

“He assaulted me, he assaulted me not”:
Supporting young women in responding to intimate partner
violence at the McGill Domestic Violence Clinic

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The Problem of Dating Violence

- Persists & remains unreported because
 - No apparent physical injury
 - No use of weapon
 - Use of alcohol and drugs
 - Normalization of risk behaviours

The Problem of Partner Violence

- Used to only include
 - use of minor physical force
- Today includes
 - Homicide
 - minor and severe physical assault
 - sexual assault
 - threats and harassment
 - Robbery
 - property damage
 - Kidnapping
 - Stalking
 - economic deprivation
 - animal abuse
 - psychological coercion and intimidation

The Problem of Partner Violence

- Also includes
 - married women
 - women living with their violent husbands
- Physical and sexual coercion ranges from 20-30% amongst college aged young women
- Almost 35% of the women reported having been physically assaulted and 17.8% of the men stated ever having used physical abuse since leaving high school

University and College Students

- DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998)
 - 28% of female undergraduate students reported that they had been sexually abused in the 12 months prior to their survey
 - 45% of the female survey respondents reported having been sexually assaulted since leaving high school
 - 11% of the male student survey respondents reported that they had sexually assaulted a woman dating partner in the same time period
- Rapaport and Posey's
 - over 40% of college males reported that they had used some form of coercive behaviour to have sex
 - Lying
 - disregarding a women's protest
 - using physical force
- Koss and Harvey
 - 51% of college age males reported they might commit rape if they knew they would not be caught

Dating Violence

- Any intentional, unpredictable physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse
- Mistreatment that occurs between individuals who have established or may be moving towards an intimate relationship

Three Central Concepts

- 1. Violence is intentional
 - use of a range of tactics of control that give rise to and perpetuate the violence
- 2. Violence is unpredictable and patterned
 - Lenore Walker – Cycle of Violence
 - a period of calm
 - rising tension
 - an explosion in one form or another
 - pleas of forgiveness
 - a period of calm
 - the cycle begins again

Three Central Concepts

- The cycle is unpredictable
 - intermittent periods of calm and forgiveness can serve to reinforce a “traumatic bond
 - secrecy all too often prevails
 - young women may not recognize the abuse as “abuse”
 - diminishes self-esteem and self-confidence
 - damages or destroys trust

Etiology

- Risk Factors
 - Past experience(s) of abuse
 - Belief systems and attitudes
 - Dating relationships in their development
 - Substance use
 - Social influences
- Outcomes of previous abuse
 - Depression
 - Decreased self-esteem
 - Substance
 - Acceptance of abusive behaviours
 - Victimization seen as unimportant
 - Development of ineffective communication skills
 - Poor approaches to problem solving
 - Problematic ways of managing emotions

Etiology

- Difficulty meeting the challenges of
 - Developing sexual maturity
 - Developing “relational” and sexual identities
 - Being successful with experimentation and experiences that challenge women's emotional, social, sexual and psychological development

Etiology

- As well
 - Date rape might be rationalized by a partner as acceptable based on his interpretation of a woman's behavior
 - Reputation
 - Manner of dress or talk
 - The extent to which young women accept stereotypical gender roles

Emotional and Physical Consequences

- Minor physical injury to death
- Sexual injury to STDs and HIV/AIDS
- Loss of self-esteem, self-worth, a sense of safety
- Guilt
- Shame
- Withdrawal
- Depression
- Nervousness
- Increased fear and anxiety
- Withdrawal from peers
- Little or no interest in social or family activities
- Difficulty sleeping, concentrating, and remembering
- Start missing school more
- Academic performance compromised

MDVC Women's Group

- Professionally led, self-help, support group
- Designed to help women
 - Engage in collaborative problem-solving
 - To enhance self-efficacy
 - Build confidence
 - Develop strategies for individuation from coercive situations
 - Explore
 - healthy relationships
 - control and power in relationships
 - gender inequality, stereotypes and roles
 - depictions of violence and gender in the media
 - the dynamics of aggression
 - communication skills
 - dealing with peer pressure and sexual harassment.

Components of the MDVC Model

- Group Phases
 - Sign-In
 - Working
 - Didactic
 - Sign-Out

Practice Techniques

- Awareness of client and group process
- Identifying and exploring needs-based themes in a woman's narrative
- Understanding the underlying authentic emotion embedded in a woman's narrative

Implications for Practice

- Dating violence has a dynamic nature
 - we must appreciate that addressing the violence in one's intimate relation is also a process
- Informed decisions are more likely to emanate from women who have turned to developing their own identities
 - away from the identities developed in the context of the abusive relationship
- In moving from victims to survivors
 - pathways for women are very challenging
 - escalation of danger to women in their efforts to terminate coercive relations