DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDER GROUPS

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Focal Group Psychotherapy

Domestic Violence Offender Groups

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Introduction

What Is Abuse?

Abuse is any behavior that is intended to hurt, intimidate, or control another person or more than one person; or behavior, whether intentional or not, that has this effect. There is a prevalent belief in our society that men have the right to control other people. Men in our society also have a paucity of skills for getting what they need. For these reasons, men have a particularly problematic relationship to power and control. Because of the way in which these beliefs inform male socialization, it can be said that virtually all men are abusers on one level or another. In considering whether behavior is abusive, the question of what another person said or did is irrelevant. There are always alternative choices to abuse: each man must take responsibility for his own behavior at all times. If a person is unsure whether or not he has acted abusively, a good test is to ask that person's partner, who has been affected by the behavior in question.

Abusive behavior falls into four major categories:

- Physical—such as punching, kicking, slapping, burning, scratching, raping
- Verbal—such as shouting to intimidate, name-calling, "trashing," insulting

- Emotional—such as playing "mind games," using children for purposes of emotional manipulation, emotional blackmail

- Financial—such as neglecting financial responsibilities, spending joint money without prior agreement, appropriating credit cards or checkbooks, and not paying child support.

Failing to honor responsibilities in a relationship—such as not doing a fair share of housework or child care, or lying with an intent to deceive or defraud—can also constitute abuse.

Cycle of Abuse

Domestic violence tends to follow a particular pattern or cycle in which, over time, the abuse becomes both more frequent and severe. Many men, on entering the program, may experience a feeling of safety or security. If they have just been through a major abuse incident, joining the group may kick off what is termed "the honeymoon" or "hearts-and-flowers" period. Both the group member and his partner want to believe that the abuse won't happen again, are trying very hard to be "nice" to each other, and doing their best not to let things upset them.

Over time, however, the issues that the couple has been burying inevitably begin to surface again. The relationship then moves into the

tension-building phase. This is the dominant phase for most abusive relationships. Like the hearts-and-flowers period, the third phase—the blowup—is relatively short in duration.

In a healthy relationship, tensions also arise day to day, but are acknowledged and discharged. The function of a domestic violence group is to teach men to avoid the explosive phase altogether. It's unrealistic to hope to maintain a relationship in the hearts-and-flowers phase; however, men can be taught skills that will allow them to acknowledge and discharge tensions in the manner of someone in a healthy relationship, without violent incident.

Social Context of Domestic Violence and Its Treatment

The work of facilitating domestic violence offenders' groups goes beyond "curing" the errant behavior of a group of individuals. Male violence is socially produced. A restructuring of the social order is needed to make a real and meaningful change in society that will affect the individuals within it. As such, these therapy groups are concerned not only with teaching skills to abusive men, resocializing them, encouraging psychological insight, and helping them to reorganize their relationships; but also with shaping the institutions that encourage sexism and violence, and moving society at large to be less abusive, more cooperative, and more flexible.

This work is revolutionary in this respect, and demands a great deal

both of facilitators and group members. It's sometimes difficult to define the appropriate relationship between groups of this kind and other social institutions, including the criminal justice system, the psychotherapeutic community, community mental health services, and the larger progressive political community. Offenders' programs hold a special place in the constellation of services for victims of family violence; in that they nurture the offender, they have also at times been considered controversial. It is critical for therapists themselves to be observant of their own processes and principles, as these resonate within the support and treatment community.

We felt that it was important to collaborate on this chapter, co-writing it rather than assigning responsibility to one individual. Part of the etiology of male violence is the belief that men need to struggle with everything in isolation, rather than by cooperating. Facilitators in this work need to be very conscious of the pull exerted by our early socialization to reinforce the oppressive social order. We have co-facilitated groups together, and strongly recommend that men's groups of this nature have two facilitators. This models for group members cooperative behavior and conflict resolution. More subtly, they don't see another reinforcing example of one man taking on more than he can reasonably handle, heroically struggling alone. Male facilitation is important for several reasons:

- Nonviolent male behavior is modeled by the facilitators.

- The group creates a non-abusive male culture.
- Men in the group feel safe to talk about their feelings about men, women, masculinity, power, and control.
- Male facilitators in such an environment are bound to feel safer than women, who are the most frequent victims of the offender population.

An important part of this work is teaching men to take care of themselves appropriately. Batterers often feel incapable of taking care of themselves. This may lead to a sort of panic that they neutralize by exerting pressure on someone else—usually a spouse or partner—to appropriate this function. Since no one can successfully take on this role for another adult for any length of time, frustrations, anger, and a sense of betrayal can and often do occur on the part of the self-perceived "un-nurtured" male. If this man cannot express such feelings in any other way, he may express them through violence or abuse.

Gay Domestic Violence

This chapter is about male violence as it applies to gay as well as straight relationships. Acknowledging and working with gay male domestic violence is complicated, as it is not always clear as in heterosexual relationships who the offender is and who the victim. Of course, each person

in the relationship must take responsibility for his own abusive behavior. If presented with a gay man who is abusive in his relationship, and is also being abused, you should deal with the safety of the parties first, usually by separating them until the violence is contained. The exercises and iInterventions in this chapter have been used with gay and straight male offenders and are appropriate to both.

Although straight men in a group might benefit from the perspective of gay men, it makes most sense to see these populations of batterers in separate groups. Probation or diversion referrals for gay men are very rare, whereas about 50 percent of straight men in such groups are court-mandated. The police and courts intervene differently in cases of gay male domestic violence. This is an issue that needs continuing examination at the social and community levels.

Selection and Screening

Not all clients who present with domestic violence issues are appropriate for group treatment. The main tool for selection and screening should be a comprehensive intake procedure. Batterers' groups do not lend themselves to a "drop-in" format, as safety in the room is a fundamental concern. Please remember that the membership of this group is limited to men who are perpetrators of violence or abuse with their partners. Although

child abuse, sexual abuse, or street violence may be a concurrent problem for members of the group, these issues should be treated separately as well. Refer these clients to appropriate treatment providers; and always adhere to legally mandated reporting procedures.

Therapists or counselors doing intakes with batterers should have experience with this population and feel confident in their ability to confront denial and minimization. At the same time, a warm and caring presence is necessary to help quell the fear and anxiety these men feel. The intake worker should have a keen eye for manipulation and inconsistency, and be willing to point these things out, setting the tone for honesty and accountability as treatment goals.

Red Flags

What are some of the "red flags," or indicators, that a client may not be appropriate for the group? A batterer capable of working in a group setting is not, by definition, mentally ill. The typical batterer is functioning normally in his everyday life; his use of force and violence is a traditional male mode of expression and problem solving. Very often these men are shocked at being arrested or threatened with divorce, as they have seen their fathers exhibit these same behaviors unchallenged. Such men are workable clients.

Sometimes men will come to treatment, however, displaying psychotic,

sociopathic, or sadistic behaviors. These men need help above and beyond the group setting. They should be referred to treatment with professionals qualified to deal with these pathologies.

Another red flag first encountered by the intake worker is high lethality. Ritualized abuse, the use of weapons, rape, and a history of serious injury to the partner are all indicators that iInterventions other than, or in addition to, group treatment may be called for. It is important for all intake workers to seek supervision or consultation if they are unclear about a client's appropriateness for group treatment based upon lethal potential.

Untreated substance abuse should be confronted and satisfactorily addressed before a man can gain entry to a batterers' group. A man who presents as a drug or alcohol abuser will have little chance of success in changing his battering behavior without concurrent substance abuse treatment. Intake workers should refer these men to treatment providers, and require written proof of compliance, before placing them in a group. Men are informed at intake that if the group facilitators at any time assess that drug or alcohol abuse is inhibiting an individual's participation, he will not be allowed to continue in the group.

Unclear motivation can also serve as a red flag for admission to a group. While minimization of their abuse is the norm for batterers, some men take

no responsibility for their behavior, blaming their partner and the system, or flat-out denying the action itself in spite of overwhelming evidence. Sometimes a man is required to come to counseling by a judge or under threat of divorce and, predictably, his motivation is limited to escaping a jail sentence or retaining his partner. These men should be seen individually rather than in a group setting until they gain internal motivation and display some accountability.

Language or cultural barriers can make it difficult for a man to work in a group setting. In these situations, every attempt should be made to refer men to a group in which their language is spoken or to a therapist or counselor familiar with the culture-specific needs of the client.

Lastly, the intake worker needs to be aware that a few men will attempt to use treatment as a means to "prove" their nonviolence. This scenario usually presents itself in child custody disputes, whereby a man attempts to smooth over a history of violence or abusiveness by entering a group and thus look better in court. The worker should make it clear from the start that behavior cannot be predicted and that while the individual may be welcome in treatment, no claims concerning his safety will be substantiated by the treatment provider.

Time and Duration

Battering behavior is not easy to change. Clients should expect to spend a minimum of six months in weekly two-hour group sessions. For the purposes of this chapter, the group format is described as a twenty-four-week program; however, clients should not be terminated until they have demonstrated a mastery of the techniques and concepts taught in the group. One strategy for achieving this is to encourage group members who are not ready to leave the group to reenroll in twelve-week increments. This maintains more stability of membership and allows each man to stay in treatment until he is able to demonstrate a cessation of his battering behavior.

Issues will surface in the course of group treatment requiring help that the group alone cannot give. Often in such cases clients have not dealt with their own abuse issues as victims in their families of origin. Depression or suicidal ideation may surface for men who have lost their partners or families because of their abusive behavior. Men should be encouraged to deal with these types of issues in individual treatment that is concurrent with their participation in the group. Resistance to treatment should be gently confronted; remind men that they have an opportunity now to solve problems that will otherwise plague them for the rest of their lives.

Finally, it should be recognized that people learn and change at different rates; some acknowledgment of this fact should be built into any program.

Rather than a standard schedule for change, a program should have specific termination criteria: men should be able to continue in group until they successfully meet those criteria. Batterers have spent a lifetime learning these behaviors: they cannot be expected to unlearn them quickly. Clients should be encouraged to stay with the process and not to expect quick and easy solutions.

Structure

Group Size

An ideal group for batterers would contain between eight and ten men, with two facilitators. Because of the volatile nature of some clients, dual facilitation is highly recommended to provide safety for both clients and facilitators, as well as a role model for male cooperation. Dual facilitation also ensures leadership continuity in cases of illness, vacation, or leaves of absence.

Batterers' groups suffer from a fairly high dropout rate for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a violent incident will inspire a man to seek help, but his interest may wane as the incident loses its vividness for him. Issues raised in the group may be painful for the man to deal with, making it hard for him to return to the group every week. There is also the case of men who are in

treatment only to get their partner to come home. When this fails, the man's motivation for treatment usually evaporates. Lastly, general life issues, such as money or scheduling problems, can cause a man to drop out unexpectedly.

For these reasons, it is often best to start a group with an excessive number of men, about 12 or 13, knowing that you'll probably end up with an ideal number after a few weeks. Adding men to the group once it has begun is not recommended, as this changes the group dynamics with each addition, and undermines feelings within the group of trust and safety.

Group Structure

In recent years, law enforcement agencies have been mandated to hold men accountable for their abusive behavior. Such men have been arrested in increasing numbers for domestic violence. Mandated counseling is often a condition of probation for the first-time offender, with jail as the option for noncompliance.

The court-referred client presents difficult issues for the group and its facilitators. The motivation for such a client is sometimes limited to avoidance of punishment, and he may be in heavy denial about his behavior. For these reasons, it's important to make it clear from the outset of treatment that attendance alone does not constitute fulfillment of the court-mandated counseling requirement. On the contrary, every client is expected to own

responsibility for his violence, be willing to apply behavioral techniques to stop his violent behavior, and to gain a thorough understanding of the skills and concepts presented in the group. Court-mandated clients have not fulfilled their term of rehabilitation until they meet these requirements.

Clients who are court-referred may be effectively mixed with self-referred clients, as their issues and behaviors are essentially the same. The reality is that the self-referred clients were either responsible enough or lucky enough to seek help before they were arrested. Unfortunately, poor and minority men are more likely to be arrested for this offense than white middle- or upper-class men. These race and class issues should be explored in the group, as the stress and the anger that accompany poverty and discrimination are often contributing factors to a man's violent behavior.

Goals

The primary goal of the batterers' group is to stop the domestic violence and ensure the safety of the victim. For this reason, the initial iIntervention is the teaching of behavioral techniques, such as the time-out, designed to remove the client from his environment before he is at risk for violent behavior. Although behavioral techniques can help the client stop his battering behavior in the short term, lasting change involves a multifaceted approach challenging many of the fundamental assumptions of male culture.

Domestic violence can be seen as an expression of the pain, rage, and helplessness that men may actually feel in relation to power and control issues within the family. An important facet of any batterers' group should be the presentation of nonviolent alternatives for expressing these feelings. The use of "feeling statements" is an example of one such technique. The client must be willing to give up his impulse to control his partner, exert his will, or simply vent his frustrations through violence.

In addition to the collective goal of stopping violent behavior, it's helpful in the course of the group to have members set individual short-term goals. These goals can be regarded as stepping stones toward the larger goal; they should be realistic and reflect a measurable behavior. For example, while it is not realistic for a man to resolve never to feel angry again, it is possible for him to strive to take a time-out whenever he feels angry with his partner.

The group is also a good place for men to gain empathy for and an understanding of their partner's predicament. Specific exercises are designed to help men own and identify their own prior and present experiences of victimization, whether in their family of origin, in society in general, or at the hands of other men. This can lead to an empathy for the mixture of love and fear felt by partners.

Some programs include a mandatory partner contract designed to

educate the victim about the counseling services, shelters, and legal remedies available. It is important that the victim as well as the perpetrator be warned that participation in the group in no way guarantees a cure for the problem of battering. Victims should be cautioned that the decision to stay in a relationship with a batterer in treatment involves risk, and that support is available for her in the community if she decides to leave.

Ground Rules

Because these clients tend to be manipulative and to test limits, a firm set of ground rules for the group is recommended. Fundamentally, no violence or verbal abuse of any kind should be tolerated in sessions, and weapons of any kind should not be allowed in the room. A tight attendance and lateness policy should be in place to underscore the commitment and responsibility necessary to be successful in treatment. No drug or alcohol use should be tolerated. Anyone with a substance abuse problem should be required to seek treatment. All fees should be kept up-to-date. Any client who chooses to drop out of the group is asked to come and tell the group why, rather than simply to "disappear."

Lastly, clients are expected to report any episodes of violence or abuse of any kind to the group. All clients must agree to maintain confidentiality outside of the group. Any client who cannot or will not honor the ground rules

will be terminated from the group.

Group Process

Once the membership has made a commitment to the group and its rules and expectations, the work of the group begins. Initially, the educational and behavioral content tends to dominate, as the men must quickly learn tools to avoid further violent incidents. Once the men have been able to demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to utilize these tools, the focus shifts to "process." The task of this phase is to integrate the tools and concepts with the real-life experiences of the men in the group, who can begin to analyze their patterns of success and failure.

In all sessions, the men should engage in a short "check-in." The check-in should consist of two parts: "How are you feeling right now?", and "Have there been any incidents of violence or avoidance of violence since our last session?"

To end each session, it's helpful to have a closing or "check-out" ritual. This should include a "safety check," giving each man a moment to look ahead to the week's activities and anticipate any stressors or situations that might be setups for potentially violent incidents. For example, a client might be attending a company party with his wife. In the past, the boss has flirted with the batterer's wife, which has in turn aroused his violent jealousy. The group

can offer support and advice as to how he can deal with this situation differently than he has in the past.

Another helpful component of the closing segment is "appreciation and criticism." Each man is given the opportunity to appreciate or criticize (appropriately, without trashing) another man in the group for something he said that evening. This serves to give men practice in direct expression, as well as allowing for support and feedback for the work they are doing.

Facilitators should model the check-in and check-out procedures in the initial group session. The men will need help and support in identifying their feelings in the check-in: a large "feeling chart," with lists of feelings, both positive and negative, should be posted in each group room as a helping tool. Men should not be allowed to make the traditional "I'm okay" response when asked how they feel;

instead, they should be guided toward more descriptive expressions. The men should continually be validated for displaying a willingness to talk in the check-in about violent or potentially violent incidents so that information is not driven "underground."

In the check-outs, men should be reminded to be specific in their appreciations and criticisms. They should be practicing direct expression, looking each other in the eyes, and beginning sentences with "you" rather

than speaking in the third person. Generalizations such as "I appreciate the whole group" should be discouraged. Ask group members to pick out one man, and to appreciate or criticize him for something he did or said that evening. Facilitators themselves should be open to feedback or criticism from group members if it is presented appropriately—in other words, with the same consideration afforded other members of the group.

As the weeks go on, the men's depth of feeling for each other will increase. This is fueled by the process the men are experiencing, and is contained by the safety of the group. Ideally, new norms are being created in the group—a willingness to confront as well as appreciate each other, the expression of honesty and vulnerability, and, most importantly, an ethic of nonviolence. Of course, every group learns at its own pace; a strict "recipe" format for these groups is unrealistic. Outlined in broad terms, however, the groups do follow a predictable growth pattern, and the skills and concepts that must be learned build on each other in a systematic way. It's important that the group be allowed to move at its own speed, and that each skill and concept be learned and integrated before the group proceeds.

Starting the Group

In starting a batterers' group, it's important to establish the group's purpose right away. The collective self-esteem of these men is very low,

which is a primary reason for their behavior: it's therefore especially important to be nonjudgmental, empathic, and caring. Because most of the men will be new to therapy and group situations, unifying rituals are a good way to establish common ground by including all men in the group process.

Begin with an introduction of yourselves and the purpose of the group. For example, "Welcome to [name of agency]. My name is _____, and I will be your facilitator, along with _____. I'm sure that some of you may be feeling nervous. I want to assure you that although we'll be doing serious work together in the next 24 weeks, the task we've come together to do is possible. We've set up ground rules to make this work both possible and safe."

Introduce the ground rules of the group. It's helpful to provide a handout, which the clients sign and retain.

Ground Rules

1. No weapons may be brought to the group.

2. Men must not have used drugs or alcohol for 24 hours prior to the group meeting.

3. No verbal trashing of partners or other group members is allowed.

4. Members must arrive on time for each group session.

5. No more than three absences will be tolerated in any 24-week period.

6. Fees must be kept up to date.

7. No violence of any kind will be tolerated within the group. Members will be terminated if any such event occurs.

Next, have the men introduce themselves and tell about the incidents of abuse that convinced them they needed to get help for their violent behavior. These vignettes will allow the men to establish their membership in the group, as well as end the isolation they feel by realizing that everyone in the room shares the same problem.

As the room fills with stories, an air of seriousness pervades, allowing the men to put down their defenses and false bravado. Often a man will break down and cry as he confesses to things that he may not have shared previously with anyone.

The facilitators' role in the initial session is to provide support and containment. They should remind clients that their negative behaviors do not define them as bad people. Group members should be given credit for seeking help and be given support and approval for appropriate displays of emotion. Additionally, facilitators should keep a close watch on the clock to allow each man in the room sufficient time to share his personal story. Discourage

blaming, woman-bashing, denial, and minimization. Your goal should be to establish a group norm of honesty and accountability.

Main Concepts and Skills

A. Skill: Self-Reporting

"In order to tell about the incidents that brought you here (or that happened since last week), you will be narrating factually through the incident, telling how it started, what you were saying, how you were feeling, specifically what you did, how it stopped, and what the consequences were. This is not the place to talk extensively about your partners, nor will it be appropriate here for you to blame them. Instead, you should focus on taking responsibility and reporting your feelings and behavior. This takes some getting used to, but I'll be available to help you focus your story if you get off course."

B. Skill: Time-out

"The time-out is the cornerstone of domestic violence iIntervention. Most importantly, it provides a guaranteed method for stopping the violence now. It also serves as a catalyst for beginning to talk about your resistance to changing abusive, controlling, or violent behavior: it's an iIntervention that puts the responsibility for changing on you.

"Here's how the time-out works: when you're beginning to feel angry, you say out loud to yourself and your partner, 'I'm beginning to feel angry. I'm going to take a time-out. I'll be back in one hour and check in.' You then leave the physical location for one hour (no longer and no shorter), you don't drink or drive or use drugs, and you come back to check in. If at that time both of you want to talk about what happened, you can do so; if not, you don't. If you find yourself getting angry again, you take another time-out.

"The time-out is a specific tool, which is to be used exactly as presented. If you don't say exactly, 'I'm beginning to feel angry; I'm going to take a time-out, I'll be back in one hour and check in,' you may be doing something helpful, but you're not taking a time-out. Each word is there for a reason and, as simplistic as it looks, the formula works as an elegant, profound iIntervention for domestic violence. It teaches you where your authority really rests: with yourself and your determination of your physical proximity to upsetting situations. Rather than controlling the situation, you learn to leave it without behaving abusively. This marks the point where you begin to take care of yourself, which is a crucial element for change.

"Saying the phrase, 'I'm beginning to feel angry,' is a way of learning to identify and express feelings, rather than acting them out or controlling circumstances and other people in an attempt to *avoid* feeling them. This phrase emphasizes the skill of talking about yourself and your internal state,

rather than focusing on what is wrong with the other person that "causes" you to feel angry or uncomfortable.

"It's important to emphasize the word 'beginning' in this phrase. The time-out is to be taken when you first notice warning signs of anger—I'll explain more about warning signs next week—rather than after you are already in a blinding rage and have already done something abusive.

" 'I'm going to take a time-out' is your statement about what you are going to do to respond to your feeling, rather than manipulating or controlling your partner so that she will do something to change it. The word 'going' is important, in that it indicates to both of you that the time-out is not negotiable, not open for discussion, and that it is happening *now.* Although it may seem a minute point, choosing 'going' over 'think I need' in this phrase can make the difference between getting out the door and not getting out at all—which can be a life-and-death difference."

" 'I'll be back and check in in one hour,' is your statement to both of you about what will happen after the time-out. As such, it keeps the time-out from becoming an abusive gambit in itself. That is, your partner knows that you aren't leaving forever, or going to go out and get drunk and come back with a weapon. When you come back in one hour, this serves to build trust in your partner, as well as yourself, that you can and will do as you say and live up to

your word. This is important, because many men have eroded their partners' and their own trust in themselves by repeatedly breaking their promises not to be violent or abusive."

C. Skill: Recognition of Warning Signs

"Men are not trained to be particularly attentive to, or aware of, their feelings. During the time-out presentation, some of you may have felt confused about how to tell when you are beginning to feel angry.

"In order to learn more about what happens when you're beginning to feel angry, I'm going to ask you to visualize what happened just prior to the incidents that brought you here. This will help give you a sense of what your warning signs are.

"Close your eyes, sit up straight in the chair, with both feet on the floor. Take a deep breath and let it out. Now, try to remember the day of the incident. Think of what was going on then. What pressures were you under? What made you feel tense or uptight? What was worrying you? How were you talking to people? Was there anything unusual about your tone of voice, your language, your posture, your position with respect to them? Notice anything unusual in your behavior. Were you pacing, clenching, holding tension in your body? Take another deep breath, and as you let it out, notice any tension in your body now. Where are you holding tension?

"Now move up to a couple of hours before the incident. What thoughts are running through your mind? Are you arguing with your partner or anyone else? What is the subject of the argument? What about it snags you? How are you talking to people now? Again, notice your tone, language, posture, and position with respect to other people. What's going on in your body now?

"Go back to an hour before the incident—what are you feeling? Check in with your body again. Notice anything unusual? What do you see? What do you hear? What are you doing? Who is around? What are you thinking? Have you used any drugs or alcohol today? Are you talking? What are you saying?"

Continue in this manner, asking clients to check in at half-an-hour, fifteen minutes, five minutes, one minute, fifteen seconds, five seconds, and the moment of the first instance of abuse.

"Now, open your eyes and return to the room. Tell me what you noticed. I'll write your responses on the board."

D. Concept: Cycle of Violence

Note: This didactic segment lends itself very well to a visual aid which can be drawn on the blackboard or can be Xeroxed and serve as a permanent poster. (See the diagram on the next page.) Men locate themselves with respect to their progress through the cycle.

Use the diagram as per this example:

"Tony has suggested that since things are going well between himself and his partner now, he might not need this group any longer. This is a good time to talk about the Cycle of Violence. Let's look at the diagram on the wall.

"At the top of the diagram is the position we call the "volcano." This is the eruption of your unmanaged anger into a violent or abusive incident.

"From about one o'clock to three o'clock on the diagram, the couple is in what we call the "honeymoon" or "hearts-and-flowers" phase. In this stage, the man may feel remorseful and affectionate toward his partner. The partner may like this behavior and try to maintain it by responding affectionately. By the time a man finds his way into a domestic violence offenders' program, his partner is familiar with this cycle, and probably doesn't believe him when he promises that he won't be violent again. She doesn't really want the candy or flowers he offers: she wants him to do something real about changing. Nonetheless, both partners' denial may rally during this time, allowing them to believe that the battering partner is sufficiently sorry not to do it again. This creates a very dangerous, false sense of security.

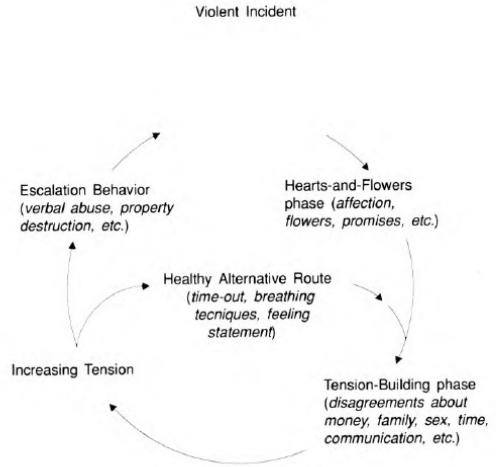
"The next phase is located from four o'clock on, very near the volcano itself. This is called the "tension-building" phase. This is where most relationships spend most of their time, and entails the day-to-day tensions

that inevitably arise in a relationship: disagreements about money, parenting, how to spend time, and negotiating the vicissitudes of intimacy. Research has shown that, over time, the cycle moves faster and faster, and incidents become increasingly violent. It is not the goal of the group to get couples back up into the hearts-and-flowers part of the cycle—that would be unrealistic. Rather, the group's charter is to give a man the tools to manage tension, releasing it as it comes up, without being abusive. Gradual release of tension in this way renders the volcano completely inactive."

E. Concept: Emotional Funnel

The Feelings List and the Emotional Funnel diagram are recommended for use as displays in the room where the group meets. They should also be distributed as handouts.

Cycle of Violence

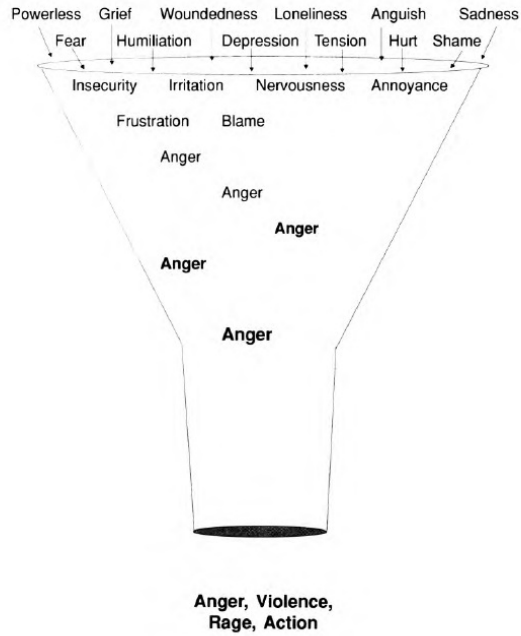


Feelings List

Happy	Sad	Angry	Afraid	Hurt	Ashamed
comfortable	down	mad	vulnerable	crushed	embarrassed
glad	unhappy	incensed	insecure	wronged	humiliated
elated	heart-broken	frustrated	terrified	misunderstood	mortified
delighted	dejected	furious	alarmed	wounded	guilty
thrilled	discouraged	enraged	nervous	provoked	exposed
ecstatic	miserable	annoyed	uncertain	abandoned	contrite
cheerful	depressed	irritated	threatened	ignored	disgraced
pleased	despondent	exasperated	hesitant	invalidated	belittled

satisfied	melancholy	righteous	panic-stricken	conscience-stricken
relieved			worried	haunted

Emotional Funnel



"I'm going to talk to you about some of the origins of anger, and I'll offer you the alternative of experiencing your original feelings, rather than turning them into anger or rage.

"Men are taught not to experience or express certain kinds of feelings—specifically those feelings associated with helplessness, or with being a victim. Rather, men are taught to feel indifferent or to become angry, but they aren't even supposed to feel angry for long. Instead, men are supposed to take action to change whatever is causing their uncomfortable feelings.

"Can anyone describe a situation in which you were angry, and what about it specifically snagged you?" (Wait for description; help the volunteer focus on specifics.) "Now, can you name the emotion you felt or feel when faced with such a situation? Other group members, how do you think you might feel? Let's use words from the Feelings List. Can you identify with words from some of the other columns besides the list of anger words? [Wait] If this happened to me, I might feel wounded or helpless. Would anyone else feel that way? What other feeling words apply?

"You can see that I'm stressing the more vulnerable responses in the picture I'm drawing here. Those words that describe anger characterize someone else's behavior, or what action we might take to avoid the feeling of going further down in the funnel. At the bottom of the funnel, I've written Anger, Violence, Rage, Action. Feelings of powerlessness, fear, and humiliation come up for people many times during a day, filling the top end of the funnel, weighing down the other feelings that are already contained within. As you fail to express or discharge these feelings, they get pushed further down into

lower levels of the emotional funnel, changing from fear, sadness, and hurt to anger, aggression, and violence.

"What does it mean to say 'I'm humiliated' rather than 'I'm pissed off'? What kind of person says those kinds of things? What do you give up by moving upward in this diagram? What do you lose by not moving up? How do you feel when you are at the receiving end of anger, rage, and violence? When someone else tells you that he or she feels vulnerable, how do you tend to react? Do you laugh at that person? Or do you tend to be kinder in the way you listen? How do you think your partner might react if you were to express your own feelings of vulnerability?

F. Skill: Three-Breath Technique

"When you notice that you're acting emotionally, or experiencing any early warning sign at all, take a deep breath. Notice where any tension or other unusual physical sensations are occurring (heat, chills, tingling, and so on). Ask yourself as you exhale, 'Am I feeling angry?' Then take another deep breath and ask, 'Am I feeling afraid?' as you exhale. Finally, take another deep breath, still being aware of your physical sensations, and ask yourself as you exhale, 'Am I feeling sad?'

"Don't stop the exercise after getting one 'yes' answer—it's important to check in about all three feelings. If you identify fear or sadness accompanying

the anger, this may give you some very important information about the more vulnerable feelings that the anger is covering. You'll also learn to interpret your physical sensations as reactions to or precursors of emotions."

G. Skill: Feeling Statement

The following is recommended as a permanent poster in the room where the group meets. You can also use it as a handout:

The Feeling Statement

I feel _____

when you _____

(because I _____).

I would like _____.

"One of the reasons men choose to behave violently is because they don't have the skills to talk about their feelings. Instead of talking about your feelings, you act to change the circumstances that stimulated them, or else you act out to make someone else experience your feelings. For example, a man who feels that his partner has hurt him or made him feel powerless may make her suffer in the same way by hurting or controlling her.

"The purpose of expressing feelings is to describe and clarify for yourself, your partner, or others your internal emotional state. In doing this, you'll explain what meanings and "weights" outside influences have for you. Understanding your own feelings and those of other people, and being understood, are basic human needs: this understanding is the fundamental building block of intimacy.

"Still, as men, you'll find yourselves in many ways, and for a variety of reasons, resisting talking about your feelings. Men are taught that feelings are unimportant, dangerous, or irrational. Men believe that angry feelings will frighten their partners, and that softer feelings are women's domain. Men also fear what other people's reactions will be to their feelings, imagining (not necessarily incorrectly) that their feelings may seem burdensome or be perceived as manipulative. The fact is, however, that talking **directly** about your feelings is the *least* burdensome or manipulative way you can manage them. You are offering your partner a gift which may be accepted or not.

"Feelings are not descriptions or judgments about outside events or thoughts about what might be going on. A good test of whether a statement is really a feeling is to see if the T feel' part of what you are saying could be restated as 'I think.' 'I feel that you...' is not a feeling statement. A description of your inner state—your gut reaction—such as T feel afraid when you...'—does qualify. Another good test is to see if the feeling expressed is similar to

any of the words on the Feelings List.

"Now, focus on the Feeling Statement diagram. I would like to try to help group members practice expressing some feelings. Like the time-out, the feeling statement is a powerful tool, and should be used exactly as diagrammed. When using the feeling statement, say, 'I feel,' and fill in the blank with a feeling such as one of those on the Feelings List. Next, say 'When you,' and describe as specifically as possible the behavior you're responding to. This means not using words like always or never, since you're responding to one specific thing. This also means that you're not characterizing your partner in general, but sticking to the particular behavior. If it seems to be helpful, you can add 'because T (this is in parentheses because it's optional): fill in the blank by describing your interpretation of what you're feeling, what it is about you that makes this behavior have its particular effect. Finally, say, 'I would like,' and fill in the blank with a specific desire, bearing in mind that this is about communicating a wish, not about getting the listener to fulfill it.

"Watch out for some of these stumbling blocks:

- Saying 'I feel that you...,' which characterizes the other person's behavior rather than describing your own internal state.

- Justifying. Feelings need no justification: they are just your feelings. Giving too much power to your partner's behavior

is one way of justifying your feelings rather than just expressing them.

- Overly long or complicated statements about your feelings provide another avenue for escaping them. This goes hand in hand with justifying.

- Blaming. No matter what another person has said or done, you are responsible for your own feelings. This is a key concept in learning how to manage what you feel.

- Expecting your partner to do something in response to your feeling is again giving too much control to your partner and directing attention away from your experience of the feeling itself.

"Would anyone be willing to try to think of a feeling statement they could have used in the past instead of controlling or hurting someone?"

H. Skill: Goal Setting

Goals are necessary for members to determine their progress and success; setting goals is the first step toward reaching them.

"Tonight, we're going to work on setting goals. This will give you a means of measuring your progress and success in the group. This exercise will also have the benefit of giving you a chance to help and be helped by another man, confronting the false assumption that men have to do

everything by themselves without outside help."

In setting goals, it's important to ask the following questions:

(Use these questions as a handout.)

- How will you be able to tell that you've accomplished what you set out to do here?
- What will your life be like when you have accomplished your goal? How will you be able to describe yourself?
- What will you gain by making the change you've chosen?
- What will you lose?
- How will you feel?

"What makes a good goal? Some characteristics of a good goal are that it

Contains a statement about *yourself,* not anyone else.

Contains a statement about *behavior,* not about emotions or circumstances you'll be in—not "I won't be so angry," but rather, "I'll take three practice time-outs per week."

Is specific in describing what your behavior will be. Use numbers and specific responses to specific situations—*not* "I'll pitch in more around the

house," but rather, "I'll cook dinner if I get home first, and will always do the dishes on the days my partner cooks."

- Is a statement of what you will do, not what you will try to do; it shouldn't depend on others—*not* "I will try to get along better with my partner," but rather, "I will use feeling statements at least three times a day when I'm tempted to be verbally abusive."

"I'd like to call your special attention to the questions, "What will you lose?" and "How will you feel?" You may tend toward saying that you have everything to gain, nothing to lose, and that you'll feel great. If it was really that simple, wouldn't you have already made this change? The fact is that by giving up controlling behavior, you are giving up power and control over areas of your lives in which you are heavily invested. If a man makes a commitment to stop using financial coercion to manipulate his wife's treatment of their child, he is giving up his level of control over something very important. This is *not* to say that you shouldn't make this commitment; but if the commitment is to succeed, you must make the pledge consciously, without denial about any negative aspects of the outcome. Making changes like this doesn't necessarily feel good. In fact, it can feel unaccustomed, weird, uncomfortable, unnatural, and frightening. It's a bit like writing with the opposite hand from the one you usually write with."

I. Concept: Responsibility

"Men taking responsibility for violent or abusive behavior is the key to change. Violent behavior is a choice, and men must acknowledge it as such in order to make a different choice.

"Who has some examples of things you say when you're avoiding responsibility? How about things you say when you're taking full responsibility for yourself? I'll write these down and we can talk about them after we've come up with a list."

If clients have difficulties coming up with examples, suggest the following:

Taking Responsibility	**Avoiding Responsibility**
I have been violent.	She/he provoked me.
I control my own actions.	My hand just flew out at her/him.
I'll tell you exactly what I did.	If she/he wouldn't..., then I wouldn't be violent.
I choose not to be violent again.	I'll try not to be violent.
I accept the consequences of my actions.	
I need a time-out.	

After the exercise, continue. "Some common ways in which men avoid responsibility are by minimizing what they did, denying it altogether, forgetting or simply omitting parts of it, justifying themselves, abstracting or

intellectualizing their actions, and blaming someone else for their behavior. It's important to understand these defenses: you can help each other by confronting instances when some of you avoid responsibility. Let's come up with some examples of when you have used these defenses in the past."

J. Concept: Gender Roles and Male Socialization

"What we're trying to do here is unlearn male violence. As part of this process, it's important to look at the ways in which we become oppressed by our own rigid adherence to narrowly defined gender roles, where these roles come from, and how they relate to domestic violence.

"What does it mean to be human? What positive qualities do we start with prior to being molded by society? Let's brainstorm about this. If you're having a hard time thinking about it, think of the kind of person you would like to be involved with as a friend or partner." (List the group's results of brainstorming.)

"You've come up with some good examples of desirable human characteristics: intelligent, strong, caring, trusting, cooperative, trustworthy, attractive, loving, sensitive, generous, responsible, and honest. What qualities come to mind when you think of what it takes to be a man? I'll write down this second list." (Write down adjectives suggested by the group.)

"You've come up with some telling examples: strong, brave, macho, fearless, stubborn, isolated, competitive, violent, hard-ass, and 'has to be right.' What do you notice about these two lists?" (If necessary, continue.) "Some of the things I've noticed are that

1. The terms you used to describe men are quite different from the terms you used to describe the people you would like to be involved with. What does that mean for your partner in terms of being involved with you? How desirable is it to be involved with a 'he-man'?

2. Some of the characteristics of 'he-men,' by virtue of the language we use, cut men off from talking about their vulnerable feelings—and cut them off from comfort as well. Having to appear fearless, for example, means that you can't acknowledge your fear and can't ask for help. Needing to be right all the time means that you can't ever back down from a position, even when you can see how wrong you are.

3. Many positive qualities are left off from list 2, which means that, somehow, male socialization cuts us off from these positive human qualities. This affects the quality of our lives and relationships profoundly, and hurts the people we love. Which kind of father would you want—one from list 1 or list 2?

(Continue the discussion.) "How does this happen? How and why do we allow ourselves to be constricted in this way? As a man, what is the result of

being seen by other men as having some of the 'softer,' positive human characteristics such as being gentle, emotional, caring, loving? What happened when you were a boy when someone stepped outside the male sex-role stereotype?

"As children, you probably saw other boys beaten up, cast out, and labeled as queer, sissy, or girlish when they exhibited those softer characteristics. Perhaps that happened to you. Can you remember the first time when you wanted comfort from someone, and received the message that this was an inappropriate thing for boys to want? How many times did an adult say to you, 'Be a big boy now—boys don't cry'?

"How can men claim a broader, more flexible gender role and keep their positive male characteristics? How can we allow ourselves to experience a greater range of feelings? Is it worth it? We need to grapple with this, because it's in this spirit that we are able to develop closer relationships: by learning to take care of our human needs, and no longer hurting the people we love."

K. Skill: Empathic Listening

"Empathic listening is a way of hearing what another person is trying to tell you. The way it works is that you put aside your own agenda and focus entirely on helping yourself and the speaker clarify the specific facts and feelings that he or she is trying to communicate. To check your

understanding, you ask questions and paraphrase what the speaker has said.

"Questioning as part of empathic listening requires that you not try to build an argument against what the speaker is saying, that you're not strategizing about your own agenda or trying to manipulate in any way: the goal is simply to try to enhance your understanding. Paraphrasing means saying back in your own words the information you're getting from the speaker.

"Empathic listening is a good way to neutralize an escalating conflict. If your partner knows that you're really attempting to listen to her, there's no need to shout, talk faster, or talk in hurtful terms. This allows you to be more flexible, and fosters a safe environment in which neither of you has to compete to be heard and understood.

"Some behaviors that get in the way of active listening are

- *Judging*—'You've got a lot of nerve saying that!'
- *Analyzing*—'The reason you're depressed is that you just have too much time on your hands!'
- *Debating*—'What you really mean is...'
- *Advising*—'The best thing for you would be to put the kids in daycare.'

L. Concept: The Abusive Behavior Package

"Abusive, violent, and controlling behaviors are all part of a package. The same underlying beliefs that give you permission to give your partner the silent treatment, withhold child support, or take away the car keys are what ultimately make you believe you can, need to, or have permission to hit her, or worse. These behaviors all reflect your relationship to issues of control. You can't give up one of these behaviors in the long term without making a commitment to giving up all of them."

M. Concept: Victim and Victimizer

"Some important things to highlight from this discussion are that men who have been violent have eroded their partner's trust, which will be in a slow process of repair long after the violence has stopped. Long after a person has experienced an incident of violence, she will remember it, and is likely to have trouble trusting the person who victimized her. You should be aware of this in terms of your partner, who has been victimized by you.

"We've also talked about male defenses against pain. As boys, you learned how to numb or deny your pain. As an adult, this can leave you desensitized to the pain you inflict on others. As men, you're not supposed to experience yourselves as victims: you've learned to master your pain by identifying with the abuser—becoming the one who abuses.

"You also need to look at the effect on your children. By becoming aware of how you have been hurt and are hurting, and of the patterns of violence you learned as children, you can stop these violent behaviors from being passed down to your children."

N. Concept: Family of Origin

"We are going to look at your relationships with our parents from the standpoint of how they affected your current understanding of violence, power, and control. If you look at the board, you see what I have written."

My name is _____

My son's name is _____

Things I like are _____

Things I don't like are _____

Something I believe strongly in is _____

What I think and feel about my son is _____

What I think he thinks and feels about me is _____

What I want him to know about being a man is _____

What I want him to know about women is _____

I discipline him when _____

The way I discipline him is _____

What I've wanted to say, but have never said to him, is _____

"What we're going to do in this session is have each member, in turn, speak in his father's voice, introducing himself by his father's name (or that of your nearest male relative or father-equivalent), filling in the blanks as your father would have when you were between the ages of 12 and 17."

"When all the members of the group have done the exercise, we will run through it again, this time speaking as your mothers might have done."

O. Concept: Dependency and Isolation

"Who did you turn to when you needed emotional support as a child? Who soothed you when you had a skinned knee? Most likely, a lot of you will identify your mother as this person, or will describe a special relationship with another female relative. Whom do you turn to now for emotional support? Many of you have few if any other people to turn to besides your partner. If you can name other friends, what kinds of things can you talk with them about? Can you, for example, talk about your violence problem? Can you

talk about deep insecurities? In most cases, the answer will be 'No.'

"Let's look at how dependent this makes you, and at the problem it poses. A basic human need, whether acknowledged or not, is the need to be heard and understood with respect to your feelings. For many of you, your partner is the only person with whom you have developed a relationship in which your feelings are acknowledged. When your partner, for whatever reason, isn't able to take care of that need, you feel disappointed and frightened; and, perhaps unconsciously, you mobilize some controlling or manipulative behavior in reaction. Your partner may respond by gratifying you; but at least some of the time, she doesn't or can't or won't. Your partner may, in fact, be overwhelmed by your needs or repelled by your controlling or manipulative behavior.

"As this happens, your fears increase, and you escalate your attempts to control. You become jealous if your partner turns her attention to anyone else; you may express that directly, or may continue to escalate your controlling behavior.

"The bottom line is that these needs are just too much for one person to satisfy. It is too much to expect from your partner; but where does this leave you?

"Let's talk about this further. How can you become less isolated? How

can you spread this dependency around? Whom else can you build relationships with? It's easy to respond by saying that you could form more open relationships with other men—even men in this group, but it's also important to challenge yourself to consider what kinds of thoughts would get in the way of such relationships. What prevents men from being close to one another?"

P. Concept: The Package—Homophobia, Racism, and Sexism

"In this exercise, we are going to work on building some appreciation of how homophobia, racism, and sexism are inseparable and oppress us all. This is a huge topic, and could lend itself to a well-spent, long term of study; we're just going to get a small start.

"In the exercise on male socialization, you learned that the ways in which we rigidly cling to and enforce oppressive gender roles ultimately oppresses all of us. Now we're going to look at oppression more broadly by understanding how homophobia, racism, and sexism are part of one package, inseparable because of their common roots in fear.

"People fear being 'less than' or being victimized. To prove that they are 'better than,' and immune to victimization, they oppress gay people, women, poor people, and people of other races. Some of you may claim not to be homophobic, racist, classist, or sexist; but all of us are stopped by some of

these issues from establishing close relationships or trusting other people. The impulse is to protect yourself from identifying with these groups and, hence, subjecting yourself to the oppression that goes with being gay, nonwhite, poor, or female. Denying your prejudices prevents you from looking at them and working to free yourself from them; and also prevents other people from trusting you. Acknowledging your fears, and listening to gay people's experiences of homophobia, women's experiences of sexism, and other people's experiences of racism, is a way to learn and change.

Homophobia

"Homophobia is the fear of homosexuality, and also reflects a fear of being gay or being perceived as gay. Each of us, even the most stereotypically masculine male (maybe especially the most stereotypically masculine), has feared the consequences of acting outside the prescribed male gender role. Because of this fear, and because we have few accepted outlets for the display of love and affection between heterosexual men in our culture, people oppress gay men (and gay women, too). Sometimes the oppression takes the relatively subtle form of creating stereotypes in your mind about what gay people are like, so that you can easily differentiate yourself from someone who is gay. This can take the form of such unconscious thought as, 'Since I don't lisp and like opera, I'm not subject to the kind of treatment gay men get.' Sometimes the oppression is less subtle, and includes such things as

employment and housing discrimination, harassment, and physical abuse. And this oppression doesn't affect just gays: it stops us all from having close relationships with members of the same sex, because we fear being gay or being perceived as gay. It locks us in the male gender role through fear that non-macho behavior will leave any man subject to oppression. By isolating you and increasing your dependency on your partner, it also makes you more prone to violence.

"Think of a time when you were with a best buddy or a loved male family member and felt affectionate toward him. How did you express your affection? How did he respond? What stopped you both from being more expressive? What stopped you at that point is homophobia. It is important that we look at this and how it affects our lives and relationships."

Racism

"Racism is another way in which people attempt to feel different and better than other people and to protect themselves from the oppression those people experience.

"Systematic mistreatment of people of color generates misinformation and ignorance that ultimately sanction racist attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions. These, in turn, become the justification for further mistreatment. It is a vicious cycle.

"There is much to be learned when people are willing, and feel safe enough, to share some of their experiences of racism and its effects. There are some ground rules that help people feel safer about this: for instance, when someone says your behavior is racist, listen—don't argue with them. What other ideas do you have about how to foster communication about racism and prejudice?"

Sexism

"When you believe that your sex is superior to the other one, you are being sexist. The term sexism also refers to the oppression that follows such beliefs.

"At this point, I want to take a minute to acknowledge that this is hard work talking about and looking at issues of sexism, homophobia, and racism. Let's consider how sexism is similar to racism and homophobia, as well as the ways in which it is different.

"In its roots, sexism is conceptually very similar to racism and homophobia, but the stereotypes that accompany sexism may be different. There is also less perspective on this topic in a domestic violence group, since there are no women here. Sexism is also the oldest prejudice, as it has been around since the days of Adam and Eve [or, if you prefer: "since the first men and women roamed the earth."].

"What are some stereotypes you know about that are applied to women? What 'rules of sexism' are used to oppress women? Some examples might include the following:

- All women want to get married and have children; women who don't want children are unnatural.
- A woman should put her husband's and children's needs before her own.
- Women should doubt their own thinking when a man asserts what he believes to be true.
- Feminine women do not act powerful.
- Women do nothing of lasting value: their work disappears.
- Women are weak, confused, and hysterical.
- All women secretly want to be overpowered by a man.

"How have stereotypes affected your attitudes about important women in your life? How have stereotypes affected your behavior toward women?"

Closing Thoughts

"You don't have to be straight to be homophobic—some gays also use stereotypes of out-of-gender role behavior to feel different from 'butch dykes'

or 'queers' to make themselves immune to anti-gay violence or discrimination. You don't have to be white to be racist, middle or upper class to be classist, or male to be sexist.

"Also, things don't divide up so evenly along racial or sexual lines of orientation. Many of us are racially mixed, and many more of us than we might realize fall somewhere other than completely heterosexual on the Kinsey scale. Some of us now live in a different class than the one into which we were born. This causes conflicts about racism, sexism, class identity, and homophobia within each of us, as well as in society."

Q. Concept: Sex

"What attitudes prevail about women and sex? Women may be forced into a rigid role in which they are treated as a 'whore' or a frigid madonna or snow queen. Some women feel pressured to pretend that they don't crave sex or, in order to gratify their partner, that they're enjoying it when they're not. Many women fear that they will be thought unfeminine or overly aggressive if they take the initiative in sexual encounters or communicate their sexual preferences to their partner. Yet these same women may feel that it is their duty to supply sex on demand for their partner, and fear the criticism or withdrawal of affection that may accompany a refusal. Do you think that these conditions get in the way of women enjoying sex? Given the effect on them,

how does it affect your enjoyment of sex?

"What are the conditions that apply for men during sex? Where did you learn the 'rules' about what is and isn't acceptable sexual practice? Why do we continue to enforce and live by these rules? Can you imagine sex being improved by not adhering to them? What is it like to live with the requirements of always being strong, always ready for sex, always taking the initiative, and having permission to always get what you want?"

Main Interventions

Domestic violence offender program counseling does not lend itself to a weekly formula, since self-reporting and the group's response of supportive confrontation is such an important aspect of the treatment. The group facilitators continuously strive to strike a balance between making space for productive group process and problem solving about reported incidents and presenting the needed didactic and structured experiences.

Certain exercises do take precedence, and some naturally follow from others. For example, the time-out exercise comes at the beginning of the program, and is naturally followed by "Recognition of Warning Signs," which answers the question, "When do I take a time-out?" Some lectures or exercises, however, are best presented when they correspond to an identifiable theme in the presentation of one or more group members. The

"Cycle of Violence," for example, is most useful when one or more members are saying that they have nothing to worry about because they are getting along well with their partners.

Self-reporting is part of the session every week. In some weeks, because of the amount of time needed to process the reports of group members, there will be inadequate time to cover even one skill or concept fully. In other weeks, there will be ample time to cover two concepts or skills, in addition to leaving some time for open process.

Different exercises, discussions, and lectures have a different emotional impact on the group; this needs to be taken into consideration as well. In the beginning sessions, when clients are reporting the incidents that brought them into the group and are being held responsible, the mood can be serious and depressed. After a few weeks, when the group is becoming more united and the men are enjoying the group and each other, a discussion such as "Types of Abuse" can bring back a more serious mood again. In each group, it is ideal to have time to process the feelings brought up by the exercises; but this is not always possible, since the priority is always to teach the skills that will stop violent behavior.

Because each session will vary depending on the business at hand, the week-by-week schedule below is only an example: many variations of this

schedule are possible within a 24-week format.

Week 1

Check-in

See Starting the Group.

Skill: Self-Reporting

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Members are prompted to be very specific in their descriptions of their own behavior. Use very concrete questions, such as, "You say that you hit her. What were you feeling just before you did that? Which hand did you hit your partner with? Was it open or closed? What did your partner's face look like? Where were the children? What were you doing with your other hand? Were you wearing that ring? How are you feeling right now?" Attempts to deflect or talk about the partner's behavior are confronted: "It's hard for you to focus on your behavior; but your partner isn't here, and we are interested in talking about is you, how you felt and feel, and what you might do differently in the future."

The group's reactions are important. One common defense mechanism among group members is to cultivate safety by creating distance from the experience of other group members. That is, while some members may say that they relate to another member's story, others may want to focus on differences, especially ways in which the other member is "worse." This is important to interpret.

Example

Facilitator: Who will begin by telling us about the incident that brought you here?

Joe: Sure, I'll go.

Facilitator: Thanks Joe. What I'd like you to do is tell me as specifically as possible about the incident, focusing on what you were feeling and doing before the incident, what you actually did, what you felt during the incident, how and why you stopped, how you felt afterward, and what the consequences were. We'll be helping you to stay focused.

Joe: Okay, right. Well, first, you've got to understand about my wife. See, she's always hurting herself and...

Facilitator: (*interrupting*) Okay, Joe. Here's one way I'll need to help you focus:

> We're not going to be talking or understanding about your wife. This is about you, your feelings, and your behavior. If you'd like to tell us about what you were feeling before the incident, we'd like to hear that.

Joe: Hmmm. Okay, well, I just don't want to seem like such a bad guy... So anyway, we were arguing about something, she was all in my face and I told her to leave—I just said, "Get out of here." So she just kept on and I could feel myself getting pissed.

Facilitator: How did you know you were getting pissed?

Joe: I can always feel the tension in my face.

Facilitator: Good, that's an important warning sign for you. So you could feel yourself getting pissed, then what happened?

Joe: Well, my hand just flew out and hit her. I don't know what happened, but I didn't hit her very hard, and the next thing I knew, she's flying across the room, slamming into the wall. I think she has hollow bones or something. [There's laughter from the group.]

Facilitator: Joe, I'm going to have to help you some more here. First of all, your hand didn't just fly out and hit her. Who's in control of your hands?

Joe: Well, I am of course, but...

Facilitator: (*again interrupting)* Good. I'll invite you to stop there, and take responsibility for what happened. What happened is that you hit her, and you need to say that and acknowledge your responsibility for it.

Joe: Well, I...

Facilitator: Joe, did you hit her or not?

Joe: Yes, I hit her.

Facilitator: Good. You just took partial responsibility, and that's an important step. Now, I want to help you go the rest of the way. You hit her, and you blame her for flying against the wall. Do you really think she has hollow bones?

Joe: No, I know she doesn't.

Facilitator: I know that you know. Why did she fly across the room and hit the wall?

Joe: Because I hit her that hard.

Facilitator: Good. Thanks Joe. Then what happened?

Joe: Nothing much. The little idiot called the police, they came and arrested me, cost me $300 plus what this program costs.

Facilitator: Again, Joe, I'm going to apply the rules here. We're not going to be trashing our partners here. You may be mad at her for calling the police, but we're not going to collude with you abusing her in here by referring to her as the "little idiot." And I'd add that she didn't cost you $300—that's just a way of deflecting. You cost yourself $300, plus a lot more. Whatever she is, whatever she does, you're responsible for your behavior, and for the consequences. We're going to tell the truth about that in here.

The discussion continues in this admittedly painstaking way until Joe has reached the end of his report. The facilitator then asks Joe what it was like for him to tell the story, and how he is feeling now. Then group members can give Joe feedback about how it was for them to hear it, sticking as closely as possible to their emotional experience.

Note: Due to the critical group-formative nature of this initial exercise, only men who are present at this first group should be allowed to attend the rest of the groups in the cycle. Men who miss the first week should be asked to enroll in a future cycle.

If there's time, add the material below.

B. Skill: Time-out

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

When the time-out is presented, men invariably have reasons why it would not work for them, or why they wouldn't want to do it. These reasons that surface are the very entrenched ideas these men have about their rights and needs for power and control.

The facilitator should ask the men to practice saying the words to the time-out during the session, and afterward should ask them to specify when they should have taken the time-out. By trouble-shooting in advance, it is possible to iron out any problems that might come up when taking a real time-out.

The times when men initially say that they would take a time-out are typically too late. Tell them that the key operative in the time-out phrase, "I'm beginning to feel angry," is "beginning." Especially at the beginning of a domestic violence offenders' program, clients need to play it very safe, taking time-outs when the danger level is low. The time to take a time-out is not the second before a man hits his partner, but when he first notices his muscles tightening or his voice rising.

Explore with the group whether members believe that the time-out could work for them. It's common for men to react as if they're being asked to back down from a fight. Taking a time-out may feel like backing down. Men's

presented reactions can vary from "I wouldn't go out in the rain" to "It's my house, she should leave" to "But what if she says something that really gets my goat as I'm going out the door?" What is underlying all such reactions is the fact that the time-out forces men to let go of the power struggle, at least temporarily letting the partner win. It's important in your discussion to raise this phenomenon to a conscious level and get members' commitments to practicing the time-out anyway.

The time-out is reviewed in some form nearly every week, either as part of a didactic presentation or during the discussion of self-reported incidents.

Check-out

See Group Process section.

Week 2

Check-in

Review Time-out

Intervention 2: Discussion

Explore how and whether group members successfully used the time-out or practiced it with their partners

Check-out

Week 3

Check-in

C. Skill: Recognition of Warning Signs

Intervention 3: Guided Visualization (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Group members report on what they noticed, and their warning signs are written on the board or flip chart in categories. Use the examples below if group members are having trouble getting started:

Sensory

Tension in arms, shoulders, chest

Heat sensations or chills

Seeing red

Ringing in ears

Faster heartbeat and breathing

Shallow breathing

Thoughts

Specific words ("You bitch," "shit")

"This is not fair."

"Somebody's gotta do something."

"I'll fix you."

Actions

Pacing

Stalking

Being in partner's personal space

Shouting

Being very quiet

Individuals in the group will relate to the warning signs of the other

men. As a group, they will come up with many more than if they had done this exercise individually. When the exercise is completed and all the warning signs are noted, the men should be encouraged to write down those that are most important to them and to keep these for reference.

It's important to take time to process the feelings brought up by this exercise, as it takes men back to their original incident, stimulating fear, shame, and guilt. By this time in their therapy, the men have had time to rally their defenses, distancing themselves from the incident, telling themselves that they are getting help and that things are better now. This exercise—appropriately—debunks that notion.

Occasionally, a man may report a lapse in memory or consciousness during an incident of abuse. For example, at one moment he was arguing at the top of the stairs, and the next thing he knew, his partner was on the floor on the landing below with a broken arm: the man doesn't remember what happened in between.

Such cases are sometimes difficult to assess. It's possible that the man indeed experienced dissociation or has a multiple personality. This is the case more often than many clinicians realize, since many offenders were victims of serious abuse as children. The lapse may also be a function of the man's denial—or may be an outright lie.

In any case, identifying the warning signs that precede a "blackout" will be helpful to someone who has experienced such incidents in order to avert them in the future.

Review Time-out

Intervention 2: Discussion

Review the concept of a time-out. Explore what, if anything, is getting in the way of practicing time-outs.

Check-out

Week 4

Check-in

D. Concept: Cycle of Violence

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Have members identify their particular behaviors that correspond to the different points of the cycle.

Check-out

Week 5

Check-in E. Concept: Emotional Funnel

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Check-out

Week 6

Check-in

F. Skill: Three-Breath Technique

This technique is best taught when a man in the group has been asked how he feels or how he felt when something happened, and is unable to identify his feelings. The facilitator then describes the three-breath technique and asks the man to try it.

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 3: Guided Visualization

Intervention 2: Discussion

G. Skill: Feeling Statement

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

The facilitator should encourage the expression of feelings in the group. For many men, the difficulty isn't merely one of learning to give expression to feelings, but goes much deeper, involving a lack of training in even recognizing a feeling when it comes up. Before men can express their feelings, they must learn to acknowledge and experience them. Explore these difficulties with the group.

Check-out

Week 7

Check-in

H. Skill: Goal Setting

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

The group is divided into dyads, and one copy of the handout is passed out to each member (see Concepts and Skills section). Each dyad establishes and writes two goals (on the form) for each member. While the group is working, the facilitators should check in with each dyad, giving assistance when needed.

When the dyads are finished, each man reads at least one of his goals aloud to the group (some members may want to set some private goals). This provides group members with some alternative suggestions for goals, and establishes a basis for supporting each other by checking in about their progress.

Review Time-out

Intervention 2: Discussion

Explore what, if anything, is getting in the way of using time-outs and taking practice time-outs.

Check-out

Week 8

Check-in

I. Concept: Responsibility

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

The presentation and discussion of this concept works best when it is raised in the context of a man's avoiding responsibility as he reports an incident. The more group members can participate in this iIntervention, the better. Part of what you hope to accomplish if you're doing your best work is to teach men to organize a social system—for which the group serves as a laboratory—to confront abuse in a way that supportively holds men accountable for their behavior. That is, men in the group are at once creating a tool—the group culture or environment—and a result. This means that they both assume greater ownership in the concept and learn how to create relationships, institutions, and a society in which abuse is no longer the norm.

This concept can be referred to throughout the course of the group by the facilitator—or preferably by group members—any time a man is avoiding responsibility.

Check-out

Week 9

Check-in

Review Feeling Statement

Intervention 2: Discussion

Ask group members to discuss their understanding of the use of the feeling statement.

Intervention 4: Role-Play

Use a group member's reported incident to practice using feeling statements.

Intervention 5: Moderated Group Process

Use moderated group process to practice using the feeling statement with current feelings in the group.

J. Concept: Gender Roles and Male Socialization

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Men like answering the questions about what men are supposed to be

like. The object of this exercise is not to demean men—so it is fine if there are some positive qualities on this list, too.

In an articulate, verbal group, after making the list of positive human qualities, the facilitator can simply ask what the men notice about these two lists. If, in the facilitator's judgment, the men wouldn't be able to respond, or if the group doesn't come up with a complete list, the facilitator can continue with the didactic material.

Check-out

Week 10

Check-in

Review Goal Setting

Intervention 2: Discussion

Review by having group members check in with each other about their progress in working toward their chosen goals. This can be done by the group as a whole, or in dyads.

Review Time-out

Intervention 2: Discussion

Again, it is important to check in about actual time-outs and practice ones, identifying and confronting resistance and problems.

Check-out

Week 11

Check-in K. Skill: Empathic Listening

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Have a group member describe how empathic listening might have worked for him during an incident.

Intervention 4: Role-Play

Next, set up a role-play in which two group members have a disagreement. One is the speaker, and the other is the listener. The speaker begins by making a provocative statement about the disagreement, and the listener, coached by the facilitator, only uses active listening skills. This is a good skill to present when there is a real disagreement in the group.

L. Concept: The Abusive Behavior Package

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

The purpose of this exercise is to expand the definition of abuse to include all behavior that has the effect of controlling or hurting someone else; or behavior that has this intention.

Start the discussion by asking that clients report on the kinds of abuse that they have perpetrated or by which they've been victimized. Then write the following column headings on the board or flip chart: Physical, Emotional, Verbal, and Financial. As the men mention instances of abuse, the facilitator writes them under the appropriate column (some instances may fit under more than one category).

The important thing is to get as large a list as possible. Discuss the men's feelings about contemplating so many types of abusive behavior.

Check-out

Week 12

Check-in

M. Concept: Victim and Victimizer

Intervention 2: Discussion

The facilitator divides the group into dyads, and instructs them to take turns discussing a time or incident in which each man was a victim of violence. The speaker is to stick to this topic, describing exactly what happened and what it was like; and the listener is to participate only by asking questions that will clarify what happened and what the speaker's emotional experience was.

This discussion should be given about five to ten minutes. The facilitators should move between dyads, helping and coaching as needed. After the allotted time is up, the roles within dyads should switch. When all the men have had a chance to do this exercise, they should be given another topic to discuss: they can tell about an incident from the same period when they themselves were violent.

After group members have had a chance to discuss this topic, the group should be reconstituted as a whole. A more open conversation should be initiated around what the exercise was like emotionally, what the men learned about their violence and its roots, and what the consequences of violence are.

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Check-out

Week 13

Check-in

N. Concept: Family of Origin

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Note: This may require more than one week. Group members gain more insight into the roots of their violence and the origins of their assumptions about power and control. This exercise is, of necessity, somewhat superficial—men, particularly if they have never been in therapy before, have a lot to say on this subject. However, the exercise can still be powerful by stimulating the curiosity of group members about how they continue to be affected by their upbringing. In addition, this can be a healing way to experience anger and forgiveness, concluding with empathy for their parents.

After the final speaker answers the last question, the facilitator asks him to speak in his own voice again, specifically to talk for a minute about what

the exercise was like for him, and what he learned about his current relationship to power, control, and violence.

Check-out

Week 14

Check-in 0. Concept: Dependency and Isolation

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Ask the group to discuss their reactions to the didactic material, and how they could respond to the problem.

Review Time-out

Intervention 2: Discussion

Again, discuss resistance to, and problems with, taking real and practice timeouts.

Check-out

Week 15

Check-in

R Concept: The package—Homophobia, Racism, and Sexism

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 2: Discussion

Discuss each of the three issues below separately, following the relevant didactic presentation.

1. Have the men discuss how homophobia may have gotten in the way of their relationships with other men.

2. Many domestic violence offenders' groups are multiracial. The balance of the group will depend on a number of social factors, including police response to domestic violence in the various cultural communities in your area, what services are available, and whether the court racially discriminates in terms of who gets diversion programs versus jail terms.

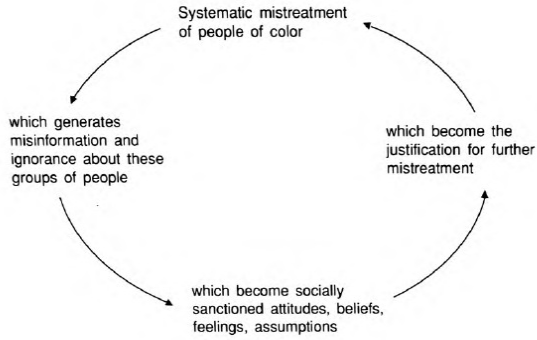
Dealing with racism directly in the group makes it safer for everyone, and is especially important when the group is led by Caucasian facilitators. Racism should always be dealt with—both as part of this exercise and whenever it crops up in the group process.

The facilitator might open the discussion by drawing on the board the diagram on the next page and asking for the men's reactions.

3. Next ask if men feel safe enough to share more of their feelings of anger, fear, or isolation in the group; ask what would make the group safer. There should be consensus about safety before proceeding. It's important that men not be railroaded into saying that they feel safe enough if they really don't.

When agreement is reached, some questions for discussion include:

- How have you been hurt by racism?
- What stereotypes about your race make it hard for you to believe that you can stop acting violently?
- From where and whom did you learn about racism?
- What fears and beliefs did those people have?
- What fears and attitudes have kept you from getting closer to people of your own or other races?
- What have you noticed about your own or other men's racism in this group?



Intervention 4: Role-Play

After the initial didactic presentation on sexism, set up a role-play in groups of three clients: one group member plays the part of a husband confronting his wife about not having dinner ready for him. The other client plays the wife, and must follow the rules described in the didactic section. Another group member plays the woman's conscience, chastising her when she fails to follow the socially imposed rules for female behavior.

After the role-play, the men should discuss what feelings the wife and husband had, and what they sacrificed through rigid adherence to the rules.

At this point, the facilitator should ask the group how men and women learn these rules, and why they keep following and enforcing them. “What attitudes do we have and what behaviors do we practice that reinforce

sexism?"

Check-out

Week 16

Check-in

Review Goal Setting

Intervention 2: Discussion

Have group members check in with each other about their progress in working toward their chosen goals. This can be done by the group as a whole or in dyads.

Review Feeling Statement

Intervention 2: Discussion

Have a group member or group members review the concept of the feeling statement, including how and why to use it.

Intervention 5: Moderated Group Process

Process feelings in the room by coaching members in using the feeling

statement.

Check-out

Week 17

Check-in Review Time-out

Intervention 2: Discussion

Any remaining blocks to taking the time-out should be discussed at this point. If members are still having a problem with this, they should be confronted directly.

Review Feeling Statement

Intervention 2: Discussion

Review the feeling statement, and discuss incidents where it could have been, or was, used.

Check-out

Week 18

Check-in Q. Concept: Sex

Intervention 1: Didactic Presentation (See Concepts and Skills section)

Intervention 3: Role-Play

Select a group of four clients: one client plays the man, a second plays his partner, and the third and fourth, respectively, speak for traditional male and female expectations about acceptable sexual practice. Interrupting to keep the dialogue on target, have the female partner express her sexual needs or preferences or take the initiative prior to a sexual encounter. The clients representing expectations should react to what she's said. Then the male partner responds, in effect taking sides either with the woman or with traditional expectations. This exercise allows clients to recognize that they have a choice when it comes to their attitudes about acceptable sexual practice; that there is a whole range of possible responses. When the argument is talked out, have the male and female partners switch roles. Repeat with another group of four if time allows.

Check-out

Week 19

Check-in Review Empathic Listening

Intervention 2: Discussion

Review the skill of empathic listening by having a group member explain how it works, and how he has used it. Instruct other group members to give him feedback.

Intervention 5: Moderated Group Process

Coach group members in using empathic listening as a way of hearing each other's expressions of their feelings.

Check-out

Week 20

Check-in Review

Write all concepts and skills headings on the board. Group members have the opportunity to ask for clarification of any items.

Check-out

Week 21

Check-in Review

Self- and peer review: group members review how they have changed

individually, and how the group has changed over the past 20 weeks. This is an opportunity to discuss any feelings about these changes. The facilitators should keep the discussion focused on feelings and specific behavior changes on the part of the men. For example, it's fine to talk about the disappointment associated with the fact that their

partners may not have changed, but it's unproductive to spend a lot of time talking in detail about what things about the partner or the relationship have not changed.

Example

Jose: Well, for me, this group has been just great. I've learned some great new tools to be intimate, but I can't use them all because Bill just isn't that interested in talking. Yesterday, I fired off a couple of good feeling statements and he just looked up from the carburetor he was cleaning and said, "So? What kind of a reply do you want from me?" I think he should come to this group now?

Facilitator: Sounds like you're disappointed about the limitations of this work.

Jose: No, I think it's been great, but he has to change now.

Maurice: Sorry, but we've observed that our partners don't have to change.

Jose: I know, I know. Yeah, I guess I am disappointed.

Facilitator: Sounds like you've been doing some good work yourself in your relationship, though. Would you like to say any more about your disappointment?

Jose: Well, I would, but I don't know what to say. I guess I'm disappointed because

when we were up against my limitations in the relationship, I came here. Now we're up against his, and we're stuck.

Facilitator: You're stuck?

Jose: Yeah. Like we can't go any further.

Max: I know what he's talking about. It's like we got a taste in here of what closeness can be like, and now we have to go back to our partners every night where there isn't the same level of closeness as in here. It's sad.

Facilitator: This is a big change we're noticing about you, Max. You're sad instead of angry.

Max: Great. Thanks a lot.

Facilitator: It doesn't seem like such a great trade-off to you?

Max: As a matter of fact, no.

Facilitator: Sounds like you're mad at me... Can you say more?

Max: No, I'm not mad at you. It's just... I don't know, [pause]

Maurice: Maybe I can help. This is scary, too. Maybe I have to leave my partner to get the kind of closeness I want.

Jose: Yes! That's right. It's scary alright. Here is this person who I've idolized and abused in the same week, who has put up with me for five years, and now I'm wondering if I still want to be with him.

Facilitator: Max, is that what was up for you, too?

Max: Yeah. I think so.

Facilitator: So, although we see some changes we feel proud of and happy about,

there is a sad, scary side to those changes, too. How about some things that we haven't changed that we still need to?

Check-out

Week 22

Check-in

Review Goal Setting

Intervention 2: Discussion

Revisit goals by having group members check in with each other about their progress in working toward their chosen goals; have them set and commit to new goals to achieve after they leave the group. Staying free of violence is a life-long process, and clients will have to continue practicing some iInterventions for the rest of their lives. Explore their feelings about this. Some men might be encouraged to make reenrollment a goal; others might be ready for individual therapy or some other type of group therapy. Some may prefer to commit to doing practice timeouts. Unlike the earlier goal-setting exercise, this one is more effective if done by the group as a whole.

Check-out

Week 23

Check-in Review Empathic Listening Review Feeling Statement

Intervention 5: Moderated Open Process

Reinforce skills and process termination by focusing communication using these two techniques. Discuss clients' feelings about leaving the group and each other.

Check-out

Week 24

Check-in

Review Empathic Listening

Review Feeling Statement

Intervention 5: Moderated Open Process

In this session, the facilitator adds that before the end of the group, clients must offer each other individual expressions of appreciation, preferably something a client will miss about that individual.

Check-out Criteria for Measuring Change

Unfortunately, no one can predict with absolute certainty whether or not a batterer will re-offend. What is most important is that clients and partners understand clearly that a "cure" for battering is not available. With this in mind, let us look at some ways in which facilitators can assess the likelihood of change for individuals in the group.

One way that change can be assessed is through the use of measurable criteria for program completion. Basic criteria should include a demonstrated knowledge of the skills and concepts taught in the group, group participation, and a cessation of the violent behavior. In assessing the men for these criteria, it's generally true that the more concrete and quantifiable the means of assessment, the more accurate will be the results. For example, if you want to verify a man's willingness to practice time-outs, you would be better served by having him phone in two practice timeouts per week to a phone machine in your office, rather than relying on his self-report of weekly practice.

Another helpful tool for assessing change is the "partner contract." The facilitator can get a very clear picture of a man's progress in stopping his abusive behavior by talking to the partner, after obtaining a signed release of information from the client. Batterers do not exist in a void. The absent

victims deserve support, education, and protection while their partners are in treatment, and their voices need to be heard. An unfortunate reality is that a man may come to group from week to week reporting great success and transformation while continuing his battering behavior behind closed doors. Facilitators need a complete picture of the abuse in order to provide the best treatment possible for their clients.

While re-offenses are disheartening for client and facilitator alike, it is important to keep in mind the larger picture, that, in fact, batterers' groups help reduce the violence visited by men on their partners. Facilitators are increasingly supported in their work by a legal system, which has begun holding men accountable for their violent behavior. The most effective tools to ensure high success rates with clients are a well-constructed program and an open flow of information between all parties involved, including partners and, in the case of court-referred clients, probation officers.

Problems Specific to the Group

Working with this population raises problems for facilitators that should be examined closely before undertaking this work. Motivation is always an issue for batterers. Clients who are in treatment under court-mandate or who are participating as a last resort to save a failing relationship may be in denial about their problem. These clients are generally more

interested in their goal (not going to jail, not losing their wife) than in owning and changing their violent behavior. They can be a drain on a group's energy, as the facilitators continually confront those clients' blaming, denial, and accompanying anger. One way in which these clients can deal with such issues before entering group treatment is through short-term individual counseling. In these sessions, men can be given an opportunity to vent their rage and frustration and to own responsibility for their violence. This counseling can continue until you feel that the client is ready to participate in a group.

Transference and counter-transference present special problems with this client population. Potential group leaders should realize that they will be dealing with high levels of rage that will test their capacity for empathy and caring. Some facilitators will find the things these men have done to be so abhorrent that they don't seem deserving of caring and forgiveness. If a facilitator has unresolved personal issues with abuse and violence, it will probably be difficult for him to work with these men.

These clients are used to controlling and asserting power through force. You, as facilitator, will be challenged to set limits for, and to confront, men who may never have been confronted before. The ability to keep your own feelings in check and not get "hooked" by the client's inevitable attempts to control and manipulate you are essential qualities for doing this work.

Clients may see you as part of the system; and they may feel that you are invading their private space, namely the realm of their family. They may feel that you are challenging their authority to lord over these families as men have for centuries. The fact is, you will be doing these things and, as a result, you may not be seen as the loving, caring professional you know yourself to be. You will need to ask yourself whether you can be comfortable with such clients before entering this exhausting, exacting, and exciting work.

Relapse Prevention

As stated earlier in this chapter, there are no "cures" for abusive behavior. It's important to convey to both client and partner that any decisions made about their future relationship should be made with this fact in mind. However, men who do re-offend should be encouraged to seek treatment; remind men in the final weeks of group therapy that changing violent or abusive behavior is a lifelong commitment that requires continuous work.

Resistance

Male domestic violence offenders are resistant to changing a status quo that gives them power and control over their partners. Paradoxically, they may resist by denying their own behavior while looking down on other men

who exhibit the same objective behaviors. Working with such resistance is the cornerstone of domestic violence work.

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