

# **Addressing Issues of Abuse in Context**

**Drexel University, Philadelphia,  
Pennsylvania  
6 May, 2008**



**Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese and Charles Waldegrave  
The Family Centre, Lower Hutt, Wellington, New  
Zealand**

[www.familycentre.org.nz](http://www.familycentre.org.nz)

# **BUILDING A CONSENSUS ON THE ISSUES OF ABUSE AND VIOLENCE**

## **ESTABLISHING SAFETY:**

**“DRAWING THE LINE ON ABUSE AND VIOLENCE”**


**SEXUAL ABUSE, PHYSICAL ABUSE, EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE**

- Identify specific actions and behaviours ranging from least to most severe e.g. under physical abuse; smacking, assault
- Place these actions and behaviours on a continuum starting from least to most severe
- Discuss amongst yourselves where you want to draw the line

## **EXERCISE: NAME THE BLOCKS**

- Name your fears about working with people who have been sexually/physically/emotionally and psychologically abused
- What do you need for you to feel confident when working with people who have been abused
- Name your fears about working with people who sexually, physically, psychologically and spiritually abuse
- What do you need for you to feel confident when working with people who abuse

**REPORT BACK**



**STEPS WHEN WORKING  
WITH  
VICTIM/SURVIVORS  
OF ABUSE**

**In our work with victim/survivors of abuse and their families, we must ensure that our work is not only professional, it must also be caring**

**Step 1 1.1 Ensure immediate safety of victims/survivors**

**1.2 Ensure that the immediate therapy environment remains warm and safe. That all therapeutic records are kept safe**

**1.3 Ensure that the victim/survivors have access to our Code of Ethics and Complaints Procedure**

**1.4 Ensure that in the immediate work with victim/survivors, there is a gendermatch.**

**1.5 Ensure that victim/survivors are fully informed about liaisons between the therapeutic agency and protection services e.g. Courts, Police, and Social Welfare**

## **Step 2**

## **Therapeutic work with victims/survivors**

### **KEY COMPONENTS**

- 2.1 Clarify safety and protection issues, including issues of spiritual protection Therapeutic stance of openness. Invite the victim/survivor and her/his family to consider various ways to achieve safety and protection.**
- 2.2 Receive story of violation Therapeutic stance of Respect that honours the survival and resistance of the victims and their families**
- 2.3 Enable the victim/survivor/s to clearly understand who is responsible for the abuse. Facilitate the victim/survivor/s freedom from the burden of guilt and self-blame**

## **Step 3**

### **Establishing Capacities for Wholeness**

**3.1 Enable the victim/survivor/s to regain a sense of self and wholeness**

**Encourage and facilitate a sense of priority to rights for healing and well-being**

**3.2 Enable the victim/survivor/s to inform those s/he chooses to know of the violation**

**3.3 Enable the victim/survivor/s to identify and request restorative and compensatory measures**

**3.4 Enable the victim/survivor/s to be free of the self-blame around issues of perpetrator/s punishment**

## **Step 4 Transformed Life Path**

- 4.1 Restoration of sacredness of life for victim/survivor/s and others**
- 4.2 Establish a total sense of freedom from the violation/s**
- 4.3 Establish a genuine sense of wisdom and confidence to make holistic relationships with other/s**
- 4.4 Enable a safe sense of belonging for all concerned**



# **STEPS WHEN WORKING WITH MEN WHO ABUSE**

# **ASSUMING PHYSICAL ABUSE HAS OCCURRED:**

**Step 1 Exposure among the persons concerned**

**Step 2 Therapeutic work with the perpetrator/s**

## **KEY COMPONENTS:**

**2.1 Understanding of physical power**

**2.2 Recognising the use of fear as a form of control**

**2.3 Internalising the victim experience of the survivor**

**2.4 Addressing own psychological needs and background deprivation**

## **Step 3 Taking Responsibility**

**3.1 Acknowledging past actions**

**3.2 Responsibility for all actions of the future**

**3.3 Restorative and compensatory action**

**3.4 Knowing deeply the priority rights of victim/survivors and others for healing**

**3.5 Punishment e.g. Compensatory, Legal, Cultural Councils etc.**

## **Step 4 Transformed Life Path**

**4.1 Restoration of sacredness of life for  
victim/survivors and others**

**4.2 Restoration of dignity and integrity of  
people who physically abuse**

**4.3 Enabling a safe place of belonging for all  
concerned**

# INDICATORS OF SAFETY

- **Agreement from all parties that physical abuse has stopped. (Victim/survivor, grandparents, partner, extended family, client, etc.)**
- **That he takes full responsibility for all his actions of abuse and is totally committed to stop all physical abuse**
- **Has learned new ways of dealing with relationships that give people around him confidence instead of fear. Shows respect for people of all ages and is responsible and accountable. Does not take risks**
- **New way of life that reflects a deep respect for women and children. Develops new skills in living context, e.g. as a father, as a partner, as a whanau member and as a friend**
- **Gains knowledge about himself, his culture, his belonging, and his needs, and is always on guard against physical abuse. Has confidence in the liberating stories of his history**

# **POLARITIES AND DILEMMAS FACED WHEN WORKING WITH MEN WHO ABUSE**

Being direct	vis a vis	Being friendly
Working from our hearts	vis a vis	Working from our heads
The issues for male clients	vis a vis	The issues for female clients
The issues for male workers	vis a vis	The issues for female workers
The issues for victim/survivors	vis a vis	The issues for men who abuse
Strict confidentiality	vis a vis	The need to share and receive a range of information
Challenging and being conflictual	vis a vis	The respect and mana friendship brings
Being professional	vis a vis	Being unguarded and open

*We note that the victim/survivors are usually women and children*

# **WHEN WORKING WITH MEN WHO ABUSE**

1. Men's stories should not be told in a vacuum. Reflective work with their stories should help them identify the growth and persistence of abuse.
2. Work should primarily focus on the abuse and its consequences on the women and/or children and their liberation, and secondarily on the victim experience of the person who abuses, eg racism, problem childhood etc.
3. The test of good work is a change of heart or second order change, that internalises the issues set out in 1 & 2 above. This is beyond simple intellectual or intentional change.
4. It should be recognised that the stories of people who abused usually reduce the level of abuse, and male workers should not advocate against the story of the person who has been abused.

5. Within the context of a warm working relationship, male workers need to be direct, challenging and very clear on the issues of sexual abuse and professional in their work with men who abuse.
6. Confidentiality is to the Agency and the normal procedures for that. Information from the female workers in particular, is not to be shared with the person who abuses without permission from that female worker. A similar procedure should also occur with information given by male workers.
7. If there are disagreements concerning the abuse of the possibility of a false accusation, then a third independent worker can be called in to assess facts of the situation.