

Domestic Violence & Infant Parent Attachment: Moving beyond the Abuse

From Trauma To Triumph

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Aim of session

- To present the 'human side' and complex nature of domestic violence
- To acknowledge our attitudes, values, thoughts and experiences
- Parent infant attachment
- Building a relationship
- Acknowledging achievements



Domestic Violence and You

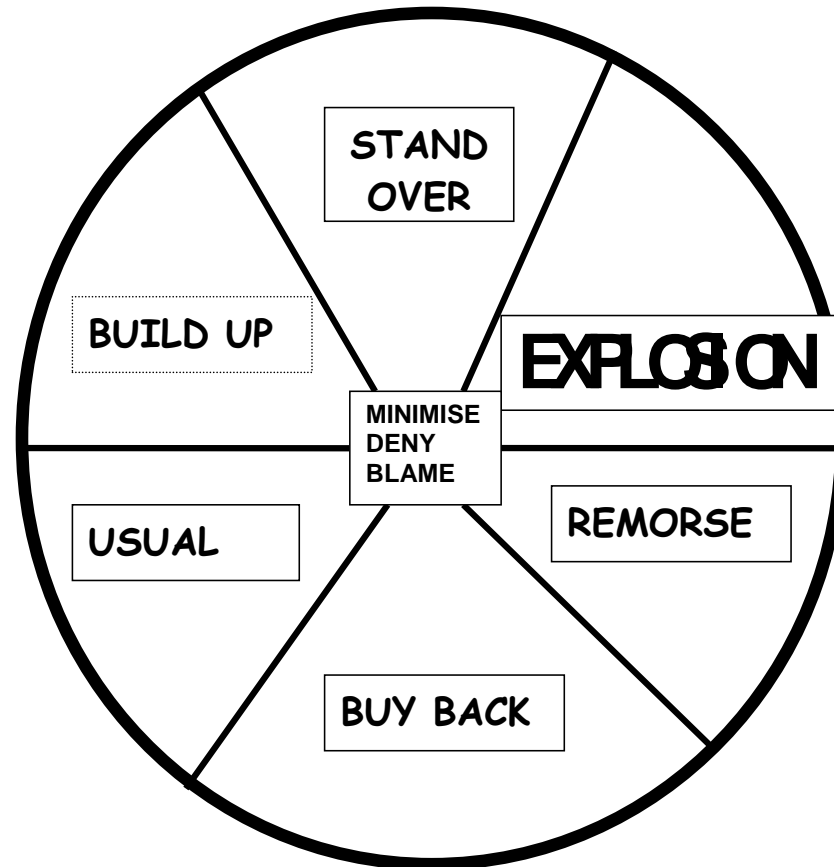
Domestic Violence

- It's closer than you realise
- 1:4 women experience DV during their life time.
- It is the most common health risk in the world for women
(W.H.O, 2002 & 2005)
- Domestic Violence is when one person in a present or past intimate relationship uses violence or abuse to cause fear and gain control over the other person.

Pregnancy & Domestic Violence

- Risk of domestic violence is higher for women during pregnancy and following birth (Taft 2002)
- Women with children are three times more likely to be subject to domestic violence than childless women (Humphreys 2007)

Cycle of Violence





Forms of Domestic Violence

- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Sexual
- Financial
- Psychological



Common Myths

- MYTH: A woman can always leave
- MYTH: Women provoke violence
- MYTH: Alcohol causes the violence
- MYTH: Violent men have mental health problems
- MYTH: Some women seek out abusive men
- MYTH: It only happens in some communities



Research informs practice

` Domestic violence is an attack on the relationship between the infant/ children and their mother by disabling her physically and or mentally so that she is not in a good position to parent'

(Humphrey 2007)



Research informs practice

- 76% of women experiencing DV reported that depression affected their parenting (Abrahams 1994)
- Effects of DV on women's mental health are seen to make mother emotionally unavailable to their infants and children (McGee 2007)



Trauma from Domestic Violence

The mental health effects of domestic violence include:-

- Loss of self esteem & confidence
- Loss of decision making ability
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Phobias
- Self harm
- PTSD
- Nightmares & sleep disturbances
- Dissociative disorders



The Fear & Guilt Factor

- To experience trauma is frightening
- Women living with DV are living in fear, this fear can be transmitted to their infant resulting in disorganised attachment patterns.
- Infants may perceive their mothers as frightened and therefore frightening



Importance of Early Relationships

- Infants form connections with others before birth
- Early attachment patterns are crucial for an infants healthy development
- A secure attachment contributes to neurological and psychological infant development. Lifelong sense of security and ability to create meaningful relationships



Principles of Attachment

- Attachment theory is derived from psychoanalysis and is embedded in the field of infant mental health
- “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (John Bowlby, 1969)
- Improving chance of survival
- Earliest attachment patterns impact on relationships formed later in life



DV & Infant development

DV is known to directly compromise infant mental health may present

- PTSD
- Sleep disturbances
- Separation anxiety
- Aggressiveness, agitation
- Hyperactivity
- Insecure attachment patterns
(avoidant, ambivalent, disorganised)



Clinical presentation



Clinical Profile of DV

- Jade House
Perinatal mood disorder stay unit
(Karitane -SSWAHS)
- 62 active clients in Jade House(2009)
- 38 report conflict in relationship
- 31 women disclose history of abuse
- 4 women positive DV screening
- 6-12mths after initial assessment
12disclosures



Implication for clinical practice

- Safe Haven
free from guilt/free from judgement
- Secure base
- Proximity maintenance
- Separation distress
- Self Care /Clinical supervision



Making a Difference – 3R's

- Recognise
- Respond- Listen& Believe
- Relationship



Making a Difference – 3C's

- Consistency
- Connectedness /communication
- Celebrations



Making a difference – 3W's

- Waiting
- Watching
- Wondering



Resources

- **Working Well with Women: Creating Non-violent Futures.** (NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women, 2002) Liverpool NSW 02 9228 7899
- **It all starts at home: Male adolescent violence to mothers** (Inner South Community Health, Monash University, August 2008) 03 9534 0981 for copies.
- **An assault on our future: the impact of violence on young people and their relationships.** (A white ribbon foundation report 09)
- **Fiona Buchanan: Mother & Infant Attachment Theory and Domestic Violence: Crossing the Divide.** (Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearing House - 2008)
- Domestic Violence: You can live without it. DoCS publication.
About healthy & unhealthy relationships.
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vaw or www.aboutdaterape.com.au
- www.zerotothree.org.au



Thank you

- Acknowledge women and their infants and children who have been brave and trusting enough to shared their story
- Privilege to share their journey of trauma to triumph