Domestic Violence: How We Work With Families

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ZERO TO THREE
## Rules of the Batterer

- I make the rules
- I am entitled to **YOU**, your obedience, services, affection, loyalty, fidelity and undivided attention.
- You cannot leave without my permission.
- You cannot tell anyone about the abuse.

### Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assaultive and controlling behavior</th>
<th>Physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats to harm</td>
<td>Intimidation and humiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of acts not always indicative of danger</td>
<td>Acts of violence are PART of the package.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cycle & Pattern of Domestic Violence

Cycle of Violence

- **Honeymoon**
  - When the abuser will apologize or try to make up for their abusive actions
  - They may blame abusive behaviors on the victim
  - Ignore or deny abuse

- **Violence**
  - When the abuse actually occurs
  - Violent behaviors
  - Emotional, physical, financial and/or sexual abuse

- **Tension**
  - Walking on eggshells
  - Threats and intimidation
  - Fear
  - Guilt
  - Unpredictable behavior

Power and Control

- Physical Violence
- Sexual Violence
- Emotional Abuse
- Economic Abuse

- Power and Control
- Minimize / Deny / Blame
- Isolation
- Using Children
- Male / Hearing Privilege
- Minimize / Deny / Blame
- Sexual Violence
- Physical Violence
- Intimidation
- Sexual Violence
A Closer look...
Why doesn’t she just leave???

- Complications of Immigration
- Economic Dependence
- Religious Pressure
- Family Pressure
- Need for the children to have a father
- Distrust of the system
- Lack of Alternatives
- FEAR
- LOVE
- HOPE
Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs

- Physiological
- Safety
- Love & Belonging
- Esteem
- Self Actualization
Meet Hailey
What this means for our babies?

- Meaning of Exposure
- Overlap with direct abuse
- Impact on infants, children and adolescents
- Emotional, behavioral and cognitive problems, PTSD
Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children

- Witnessing can mean SEEING actual incidents of physical/and or sexual abuse. It can mean HEARING threats or fighting noises from another room. Children may also OBSERVE the aftermath of physical abuse such as blood, bruises, tears, torn clothing, and broken items. Finally children may be AWARE of the tension in the home such as their mother’s fearfulness when the abuser’s car pulls into the driveway.

- Children who are exposed to battering become fearful and anxious. They are always on guard, watching and waiting for the next event to occur. They never know what will trigger the abuse, and therefore, they never feel safe. They are always worried for themselves, their mother, and their siblings. They may feel worthless and powerless.
  - Denial
  - Blame
  - Anger at the victim
  - Isolation
  - Physically, emotionally and psychologically abandoned
The Effects of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children

During your first 18 years of life, did you experience:

1. Physical abuse?
2. Emotional abuse?
3. Contact sexual abuse?
4. Emotional neglect?
5. Physical neglect?
6. Your mother being physically abused?
7. Parental substance abuse?
8. Losing a parent to divorce or separation?
9. A household member going to prison?
10. A household member who was depressed, mentally ill or attempted suicide?

Following their ACEs

- Alcoholism
- Unstable relationships
- Risk of repeated victimization
- Mental health problems
- Suicide attempts
- Low self esteem
- Eating disorders
- Depression

The survey instrument is available at www.acestudy.org
The impact of Exposure...

- Emotional and psychological trauma
- Belief that violence is an effective way to resolve conflicts and problems
- Developmental delays
- A greater likelihood of becoming a batterer than children raised in nonviolent homes
- A higher risk of alcohol/drug abuse, PTSD, and juvenile delinquency.

*Witnessing domestic violence is the single best predictor of juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. It is also the number one reason children run away.*
COMINGS & GOINGS...
An exercise about Choices…

Cost
- Green Cards = money
- Yellow Cards = Goodwill

Ground Rules
- Movement = pay the fare
- Ringing bell = pay fare or move
- No more resources = go home or be homeless

SILENCE
You are a 35 year old woman who has been married for 15 years. You have three (3) children, Emory (age 2), Jersie (age 6) and Kenny (age 14). You work part time as a nurse’s aide while your kids are at daycare and school. You are devoutly religious. You have a modest home in the city. Your husband works in construction. You love your 3-year old dog.
The Options

Homeless Shelter – You & your children... NO dog...
(1) Yellow for goodwill.

Your home - Free

Rent and apartment- you, Your 3 children & dog (3) $$$
and (1) Yellow for goodwill

Check into a hotel – you & your Children ...
You sneak in the dog 😊 (2) $$

Stay with a Friend - You, your children ...
(No dog they’re allergic)
(2) Yellow for goodwill

Be homeless for Free
Large Group Discussion
• How did it feel to make these choices?
• What facts, if any, indicated increasing danger for Maria?
• For those of you who were undocumented, or were given additional characteristics, did the decision-making process change for you? How so?
• For those of you who played the role of the husband, how did it feel? What connections did you make between your partner’s decision-making process and your own behavior?
Comings and Goings…

• Did anyone break the rules?
• Why was this exercise done in silence?
• How may left the home and then returned?
• How does this exercise apply to your role as professional working with families?
Supports and Strategies for Working with Families
What are we asking for?

Underlying demand

Remember Comings & Goings...

Leave him

“why don’t you get it?”

Family Court

Model positive co-parenting

Cooperation

Prove safe decision-making
Be careful not to underestimate:

- Alliances between Parties (these can shift as the case progresses)
- Role of Parties not Present
- Power Issues
- Expert Involvement

Remember Sleeping Beauty: Invite all to the party: even the bad fairies
Screening for Supports and Services

• Assessments – At the beginning and on-going through out the case.  
  (Be on the alert for patterns of coercive control)
  • **Coercive Control**: term developed by Evan Stark to help us understand  
    domestic abuse as more than a “fight”. It is a pattern of behavior which seeks to  
    take away the victim's liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self.  
    • Screen the moment you become involved whether or not you have the  
      “admission of DV”.

• Screening both parents  
  • Helps to identify the risk for the children  
  • Accountability  
  • SCREEN SEPARATELY  
  • Document when it doesn’t feel right  
  • Be clear and transparent –neutral  
  • Treat both parties with respect

• Creating safe places for disclosure  
  • Identifying a safe contact  
  • Watch for trigger words  
  • Create a “safe” signal for topics  
  • Follow disclosure with questions for specific details
Safety planning

- Document safety plan WITHOUT specifics
- Create a coordinated community response
  - Health, police, shelters, schools, faith-based community supports, judicial and legal services surrounding the family without blame or consequences for disclosure and ultimatums
- Advocate for batterer intervention programs to be incorporated in case planning (…beyond Anger Management)
- Confirm any cross over between criminal and the DN cases for orders or services involving domestic violence
- Lay the groundwork for future referrals
  - Teach ways to document with details
  - The power of POs
  - Strength-based relationships and support groups
COUNSELING

- **TF-CBT:** *Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* is an evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents impacted by *trauma* and their parents or caregivers.

- **DBT:** *Dialectical behavior therapy* is a highly effective type of CBT, it teaches clients four sets of behavioral *skills:* mindfulness; distress tolerance; interpersonal effectiveness; and emotion regulation.

- **EMDR:** *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing* is a powerful new psychotherapy technique which has been very successful in helping people who suffer from trauma, anxiety, panic, disturbing memories, post traumatic stress and many other emotional problems.

- Couples Counseling is based on shared respect for one another and shared responsibility for the relationship outcome and process. Until a violent partner gets help to stop his or her abusive behavior, and until the recipient is able to discover why he or she tolerates such abuse, couples work is likely to harm more than it helps.*
## INFANTS, TODDLERS, & PRESCHOOLERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you may observe:</th>
<th>How you can help (and support parents to help):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep disturbances</td>
<td>♦ Help the child anticipate what will happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Disturbances in feeding</td>
<td>♦ Give choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Feelings of helplessness and passivity</td>
<td>♦ Provide reassurance when the child needs it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Generalized fearfulness</td>
<td>♦ Name the child’s feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Specific new fears</td>
<td>♦ Expect to need to do these over and over again. It is normal for children to need repeated reassurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Loss of recently acquired developmental skills (e.g., walking or talking)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Clinginess and separation anxiety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ Inhibited play and exploration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Thinking and talking about the traumatic event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Being upset at reminders and doing their best to avoid reminders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Irritability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Aggressiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Scanning for danger/expecting danger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Easily startled</td>
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</table>
**Supports for School-Age Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN</th>
<th>What you may observe:</th>
<th>How you can help (and support parents to help):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Posttraumatic play*</td>
<td>♦ Listen to the child’s concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Thinking and talking about the trauma outside play</td>
<td>♦ Answer questions truthfully and simply.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Being upset at reminders of the trauma and doing their best to avoid reminders</td>
<td>♦ Support the parent in letting the child stay close to her.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Specific fears, often triggered by traumatic reminders</td>
<td>♦ Offer reassurance that you and the parent are working together to keep the family safe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Feeling guilty about the trauma and responsible for what happened</td>
<td>♦ Name the child’s feelings and encourage the child to find ways to express them through language, play, or drawing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Fantasies of revenge</td>
<td>♦ Help the child anticipate what will happen next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings</td>
<td>♦ Give choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Impaired concentration and difficulty learning</td>
<td>♦ Expect to have to do these things again and again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Sleep disturbances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Headaches, stomach aches, or other physical symptoms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Concerns about their own safety and the safety of others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Aggressive behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Withdrawn behavior</td>
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There are evidence-based trauma-focused treatments. A trauma-informed mental health professional should be able to determine which treatment is most appropriate for a given case.

- **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)**

- **Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)**

- **Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)**
Food for Thought as You Prepare to Help…

- Support the victim, first and foremost.
- Support the perpetrator, too, in getting help. Acting out violence is abuse to the self as well as to the other. Many people who abuse have experienced abuse themselves.
- Know the signs of abuse. In addition to the obvious physical cues, these may include emotional difficulties such as low self-esteem, anger, sadness, post-traumatic symptoms, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, substance use, eating issues, academic problems, relationship issues, and isolation, among others. A depressed and frightened child or adult may be unable to seek help directly.
- Intervene with COMPASSION and strength. Contact authorities, if necessary.
- Promote awareness. Abuse happens in all kinds of families, and not always visibly.
- Support initiatives that help educate, protect, and support families.
Reading Resources

- *When Dad Hurts Mom: Helping Your Children Heal the Wounds of Witnessing Abuse* by Lundy Bancroft (Putnam Adult, 2004)
- *The Batterer as Parent* by Lundy Bancroft and Jay G. Silverman (Sage Publications, Inc. 2002)
- *A Terrible Thing Happened* by Margaret M. Holmes
- *When Mommy got Hurt: A story for Young Children About Domestic Violence* by Ilene Lee and Kathy Sylwester
- *Daddy, Why Do You Hurt Mommy?* By Katrina Carmichael and Marcelina Garth
References


• Domestic Violence and Mental Health Policy Initiative’s 2008 *Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: A Curriculum for DV Advocates* (written by Patricia Van Horn, JD, PhD). Chicago, IL: DVMHPI.