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# Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence

ASHLEY SLYE

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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## Session Overview

- ▶ Understanding DV
- ▶ The Realities of DV
- ▶ Economic Coercion & Abuse
- ▶ Trauma & Triggers
- ▶ Confidentiality
- ▶ Referrals & Working with DV Programs
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Questions

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## Understanding Domestic Violence

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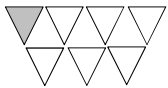
## Statistics

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- 1 in 4 women



- 1 in 7 men



- Have or will experience some form of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in their lifetime
- DV is NOT Gender Neutral
- All survivors need access to safety and services

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## Statistics

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- ▶ 44% of Lesbian Women
- ▶ 61% of Bisexual Women
- ▶ 26% of Gay Men
- ▶ 37% of Bisexual Men
- ▶ 30% - 50% of Transgender people

experience rape,  
physical violence,  
and/or stalking by an  
intimate partner in their  
lifetime.

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## Statistics

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- ▶ A woman's risk of being killed goes up 75% when she leaves the relationship or has left.
- ▶ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence equals \$727.8 million, with more than 7.9 million paid workdays lost each year.

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## Statistics

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- ▶ 99% of victims report having experienced some form of economic abuse and victims often cite finances as a barrier to escaping abuse.
- ▶ Employers absorb a large portion of the health care costs related to domestic violence, which total nearly \$4.1 billion each year.
- ▶ Between one-quarter and one-half of domestic violence victims report that they lost a job, at least in part, due to domestic violence.

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## 2016 Domestic Violence Counts

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72,959 survivors served in one day



41,195 survivors served in emergency shelters or transitional housing

31,764 survivors received non-residential services – counseling, legal advocacy, support groups, etc.

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## Advocacy Definition

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Domestic violence is a **pattern** of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners to **gain or maintain power and control** in the relationship.

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## Power and Control

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- Domestic violence is purposeful behavior. The batterer's **pattern** of abusive acts are directed at achieving compliance and **control** over the victim.
- Tactics that work to control the victim are selectively chosen by the batterer. This power permeates every aspect of the victim's life.

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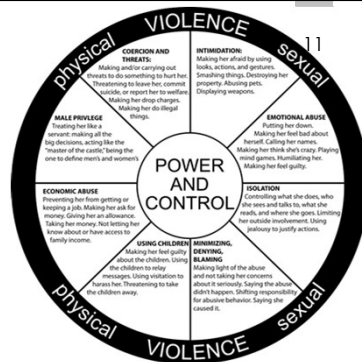
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## Power & Control Wheel




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## The Realities of Domestic Violence

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## Myths & Realities

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### Excuses & Justification



### Domestic Violence is:

- ▶ Learned Behavior
  - ▶ Observation
  - ▶ Reinforced in society
- ▶ Choice
  - ▶ Abuser control who their victims are
- ▶ Intentional
  - ▶ Instill fear
  - ▶ Gain power and control

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## Why Do They Stay?

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Housing	Lack of Support
Money	Escalation of abuse
Fear	Promises partner will change
Shame	Threat of further violence
Religion	Social norms
Children	Immigration Status
Geography	Love
Employment	

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## Leaving $\neq$ Safety

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- ▶ Leaving an abusive relationship can leave a survivor in an impossible financial situation.
  - ▶ Leaving is one of the most dangerous times
  - ▶ If not already living in poverty – leaving may result in it
- ▶ Often an impossible choice
- ▶ Leaving is not a single act, it is a process

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## The Effects of Domestic Violence

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- ▶ Last long after the bruises have healed
  - ▶ Emotional Impact
  - ▶ Long-term health complications
- ▶ The financial impact can go on for 10-20 years
- ▶ The emotional impact and long-term health complications can last a lifetime

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## Economic Coercion & Abuse

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## Why?

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- ▶ Having limited financial resources is a big risk factor for Domestic Violence
  - ▶ Few resources = fewer good choices for getting and/or staying safe
  - ▶ An abuser is able to gain more control due to increased vulnerability
  - ▶ Abuse is likely to last longer and result in more severe injuries

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However...

- ▶ This Does Not mean that those living poverty are more violent
- ▶ Also Does Not mean those with plenty of financial resources are not experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse

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What does a healthy financial relationship look like?

- ▶ Both partners have access to financial statements
- ▶ Couples identify differing values about money and negotiate financial goals
- ▶ Both recognize and respect that decision-making is equal
- ▶ Each partner has access to money on their own
- ▶ Both are knowledgeable how money is spent

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What is financial abuse?

- ▶ Financial abuse often begins subtly and progresses over time
- ▶ The aim of financial abuse is to gain power and control in a relationship
- ▶ Every type of abuse is aimed at attaining and maintaining control over another person
- ▶ Abuse traps a person in a relationship

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### What does financial abuse look like?

- ▶ Controlling how money is spent
- ▶ Withholding money or "giving an allowance"
- ▶ Withholding basic living resources, medication or food

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### What does financial abuse look like?

- ▶ Not allowing their significant other to work or earn money
- ▶ Forcing their significant other to work
- ▶ Stealing money from family
- ▶ Stealing identity, money, credit or property

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### Financially Abusive Relationships

#### **A partner may be abusive if they:**

- ▶ Make financial decisions without consulting with their partner
- ▶ Forbids partner from working or attending school
- ▶ Overuses credit cards or refuses to pay the bills
- ▶ Forces their partner to file fraudulent tax claims or other documents

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## Financially Abusive Relationships

### A partner may be abusive if they:

- ▶ Prevents their partner from owning or using credit cards
- ▶ Harasses their partner at her workplace
- ▶ Reports that their partner "cheats" on public benefits so they are cut
- ▶ Forces their partner to sign over assets and power-of-attorney

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## Trauma & Triggers

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## What is Trauma?

Trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions, in which:

- ▶ The individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed, or
- ▶ The individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity. (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p. 60)

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## Impact of Trauma on the Body

- ▶ Long-term stress can effect the bodies ability to thrive
  - ▶ Blood flow away from extremities to major muscles and organs for survival
  - ▶ Difficulties sleeping
  - ▶ Headaches, joint pains
  - ▶ Gastrointestinal, respiratory, cardio-vascular issues
- ▶ Trauma effects each individual differently

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## Impact of Trauma on the Brain

- ▶ Trauma may result in a broad array of co-occurring psychiatric diagnoses.
  - ▶ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ▶ Trauma can hinder brain development in youth
- ▶ Neuroplasticity Video - <https://youtu.be/ELpfYC7a87g>

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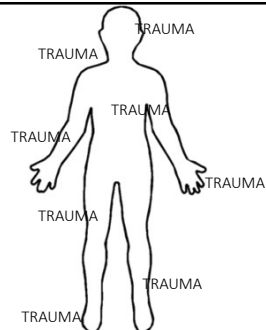
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## Why Trauma Informed Care?

- ▶ What is traumatic for one person may not be traumatic for another.
- ▶ We must, therefore, consider carefully not only the EVENT but the individual's PERCEPTION of the event.
- ▶ Trauma Informed Care shifts the question from 'What's wrong with you?' to 'What happened to you?'

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## Triggers

Exposure to a traumatic event can lead to continued physiological, behavioral, and cognitive responding to previously neutral, nonthreatening stimuli.

(Resnick, Acierno, & Kilpatrick, 1997)

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| ▶ Sounds     | ▶ Locations    |
| ▶ Smells     | ▶ News Stories |
| ▶ Actions    | ▶ Photos       |
| ▶ The "look" | ▶ People       |

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## Confidentiality

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### Why is Privacy Important to Victims?

- ▶ Integral to survivor-centered services
- ▶ Impacts a victim's safety & healing
- ▶ Influences quality of life of a victim
- ▶ Impacts the chances of revictimization
- ▶ It's their information
- ▶ Give power and control back to the survivor

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Who **wants** survivor information?

Who **decides** whether to share?




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### How Do Advocates Help with Safety, Empowerment, & Privacy?

- ▶ Advocate on behalf of survivors
- ▶ Safety Plan
- ▶ Ensure survivor-driven services
- ▶ Provide information so survivors can make informed decisions
- ▶ Maintain their confidentiality

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## Federal Laws

- ▶ Violence Against Women Act
- ▶ Family Violence Prevention & Services Act
- ▶ Victims of Crime Act

### Prohibits the disclosure of:

- ▶ Personally Identifying Information (PII)
- ▶ Unless have informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person.

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## VAWA, FVPSA, & VOCA

- ▶ Grantees shall NOT disclose, reveal or release any:
  - ▶ personally identifying information (PII)
  - ▶ individual information [for VAWA only]
  - ▶ collected in connection with program services
    - ▶ requested,
    - ▶ utilized, or
    - ▶ denied

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## NO Exception For...

- ▶ Subpoenas that are not court orders.
- ▶ Arrest warrants.
- ▶ Missing person reports.
- ▶ Request from a friend or well-intentioned colleague.

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## Protecting Survivor Information

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- ▶ In some jurisdictions, survivors may be eligible for a confidential post office box
  - ▶ State may have address confidentiality program
  - ▶ Protection Order may be required
- ▶ Motion to Quash
  - ▶ History of DV, may be able to make a case

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## Referrals & Working with DV/SA Programs

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## Barriers to Seeking and Receiving Help

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### Community attitudes

- ▶ Victim-blaming
- ▶ Assumptions
- ▶ The victim is lying
- ▶ Stigma
- ▶ Differing values
- ▶ Personal bias

2 out of 3 female victims of domestic violence report fear of not being believed or unsuccessful prosecution as reasons for being reluctant to turn to law enforcement.

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## Survivor Information

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- ▶ If you are working with a survivor who wants info from DV program shared:
  - ▶ Survivor to sign a release or deliver the info directly to you
  - ▶ WITS Release

*A release is needed even to admit that a particular person has received services from a DV agency.*

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## How to help

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- ▶ Believe them and build rapport
  - ▶ What you are being told, is likely only the tip of the iceberg
- ▶ Ask in a private place
  - ▶ Survivor privacy and confidentiality is crucial
  - ▶ Never ask in front of their partner
- ▶ Validate their experience
  - ▶ Be supportive and non-judgmental

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## How to help

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- ▶ Explore options while allowing them to be the expert in their own lives
  - ▶ Empower the survivor to make their own decisions
- ▶ Share resources and let them know you are available
- ▶ Support them in creating a safety plan

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## Restoring Relationships

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- ▶ Understand and demonstrate that the trauma of each individual is different
- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Acknowledging their experience and asking their thoughts/opinions/feelings

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## Restoring Relationships

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- ▶ Showing flexibility to meet their needs
- ▶ Give them options and space to make their own decisions
- ▶ Not criticizing their decisions

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## Needs of survivors

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- ▶ Hotline and anonymous support services
- ▶ Crisis intervention and counseling
- ▶ Support groups
- ▶ Culturally specific support
- ▶ Legal advocacy and support
  - ▶ Civil legal support (e.g. issues with school, landlords, employers, protection orders)
  - ▶ Advocacy and support during criminal justice process

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## Needs of survivors

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- ▶ Medical services
  - ▶ Support during forensic exams
  - ▶ Follow up medical care
- ▶ Mental health and substance abuse services
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Improved Criminal Justice Response (victim centric)
- ▶ Shelter (Emergency and Short Term)
- ▶ Cash Assistance and Economic Resources

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## Resources

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- ▶ National Domestic Violence Hotline
  - ▶ 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
  - ▶ 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)
  - ▶ Online Chat – thehotline.org
- ▶ WomensLaw.org Email Hotline
- ▶ NNEDV.org
- ▶ AmericanBar.org – Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence
- ▶ NCALL.us – National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life

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Questions?

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