the subject, and assure them that they are not alone. Be sure to give the handouts to each person. Leave enough time afterwards for a discussion period to debrief the viewers.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

It is important to respect viewers’ feelings and give them a chance to talk. Guide the discussion with questions like, “Can you tell me more about that?”, “How did (does) that make you feel?” Remain as neutral as possible. It is important that men and women in the audience not perceive the facilitator as judgmental. Ask the audience to “think aloud”. How did they arrive at their opinions? Pause 10-20 seconds after a question to allow them to think about it. Encourage them to “brainstorm” in groups.

A subject like domestic violence will uncover many feelings, particularly among individuals who have experienced abusive situations and relationships. Offer to talk privately with anyone who does not feel comfortable speaking in a large group. There may be someone who is prompted to seek further help through the resources that you have listed.

RESOURCE PHONE NUMBERS

National Domestic Violence Hotline - 1-800-799-SAFE TDD-1-800-787-3224

Local Domestic Violence Shelter - _____

Local Domestic Violence Hotline - _____

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic Violence is Violent or Controlling Behavior by a Present or Former Relationship Partner

- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OCCURS IN THE CONTEXT OF A RELATIONSHIP**

The batterer and the victim are known to each other, and victims must not only deal with injury and fear of their batterer, but also must deal with the complexities of an intimate relationship with that person.

- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A PATTERN OF BEHAVIORS**

Domestic violence is not an isolated event, but a pattern of behaviors used against a victim consisting of a variety of abuse occurring many times throughout the relationship. One battering builds on past batterings and sets the stage for future episodes, and victims respond to the entire pattern of abuse rather than simply to one episode or one tactic.

- **FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Physical - Abusive and coercive behaviors can take physically assaultive forms as in physical and sexual abuse.

Psychological - Psychological assaults can include threats of violence and harm, attacks against property or pets, stalking, discrediting the victim's reputation and damaging her relationships with others.

Emotional abuse is another form of psychological abuse which consists of a wide variety of verbal attacks and humiliations, often emphasizing the victim's vulnerabilities. Sometimes the batterer will play "mind games" to undercut the victim's sense of reality, e.g., asking her to do something, then claiming that he never asked her when she complies. Emotional abuse may include humiliating the victim in front of family, friends or strangers, or may only occur when the batterer and victim are alone together. Batterers may claim that victims are crazy, incompetent and unable to "do anything right". These tactics are similar to those used against prisoners of war or hostages and are used for the same purpose: to maintain the perpetrator's power and control.

Isolation is another type of psychological abuse. At first perpetrators cut victims off from support networks by claims of "loving them so much" and wanting to be with them all the time. Then may come verbal abuse, complaints about "interfering" family members and friends, sometimes extreme pressure for her to quit her job. Through the victim's isolation the perpetrator prevents discovery of the abuse and avoids being held responsible.

Economic control is another form of psychological abuse. A batterer may control his victim's access to all of the family resources: time, transportation, food, clothing, shelter, insurance and money. It does not matter who the primary provider is or if both partners contribute, for the perpetrator is the one who controls how the finances are spent. The batterer alone makes the decisions, and victims have to get "permission" to spend money on basic family needs.

- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS PURPOSEFUL, COERCIVE BEHAVIOR**

Perpetrators who minimize or excuse their behavior by claiming they "lost it" or "were out of control" have actually made specific choices. Regardless of the tactic chosen, the perpetrator's intent is to get something from the victims, to establish domination over them or to punish them.

- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT CAUSED BY THE VICTIM'S BEHAVIOR**

Blaming the victim for making the batterer angry, or blaming the violence on problems in the relationship provides him with excuses and justifications for his behavior. Being a victim of domestic violence is due to behaviors of the batterer, not the personal characteristics of the victim. In all cases, the issue is not “why doesn't she leave?”, but “why does he batter?”. It is not a crime to stay with a partner; it *is* a crime to batter a partner.

- **BATTERERS AVOID TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR BEHAVIOR**

Perpetrators minimize their abuse and its impact on the victim by making the abuse appear less frequent and less severe than it really is, e.g., “I only hit her once.” “She bruises easily.” Sometimes batterers acknowledge what they do, but justify it by externalizing responsibility to others or to factors supposedly outside their control, e.g., “She made me do it.” “She's crazy.”

Domestic violence can not be helped by “working on the relationship”. Couples therapy is not an appropriate intervention, for often the batterer will stop the physical violence, only to replace it by intensifying psychological forms of abuse. Batterers treatment can help if the abuser is willing to change.

Source: Anne L. Ganley, Ph.D., “Understanding Domestic Violence”. This material was adapted from the publication entitled, “Improving the Health Care System's Response to Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual for Health Care Providers”, produced by the Family Violence Prevention Fund in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Written by Carole Warshaw, M.D. and Anne L. Ganley, Ph.D., with contributions by Patricia R. Salbert, M.D.

VERBAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Domestic violence is a process of psychological intimidation. Even strong competent people can be controlled by a domestic partner. Domestic violence often begins with verbal abuse and emotional abuse, and can escalate to physical abuse. The threats and humiliation can be more significant and longer lasting than bruises and broken bones.

NAME-CALLING

Bitch, dummy, idiot, etc....

PUT-DOWNS

*You're so stupid, why can't you understand even the simplest idea?
You never listen to anyone.
You only think of yourself.
How could I have ever married someone like you?
I won't be seen in public with you again.
How your boss tolerates you, I'll never know....*

ACCUSING AND BLAMING

*You made me (spill the soup, kick the dog, yell at the kids, hit you....).
You always have to have the last word.
I'm reasonable, I'm a nice guy, why are you trying to make me mad?
You twist everything around to your own advantage.*

CRITICISM AND JUDGMENTS

*You're always spending too much money.
You've made this same mistake over and over.
That dress makes you look fat.
Your conversation sounds like a child talking....
You don't have any idea how to raise children....
You shouldn't contradict me in front of the children.
You always forget the nice things I've done for you.
You over-cooked the dinner again.
You're too sensitive.
You can't take a joke.*

WITHHOLDING

*I don't want to talk about it.
What do you want me to say?
Why should I answer you? you'll only do what you want anyway.
I'm too busy, it will have to wait.*

DENIAL OF YOUR RESPONSE OR PERCEPTION

You're wrong, it's not that way.

You're crazy if you think that. Go see a therapist.

No one believes that crap.

Who told you your opinion counted?

That is (absurd, stupid, nonsense...).

Who would ever think that way?

I am not angry.

You're making that up.

You're getting upset about nothing.

You can't feel that way/You don't feel that way.

You just feel that way because (you have PMS, you're depressed, you didn't get enough sleep...).

CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS

Limits where you can go, who you can see, and what you can do

Checks in randomly

Makes all primary decisions

Has control over all finances and assets

Uses children to relay messages

Ignores your presence and/or your opinions

JEALOUSY AND POSSESSIVENESS

Resents amount of time spent at work, with children, with friends, etc.

Accusations of sexual infidelity

Checks up on where you've been

ANGRY OUTBURSTS

Everything that happens to him is your fault

Public humiliations and insults

CREATES CONFUSION

Sends mixed and contradictory messages

Changes behaviors

Has different public and private personalities

Makes jokes about or down-plays abuse

Unpredictable moods

THREATS

Describes ways to hurt you, others, pets, belongings

Threatens to take the children from you.

Threatens suicide

Describes all the things he is going to tell your boss and your friends

Many Ask “WHY DOESN’T SHE LEAVE?”

Here’s “WHY I DON’T JUST LEAVE”

- *I believe his threats about what will happen to me if I leave. I know that 75% of reported domestic crimes happen after the woman leaves. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury for women.*
- *He has told me that what is happening is my fault. He has convinced me that what he says about me is probably true. I’m sure no one else could love me, and I don’t want to live my life all alone.*
- *He says he doesn’t mean to hurt me with his words and threats. He just doesn’t have any place to let his anger out. He is under a lot of daily stress. I’m sure everything will begin to turn around for him and he will be happy with me again.*
- *My children believe what he says about me and they will want to live with him if I leave. He told me that he would win every custody case and would declare I am an unfit mother. I believe that it is best if children are raised with both parents. Children really suffer with divorced parents.*
- *I have no money of my own. He is the only one who can sign checks or withdraw money from savings. I don’t know anything about paying bills; how will I survive on my paycheck alone? What kind of housing could I afford? What would happen if I lost this job?*
- *He has known everything about me since I was eighteen. He knows my faults, my fears, my mistakes, and my actions. Who will he tell? What will he say about me to others?*
- *I keep hoping that I still love him and I took a vow “for better or for worse”. I don’t want to fail at marriage or give up hope. My family believes that divorce is a sin.*
- *If I can just hang in there and manage the situation, it will get better.*
- *I really haven’t been in contact with my family.*
- *I haven’t been able to have close friends for years. He wanted me to put our family first. No one knows what is happening and they probably wouldn’t believe it. Whenever we are with people, he is very loving to me. People like to be around him.*
- *He says he really doesn’t want to hurt me and he doesn’t want me to leave. He often brings me flowers after an incident and always apologizes. He says he needs me and he is trying to stop hurting me.*

When my car was stolen, the police and courts couldn’t help me. I got very confused about what to do. I don’t know if I can put my personal life in the hands of police and attorneys.

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

STATISTICS

- Between 3.3 million and 25 million children experience domestic violence in their home each year. The number is greatly under-reported.
- Between 50% and 75% of male batterers also abuse their children.
- 40% of suspected child abuse also includes a history of domestic violence.
- 25% of victims of domestic violence are pregnant women.
- 70% of the children in domestic violence shelters are physically abused or neglected.
- 80% of runaways come from homes where domestic violence occurs.
- Young criminal offenders are four times more likely to come from abusive homes.
- 63% of boys, ages 11 to 20, arrested for homicide, have killed their mother's assaulter.
- 70% of men in court-ordered treatment for domestic violence witnessed it as a child.
- Girls from homes with domestic violence are 6.5 times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and more likely to become pregnant as a teen.
- Boys from homes with domestic violence are four times more likely to abuse in a dating relationship, 25 times more likely to commit rape as an adult, 6 times more likely to commit suicide, have a 74 percent greater chance of committing crimes against others, are 24 times more likely to commit a sexual assault as an adult, and 1000 times more likely to commit violent acts against an adult partner or their own children.

EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

Children, regardless of whether they have experienced abuse directly, are affected by violence in the home. Children who witness abuse display the same emotional responses as children who have been physically and emotionally abused. Abusive behavior is learned behavior, and children from domestic violent homes are at a greater risk of becoming the next generation of abusers and victims. They may develop patterns that mimic the behavior of batterers and victims. The lessons they learn from experiencing or observing abuse accompany them into adulthood.

As adults, females may develop distrust of males, negative attitudes toward marriage, and accept violence or other forms of abuse as natural. Many males, even though they may have intervened on at least one occasion to stop the abuse, may identify with the seemingly more powerful batterers and adopt many of their attitudes toward women and their use of control tactics.

Children of domestic violence also stand a greater chance of experiencing neglect. Depression, fear, frustration, helplessness, and anger may serve as obstacles for many battered women who are trying to foster nurturing relationships with their children. After having had their foundation destroyed by domestic abuse, children from abusive homes find it difficult to develop trust, self-confidence or positive self-image. They may become ambivalent and desensitized to abuse. The children's initial sympathy for the victim may wane, especially if defensive measures taken by the victim are not apparent to the children.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR INTERVENTION

WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?

Although there is no “perpetrator profile” of demographic or other characteristics, there are certain features which are often associated with an abuser. An abuser is likely to:

- Be of any race, educational level, cultural background, socio-economic level, occupational group, religious group or from any geographic region.
- Have a belief system which supports the use of violence or abusive behavior to achieve control over a partner.
- Be “invisible” due to exemplary behavior on the job, and in his social role.
- Deny problems.
- Blame others, especially the victim.
- Gain sympathy by sharing convincing stories about his “difficult partner”, about how miserable he is, how hard it is for him.
- Show “defensive injuries”, such as scratch marks, bite marks.
- Seem so reasonable.
- Have witnessed his mother being abused by his father.
- Abuse his children, too.

WHAT IS A GOOD TREATMENT PROGRAM?

- Focuses on violence as the problem, not a “symptom”.
- Is based on the idea that domestic violence treatment is not anger management, couples counseling, individual psychotherapy, family therapy, pastoral counseling or any other technique. These modalities are not a substitute for specialized domestic violence treatment and have been known to exacerbate the risk to the victim.
- Covers specific topics related to domestic violence, its causes, effects, impact on children and ways to obtain the belief system changes which underlie behavior changes.
- Includes a thorough assessment at intake including review of criminal history, violence history, records from other treatment programs. The program must have the right to decline admission to an individual who does not meet its entry requirements.
- Holds perpetrator alone accountable for the abusive behavior.
- Holds the perpetrator alone responsible for changing the abusive behavior.
- Has policies and procedures which promote victim safety and autonomy.
- Has clear treatment contracts outlining program expectations.
- Treats voluntary and court-ordered clients to identical standards.
- Makes sure there is victim contact to ensure referral to appropriate advocacy, shelter or other services; to provide information about the batterers program; to invite input to provider regarding perpetrator, and to notify victim of safety concerns. Programs should provide a pamphlet with helpful information for those whose abusive partners are in treatment.
- Makes sure groups are single-gender, are no larger than 12 to 15 participants, and, ideally, are facilitated by a male and female team.
- Makes sure that the minimum length of the program is one year, and that completion is based on accomplishment of clear goals and meeting the exit criteria, not just attendance for a specified time.

Joan Zegree, “Batterers Intervention Programs” presentation, National College of District Attorneys, Los Angeles, 1997

NOTES

Yllo, Kersti, Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse, Sage Publishing, 1988 is the source for the statement by Dr. Sandra Folzer in “Survivors” that, *“Women at either end of the educational status are more vulnerable to abuse.”*