

Teaching Guide

When Violence Hits Home:

Bringing the Facts to Light

Focus

This guide will help you introduce adults to the topic of domestic violence among couples. The guide is organized into 10-, 20-, 30-, 60- and 90-minute segments to help you adapt this material to meet the needs of your groups.

Since batterers are generally men, we use he/him/man to refer to the abuser. However, a very small percentage of women abuse men. In these cases, the dynamics are very similar to the material presented here.

Note: For more information on this topic and for several personal glimpses, use the winter 1994 edition of *Transitions*.

Program participants will learn:

- Some of the basic facts concerning domestic violence.
- Domestic violence is a crime that may be happening to someone they know.
- How to refer someone for help.

Before making a presentation:

1. Read these materials thoroughly.
2. Contact the domestic violence program serving your area.
 - Obtain brochures, business cards, or other materials that may help participants be aware of services.
 - Consider inviting a staff person to join you in teaching this topic or to make a special presentation.
 - In addition, the staff may have statistics about the rate of domestic violence for your area and other information that would "personalize" your presentation.
3. Consider writing definitions and key facts on newsprint or poster board for visuals.

Part 1: Domestic Violence: A Rural Problem, Too

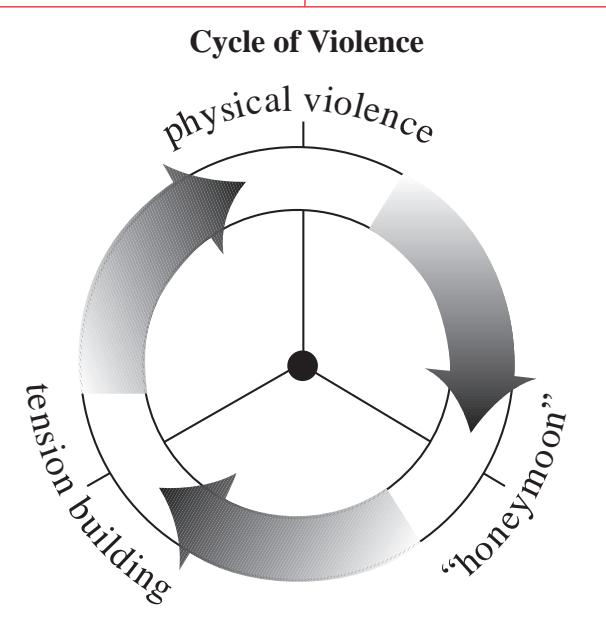
For 60- or 90-minute programs, take some time at the beginning to share why each person has come and what each person hopes to gain from the workshop.

Materials needed:

Newsprint or flip chart; markers; copies of the handouts "Fast Facts," "How Can I Help My Friend?" and the fact sheet "When Violence Hits Home;" and brochures and materials from the domestic violence program serving your area.

Opening Activity

2 to 3 minutes



Begin by asking participants to share the first words that come to their minds when they think of the word "home." Write these on the newsprint. Do the same for the word "violence" on a separate sheet of paper.

Teaching

Put the two pieces of paper side by side.

Say: It seems like these two words shouldn't go together. But in many families, they do. Domestic violence has been happening throughout our history, but only recently are more people

talking about it and doing something about it.

Just what is domestic violence? It is more complicated than occasional beatings. It includes many types of abuse: put downs, mind games, intimidation by destroying property or abusing a pet, making threats, or taking money.

Those who commit domestic violence generally use many means of belittling, controlling, and making miserable the person they victimize. The abuser's desire is to have power over that person.

Periodically, the abuse will escalate into physical violence or sexual assault: beatings, using weapons, or rape. This severe trauma is intended to shock and frighten the victim so that she will not leave the relationship.

Domestic violence isn't just a rare problem, an urban problem, or a minorities problem. It can and does happen to anyone, anywhere—including rural Kansas. Share some of the information from the "Fast Facts" handout.

One of the most powerful tactics an abuser uses is isolation. It is isolation that makes the victim more vulnerable to his control. Isolation also effectively hides her bruises and blinds her to resources for relief. Read "Isolation" below.

Isolation: Part of A Survivor's Story

After we were married, he started chasing off our friends, especially my friends, then our shared friends. Soon only some of his carefully chosen friends visited occasionally. These friends were just as abusive and neglectful of their partners and family as my husband was with me.

I recall being sent from our living room during these visits to "take care of business," as my husband referred to it, which usually meant serving him and his friends. . . . Indeed, I was his slave! Many times, I heard myself referred to as "a piece of furniture" — something he owned. I was treated in the same manner by his friends in my own home.

Isolated from my friends, he started to isolate me from my family. This he accomplished by making it unbearable for (my family) to visit our home. . . . He would cause arguments, then give me a choice of him or them; he always topped it off with "No one loves you as much as I do," or "They're trying to control you. . . ."

I remember one very painful incident, Christmas 1975. My family always spent Christmas Day together. This one was different. My father had been terminally ill for some time. This would, in all likelihood, be his last Christmas. My husband gave me a choice of him or my family. I chose my family. I paid for it with verbal and physical abuse.

After a long period of isolation, I began to develop a fear of experiencing the world. I was made to feel paranoid — paranoid to the point that I was afraid to be outside of my home, even in my own yard. By that time, my abuser's plan to isolate me was not only psychological and emotional, but also geographical.

I was moved 1,200 miles from my family. I had almost no access to communication with them. The communication I did have was filtered through my husband and his family. I was not

allowed to have a telephone, my mail was opened before I received it. I had no transportation. We always had two cars; my husband simply disabled one of them.

Soon I had no contact with anyone outside my home. My closest neighbor was a mile away and I had three small children. . . .

From a personal story by Pamela Bolton in the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Rural Task Force Resource Packet. Pamela escaped this abusive relationship and began a new life free of violence.

Discussion questions:

1. What role did isolation play in this true story?
2. What facets of rural life may make it easier for an abuser to isolate his wife or girlfriend?
3. One of the ways to help a potential victim of abuse is to prevent isolation, even in small ways. What ways can you think of to reach through isolation and help a family have social contacts?

STOP

*To end here, finish with the program ending below.
To continue, skip the ending and continue with Part 2.
GO*

Say: The chances are good that someone you know has been a victim or is now a victim of domestic violence. You can help this person by becoming more informed and by repeatedly telling her that she does not deserve to be abused.

Share with her the phone number for the domestic violence program that serves our area:

_____ phone _____. You can also call this number yourself to ask more specific questions about how to help the person you care about.

Book to recommend: *Getting Free* by Ginny NiCarthy.

Handouts: "Fast Facts," "How Can I Help My Friend?" and materials from the domestic violence program.

Part 2: Facts and Fiction about Domestic Violence

An additional 10 minutes

To present a 20-minute program, skip the program ending above and continue as follows after the discussion.

Additional materials needed:

Copies of quiz, pencils.

Say: Domestic violence is a complex issue. Myths and misunderstandings abound, which increase the isolation for the woman being abused. She often withdraws even more because she feels that people judge her harshly. Let's take a look at some of the facts and fiction about abusive adult relationships.

Hand out the quiz, instructing participants to quickly check their first impression. Allow only three to four minutes to fill out the quiz unless your group reads more slowly. Present and discuss quiz answers.

STOP

To end here, finish with the program ending on page 2. To continue, skip the ending and continue with Part 3.

GO

Part 3: Cycle of Violence

An additional 10 minutes

The next segment will focus on the cycle of violence and issues of power. Strongly consider inviting a staff member from the domestic violence program serving your area to present this material. This person is specifically trained in this area and will be able to answer difficult questions.

Say: Isolation is one factor that allows abuse to continue unabated. The couple also may become trapped in a pattern that many people refer to as “the cycle of violence.” Draw the cycle on newsprint or poster board as you talk.

Tensions rise in the relationship. The abuser generally increases his abuse: name calling, controlling her every action, demanding immediate and absolute obedience to trivial requests, accusing her of infidelity, making threats, and more. Tension continues to rise until he commits an act of violent crime against her—extreme emotional abuse, physical assault, or rape.

After the emotional storm passes, the couple may experience a “honeymoon” period. He may offer apologies and gifts. Both want to believe that the violence will never happen again. But tension begins to build again. For some couples, it is a year or two until the next physical assault; for others it is only a few weeks.

Once couples begin this cycle, the stages pass more quickly; the violent attacks come more often and are more severe while the honeymoon stage becomes shorter or even nonexistent.

Discussion questions:

1. In a relationship as painful as this, why would a woman stay in the relationship? Brainstorm answers, write responses on newsprint or poster board. For answers, see the fact sheet. Bring up any answers that the group does not mention.
2. Most people wonder why the victim stays. Another way to think about it is “Why does he stay?” If he is so unhappy that he continually abuses her, periodically beats her up, and perhaps even tries to kill her—why doesn’t he just leave? What do you think? Brainstorm answers; write responses on newsprint. If needed, the

following paragraph may be used as an explanation for why men stay.)

Why Men Stay

Obtain a copy of Getting Free by Ginny NiCarthy and read the section on page 12 or use the following comments.

Even though they may hide it at work or in the company of other people, many batterers are emotionally immature and make themselves totally dependent upon the victim. They isolate themselves emotionally (and sometimes physically) from other people.

Addicted to their relationship with the victim, they expect this person to fill all their needs, even those they can’t express. Because this is totally unrealistic, these men are often disappointed, depressed, or hostile. This can contribute to their abusive behaviors.

Batterers are very insecure and live in great fear that the women they need so much will “abandon” them (even though, through their abusive behaviors, batterers seem to be driving their partners away!). This fear leads to tremendous jealousy, which both partners may misinterpret as “love.” He becomes jealous of any relationship, even her relationships with her family or friends, fearing she will be enticed away from him or have no love left over for him. Part of the goal in battering is to frighten the woman so that she won’t dare leave.

STOP

To end here, finish with program ending on page 2. To continue, skip the ending and continue with Part 4.

GO

Part 4: Violence Affects Everyone in the Family

An additional 30 minutes

Additional materials needed:

TV, VCR, and the video *It’s Not Always Happy at My House*. (The video is available from your area extension office as part of the educational kit “When Violence Hits Home” or, perhaps, from the domestic violence program serving your area. If this video is not available, ask for another video or for a staff person who would be willing to make a presentation.)

Say: When a man beats his wife, everyone in the family suffers. As we watch this video segment, look for the concepts we have already discussed. Also look for evidence of how the violence is affecting the children.

Show video. Stop the video after about twelve minutes, right after the children leave in the squad car. Allow a moment or two of silence.

Discussion questions (choose some or all):

1. After viewing this, how would you define domestic violence?
2. Earlier in this workshop, we talked about isolation.

- This family lived in a neighborhood, but what evidence did you see of isolation?
3. In what ways did this husband abuse his wife?
 4. Did you see the cycle of violence in this relationship? What was it like?
 5. How were the children affected?
 6. Do you think the children will repeat the violence they have seen? It is not possible to predict, but the son seems to have accepted his father's values about fighting and violence. A significant number of children grow up to repeat the abusive relationships they saw their parents live.

Say: Children are very much affected when there is adult violence at home. Children are psychologically hurt by hearing or witnessing the violence. They learn that they cannot trust their parents, especially the abuser. The preoccupation with the adults' problems

may lead to child neglect. In many homes, children are "accidentally" injured during an episode of violence. Some are also physically or sexually abused by one or both parents. Children in these homes are at risk! It is quite likely that a child you know experiences violence at home and may need your help to find some relief.

Hand out copies of the brochure "Violence at Home Means Children at Risk." Highlight the section "What You Can Do" on the back of the brochure.

STOP

To end here, finish with program ending on page 2.
To continue, skip the ending and continue with Part 5.
GO

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Part 5: Hope for Change

An additional 30 minutes

Invite a staff person from the domestic violence program that serves your area to come. Ask the staff member to talk about women who have ended the abuse. Ask her to share what others can do to help a battered woman and her family. Ask if it would be possible to role play short conversations to practice giving a battered woman positive messages and a referral to the domestic violence program.

Ideas for Other Presentations

Invite a staff person from the domestic violence program serving your area to make a presentation on these or other topics:

- Violence in dating relationships.
- Preventing domestic violence.
- Services provided by the program.
- Legal and social

solutions to domestic violence.

• A short history of domestic violence in our country.

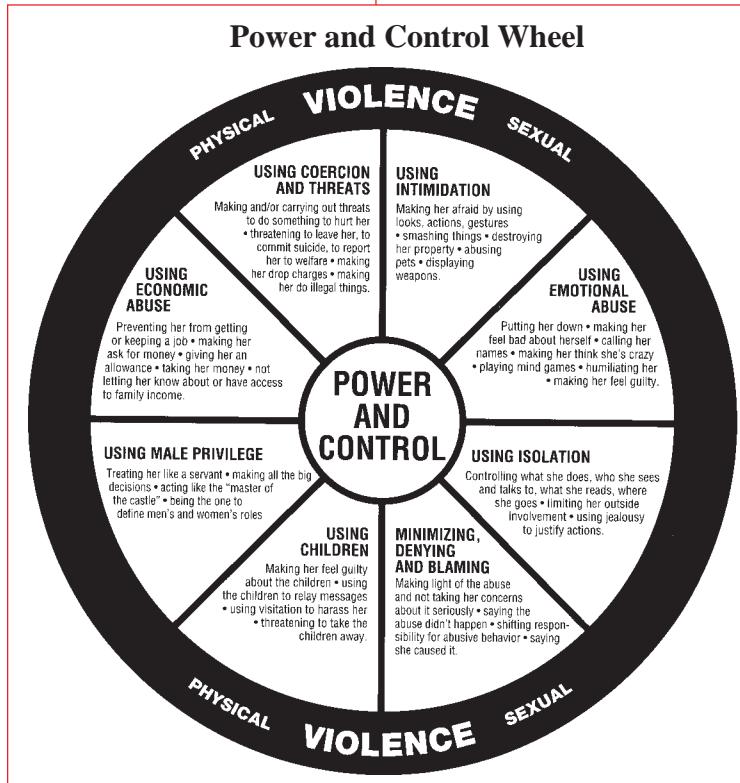
Your local Area Office on Aging may be able to provide you with programs concerning the abuse of older citizens.

Prepared by:

Joyce Powell, Extension Assistant, Human Development and Family Studies, Kansas State University.

Reviewed by:

Melissa Divine, Community Educator, The Crisis Center, Inc.



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