



Praxis International—Rural technical assistance on violence against women



**Developing a Shared Philosophical Approach:  
A Core Element of a Coordinated Community  
Response to Battering**

*Audio Conference Training*

**Part 2, March 12, 2009**

**Recognizing and Understanding  
Battering**

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**What is domestic violence?**

Any act of violence committed by a person  
against an intimate partner



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**The problem with the term;**

- The term “domestic violence” lumps very dissimilar acts of violence into one category in ways that are often problematic.
- Legal and human service solutions to domestic violence were often designed with battering (one form of domestic violence) in mind, but applied to all acts of domestic violence.



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## Breaking down the term



- Battering
- Resistive violence
- Non-battering partner violence

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## Problems with breaking down domestic violence



- Gives batterers and their defenders a way to claim a less deliberate form of violence.
- Reinforces old notions that domestic violence occurs mostly with people who are not able to get along.
- Leads some people to conclude that marriage counseling will end the violence.
- Could promote an individual psychological approach to battering.

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## Does it help protect victims?



- Yes, it can. When used correctly, it makes what is happening more transparent.
- Intervening agencies need to be able to answer the question;

***Who is doing what to whom, and with what impact?***

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### It will help us determine:



- Risk of future harm to victims
- Likelihood of person escalating or continuing abuse
- Who needs protection from whom
- Which protective measures may be needed
- Which interventions may increase risk
- Relevance to the protection of children
- Relevance to justice and fairness

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### Defining Coercive Control or Battering:



An on-going pattern of coercion, intimidation, and violence to establish and maintain control in an intimate relationship.

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### Coercive Control or Battering;



- Element of domination
  - Physical
  - Psychological
  - Cognitive
  - Spiritual
- Gender is a major predictor of who is battering in hetero-sexual relationships

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### Battering and being abusive are not the same;

- Inclusion of fear/violence and its intent to establish dominance differentiates battering from abusive or hurtful acts in relationships.
- Fear and potential for violence is attached to behaviors of the abuser.
- Includes ability to put victims in on-going fear of their physical and/or sexual safety.

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### Characteristics of the behaviors associated with battering;

- Battering typically has an element of entrapment... "You can't leave me without being punished"
- Pattern of abuse, its impact, and victims' responses are not static over time
- The power differential created by violence shapes all interactions between outsiders and family members
- Vulnerability to continued acts of violence takes away victims' ability to speak freely

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## Characteristics of the violence



- Typically associated with words and gestures of gender hostility
- Violence and Coercion shifts and often escalates during separation;
  - Threats to harm or take children
  - Increase threats to kill or maim
  - Use of outsiders to control (e.g. child protection, criminal court, mental health services)

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## Resistive violence;



Part of a victim's broader strategy to stop (contain) the abuse;

- Negotiation
- Appeals to family and friends
- Appeasement
- Anger and hostility
- Separation
- Withdrawal
- Use of Force

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## Resistive violence;



- Punishment (including the use of children)
- Drinking, drugs, suicide (attempts)
- Violence
  - Continuum of severity (far less likely to cause injury, etc.)
  - Pre-emptive strikes
  - Defensive violence during attacks
  - Retaliation
  - Threats
  - Seeking outsiders (relatives, and in extreme cases, hired killers)

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**Non-battering domestic violence**  
 (includes wide range of violence committed in intimate relationships)

- Not part of an attempt to establish an on-going position of dominance in a relationship (battering)
- Not part of a strategy to keep from being battered (resistive violence)
- Could happen infrequently or regularly and the source of the violence is not linked to establishing control in a relationship or using coercion to gain the compliance the offender feels is due




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**Examples of non-battering domestic violence;**

- A woman is an alcoholic and her partner frequently pours her alcohol down the sink. She then physically attacks him and he fends her off.
- A man has an affair and his partner physically attacks him every time she thinks he has been with the other woman.
- A sick, elderly parent moves in causing stress and conflict and one partner hits another during a heated argument.




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**Examples continued:**

- A person has experienced a brain trauma and subsequently begins to act aggressively
- A person has returned from war or similar trauma-producing environment and has never previously used intimidation or force toward his partner but now is threatening/violent toward partner and others
- Pathological condition including mental illness--causing aggression--but elements of battering are missing.
- Sometimes alcohol or drug abuse
  - Sobering up will stop the violence
  - No pattern of accompanying hostility and dominance.
- Violence is more generalized; not targeted at family members only




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### What is unique about battering?



- Abusers tend to...
  - Promote victim's dependency and attack autonomy.
  - Use the victim as a shield from outside intervention.
  - Experience themselves as victims of their victim.
  - Promote isolation of victim, attacking all intimate and supportive relationships (family, children, religious and intervening supporters).
  - Promotes victim's self-blame; denies personal responsibility

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### Abusers tend to...



- Expect (coerce) the victim to act on his behalf so the abuser is likely to:
  - Experience her actions to obtain help as betrayal.
  - Punish her for acting without his approval or for putting her needs or children's needs before his.
  - Punish her when she isn't appeasing.

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### Abusers tend to....



- Convince victims and others that she is mentally ill and use her emotional instability (caused by abuse) against her.
- Make claims of mental illness, which stay in her case files,
- If a victim has a mental illness, it becomes a mitigating rather than aggravating factor for his abuse.

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## Abusers tend to...



- Shift tactics of control after separation (use of institutions, children, and more extreme violence).
- Increase level of threats and violence when victim attempts to leave or change the situation.
- Draw children into the abuse of their mother

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## What does this mean for intervention?



- Neutrality favors a batterer.
- Documentation.
- Adjusting the intervention to who is doing what to whom.
- Levels of severity and security.
- Need for state intervention.
- Need for advocacy.

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## Praxis International



*This presentation was prepared by Dr. Ellen Pence of Praxis International as part of Award No. 2004-WT-AX-K061 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women.*

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