

Strengthening Response to Violence Against Women and Girls

Handout: Session – Working with Men

Handout Developed by
iCALL

Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Working with men

Historically, the focus of intervention with issues of violence against women has been on women. However, there is a growing movement towards including men in strategies for preventing and intervening for violence against women. The aim here is to protect the survivor, but also to hold men accountable for the violence and for the change process towards non-violence.

Intervention with men

Aspects of a Holistic Intervention:

- History taking and assessment (risk Factors Contributing to Abusive/Violent Behaviour and men's readiness for change)
- Taking an explicit political stance - conveying that abuse and violence are not okay
- Enhancing safety of women and children
- Encouraging attitudinal changes by helping men take responsibility for their violent behaviours, their consequences, and the requirement for them to change
- Suggesting alternative Behavioural Responses: Leaving the house/walking away when he feels he is getting angry/frustrated and could become violent or abusive.
- Allowing the victim/survivor to leave (with the children) if she feels unsafe,
- Behavioural Contracting Against Substance Abuse
- Ensuring compliance with police/court orders, protection or restraining orders, and civil court decisions on child access and custody.
- Making referrals: mental health services, rehabilitation programs
- Goal is to end violence

Principles of working with Men

- ★ Hold men accountable for the violence they use and emphasise the need to take on responsibility for their violent behaviour and its consequences
- ★ Abusive behaviour and violence is a choice made by the abuser in order to exert their control over their partners.
- ★ Teach the perpetrator constructive communication skills and anger management while challenging their sense of entitlement regarding women and children
- ★ Work with a feminist lens or a women-centered ideology & treat the woman as the primary client at all times
- ★ Register men's complaints as a strategy to reach out to distressed women and address their concerns

Directedness of a Successful Intervention:

- Help men acknowledge and reassess their abusive behaviour

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- Increase their awareness of their triggers to towards violence and ability to use alternative non-controlling behaviours
- Reduce all forms of denial employed by men to minimise their ability to avoid feelings of guilt, shame and remorse and enable them to acknowledge and express vulnerable feelings
- Develop the understanding that their violence is part of a system of abusive behaviour and build empathy towards women by discussing the consequences of violence
- Increase men's ability to reflect on how and what past experiences contribute to their current feelings

Joint meeting

- Often women express an urgency to call the abusive people for a meeting and resolve the issue immediately. A counsellor should validate the woman's feelings, but at the same time, it would be important to counsel the woman that there is a need to understand her life situation and those aspects which she wishes to negotiate
- If the woman is not adequately prepared, the meeting may not achieve the purpose
- The set-up of a counselling centre can be empowering for the woman to put forth her demands in a calm and confident manner
- The focus of the joint meeting needs to be maintained throughout – to communicate to those who perpetrate violence that violence is unacceptable irrespective of any circumstance
- The counsellor should introduce herself and her organization/group, Objective of the meeting should also be explained.
- Counsellor needs to be in complete control of the meeting, though the talking would be done by the woman and the perpetrators
- Good strategy to let the perpetrator talk first
- Appreciate the perpetrator for coming to the counselling centre because that also indicates that they are interested in the relationship
- The focus of the meeting needs to be maintained throughout – to communicate that violence is unacceptable irrespective of any circumstance
- Communicate that documentation of the meeting would be done and individuals present would be given copies of the document
- Such a meeting is not called to bring about an “adjustment” or a “compromise” between the abuser and the woman.
- If this is done, women would be at the receiving end; being blamed for not doing or not acting in ways demanded by the family.
- As a consequence of this, the purpose of negotiating for preventing violence would be defeated.
- The purpose of the meeting should be to hold a respectful conversation with men and women to uphold women's safety and expectations.