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Canadian Association of Social Workers

Association canadienne des travailleuses et travailleurs sociaux

Developing Capacity to Respond in Intimate Partner Violence Situations

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Learning objectives

- To recognize and understand the complexity of the issue
- To enhance trauma-informed practice skills for responding to IPV
- To ensure that we as professionals are accountable for the role we play in intervening in situations of IPV

Common Definition of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

"When a person who is currently or previously in an intimate personal relationship uses abusive, threatening, harassing or violent behaviour as a means to psychologically, physically, sexually or financially coerce, dominate and control the other member of the relationship."

Common Definition of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Individuals who were previously or who are currently involved in an intimate/romantic relationship with each other, regardless of whether this relationship was between same-sex or different-sex couples or whether the couple cohabited.

Types of Violence

- Emotional / psychological violence
- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Spiritual violence
- Financial exploitation
- Neglect
- Injury to pets
- Destruction of property
- Criminal harassment (stalking)
- Homicide

Types of Violence

Emotional / psychological Violence

"I always felt like I was walking on egg-shells – always afraid of when the other shoe would fall – afraid of saying, doing, looking the wrong way in fear of upsetting him. It was unbearable".

"The whole relationship was abusive…he just never put his hands on me".

Types of Violence

Physical Violence

"At first, when we had a disagreement, he uses to scream at me to top of his lungs. He would even go as far as shaking me like a doll until I said the same as him. One day he arrived home from work in a bad mood and pushed me out of the way so hard and I fell. He then kicked me hard in the ribs. For a few minutes I could not breathe."

Types of Violence

Sexual Violence

"I belong to my husband. He always said you are married to me now so I own you. Sometimes he would insist for me to do things that I did not really want to do but I had no choice in the matter."

Types of Violence

Spiritual Violence

"When my husband became a 'born again Christian', it didn't make him a better person. He just wanted to have God on his side whenever he needed an excuse to control and abuse me".

Types of Violence

Criminal Harassment

"His affairs, his lack of respect for me and the kids became intolerable, so I left but then he began to stalk me. He would text me every five minutes; he would leave messages at my work constantly; it was hell".

Threats and Attempts to Kill

An abusive partner may instill fear by:

- Threatening to use a weapon on victim
- Threatening to take the children away
- Threatening to harm or kill the victim or the victim's children
- Threatening to harm or kill other family members
- Threatening to put her/him in an institution
- Threatening to tell her/his friends, family and employer devastating lies
- Threatening to commit suicide (most common with teens)
- Threatening to withdraw immigration sponsorship, or have victim deported
- Threatening to harm pets
- Threatening to destroy (or actual damage to) prized possession or personal property

Types of Violence

Threats/Attempts to Kill

"I was 7 months pregnant when he shot my cat in the basement…as I was cleaning the blood on the walls, I knew he was telling me that I was next".

Violence is …..

An abuse of power that is:

- Constant
- Frequent
- Intense

And used:

- To control
- To keep in a position of inferiority
- To impose certain behaviours

Who are the Victims of IPV?

- Studies estimate that 83% of victims of IPV are women and 17% are men

Bressan, A. (2008). Spousal violence in Canada's provinces and territories. In Statistics Canada (Ed.), Family Violence in Canada: A statistical report 2008 (pp. 11). Ottawa: Ministry of Industry.

Who are the Victims of IPV?

Women who reported intimate partner violence were:

- 3 times more likely than men to be sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or threatened with a knife or a gun
- More than twice as likely to be physically injured
- Six times more likely to receive medical attention
- Five times more likely to be hospitalized
- Three times more likely to take time off paid or unpaid work as a consequence of the violence
- Three times more likely to be killed by intimate partners
- 41 per cent of women who killed spouses were acting to defend themselves against a violent male partner.

CRIAW 2013 http://www.criaw-icref.ca/sites/criaw/files/VAW_ENG_long_final_0.pdf

The Perpetrator ….

Risk factors

- Child survivor of abuse or witness
- Believes in traditional gender roles
- Rigid and impulsive
- Blames others
- Socially isolated

Underlying reasons

- Emotional dependence
- Low self-esteem
- A need to feel safe, to control

Exploring Power and Control




How are power and control used in an IPV relationship?





Power and Control Explanation

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Continuum of Violence

- ✓ IPV is part of a continuum in people's lives. It is not a one time event
- ✓ It is not a situation where the abuser « lost control »
- ✓ It increases with time

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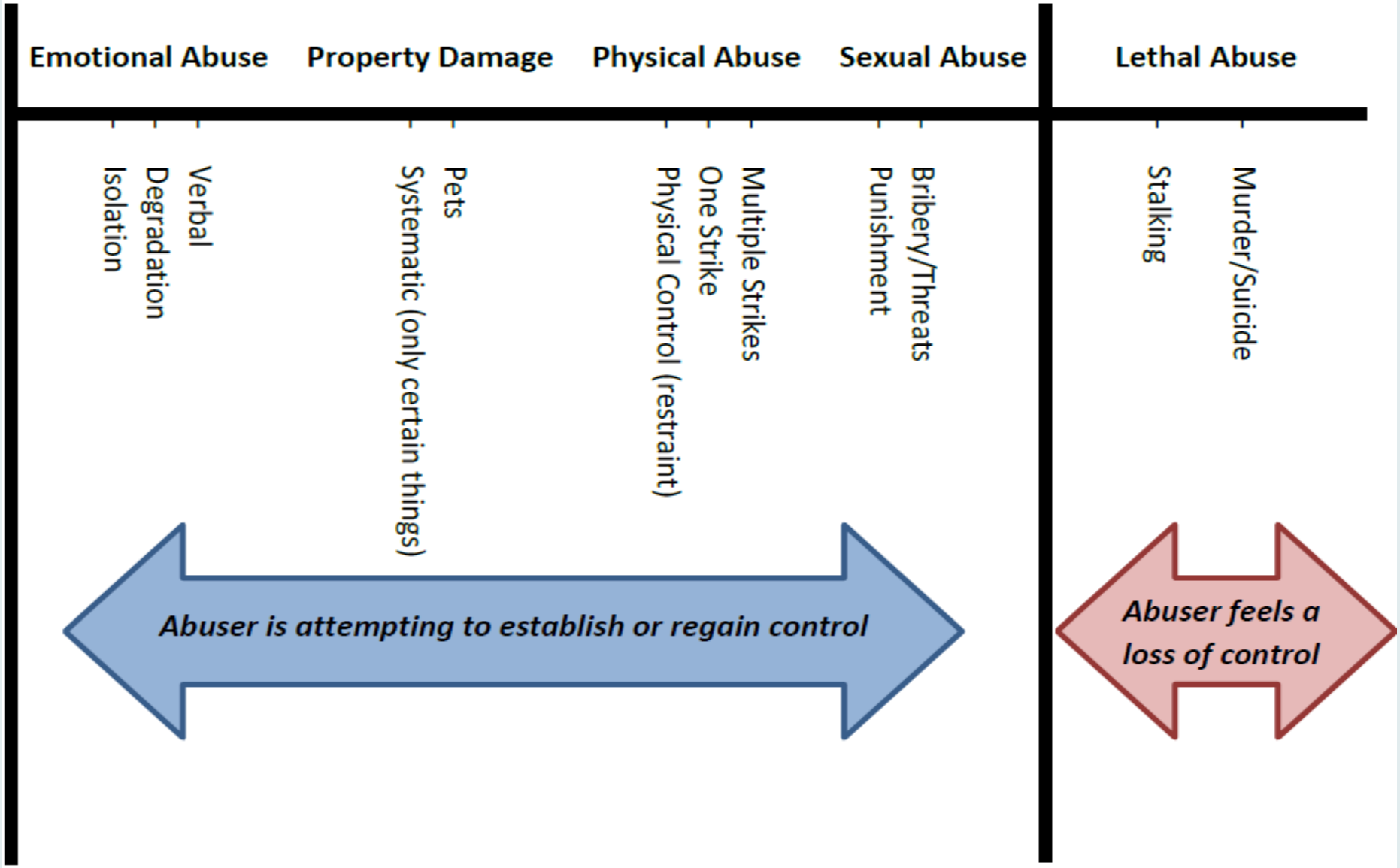
Continuum of Violence



Adapted from presentations by Derek Marchman on Domestic Violence Training for Law Enforcement, 2002

Understanding Victims

Shattered beliefs and assumptions

- Loss of safety and trust, feelings of fear and abandonment
- Feelings of self-blame and deficiency
- Loss of positive self-image
- Heightened feelings of helplessness, vulnerability and powerlessness
- Increased dependency on others
- Increased feelings of anger and rage
- Withdrawal

Underlying reasons:

- Love and hope
- Guilt and shame
- Family and social pressures
- Dependence and fear

Physical Effects of IPV on the Victims

Physical injuries	Scars
Change of appetite	Sleep disorders
Headaches / Migraine	Stomach problems
Respiratory problems	Fatigue
Ulcers	Back / Neck pain

Emotional and Mental Effects of IPV

Fear	Sadness
Shame	Guilt
Powerlessness	Loss of self-esteem & self-confidence
Stress	Anxiety
Loss of personal identity	Dependence
Broken relationship with loved ones	Isolation
Depression	Suicide

Trauma and ongoing experiences of violence

On-going violence → likelihood on-going injury → likelihood of injury becoming overwhelming perhaps more overwhelming than an originating event.

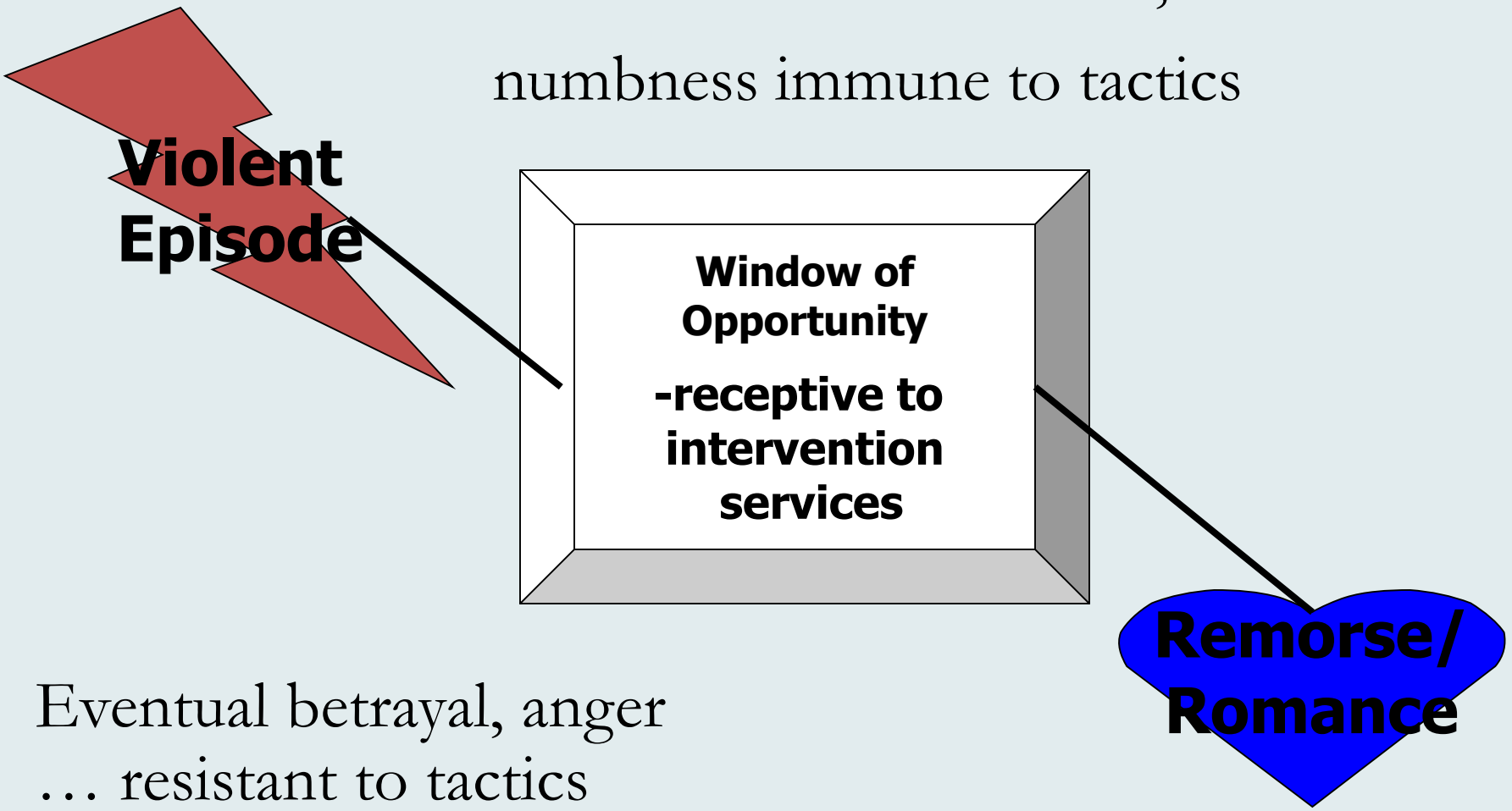
Barriers Affecting Victim's Decision to Leave or Stay

Constraining Beliefs and Feelings	Structural Barriers	Ineffective Responses
➢ Fear of injury or death ➢ Safety and well-being of children ➢ Desire to give relationship another try ➢ A reduced sense of agency	➢ Lack of money ➢ Lack of housing ➢ Lack of support services / information about support services	➢ Family and friends ➢ Service providers ➢ Cultural and racial differences ➢ Faith ➢ Lack of appropriate services

Timing is Important

Initial shock,

numbness immune to tactics



Eventual betrayal, anger
… resistant to tactics

Timely and Supportive Intervention:

- ✓ Safety Plan
- ✓ Barriers of Isolation Broken
- ✓ Valuable Information
  - more objective
  - less tolerant

While figuring out what/how to end abuse…

- Shelter services
- Outreach program
- Mental health and/or addiction services
- Child protection
- Custody and access
- Health care system
- Private counselling
- Family, neighbour, friend, community
- Criminal justice process

Recognizing responses to violence & trauma

- Trauma Informed lens – we critically reflect on our everyday assumptions about "harmful" and "irresponsible behaviours".

- Instead of "healthy vs. unhealthy" or "wellness vs. disorder", Trauma Informed lens is about *honoring* people's actions, as *testaments* to:

  - Their *knowledge* and reality of violence…
  - Their *skill* at responding to on-going violence…
  - Ex: Alcohol abuse, medication abuse, cutting

Recognizing responses to violence & trauma

- Lives are understandable and their behaviour make sense when interpreted through an trauma-informed lens.
- Clients feel validated.
- Behaviour develop to cope may be seen as pathological if you do not have trauma informed lens.
- Understanding clients who have been abuse and neglect allows us to focus on helping them increase their self-capacities.
- They may have developed extreme coping mechanism thus creating their own set of problems.

Supporting self-determination

"Empowerment" is often something good-intended that we do "to" people or "for" people.

Our desire to "empower" can unintentionally de-center the person, reproduce a sense of deficiency – a sense of something wrong with them instead of something wrong happened to them.

Trauma Informed care is about **working together "with**" people, to support their power within.

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Attending to the significance of actions

"As workers we may struggle with the "**poor choices**" we perceive people to be making. We may become confuse and frustrate when they don't choose "better choices" .

Trauma Informed lens focuses on understanding the significance of "poor choices" and it is a critical step in **supporting self-determination** and control over processes.

Working collaboratively (with client)

We need to work **"together with"** people – work collaboratively.

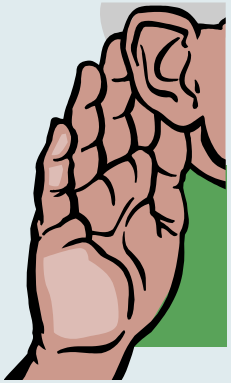
Surviving **power inequalities and violence,** the person may have developed some conforming skills with persons of authority. Trauma informed lens will help you understand and help to develop ways of attending together to power relations in the helping professions.

Working collaboratively (with client)

We will:

Understand the importance of **beginning with us**, we need to ask some very important questions of:

- our self, (personal values, attitudes & beliefs)
- our programs



and listen to the answers with awareness.

The Secret

Minimizing re-traumatization

Building together on strengths and resilience may provide a very different relationship from relationships of inequity, coercion, and violence.

Increasing cultural competence

Increase our cultural competence regarding age, sex and gender diversities, gender relations, class, ability, racialization, and location (rural, urban…) and critical attention to one's own positions.

This competence is constantly built and re-built, upon the on-going learning we may develop, resulting in a shift in our engagement with the people and communities we serve. We may also see a shift in our experiences of our work, our programs, policies, and social structures.

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Thank You Merci

Questions?

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