INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

UNITED CULTURES
OF CANADA ASSOCIATION

Inclusive Practices Guidelines for Assisting Newcomers to Canada

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Board,
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A Note from the Author

This manual focuses on abuse as it occurs in intimate relationships between adult partners. The terms "family violence," "domestic violence," and "spousal abuse" are often applied interchangeably to such behaviours (CIAFV, 2017). The manual instead uses "intimate partner violence." This term is broad enough to include all types of intimate partnerships, where the people involved may or may not be married. It is also specific enough to distinguish the subject matter of this manual from other forms of family violence, like elder abuse or child abuse.

In line with holistic views that seek to see a person outside their behaviour and their experiences, this manual avoids labels like "abuser" and "victim." Instead, I refer to people "who use abusive behaviours" and people "who are experiencing abuse." Many people who have experienced abuse find victim language defeating; they prefer to see the abuse as just one part of their lives that they are working to overcome. In recent years, the term "survivor" has replaced "victim." While some find it empowering, others may not relate to it, especially those still in the abusive relationship or early in their process of healing. Above all, it is important to follow the client's lead in terms of language while keeping in mind that what they are going through does not define them. We are all so much more than the things we experience.

Frequent reference is also made to the person experiencing abuse as "she" or "the woman." Although abuse does not discriminate across gender lines, statistics tell us the most common iteration of intimate partner violence is a woman being abused by a man. It is important to recognize that intimate partner violence is a product of an unequal society. The violence women face outside the home is not disconnected from the violence they face inside the home.

The information presented here has come first and foremost from my years of training and experience working at crisis lines, women's shelters, and sexual assault centres that have now been operating for decades. Many women's shelters and support services were built from the ground up by women in the community who experienced abuse first-hand and finally said, "No more." They were centered on feminist ideologies, which were the first to recognize that abuse is never the fault of the person experiencing it. These centres were some of the first places to say "I believe you" to women who had been consistently failed by physicians, police, and the court. They were the first to say, "You don't deserve this" while well-meaning family and friends were still pushing women to keep the family together at all costs (even when that cost was their own lives).

My understanding of this subject has also been informed by my training in Somatic Experiencing, a body-based method for healing trauma. It has also been supported by my years of work as a counselling psychologist helping women heal from abusive and traumatic experiences.

Chapter 1 Understanding Abuse

THE DEFINITION OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE used in this manual is one that has also been adopted by the organization Community Initiatives Against Family Violence (CIAFV):

> *[Intimate partner violence] describes a systematic pattern of abusive behaviours within a relationship that is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust.*

The abusive behaviours are used to gain power, control, and induce fear. Abuse occurs in all age, racial, socio-economic, occupational, and religious groups. The abusive behaviours can be physical, emotional, financial, material, sexual, spiritual, or cultural in nature. They usually include many of these forms.

The Issue of Intimate Partner Violence in Canada

When considering the prevalence of intimate partner violence, many are shocked to recognize that **the most dangerous place for a woman in Canada to be is in her own home**, with a man who is her romantic partner. This is especially true for Aboriginal women (Sinha, 2013a), women with disabilities (Cotter, 2018), and young women, as these groups face additional barriers. For example, women with disabilities are often dismissed and not believed to have sexual lives, so when they come forward with sexual abuse, are less likely to be believed. They are also more likely to be in situations where they're dependent on the person abusing them.

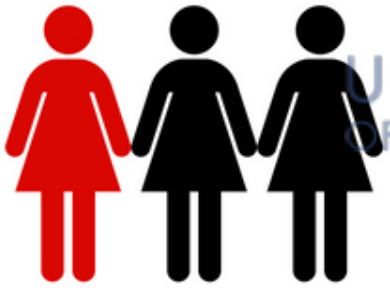
Intimate partner violence describes a systematic pattern of abusive behaviours within a relationship that is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust.

According to Statistics Canada, intimate partner violence accounts for one in every four violent crimes reported to police. In 2016, there were approximately 93,000 reported victims of intimate partner violence. The vast majority of the victims (79%) were women, a finding consistent over time (Burczyka & Conroy, 2018). Now, keep in mind that in general, violence of all kinds often goes unreported to police, so the actual number of people who experienced intimate partner violence is likely much higher (Perreault, 2015).

It is often difficult to conceptualize the impact of violence from statistics. To really understand the impact, we can remind ourselves that each of these 93,000 individuals is a whole person with their own history, desires, dreams, and offerings. We can imagine the pain each of them experiences through being abused, threatened, and violated. And we can remind ourselves that there is nothing they could ever do to deserve that kind of treatment.

Just how prevalent is abuse in Canada? A landmark study by Statistics Canada in 1993 ("Violence Against Women Survey") asked that question. Although more up-to-date data would be preferable, no recent Statistics Canada survey has asked women about their life-time experience of violence. Yet, there is every reason to believe that the rate of violence remains as worrisome as ever. According to the survey:

One in two Canadian women experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16.



One in three Canadian women experienced assault by a spouse or partner.

Four in ten women experienced a sexual assault.

We know very well that the numbers increase when we look at specific populations. A United Nations special report on Violence against women in Canada found that due to institutional discrimination, Indigenous women are more likely to experience violence just by being Indigenous. The report found that Indigenous women are physically and sexually assaulted almost three times more often than non-Indigenous women. They also experience intimate partner violence at higher rates and are about seven times more likely to be killed by a serial killer (Bellrichard, 2018).

Surviving such a traumatic experience can have lifelong impacts on a person's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health – that is, if she is lucky enough to survive it. In Canada, women still have every reason to fear death within the context of an abusive relationship. To put it in perspective, there were 344 murder-suicides in Canada between 2001 and 2011, of which more than three-quarters (77%) involved at least one victim that was related to the accused (Sinha, 2013b).

Even now, women in Canada continue to be killed in domestic violence situations. This news story on January 15, 2018, highlights the issue:

Peel Regional Police say the three women killed in apparent acts of domestic violence in a three-hour period on Friday night and Saturday morning equals the total number of women killed in homicides in the region in all of 2017.

Thirty-two-year-old Baljit Thandi and her mother, 60-year-old Avtar Kaur, were found stabbed to death in the family's home on Starhill Crescent in Brampton at around 10:45 p.m. Friday. Thandi's husband, 29-year-old Dalwinder Singh, has been charged with two counts of second-degree murder.

In the other case, 61-year-old Elaine Bellevue was found stabbed to death and her teenage daughter was also injured in the family's home on Marmac Crescent in Mississauga early Saturday morning. Bellevue's 61-year-old husband Bob Bellevue was taken to hospital after an altercation with police. He was charged with first-degree murder and attempted murder.

A 71-year-old Indian-Canadian woman, a domestic violence survivor herself who did not want to be identified on camera, told Global News many women in her community, often newcomers to Canada, will not seek help — even if they fear for their lives.

"The community itself will discard you, it's very few people who will come to your help and encourage you to remain in the shelter and to help you out," she said, explaining that anyone who speaks out against their husband is perceived as a traitor.

The woman said there are no shelters catering to Indian-Canadian women in the Greater Toronto Area where their language and culture are understood (McDonald, 2018).

Many women live in terror of their own lives ending this way. Moreover, the risk of homicide increases in the period just before or just after a woman leaves a violent situation. Even for those who are able to escape the abuse, the impacts of violence do not end. In addition to acute injuries that occur during an assault (like fractures, burns, and broken bones), many people who have experienced abuse are left to contend with chronic health issues. These often include physical health issues caused by the abuse (like brain or back injury, gastrointestinal disorders, skin disorders, or chronic pain), mental health issues (including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorders), and sexual health issues (such as sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, or miscarriages). Due to the effects of abuse, survivors will likely also have to bear with absence from school or work, job loss, and social isolation (WHO, 2017).

Forms of Abuse

A common model for understanding the forms of abuse is the Duluth Power and Control Wheel. It highlights the most commonly articulated experiences of abuse against women in intimate partnerships. The Wheel displays power and control at the center, with different forms of abuse connected to that center. This is essential in understanding abuse, because no matter what form it takes, abuse is always an attempt to gain power.

Since its creation in 1984, the Duluth Model has been adapted and used in communities around the world. In different communities, different forms of abuse may be highlighted (e.g., cultural abuse and threat of deportation would be more common in immigrant communities). But the Duluth model consistently locates power and control at the center of abuse within any community.

Power and Control Wheel

Credit: Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802 USA, 218-722-2781. URL http://www.theduluthmodel.org

Someone who is being abused will likely have experienced a number of forms of abuse, though she may not always recognize them as abusive. Often, the abuse has become so normalized and the person experiencing it has become so isolated that she has difficulty recognizing what is happening.

Abuse may be physical, emotional, financial, material, sexual, spiritual, or cultural. The following pages provide some examples of abusive behaviours in each of these categories, in order to help both you and the person you are helping better identify abuse as it is happening.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve any act that causes physical pain or discomfort, whether through direct contact or by deprivation and neglect (Alberta Children and Youth Services, 2008a).

- Pushing, grabbing, or shoving
- Biting, pinching, or spitting
- Hitting, kicking, slapping, or punching
- Use of weapons
- Burning
- Strangulation*
- Trapping her in a room or car, or blocking her from leaving
- Hiding car keys, clothes, or shoes so she cannot leave
- Abandoning her in an unsafe place
- Refusing to help her when she is sick or injured
- Preventing her from using the prescription drugs she needs
- Throwing objects at her

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the "deliberate, calculated infliction of mental or emotional anguish by threat, humiliation, blaming, and/or intimidation" (CIAFV, 2007). Here are a few examples:

- Name calling, put downs, or making her feel as if no one else would ever love her
- Yelling or threatening behaviour
- Acting in a controlling and possessive manner
- Refusing to listen or work together to solve problems
- Frequently criticizing her family or friends
- Not taking seriously her or the things that are important to her
- Manipulating her into feeling like she is crazy for bringing up real issues
- Embarrassing or humiliating her in front of other people
- Threatening to end the relationship if they do not get what they want
- Threatening to kill or hurt themselves if she tries to end the relationship
- Threatening to hurt her, hurt the children, or take the children away from her

* Note: strangulation is a well-documented predictor of future lethal violence (Glass, Laughon, et al, 2007) and should be considered an indicator that the person being abused is at high risk

- Lying or cheating
- Blaming her for all the problems in the relationship and refusing to take accountability for their own bad behaviour
- Making fun of her dreams, desires, interests, culture, religion, gender, heritage, or any other important aspect of who she is
- Controlling who she is allowed to see and what she is allowed to do
- Not allowing her to have privacy
- Spreading hurtful rumors about her
- Emotionally abandoning her
- Convincing her that others will not believe what she is saying
- Telling her that they can kill and bury her, and no one will find her or care that she is missing

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse involves controlling, exploiting, or stealing another person's financial resources, or limiting her ability to access financial resources. It is often used as a way to keep the person being abused dependent on her abusive partner.

- Insisting on controlling all the financial resources (money, property, credit)
- Not allowing her to seek employment or further her education
- Not allowing her to own a bank account or have her own property
- Stealing money or belongings from her or her family members
- Using the family money to support an addiction to drugs, alcohol, or gambling
- Taking her paycheque or money without permission
- Withholding money so she cannot pay for food, rent, clothes, or other things she needs for herself and the children
- Making her sign documents to sell her property or change her will
- Exploiting her household labour to serve all members of his extended family

Material Abuse

Material abuse involves damaging another person's belongings or home with the intent to induce fear or gain power:

- Destroying her clothes or special keepsakes
- Punching holes in the wall in order to make her feel afraid
- Attacking or threatening to harm family pets
- Destroying her phone so she cannot call for help

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse refers to any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent. In order for consent to be voluntary, it cannot include using threats, force, or manipulation to get someone to engage in sexual activity. Sexual abuse can also include unwanted sexual behaviours or communication directed at someone with the intention of attacking their sexuality. Some examples of sexual abuse are as follows:

- Sexual contact when she is unconscious, sleeping, drunk, or under the influence of drugs (unable to make a decision about sex)
- Taking sexual pictures or videos without consent
- Sending or sharing sexual pictures or videos without consent
- Sexual name-calling
- Forcing her to watch sex between others or forcing her to watch pornography
- Forcing her to engage in sexual activity she does not want. (Note: even if someone has agreed to sexual activity in the past, it does not mean that consent is ongoing. In order for consent to be valid, it must be given freely at each new sexual encounter.)
- Exposing her to sexually-transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy by refusing to use protection such as condoms
- Engaging in humiliating, degrading, or painful sexual acts
- Forcing her to have an abortion, or forcing repeated pregnancies to bear sons in the family

Cultural/Spiritual/Religious Abuse

Cultural abuse can include the manipulation of culture to justify abuse. Alternatively, it can involve manipulating or forcing another person to transgress or abandon cultural practices that are important to them (Douglas & Chapple, 2018). Doing so can further isolate the person being abused and make her more dependent on the abusive person. Likewise, spiritual or religious abuse may involve the misuse of spirituality or religion to harm another person. Or, it could involve forcing them to abandon spiritual or religious practices.

Clearly, people can be spiritual and not follow any formal religious doctrine, while for others, the two are intrinsically linked. Likewise, there are many different ways of practicing any one religion. So within this broad category, some examples of abuse are the following:

- Forbidding her involvement in spiritual or cultural practices, including ceremonies
- Not allowing her to attend religious institutions (e.g., mosques, churches) that are important to her
- Forcing her to adopt cultural practices that are in conflict with her own
- Manipulating spiritual teachings in order to justify the abuse
- Preventing her from wearing clothing prescribed by her culture
- Using sacred scripture to force an abused person to stay in an abusive relationship
- Forcing her to transgress other cultural obligations or prohibitions

Exposure as a Form of Abuse

If a woman who is experiencing abuse has children, it is very likely that they have witnessed the abuse. Even if they have not, they will have picked up on the fear, tension, and stress in the household, and will likely be suffering many of the same psychological impacts as someone who was directly experiencing abuse. They may have heard sounds of violence and fear, and learned to stay quiet out of fear. The Government of Canada recognizes that exposure to abuse is in itself a form of abuse (Alberta Children and Youth Services, 2008b).

Abuse in Immigrant Communities

In addition to the forms of abuse outlined above, immigrant women may experience some specific forms of abuse related to their immigration status (IRCNFF, n.d.; BWSS, 2010). For example:

- Making her believe the system does not favour women, and particularly women who are not citizens
- Threatening to destroy her passport or legal papers
- Threatening to take her children out of Canada, back to the country of origin
- Promising to sponsor her but stopping the process of sponsorship, or never truly beginning it
- Threatening to report her, her children, or her family to immigration

In rare cases, women in immigrant communities may also experience forms of abuse by their spouse (BWSS, 2010) such as:

- Forcing her to have an abortion, or forcing repeated pregnancies to bear sons in the family

- Manipulating religion and cultural beliefs in order to justify the abuse
- Exploiting her household labour to serve all members of the extended family

There are also systemic barriers and challenges that make an abusive situation even more dangerous for an immigrant woman. To truly understand the reality of abuse as it shows up in the life of an immigrant woman, it is important to understand the barriers and challenges specific to immigration.

As a result of immigration, women are:

- **More isolated.** Immigrant women are quite often separated from a protective family and community, and unsure how to access community in Canada. While isolation is a common experience for all immigrant women, it is going to be even more serious for refugee women. Because refugees are typically leaving violent situations, a woman's friends and family in her home country may be missing or dead. Her abusive partner then becomes her only source of support.

- **Under personal duress.** As women adjust to the intensity and stress of building a new life in Canada (financial pressure, adjusting to minority status, underemployment and poverty, culture shock), they may have fewer resources to deal with an abusive situation.

- **Facing systemic barriers.** Barriers to accessing supportive services include not speaking the language, not knowing how to use transportation services, not having access to a vehicle, and not having access to childcare. She may also be unfamiliar with how the law works (e.g., regarding sponsorship), may not know how to access services, may be scared to access services, may not be employed, or may not have the skills to complete a resume and find employment. All these things can make it seem impossible to access help or leave an abusive situation, particularly if she is taking care of children or other dependent family members.

- **Experience of discrimination.** Immigrant women may also be reluctant to seek help in Canada due to previous experiences of racism and discrimination. These experiences may leave them feeling they will not be believed and as a result, many women end up staying in situations they otherwise might not tolerate. Mainstream services do not always understand the unique challenges faced by women in immigrant communities, and can be inaccessible to many.

Clearly, the challenges of western culture can play a part in perpetuating abuse. Part of a truly contextual approach is to recognize how our society makes it more difficult for certain women to access support and ultimately escape the abuse they are facing. In addition to these systemic barriers, women in immigrant communities face specific types of abuse, including *forced marriage*, *fraudulent international marriage*, *international child abduction*, and *abuse by sponsor*.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is one where a person is made to marry against her wishes or without her consent. This includes situations where consent was not freely given but gained through pressure, blackmailing, deliberate misinformation and manipulation, force, or threats of force. Forced marriages are distinct from arranged marriages, which are respectfully arranged by family based on compatibility of the prospective spouses, and do not involve force or fraud.

Fraudulent International Marriage

Fraudulent international marriage describes a situation where a Canadian permanent resident or citizen goes abroad and misrepresents himself in order to marry. In some situations, sponsors have abused their foreign-born spouses to extort money in the name of dowry.* In other cases, foreign-born spouses have entered marriages to gain entry into Canada.

International Child Abduction

International child abduction involves removing a child from the care of a parent or legal guardian without that adult's permission or knowledge. For immigrant women in abusive relationships, one situation they may worry about is that their spouse will abduct the children and take them back to the home country. This can happen as a way to demonstate power and take revenge, and it is illegal.

In some cultures, fathers may have more rights to children than mothers. The person using abusive behaviours may try to manipulate that cultural norm to separate a mother from her children and send the children to paternal grandparents in the home country.

*Dowry is "a transfer of parental property, gifts or money at the marriage of a daughter" Dowry. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowry.

Abuse by Sponsor

Unfortunately, dependence on a spouse for sponsorship can put women at higher risk for intimate partner violence. When working with women in immigrant communities, it is important to understand that sponsorship is often used by the abusive partner to keep the woman in the relationship. Some women wait for years for the sponsorship applications to be filled, confined in the relationship with false promises that it will be done "soon." Abusive partners have also told some women that they must stay in the marriage in order to have permanent residency in Canada. This is not true. A sponsorship application must be filled out, and once permanent residency is attained, her spouse cannot force her to leave the country, even if she decides to leave the relationship (BWSS, 2010).

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Chapter 2
Clearing Up Some Misconceptions about Abuse

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER defined intimate partner violence as "a systematic pattern of abusive behaviours within a relationship that is characterized by intimacy, dependency or trust." A "systematic pattern" means that it occurs deliberately, over time.

Abuse Does Not Happen By Mistake

One common mistake is to believe that abuse happens by accident. To suggest that the person using abusive behaviours "didn't mean to do it" is to completely discount the reality of the person experiencing abuse. What is more, it misunderstands the nature of abuse. Abuse does not happen because someone loses control. It happens because one person is trying to gain control over another. So, to be clear:

> *Abuse does not happen by accident. It is a deliberate way of gaining power over another person.*

Claiming that they simply "lost control in the heat of the moment" is one way people justify their abusive behaviour. People who abuse characteristically deny the responsibility for their abuse, even blaming this so called "loss of control" on the person they are abusing.

All this talk of losing control masks the true nature of abuse, which is calculated, conscious, and purposeful. It is repeated over time and follows a well-established pattern. If it were truly a loss of control, we would see the abusive person acting chaotically in all areas of their life. But people who abuse do not use abusive behaviours with superiors at work or in their communities. They know how to behave in public and have no problem "controlling their tempers" in situations that require it. Only within the context of the abusive relationship do they unleash their controlling behaviours. As Lundy Bancroft points out, "Abusers are far more conscious of what they are doing than they appear to be" (2014a, p. 75).

Abuse Is Not an Anger Management Problem

Historically, abuse has been treated as if it is an "anger management problem." But research and experience has shown that this is not the case. The person using abusive behaviour acts "angry" with their partner, but has no problem acting respectfully when doing otherwise would have serious consequences (e.g., with a boss, in the community, at a faith centre). Individuals who actually do have trouble

managing their anger will display such issues in all areas of their lives, not just in their intimate relationships.

Program follow-up has shown that people who abuse can successfully complete anger management programs but may continue to use abusive behaviours. The only difference is that they will abuse in a more sophisticated and insidious way that is less obvious to an outside observer. They have learned how to appear calm, and use psychological language to make themselves look good to an untrained observer. It then becomes harder for the person being abused to gain help and for others to understand what is happening. In this way, it is easy for well-meaning service providers who do not understand the nature of abuse to do more harm than good. Abuse is not an anger management problem, and cannot be treated with anger management programs.

> Abuse does not happen by accident. It is a deliberate way of gaining power over another person.

Abuse Is Not Caused by a Substance Use Issue

Abuse is not caused by substance abuse problems, either. Sometimes drugs or alcohol can exacerbate abusive tendencies and increase risk to the person being abused, but they are not the root issue. Again, program follow-up demonstrates that a person who uses abusive behaviours can successfully attain sobriety, but they will continue to abuse if the issues of power and control are not addressed. Many people who abuse do not use substances at all, and some people who are abused use substances to cope with the abuse.

The Real Problem – Entitlement

So if anger is not the issue and neither is substance use, what is the real problem? The answer is *entitlement*. People who use abusive behaviours believe that they are more important than the other person in the relationship and deserve special treatment. When the other person demonstrates needs of their own, the entitled person reacts as if something has been taken away from them, and does everything in their power to take it back.

How Change Occurs

An entitled worldview is incredibly self-serving and difficult to change. When someone has spent their whole life believing that they are more important than other people and the world owes them something, there is usually little motivation to embark on the difficult road of accountability and behavioural change. This is why abuse does not simply get better with time. For change to occur, the abusive person needs to take on a serious commitment to change and access professional supports designed to address issues of power and control.

As you can see, accountability for abuse in a relationship lies with the person using the abusive behaviour, not with the person experiencing it. We know that people who use abusive behaviours will continue to abuse in their relationships until and unless they are ready to take accountability and seek professional support. It is not a matter of finding the right person, drinking less, or dealing with their anger. At the root, their power and control issues must be addressed.

Love & Abuse Cannot Coexist

Another prevalent myth about abuse is that it stems from love. Partners who use abusive behaviour may claim, "It's because I love her so much," or "I wouldn't do this if I didn't care." They often make such claims when taken to task for their actions. Often, abusive partners will pair seemingly loving statements (such as "I'm doing this because I care about you") with abusive actions. They even will say things that are in direct contradiction to what is happening. (For example, saying "I would never hurt you" or "You're safe with me" while they are doing something quite hurtful). When paired together, love and abuse can become confused. Over time, people who are being abused can start to question their own sense of reality and understanding of love, adopting a belief that this is happening to them because of love. Yet, author bell hooks reminds us to understand love as separate from abuse:

> *When we understand love as the will to nurture our own and another's spiritual growth, it becomes clear that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful and abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist. Abuse and neglect are, by definition, the opposites of nurturance and care* (hooks, 2000, pp. 5-6).

The idea that abuse is not love may seem obvious, but we still subscribe to it in various ways. Many individuals in abusive relationships are given bad advice to stay in an abusive relationship from well-meaning relatives who believe love will prevail. Often, women are told, "He loves you – you just need to stick by him."

Unfortunately, as we now know, abuse does not change without intervention, and it tends to escalate over time. Despite a partner's efforts to "love more," when a relationship lacks respect (as all abusive relationships do), abuse will continue to occur.

The idea that "love conquers all" is as dangerous as it is commonplace. Author Mark Manson points out the real problem in this idyllic thinking:

> In 1967, John Lennon wrote a song called, "All You Need is Love." He also beat both of his wives, abandoned one of his children, verbally abused his gay Jewish manager with homophobic and anti-semitic slurs, and once had a camera crew film him lying naked in his bed for an entire day.
>
> Thirty-five years later, Trent Reznor from Nine Inch Nails wrote a song called "Love is Not Enough." Reznor, despite being famous for his shocking stage performances and his grotesque and disturbing videos, got clean from all drugs and alcohol, married one woman, had two children with her, and then cancelled entire albums and tours so that he could stay home and be a good husband and father....
>
> When we believe that "all we need is love," then like Lennon, we're more likely to ignore fundamental values such as respect, humility and commitment towards the people we care about. After all, if love solves everything, then why bother with all the other stuff — all of the *hard* stuff? (Manson, 2014).

Plainly, when it comes to understanding the causes of abuse, there are a number of misconceptions held by the general public and helping professionals alike. Unfortunately, treatment based on these misconceptions has not only been ineffective – it has caused profound harm. To assist individuals experiencing abuse, we need to root our services in a solid understanding of the factors underlying that abuse. To review:

Abuse does not happen by accident. It is a deliberate way of gaining power over another person.

Abuse is not an anger management problem and cannot be treated with anger management programs.

Abuse is not caused by a substance use issue.

In order for change to occur, the abusive person needs to make a serious commitment to change, and access professional supports designed to address issues of power and control.

Abuse is not love.

When the true causes of abuse are understood, it is clear that abuse is never caused by the person experiencing it. Some people may wish to believe "the relationship is just toxic" or that both people are contributors, but even when the abusive relationship ends, the abusive person is very likely to continue abusing in future relationships. Unless he commits to a path of change, he is likely to repeat his behaviours with other partners. It also means **he is likely to act in abusive ways toward his children**.

An Abusive Person is Not a Good Parent

The truth of this statement is obvious to some women in abusive relationships, and they may already have seen it happen. Others are convinced their abusive partners "would never hurt the children." But again and again research has confirmed that the risk of abuse to children is high when a spouse has been abused. Even when the abusive parent never physically abuses a child, it is likely that emotional abuse is ongoing: they are not able to provide the safe, loving home that a child deserves.

So why is it so hard to see the connection between intimate partner violence and child abuse, both for the women experiencing it, and for service providers? Some abusive men can act like good fathers for a time, and even convince those to whom they are closest that they would never hurt their children. Let's examine that.

When an abusive person acts like a good parent, it is often a manipulation tactic to make themselves look good, and perhaps even make their partners look bad by comparison. They may buy a lot of gifts for the children or take them on expensive trips. They play this role for a time so they can gain custody or access and then they use the children to continue abusing their partner. For example:

- telling the children lies about their mother in an attempt to turn them against her.
- deliberately neglecting the children as a way to hurt her (e.g., not bathing them or changing them while they are in his care).
- using the children to gain information about their mother in order to enable stalking behaviours.
- using pick-up and drop-offs as a chance to abuse her emotionally.

A man who abuses his children's mother is not a good father. A good parent is a good role model, and that means treating the child's mother with respect and dignity. An abusive person does not do this. Further, because entitlement and control are so integral to the worldview of an abusive person, it is practically impossible for him to put his children's interests ahead of his own.

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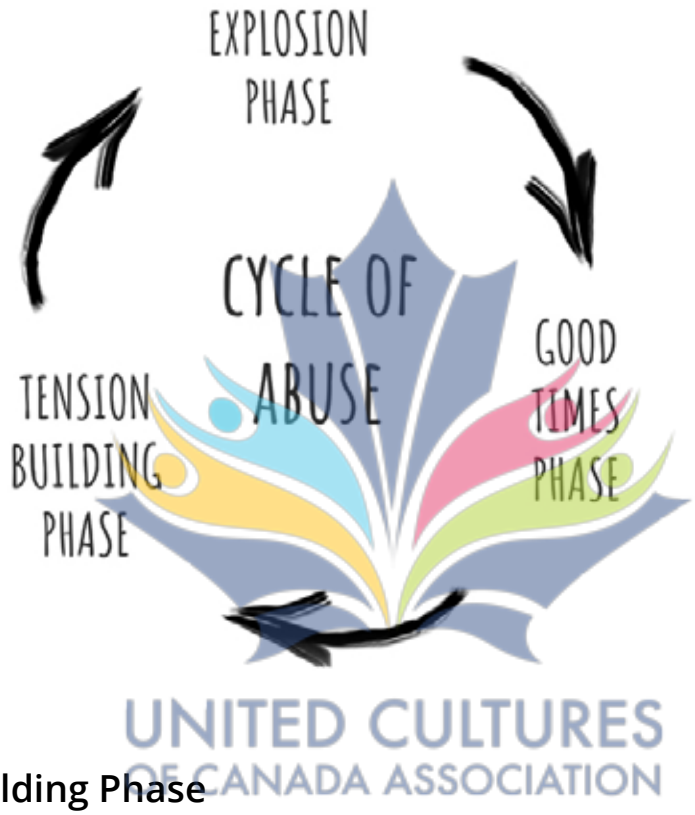
Chapter 3
The Cycle of Abuse

HAVING CLEARED UP SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS about abuse, let's explore what abuse looks like over time. The Cycle of Abuse was developed in 1979 by Lenore E. Walker to explain patterns of behaviour in an abusive relationship. After interviewing many individuals who had experienced abuse, she found that abuse tends to pass through the same three phases, again and again, as depicted and described below.



Credit: Nicole Perry, Feminist Counsellor Edmonton, adapted from Walker (1979). *The Battered Woman.* New York: Harper & Row.

Tension Building Phase

During this phase, the person being abused may feel they are walking on eggshells. It is as if everything they say or do – no matter how cautious they are – only makes things worse. The person who is abusive becomes increasingly controlling and difficult to be around. The person being abused often has a feeling something bad is about to happen, but is powerless to stop it.

Explosion Phase

The Explosion Phase is the acute incidence of abuse, which may take any form. For example, the abusive person may empty the bank account, destroy shared property, create chaos by yelling and threatening harm to self, or assault his partner sexually and physically.

Good Times Phase

Walker initially identified two parts in this phase - reconciliation and then calm. Depiction as a single phase is preferable because the Good Times Phase encompasses a wide range of possible behaviours. These behaviours may include apologies, promises to change, promises that it will never happen again, and shows of affection. Sometimes, these shows of affection will be over the top – buying gifts the abusive person cannot afford or making elaborate displays. Other times, the abusive person will simply act as if nothing has happened. The person being abused may wake up the next morning and wonder, "Did that really happen?" Everything has returned to normal – there is almost no sign of what happened just a few hours ago. In this phase, the person using abusive behaviour is likely to minimize or even deny the abuse outright, a form of emotional manipulation. (See "Mental Health and Emotional Impacts," p. 30.) The person using abusive behaviour may also self-harm or threaten suicide as a way to induce sympathy and to keep the abused person in the relationship.

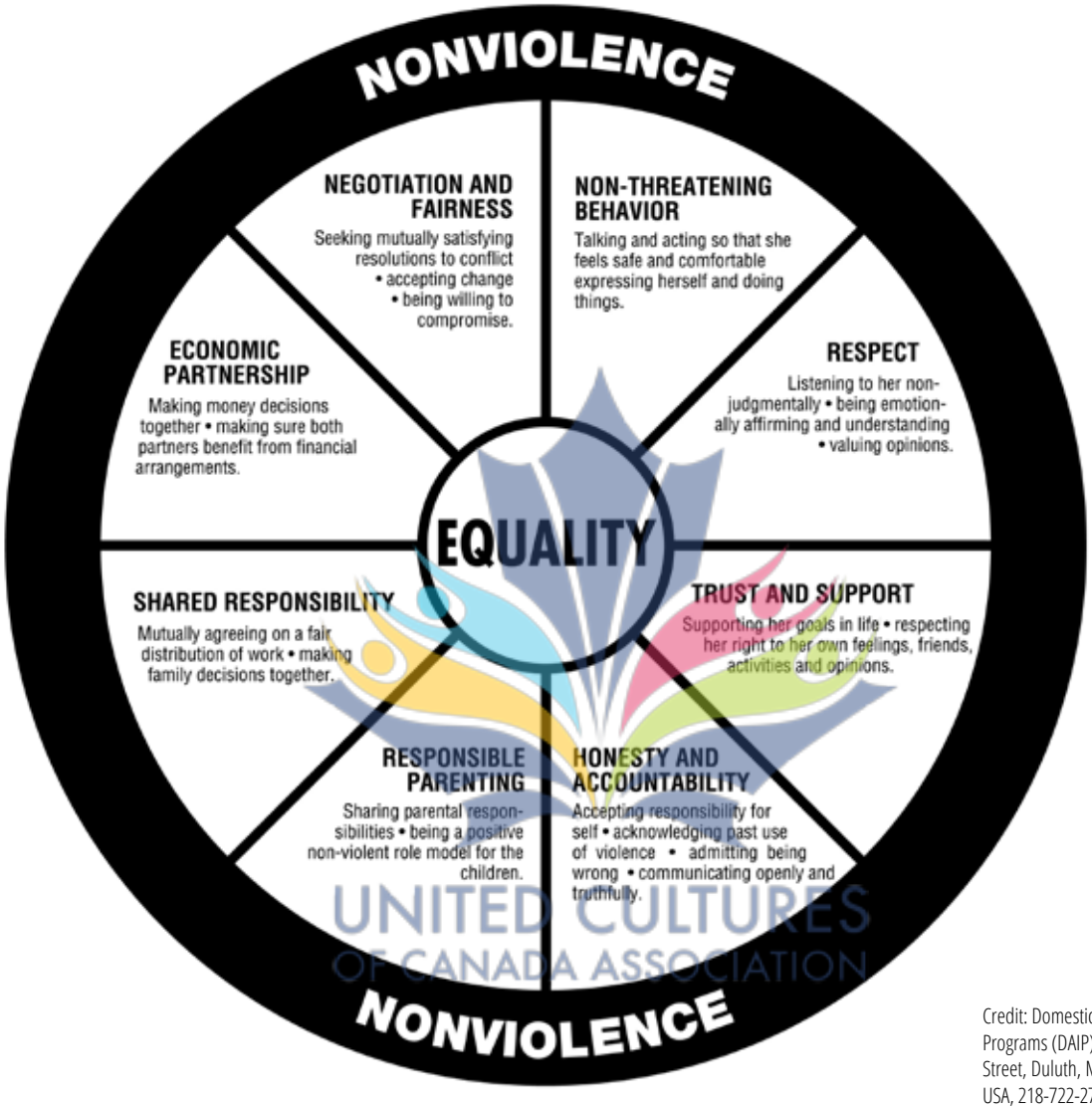
There are a few other key points to keep in mind about the cycle of abuse:

- The violence tends to escalate or get worse over time.
- The Explosion Phase happens more frequently.
- The Good Times Phase shortens until it disappears.
- The cycle will not stop without intervention.

Healthy Relationships

Finally, it is worthwhile to briefly touch on a definition of "healthy relationships." The reason is that once people in abusive relationships start to recognize the signs of abuse, they may start to wonder what a healthy relationship actually looks and feels like – they may never have experienced one. At the very least, healthy relationships are free from abuse of all kinds. Yet, it is not enough to say that a healthy relationship is one that is free from abuse. A healthy relationship is built on mutual respect, trust, and safety. One way we can help women who are experiencing abuse is by gaining a deep understanding of the elements of a healthy relationship. The Duluth Equality Wheel locates equality at the center of healthy relationships.

Equality Wheel



Credit: Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802 USA, 218-722-2781. URL http://www.theduluthmodel.org

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Chapter 4 Understanding the Effects of Abuse & Barriers to Leaving

IT CAN BE HARD FOR MOST PEOPLE to understand why someone experiencing abuse would stay in an abusive relationship. In fact, a complex web of challenges make the process of leaving difficult if not impossible for so many women. This chapter is about some of the major barriers that women face when trying to access support and get safely away from the abuse.

When encountering someone in an abusive situation, it is important to recognize that they are already doing everything in their power to end the abuse. From the outside, it is easy to judge what someone else should be doing; what we do not see is everything they are already doing just to survive. This may start with attempting to get through the day or make the abusive person stop abusing. Later, some women reach out to family and friends or get professional support. That being said, it is also true that some women never leave the relationship; they only become free of it when either they or their spouse dies.

One of the major factors leading women to stay in abusive relationships may be that they simply devote all their energy to survival. Experiencing abuse is traumatic in nature. So even when an abusive event is over, the impact of that event is not. The woman may be left with traumatic symptoms (such as hypervigilance, nightmares, and flashbacks) that greatly impact her ability to function day to day, in many cases even leading to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many women will not understand their symptoms, or they may feel ashamed for being unable to "keep it together." As a service provider, it is important to understand some of the impacts of trauma.

The Trauma Response, Explained

While space does not permit an in-depth explanation of trauma, this manual can put into context what a person experiencing abuse may be going through. Trauma results from experiences that overwhelm a person's capacity to cope. We may experience trauma after a single event like a car accident or assault, or as a result of a chronically frightening situation like living in poverty or experiencing intimate partner violence.

Our bodies are very well adapted to respond to life-threatening situations. As Peter Levine explains, "When a situation is perceived to be life-threatening, both body and mind will mobilize a vast amount of energy in preparation to fight or escape – that's why this is known as the "fight or flight [or freeze]" response" (2005, p. 27). This is a healthy, adaptive response that allows us to survive dangerous situations.

Unfortunately for many, the "fight, flight, or freeze" response seems to continue after the threat is no longer present. In other words, even after a particular abusive incident is over or the person has left an abusive relationship, they may continue to feel afraid and unsafe. Their body continues to release adrenaline and cortisol, locking them in the stress-response cycle. Instead of returning to normal functioning, they still feel under threat of attack, as if the worst is about to happen. When someone is stuck in the stress-response cycle, trauma can begin to take over.

Effects of Trauma

A person who has experienced trauma may be impacted in some of the following ways:

- re-experiencing abuse through nightmares, intrusive thoughts, or flashbacks
- physical reactions when reminded of trauma (e.g., heart racing, panic attacks, uncontrollable breathing)
- hypervigilance, fear, anxiety, racing thoughts, and being easily startled
- feeling angry, frustrated, tense, and overly reactive
- difficulty remembering, or feeling hazy and clouded
- physical manifestations of stress such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, chronic pain, or extreme fatigue
- trouble with sleeping, concentration, or appetite

Some of the effects of trauma may be less obviously connected to the abuse, and are worth explaining:

- **Feelings of shame and low self worth**. Many people experience this because part of emotional abuse involves a constant attack on a person's worth and sense of themselves. No matter how strong a person is, eventually these attacks become unbearable.

- **Avoiding certain people, places, or memories** that remind her of the abuse. Such avoidance is not always done consciously. Sometimes a person may find themselves steering clear of certain places without making the connection as to why that would be. It may be a distant reminder of the abuse they went through.

- **Feelings of despair and hopelessness**. These feelings arise because violence is outside her control, and no matter what she does, it does not get better. (Very likely, it is getting worse.)

- **Feeling as though the future will be cut short**. Even after someone has left an abusive relationship, the impact of trauma can make it hard to see a life ahead. This is especially the case if the person is reliving painful past experiences through traumatic flashbacks.

- **Self-harm**. Typically, self-harm is a way to try to manage and cope with overwhelming feelings such as those experienced by people suffering from PTSD. This is different than wanting to die by suicide, though some people experiencing abuse have this as well, especially if they are feeling hopeless.

- **Addictive behaviours**. Like self-harm, addictive behaviours (like food, drinking, and drug use) are typically employed as a way to cope with overwhelming experiences. The pain may be so unbearable that the person feels they can only escape from it by numbing out. It is important to be compassionate with someone who is using addictive behaviours to cope – it may be all they can do to survive.

- **Feeling shut down, frozen, or numb**. This is connected to the freeze response, and may be the only way the person continues to survive the horror of their situation. As a result, they may appear disconnected, distant, or cut off, even from the people closest to them. Truthfully, they are disconnected from themselves, and so may have a hard time knowing what they need. Their emotions seem muted and may not match the situation they are describing.

A Note on Survival Instincts

When moved to fight, flight, or freeze, keep in mind that these happen through *instinct* rather than choice, and all are valid responses to a threat. Whether we fight back, flee, or freeze, it is a way the human body has evolved to deal with life-threatening situations.

When under threat from an intimate partner, some women resist and fight back. Some flee. Many women freeze. They try to keep the peace and make things as safe as possible within the relationship. It is as if their bodies instinctively know that this is the safest option. Unfortunately, the reality is that if they fought back or tried to run away, he might increase his violence in an attempt to gain control.

Many women are hard on themselves for not "fighting back." Other people may have been hard on them, too. Helping professionals or others who are not trauma-informed might naively ask, "Why didn't you leave?" This only adds to the

shame a woman already feels as part of her experience of abuse. Now, in addition to everything else, she may feel that her body has failed her.

All the above are survival strategies, instinctively employed and consciously continued by women as a way to ensure their own survival and that of their children. From the outside, staying in the abusive relationship can sometimes look like a lack of response or "doing nothing." Yet, as many women unfortunately know, sometimes the only way to keep children safe is to remain in the home, protecting them. They may also recognize the barriers to providing adequate and safe care for children when faced with the realities of poverty and housing, or expulsion from family and community – an additional challenge that some immigrant women face.

There are more barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, but first let's look at other effects of abuse. This will help clarify how abuse might be impacting a client.

Other Effects of Abuse

In addition to the effects of trauma we described above, a person experiencing abuse will typically endure:

- mental health and emotional impacts
- financial, housing, and career-related impacts
- social and community-based impacts
- sexual and physical health impacts
- impacts on the children

There is literally no area of a woman's life that is not affected by the abuse. Cyclically, the effects of the abuse also have a direct impact on the woman's ability to leave.

Mental Health and Emotional Impacts

In addition to PTSD, abuse is associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and addiction issues. Some of the most serious impacts are the result of an emotional abuse tactic called "gaslighting." Gaslighting is where one person deliberately tries to make another doubt their reality or feel crazy. The abusive person tries to make the woman doubt her own memory, perception, and sanity. It is one of the most common forms of abuse, and one of the most powerful. The person using abusive behaviour will question the memory of the person

they are abusing, tell other people how "crazy" they are, and even outright deny an abusive incident ever happened (e.g., "I never said that," or, "You must have had a bad dream").

Despite what you may think, it is not a tactic that is easily detected. The denial of reality begins slowly, is done with a straight face, and throws a person off or confuses them. Over time, the lies and manipulation become so pervasive that the person being abused does not know what to believe. As a result, women begin to doubt themselves and their memory of the abuse. It is more than confusing – it is devastating for them to feel as if they cannot trust their own perception of reality.

As a result of gaslighting, many women stay in the relationship, believing that the abuse is not that bad after all or that it is somehow their fault. They do not know whom they can trust and, if the abusive person is convincing enough, they may even begin to believe that they are the abusive one in the relationship.

Financial, Housing, & Career-Related Impacts

One way many people abuse their partners is by emptying joint bank accounts. The abusive person may use the money to support a gambling addiction, careless spending, or simply as a means to control the person being abused. As a result, many women who experience abuse are left with little to nothing as they try to forge a new life. It may be difficult if not impossible for a woman experiencing financial abuse to save enough money for a damage deposit on a rental property in order for her to escape the abusive environment.

Even worse, women may be left with huge debts that their partners have incurred. For the next decade of their lives, women can find themselves having to pay off debts in the tens of thousands of dollars built up by a former spouse. This is just one of the devastating ways an abusive partner can continue to impact someone years after their relationship has ended. Other women have abusive partners who insist on controlling all aspects of household finances, making it very hard to save money or gain financial literacy.

The financial impacts of abuse are far-reaching. Many women end up having to take leave from work, or significantly decrease their working hours because of the abuse. And it becomes a vicious circle. The abuse impacts their financial security, and then poverty and homelessness put them at risk of further abuse.

Social and Community-Based Impacts

Isolation is another tactic of abuse, and many people experiencing abuse are less likely to participate in activities or spend time with friends and family. This might be due to feelings of shame, fear of retaliation, or to cover up the abuse. Due to their isolation, they may worry that they will not get the support they need to leave, and that they will become even more isolated as a result of the separation. Unfortunately, if divorce is socially unacceptable in a woman's community, she may be ostracized even when the relationship she leaves is an abusive one.

After separation, the abuse may continue via proxy. For example, the abusive person may spread lies about the former partner in order to make it harder for her to retain connections or access support. The abusive person may contact future partners of the abused person and threaten them or tell them lies about that person.

In terms of broader social impacts, the prevalence of intimate partner violence would suggest that all of us have all been affected by it. It is highly likely that each of us has either encountered someone affected by intimate partner violence, or experienced it ourselves. Certainly, to witness abuse as a child can have long-lasting psychological impacts similar to the aforementioned effects of abuse and trauma. Moreover, hearing about trauma as a supporter can lead to vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, or burnout.

Sexual and Physical Health Impacts

Women in controlling relationships almost always experience some form of sexual coercion, pressure, or manipulation. It can be safely assumed that many women in abusive relationships are suffering the effects of sexual trauma, even if they are not talking about it. After experiencing sexual violence, many people find it impacts future sexual relationships. They may experience flashbacks, feelings of being unsafe, or feelings of shame even in future intimate situations that are healthy. Reclaiming their sexuality and healthy relationship with their bodies may take years after a woman has left an abusive relationship.

Sometimes the impacts of sexual abuse are lifelong. When an abusive partner has refused to practice safe sex and use protection, a woman may be the recipient of a sexually-transmitted infection (STI). This may make it harder for her to pursue future sexual relationships, especially if her abusive partner makes her feel ashamed of it. If the abusive partner refuses to use protection, it may also result

in unwanted pregnancies that may further entrap the woman in a cycle of poverty and dependence on the relationship.

Strangulation is often used by abusive people during a sexual assault and during a physical assault. Fifty-five percent of those who access shelter services for abused women in Alberta report at least one incidence of strangulation (Cairns & Hoffart, 2009). Strangulation can lead to short- and long-term injuries including cardiac arrest, miscarriage, respiratory arrest, stroke, brain injury, vision issues, hearing issues, seizures, swallowing, and speaking issues (Utley, 2014; domesticshelters.org, 2016).

In terms of their physical health, women who experience a physical assault may suffer from broken bones and head or back injuries that impact them through their entire lives. As a result of assault and/or living with trauma, abuse survivors are also more likely to suffer from certain neurological conditions, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, intestinal and digestive conditions, and reproductive issues (Florida State University, 2014).

One reproductive and physical health issue that is often overlooked is the prevalence of physical assault while a woman is pregnant. When a woman becomes pregnant, this is one of the most dangerous times for her to be in an abusive relationship (Campo, 2015). Someone who uses abusive behaviour may see the new life growing inside his partner as a threat and often act out his control by assaulting her and potentially causing a miscarriage. For women who have experienced such inconceivable loss, it is nearly impossible to think about finding the strength to leave. All they can do is get through the day.

Impacts on the Children

One of the most appalling aspects of our legal system is that fathers who subject a child's mother to abusive behaviours are often still granted custody access after the woman has left the relationship. The courts do not see abuse of the mother as a risk factor for abuse of the children, despite a mountain of evidence to the contrary (Bancroft, 2014b). So, in many cases, a woman who has found the courage to leave an abusive relationship will have to leave her children unsupervised with her abusive ex for sometimes days at a time. Facing this exact scenario, many women choose to return to their abusive relationships in order to be present to protect their children.

Being exposed to violence has a number of detrimental impacts, including the following:

- issues with brain development and their ability to learn
- decreased ability to connect with other people and get along with peers
- increased anxiety and fear
- feelings of shame and guilt
- isolation and helplessness
- defiance, aggression, or impulsive behaviour (Alberta Children and Youth Services, 2008b)

As adults, children exposed to family violence are also at higher risk for depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Living in an abusive home will also put them at higher risk for experiencing abuse themselves. In recent years, the landmark Kaiser ACE [Adverse Childhood Experience] Study has raised awareness of early childhood experiences of abuse and the effect they have on later physical and psychological well-being. "ACEs" include all types of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic experiences that occur to individuals under the age of 18. The study examined the relationships between certain experiences during childhood and health outcomes later in life. Specifically, it examined three categories of adverse experience: childhood abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual); household challenges (growing up in a house where there was substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment of a mother or stepmother, parental separation/divorce, or if a member of the household went to prison); and neglect (physical and emotional). Survey respondents received an ACE score between 0 and 10 based on the number of these types of adverse experience to which they reported being exposed.

The results of the study were astounding. It became clear that our childhood experiences have a tremendous, lifelong impact on our health and the quality of our lives. The higher a respondent's ACE score, the more likely it was that they would, as an adult, struggle with lack of physical activity, smoking, alcoholism, drug use, and missed work. It also had an impact on their physical and mental health, with correlations found between a high ACE score and severe obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STIs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and broken bones.

Perhaps most eye-opening in this study was what was revealed about life expectancy. On average, people with six or more ACEs died nearly 20 years earlier than those without ACEs (Veto Violence, n.d.).

The Effects of Abuse May Not be Obvious Right Away

Keep in mind that even if children do not talk about the abuse, they may well be affected by it. They may be confused, scared, ashamed, or unable to distinguish between what is healthy and what is not. Many children living in abusive homes will express a wish that their parents stay together, but this may not actually be what is best for them. Considering all the ways that abuse and exposure to abuse impact them, keeping children in an abusive home is not helpful.

Instead of working to keep the parents together at all costs, it is wiser to support women who are experiencing intimate partner violence. They are the best possible advocates for their children, and best protectors from the impacts of abuse. She can be provided with information and referrals to specialists in the area of family violence so that she will be in the best position to leave the abusive situation. When leaving the abusive home is not possible or not the best available option, there are still ways to support her and minimize the impacts of the abuse on the children.

Understanding Abuse Makes Us Better Practitioners

Given the nature of trauma and the effects of abuse, it is paramount to recognize how women who are subject to it need to be respected, informed, and believed. Safety and trustworthiness are essential to their relationship with a helping professional. At every turn, the practitioner must try to provide opportunities for choice and collaboration. Chapter 5 (p. 39) will discuss ways for practitioners to help people in abusive situations. For now, by understanding the effects of abuse we already can offer clients a higher level of care.

Barriers to Leaving

In and of themselves, the impacts of abuse and the effects of trauma are a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship. Effectively, they make the person being abused believe that they are to blame, and feel deeply ashamed. In addition to this, there are a number of other very real barriers to leaving to consider:

- **Good Times Phase.** Typically, even an abusive relationship is not bad all the time. During the Good Times Phase, the person experiencing abuse may feel hopeful that their partner will change and the abuse will stop. Within a rela-

tionship that no longer has positive times, the people being abused may hold on to memories of the good times, believing that if somehow they could just say or do the right thing (or hold on long enough), the relationship will return to how it used to be.

- **Fear for the woman's safety.** The abusive partner may have threatened to kill her or the children if she leaves. He may also have threatened the lives of any who give her shelter and protection. Such threats induce fear, and fear induces immobility. In some cases abusive partners do follow through with these threats. Statistics show us that leaving is the most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive situation, and so she is right to be afraid (Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness, 2019).

- **Nowhere to go.** In Canada there is a shortage of affordable housing and childcare, and women continue to earn lower wages than men. This may make her financially dependent on the relationship, for her own welfare as well as that of the children. She may also have had no access to money or job training, making the financial realities of living on her own very challenging.

- **Guilt and shame.** She has been made to feel the abuse is her fault, and she may also feel she must stay to fix it. She may feel that there is something wrong with her if she cannot make her marriage work, or that leaving would mean she has failed.

- **Learned helplessness.** By definition, someone who is being abused is powerless to stop it, and those feelings of powerlessness can extend to all areas of her life. She may have a hard time seeing her options or feeling her own power in the situation.

- **Emotional dependency.** One of the tactics of abuse is to isolate a person; so a woman experiencing abuse naturally will become more emotionally dependent on her spouse. She may not feel she has anyone else to turn to for support or advice to help get her through this difficult time.

- **Commitment to the relationship and family.** Many women believe that it is not okay to leave a marriage, or that they must fight for a relationship at all costs. A woman experiencing abuse may have been taught to value loyalty above self-preservation. Religious or cultural beliefs may play a part here, along with family messages from others who are telling her she must stay in the relationship and make it work.

- **Children.** She may be staying in the relationship to protect the children, because she knows that she would not be able to get full custody. She understands that they are safer with her around to watch and step in when needed. On the other hand, she may be subscribing to false beliefs about what is best for the children. It is possible she incorrectly believes that the children are better off in a home with two parents than they would be in a single parent household. We know from the research that ultimately the best situation for children is to not be in a home where abuse is happening.

- **Traumatic bonding**, especially if she and her abusive partner share experiences of trauma or torture in their home country. She may feel sympathetic to what he has gone through and he may also be using it to excuse his behaviour.

- **Legal reasons.** She may be concerned about her immigration status or her ability to gain full custody of the children. For example, some spouses are politically- or economically powerful, and will try to gain custody of the children as a tactic of power and control in order to continue abusing her. She may also have been given false information about her legal rights.

- **Unaware of options/resources.** Many women do not know where they would go if they left, how they would stay safe, or what they would do to support themselves and their children.

- **Losses associated with leaving.** When a woman leaves a relationship, she is not simply leaving the person she is with – often, she is leaving an entire life behind. An abusive partner who is intent on continuing to abuse her even after she has left (as is so often the case) may spread nasty rumors about her. This may cause her to lose connections with her faith community as well as her family members and friends. She will likely also lose the house she was living in and lifestyle associated with it.

Barriers Specific to Immigrant Women

In addition to the above, there are some barriers specific to immigrant women. Of course, immigrant women are just as resourceful as those who are born in Canada. However, any time a person moves to a new country, there is going to be some unfamiliarity with its systems and structures. Research in regard to both immigrant and non-immigrant women notes that lack of awareness of services is a structural barrier to leaving an abusive relationship. An abusive person will often deliberately prevent his partner from gaining knowledge of or access to the

resources with which others may be familiar. Indeed, current research finds that immigrant women report higher perceived risks and barriers to leaving an abusive relationship in comparison to non-immigrant women (Amanor-Boadu, Messing, et al., 2012). An abusive partner knowingly takes advantage of these barriers in order to increase his power. An immigrant woman who is being abused may end up quite isolated from access to information, by reason of the following barriers:

- She may not be familiar with how to use local transit.
- She may not have access to money or may not know how to use the bank in Canada.
- She may not have access to a private phone.
- She may not have access to her identification papers, passports, etc.
- She may not know who to contact in an emergency. (Emergency numbers are different in different countries.)
- She may not be proficient in English or French, the languages of mainstream support systems.
- She may not be familiar with legal systems or resources in Canada.
- She may not have access to her health information. For example, if her spouse controlled her by always driving her and the children to medical appointments, she may not have her health care information.

Additionally, some immigrant women are reluctant to involve police, for a number of reasons:

- Fear of retaliation, blame, or not being believed.
- In their home countries, women may have come to learn that police are unjust, brutal, or on the side of the abuser. They may be the last place a woman would think to turn for help.
- Even in Canada, women may have had experiences with police that were violent or frightening.
- Belief that criminal justice system will be slow, ineffective or insensitive to their needs.
- Lack of awareness of their legal rights.
- Supports are sometimes more traumatizing than helpful – women may have experienced judgment or blame. She may have been told she is at fault, that she somehow is causing the abuse, that she is a bad mother for not protecting kids, etc. (BWSS, 2010).

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Chapter 5
How to Help

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE AND ITS IMPACT on the abused person is a difficult work and requires specialized training. Individuals working to assist newcomers are not expected to offer professional counselling that a trained psychologist would offer. However, settlement professionals share a very special relationship with their clients, characterized by utmost trust and good will, and enjoy a unique status as professionals. It is not surprising that they are often the first ones to receive a disclosure of abuse from their clients. In such situations, as information and referral specialists, they diligently refer their clients to appropriate agencies, make contacts on their behalf, and offer interpretation and other support services. They also accompany their clients to various places and appointments, in order to ease the burden of these challenging situations.

But these situations may demand a lot more from a settlement professional. A client who is in this situation may be too unmotivated or scared to contact an external agency. Some clients may refuse to access external help. Even if they do access external help, most also want their relationship with the settlement professional to continue. They want to report how other interventions have helped or not helped and ask for further directions.

Thus, settlement professionals may stay connected with their client for a much longer time than other intervening professionals and agencies. Settlement professionals may often serve for many years as the primary points of contact between the person experiencing abuse and professional interveners. Without offering professional psychological counselling, they may still provide a lot of emotional support and encouragement to their clients.

The contents of this chapter will be helpful not only to settlement professionals but to anyone (including friends and family) trying to help someone experiencing abuse. This information will help them assess the person's needs better, make more effective referrals, and provide stronger advocacy within the boundaries of their role.

The Old Model: Blame, Shame, & Revictimization

Unfortunately, many women in abusive relationships have reached out for help and then been blamed, shamed, or revictimized in some way. Even as helping professionals with the best of intentions, we need to carefully consider how our beliefs and actions may impact someone who has experienced violence.

In the past, many women who sought help through therapists, religious advisors, or medical professionals encountered a lack of understanding. Helping professionals did not understand the traumatic nature of abuse nor the impact it had on a person. Instead, women met with blaming, judgment-ridden questions, like "Why didn't you just leave? Don't you care about the children?" Overcome by shame, many women felt even more hesitant to reach out for the help they needed. They felt even more alone in their attempts to find safety and stability.

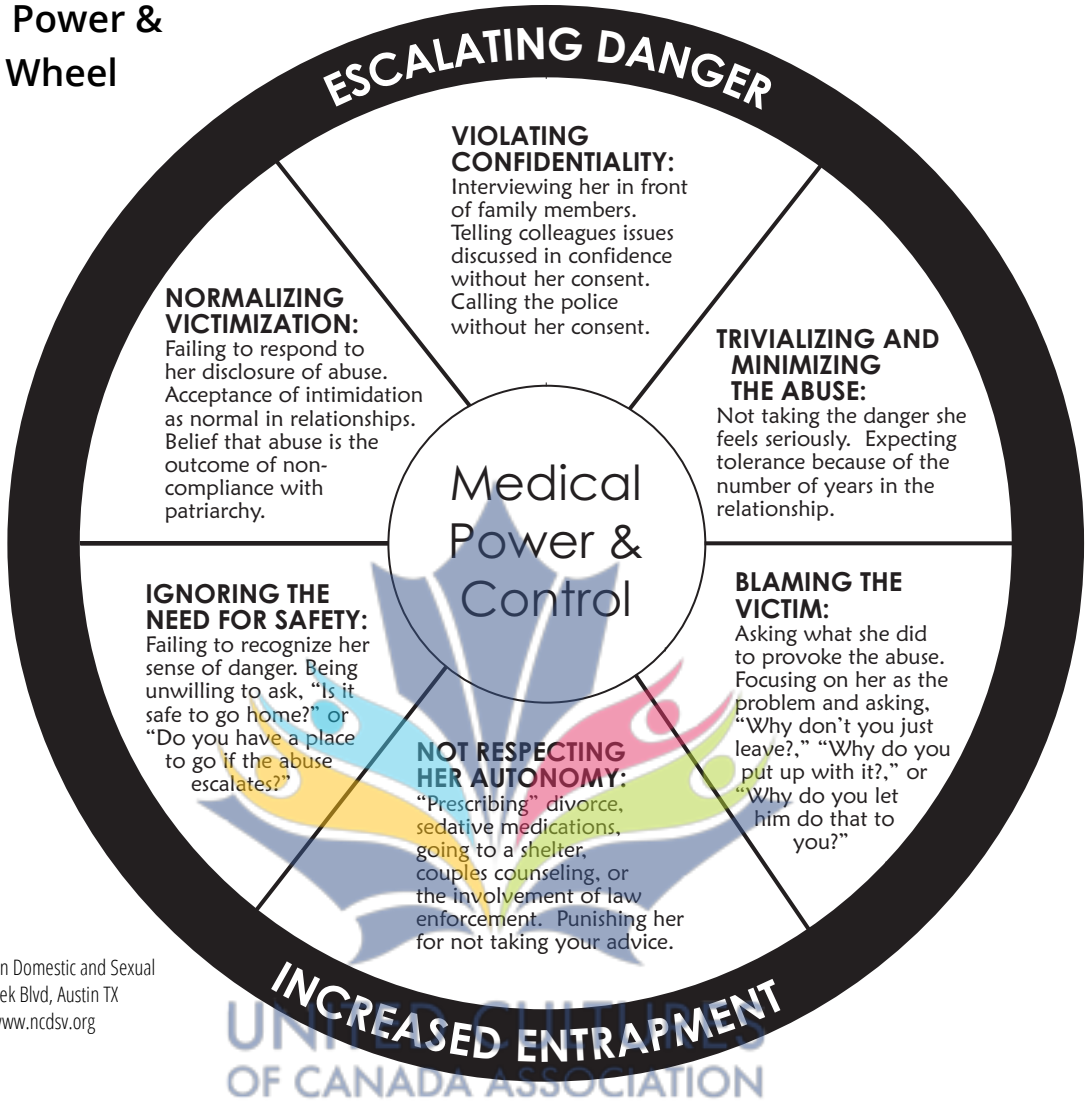
Even as awareness of trauma has increased, helping professionals sometimes remain unaware of how their own actions can contribute to a woman's feelings of powerlessness. For example, many women experiencing violence are immediately given advice on what they should do, how they should do it, and even shamed for not doing it sooner. Although this advice is often given in a well-meaning attempt to help, it usually will leave the recipient feeling disempowered. Inadvertently, the harmful power dynamics in which the person experiencing abuse is already trapped have been recreated. Over the years, such lack of awareness has led many helping professionals to disrespect a woman's autonomy, blame her for the abuse, dismiss her concerns, and violate her consent.

Medical Power & Control Wheel

The Medical Power and Control Wheel (p. 42) was created as a tool of self-reflection, to help all of us consider how our actions may impact a person who is already experiencing violence. Even when our intention is not to cause harm, people in power can recreate painful power dynamics. We can violate a woman's confidentiality; minimize the abuse or blame her for it; fail to respect her autonomy; ignore her need for safety; or, by failing to respond to abuse, normalize it.

By watching for these behaviours in ourselves, we can strive to avoid falling into these traps in the future.

Medical Power & Control Wheel



Credit: National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 4612 Shoal Creek Blvd, Austin TX 78756 USA, URL http://www.ncdsv.org

A New Mentality on Healing

Each woman is an individual, and it is important to honor the individual who is in front of us in any given moment. It is also important to tailor our approach to each person. That being said, the ideas and resources discussed in this section might work better for some women than for others.

As emphasized in this manual right from the beginning, even the language used to describe abuse will vary from person to person. Each person has the right to choose their own words to describe their experience. Some might be ready to name their experience as abuse, while others are more comfortable calling it "unhealthy," or simply talking about behaviours they are concerned about. Generally, it is best to follow the lead of the person we are working with.

Following the client's lead first applies to the language we use, and then to the forms of support we offer. There is no one way to approach all women who are experiencing violence – even women from the same culture will have different experiences and potentially very different needs. There are many ways of healing, and she does not have to follow a single path. So, how can we help? *Begin by seeing the woman as an individual with a unique set of experiences and needs.*

We can also *begin by seeing her resilience*. To survive an abusive situation takes incredible strength. To wake up every day and face the threat of violence, diminishment, and death is unimaginable to those who have not experienced it. As service providers, we need to remind ourselves how much a person experiencing abuse has already done to resist and survive each day. What she needs from us most of all is our support and trust in her experience. We are not there to tell her what to do and what is best for her. Within that model, we are mistakenly cast as strong and the person we are helping as weak. Instead, we are there to support what she is already doing. We are there to witness her resilience and walk with her so that she does not have to walk alone.

Having rooted ourselves in a more empowerment-based mentality on healing, we can do four things:

1. Listen Without Judgment
2. Offer Information
3. Encourage her to Create a Safety Plan
4. Explore Next Steps

1. Listen Without Judgment

A service provider like you or me may be one of the only connections a woman has to the world outside of her relationship. We may also be the first person to receive her disclosure of abuse, and so above all else, we want her to feel listened to, understood, and not judged. It is often very difficult to talk about abuse, especially the first time. Providing an open and non-judgmental environment is one substantial way to support someone experiencing abuse. It helps reduce the shame and stigma, leaving them more likely to disclose again in the future and reach out for further assistance.

Many of us do not always know what to do or say when someone is experiencing pain. We may find ourselves uncomfortable, or we may feel as though we have to fix their pain or make it better. Unfortunately, conciliatory statements, like "Don't

cry," or "It's going to be okay," may suggest to someone there is something wrong with how they are feeling. They may feel judged or shut down.

One way to avoid that error is to recognize that her feelings are a normal response to traumatic circumstances, and to allow those feelings to be expressed. For example, we might say:

- "It's okay to cry."
- "It's normal to feel upset."
- "Anyone would feel this way given what you're going through."
- "You don't need to apologize for your feelings."
- "You're not alone."
- "I'm here for you. I'm here to listen."

Many people experiencing abuse are afraid that no one will believe them or that they will be blamed for what is happening to them. Due to the stigma that they often experience, many are not likely to seek out the support that they need, confide in their close friends and family, or report their abuse. This is why it is so important to believe people who have the courage to disclose their experience. Even if she has heard it before, remind her that she is not to blame for what is happening to her. These assurances can make a huge difference to someone's recovery. For example, we might say:

- "No one deserves to be treated this way."
- "This is not happening because of anything you did."
- "You are not to blame."
- "This is not your fault."
- "What happened to you isn't okay."
- "Help is available to you."
- "I believe you."

When listening to a disclosure, try to avoid asking "why" questions (e.g., "Why don't you leave?" or "Why did he assault you?") as these too can have the unintended impact of making a person feel judged. "Why questions" can also imply blame or insinuate that she is responsible for explaining her abuser's actions or behaviours.

Generally, it is wise not to ask too many questions or probe for details about what happened. Retelling the story of abuse can also retraumatize the person who is experiencing it.

2. Offer Information

Another way to support someone who has disclosed abuse is to offer them information that may be helpful. It is important not to force information on someone or insist she hear us out. Ask if she would like some information on abusive relationships, and go from there.

One way to be supportive in this respect is to stay informed. Tools like the Cycle of Abuse (p. 23) and the Power and Control Wheel (p. 8) can help people to stay educated and educate others in their community. They can help her understand what is going on for her, and can be a great starting point for conversation. They are handouts that a helping professional and a woman experiencing violence can look at together. If she feels safe enough, she can even take them home to consider.

Here are some other ways to offer information to a person experiencing abuse:

- "What you're describing sounds like it might be an abusive behaviour. Would it be helpful for us to go over the signs of abusive relationships?"
- "We have some information about resources that may help you further. Would you be interested in hearing more about these resources?"
- "It may be helpful for you to know about your legal rights in Canada when your sponsor is hurting you. Would you like to see a booklet that goes over your rights?"

3. Encourage Her to Create a Safety Plan

A safety plan is a set of actions that a woman experiencing abuse can take to keep herself as safe as possible, whether in the context of a current or past abusive relationship. A safety plan does not guarantee that she will be safe from harm. (Ultimately, the abusive person is the only one who can control this.) But it may help her escape an escalating situation or mitigate some of the risks.

Intimate partner violence can be incredibly dangerous and for some, a matter of life and death. It is best if the safety plan is developed by a professional agency such as a family violence prevention centre that has trained and experienced professionals to help individuals develop a safety plan after a proper risk assessment. Individuals experiencing abuse should be encouraged and supported to access these services.

That said, many immigrant women are not yet ready to access mainstream services such as these. So the following information is provided to ensure that they have some ideas for a safety plan, rather than none at all.

To help her develop a safety plan, learn from her what she has already done and encourage her to gauge what works and what does not work in her own, very personal situation. Respect the fact that she is the expert in this area. Rather than being told, "This is what you must do to be safe," she must be able to say, "This is what I need to be able to stay safe."

The options in the safety plan differ, depending on whether she is still in the relationship or has already left. If she has children, the plan must also consider their safety.

If She is Still in the Relationship

When thinking of ways she can increase her safety, she should be sure to consider the following key points. It may be helpful for her to write some of these ideas down, in her own language.

- Create a list of resources (shelters, emergency numbers, legal help, etc).
- Keep a journal of abuse with dates, times, any evidence she has, and a description of the incidents. This may be helpful should the case ever go to court.
- Come up with a code word to use with supportive individuals, neighbours, or co-workers. When the code word is said, this means "I'm in danger, please call the police."
- Gather important documents and make copies. Hide originals in a safe deposit box or keep them with a trusted friend.

    - Birth certificates (self and children)
    - Passports
    - Immigration papers
    - Driver's licence/government ID
    - Mortgage or lease documents for home and car
    - Car registration and insurance
    - Health care card and health insurance information
    - Social insurance number (SIN) card
    - Copies of any restraining orders
    - School and vaccination records (self and children)
    - Marriage licence or divorce papers

- Pack an Emergency Safety Bag, including the items listed below. Keep it in a safe place where she can quickly grab it if she needs to leave in a hurry.

    - Important documents (listed above)
    - Money (Cash, credit card, cheques)
    - Keys (home, car, work)
    - Medications, prescriptions
    - Cell phone and charger
    - Photo of the abusive person
    - Change of clothes and shoes
    - Special or valuable items (self and children)

- Review how to keep her private information safe. For example, she can:

    - Change passwords often, including banking and social media passwords.
    - Delete browser history, especially if she has visited sites related to accessing support for the abuse like shelters, immigration services, or legal information.
    - Delete emails she has sent from her "Sent" and "Trash" folders.
    - Delete text messages, and use a friend's phone or agency phone to call services like a lawyer.
    - Lock her phone with a password.
    - Log out of her accounts when she closes her computer.

To increase the likelihood of her safety during an abusive incident:

- Review who she can call for help and ensure that she knows emergency numbers.
- Identify a safe place close by to which she can go if she does not have a car (e.g., neighbour's house, gas station, convenience store).
- Identify someplace where she could stay overnight if needed (e.g., a relative's house or shelter).
- If she cannot leave her home, identify someplace she could go in the house. (Typically, rooms that lock and have windows are best. She may want to avoid the kitchen because it will have knives.)

If She Has Left

- Consider home security such as an alarm system, security camera, bars on windows, or extra locks.
- Talk to neighbours about the abusive situation and let them know to call for help if they see the abusive ex at her house. Give them a photo of her ex.

- Address electronic security. Change passwords on email, bank login, social media.
- Change banking information. Close old bank accounts and credit cards, and open new ones.
- Change her address so that all important mail gets to her.
- Consider an emergency protection order or peace bond. Keep copies of these with her at all times.
- Consider blocking calls from abusive ex or changing her phone number. She may choose not to answer any calls that come from an "unknown number" and only give her new number to select people. She might also consider blocking calls from his family members, as they might contact her to blame and guilt her into returning to her spouse or try to get her to disclose her location.
- Keep records of attempts to contact her, including emails, texts, and phone calls. She may be able to use these in court as evidence. Keep a record of any violation of court orders or breach of emergency protection orders, and what was done in response to the violation.
- If the abusive person seems to know where she is at all times, get her car inspected for a GPS tracking device. Ensure she is not being tracked through apps like "find my iphone."
- Learn how to wipe her phone, in case spyware or tracking software has been installed.
- At work, give a photo of the abusive person to security or the front desk, and ensure security is aware.
- Have a discussion with her supervisor about staying safe at work (making sure no one in the office gives out her personal information, having an exit plan if her ex shows up, keeping her informed of any attempts to contact her, etc.).
- Vary her routine, and especially, do things differently than she may have done when she was with the abusive person. That will make it more difficult for him to keep tabs on her.
- Call the offices of both her physician and that of her children to alert the staff to an abusive person who should not be made aware of appointments or health information. Abusive people will use this information to track the movements of the abused woman and will sometimes turn up at these appointments to take the children or further abuse the woman. This puts the woman, her children, and the medical staff at risk.

If She Has Children

When the household includes children, family violence workers are trained to work through more in-depth safety plans. Here are some basics she can work through with her children, depending on their age:

- Teach them how to call 911 and what to say (e.g., "My mom is being hurt by a man and needs help").
- Teach them where to go to stay safe (e.g., to a neighbour's house).
- Teach them a code word to call for help.
- Teach their name, address, and phone number.
- Help them understand not to answer the door or phone, and not to give out contact information or tell anyone where she is.

In addition, she can help keep her children safe by making sure that teachers, school administrators, day care staff, and childcare workers know about the situation. They should be made aware who has permission to pick up her children and who does not. They should also be reminded not to give her contact information to anyone. She can give them a copy of any restraining order and ask that they contact her immediately if her ex tries to contact them.

If possible, she should take the children with her if and when she leaves the abusive situation. If she leaves them in the home of the abusive person with the intention of returning to get them at a later date, she may have a harder time gaining custody. It is best to set a precedent by keeping them with her. She may want to contact a lawyer to discuss protection of her children and custody issues as soon as possible.

4. Explore Options

Many people who first disclose abuse are not ready to take steps toward or leave the abusive situation. When exploring options with someone who is experiencing abuse, it is really important to avoid giving them advice or telling them what they should do. Telling a person experiencing abuse what to do actually harms them by again taking power and control away from them. Statements like "I think you should report this to the police" or "You need to leave him" are not empowering, and can often add to the cycle of shame that a woman already feels stuck in.

"Asking" rather than "telling" helps people who are being abused regain a sense of control over a situation where they have very little. Ultimately the person being abused will know what the best option is for them, so it is important to respect their decision.

Supportive questions like the following are great ways to open up the conversation around options:

- "What would you like to do?"
- "How can I help you with this?"
- "If you would like, we can look over some of these resources together and see if any of them seem right for you right now."

Abuse is a traumatic experience and the healing is truly a process. It is likely that the person experiencing abuse will want to talk about their experience more than once. We can start by listening, letting them know we believe them, and that we want to help how we can.

The role of the helping professional is to engage in a consensual, mutual process of healing. That begins with asking them what they want, rather than assuming they want our advice and resources. Here again are some of the best ways to help:

See the woman as an individual with a unique set of experiences and needs.

See her resilience. Let her know you see it.

Engage in a consensual and mutual process of healing together.

Ask her what she wants, and respect her right to choose.

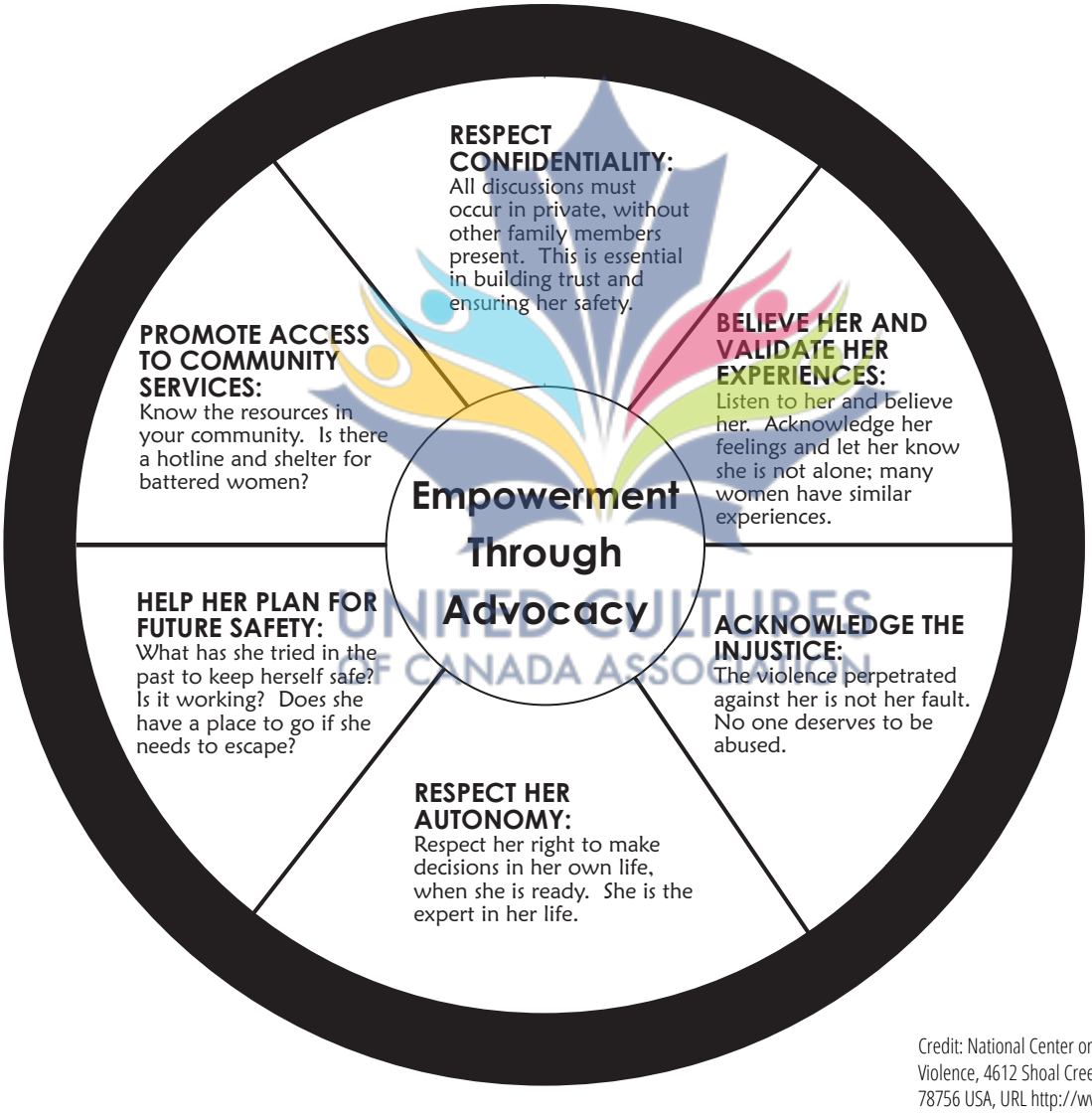
Remember there is a lot we can do: listen, offer information, help make a safety plan, and explore options.

Know that we do not have to have all the answers

Taking this approach turns helping into a process of empowerment. In the empowerment model of helping, respect for the person experiencing abuse and for her decisions are central components. We believe in her experiences and we trust in her expertise. We aim to look for her strength and support her in ways that do not rob her of her power. We may need to keep reminding ourselves that **she is in no way responsible for the abuse**. It is so easy to slip back into myth-based thinking or judgment. The person in front of us has just as many dimensions as we do. Embracing that reality will allow us to see someone of incredible strength and resilience.

Advocacy Empowerment Wheel

The Medical Power and Control Wheel (p. 42) provided examples of some of the behaviours that helping professionals must try to avoid. The Advocacy Empowerment Wheel identifies the behaviours and principles in which we need to ground our practice. Key points include respecting confidentiality, believing her and validating her experiences, acknowledging the injustice, respecting her autonomy, helping her plan for future safety, and promoting access to community services.



Credit: National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 4612 Shoal Creek Blvd, Austin TX 78756 USA, URL http://www.ncdsv.org

Empowerment

The organization Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) was established in Vancouver, B.C. in 1979, to provide support and advocacy for women who have experienced abuse. Its long-term goal is to eliminate violence against women and girls. Over the years, BWSS participants have developed a detailed understanding of women's empowerment. Rather than a single "event," they define it as a complex, multidimensional concept, practice, and process, that may include the following qualities:

- Having a voice
- Not feeling alone
- Being believed
- Gaining control over life, situation
- Return of power and/or authority
- Having access to information
- Having access to resources
- Having decision-making power
- Having a sense of self worth
- Having power to control life within and outside the home
- Understanding and knowing that women have rights
- Learning skills
- Choices beyond yes or no and either/or
- Having experience put into a social and political context
- Being with other women
- Being able to effect change in one's own life and in community
- Learning about and expressing feelings like grief and anger
- Learning the language of access, i.e., English
- Assertiveness
- Having hope
- Going public, overcoming stigma
- Speaking truth to power (systems, institutions, government)
- A feeling that the individual can make a difference (being hopeful)
- Learning about and expressing anger
- Changing others' perceptions of one's competency and capacity to act
- Growth and change that is never ending and self-initiated
- Having the ability to influence the direction of social change and to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (BWSS, 2010)

Though its exact definition may be different for each of us, this broad and beautiful word "empowerment" represents something quite amazing to strive toward. Advocacy and support work becomes more and more meaningful when we truly understand what it means to move from disempowerment to empowerment. As we embrace a new model of healing, we can take pride in the ways we support and uplift the women who have survived so much.

When a Woman is Feeling Overwhelmed

While talking with a woman who is disclosing abuse, it may become obvious that she is getting overwhelmed. Or perhaps, she talks about feeling overwhelmed in her day-to-day life and not knowing how to cope. "With her permission, it may be helpful to teach her two coping techniques: "self-regulation" and "grounding." Many individuals have found them both very effective when practised daily."

1. Self-Regulation

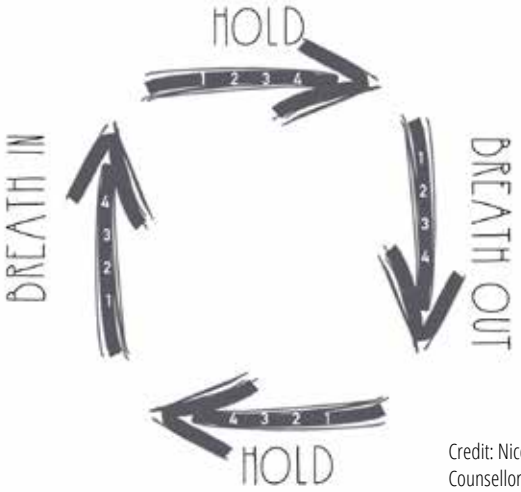
Self-regulation can help people cope with the physical sensations of trauma and anxiety. One essential skill for self-regulation is *square breathing*, a simple, focused way to start to regulate the nervous system. Many psychologists and mental health practitioners use it. In addition to persons who have experienced abuse, helping professionals can use it to keep themselves regulated in the face of bearing witness to the pain and trauma of others.

Below are the instructions for a self-regulation exercise, as well as a diagram.

Square Breathing – A Self-Regulation Exercise

Breathe in for a count of four, hold for a count of four, breathe out for a count of four, and hold for a count of four. Repeat for five more cycles, or as many work best for you.

Pay attention to the experience of this exercise. Do you feel any more relaxed, grounded, or present? Is there a sense of ease or slowness? If focusing on your breath increases anxiety (as it does for some people), you might choose instead to focus on taking one breath.



Credit: Nicole Perry, Feminist Counsellor Edmonton.

2. Grounding

Anxiety takes people away from the present moment through rumination and rehearsal. Their bodies respond as if they are actually in the difficult situation being imagined, and the stress response is activated. One way to move out of this cycle is by *grounding*: using the five senses to return the body back into the here and now. One grounding exercise that mental health practitioners often use is called "54321." Below are instructions and a diagram for practising an adapted version of 54321.

54321 – A Grounding Exercise

Take the time to notice (out loud) what you are aware of through your senses. Go through them one by one, in the order depicted. Name anything that you notice, or focus on the things that are most comforting. Between each of the senses, take a breath and a moment to remind yourself where you are. As with the square breathing practice, try this exercise and pay attention to your experience of it.

Credit: Nicole Perry, Feminist Counsellor Edmonton.

Professional Counselling for Healing Trauma

Professional counsellors receive specialized training to provide support to individuals, families, and groups, in order to promote mental health and well-being. Each province has slightly different requirements for licensure, and within each province several types of professional may perform the same type of work. (For example, in Alberta, Registered Psychologists, Registered Social Workers, and Canadian Clinical Counsellors may all provide therapeutic support in a private practice, government agency, or non-profit setting).

Certain low-cost or no-cost counselling services are available in all places. It is a good idea for settlement professionals to develop a list of the trauma-trained professionals offering reduced-fee services in their area, to whom they can refer their clients as per the clients' needs.

Recommended Therapy Approaches

It is important to access therapy from a trained and licensed professional who understands abuse. A therapist who understands abuse will be more likely to provide non-judgmental support that takes into account all the barriers and challenges discussed in this manual.

Typically, it is advisable to look for practitioners who have had specialized trauma training. Beyond typical "talk therapy," trauma therapy allows the client to process the trauma and release it through specific methods. Trauma therapists now believe that traumatic memories are stored differently in the brain and body and must be worked with in a specialized way – not just talked about. Trauma therapy also emphasizes the importance of creating safety, self-regulation, and containment, so clients can feel grounded and centered. These techniques are intended to alleviate the distress associated with traumatic memories and reduce physiological symptoms.

Here is a list of common types of trauma therapy, and where to go online for further information about each:

- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), http://www.emdr.com/
- Somatic Experiencing (SE), https://traumahealing.org/
- Sensorimotor Psychotherapy (SP), https://www.sensorimotorpsychotherapy.org/about.html
- Self Regulation Therapy (SRT), https://www.cftre.com/courses-seminars/what-is-self-regulation-therapy/

Note that if there are children involved, they should also get support during this time. Even if they show no signs of trauma in the immediate aftermath of abuse, children may have been impacted by it and may benefit from the support of a trained professional. Children can benefit immensely from contact with caring adults who create space for them to heal. When searching for therapeutic support for children, look for a licensed professional who is trained in working with children who have experienced trauma. For those who cannot afford the full fees of a private psychologist, counselling agencies offering low-cost or free services may be available.

Treatment Strategies that are Not Recommended

As you and your client search together for resources, focus on finding services and professionals that are trauma informed, experienced in working with abuse, and culturally competent. It would be helpful to avoid the following:

- Couples counselling or mediation. In order for these interventions to be successful, there needs to be a foundation of trust and safety. Unfortunately, when women experiencing abuse are asked to share their feelings in couples' counselling, they often go home and then experience more violence at the hands of the abusive person. It simply is not safe to ask women who are being abused to be any more vulnerable than they already are. Likewise, in mediation, both persons need to have each other's best interest in mind, and this is not the case when abuse is present. Often, abusive partners have used mediation as a means to continue manipulating and controlling their partner.

- Anger management programs. The root cause of abuse is not anger – it is power and control. (See pp. 17-18.) When used to treat abuse, anger management programs can have a detrimental impact. They may inadvertently teach individuals how to be more stealthy in their abusive behaviour by using language that sounds "calm" (but is still just as abusive in nature).

- Non-directive therapy or self-help groups.

- "Fair fight" techniques.

- Intervention by anyone who does not have specialized training in the area of family violence.

Making Referrals

Women in abusive situations may experience many different needs. Effective referrals can play a critical role in helping the abused person to deal with the abuse and also to heal and recover from its impacts. In Canada, a vast network of agencies offers assistance to such individuals. This includes services related to law enforcement, legal agencies, professional counselling, and housing. In each province there are also centres that serve as hubs for information about family violence and can direct you to the specialized services recommended on pp. 58-59.

When supporting someone who has experienced abuse, remember that no one can know or is expected to know all the answers. We can contact a family violence prevention center or crisis line to get more information without breaking the confidentiality of the person being helped.

It is also important to know – and express – the limits of what we can offer. It is okay to say to someone, "I'm not sure, but I can help you look into it," or "Let's try to figure that out together."

Ultimately, the aim is to help connect a person experiencing abuse to resources without pushing her to take action or to follow up on the resources immediately. It may be enough for her to know that supports and people willing to help are available should she choose to access help down the road. Each person takes their own time before deciding to access help to end abuse or leave, if that is the only realistic option. Many women leave an abusive partner and go back multiple times before exiting the relationship once and for all.

A final reminder: when considering police involvement, it is more common not to report than it is to report. There are many good reasons for this (see pp. 35-37), and they need to be kept in mind when suggesting resources or exploring options. Some support workers are unconsciously biased in favour of reporting abuse, even when this is not the best or safest option for the woman they are trying to help.

Resources by Province

Typically, a list of resources related to family violence can be found on the website of each provincial or territorial government. These often include financial, legal, educational/employment, shelter, basic needs, and counselling/support services. If any of the resources listed below or their location become outdated, search your government website for updated information. The following resources are

listed for convenience, but we cannot be responsible for accuracy, currency, or reliability of content. For someone in immediate danger, call 911 or contact the local RCMP.

Alberta

Anyone in Alberta experiencing intimate partner violence and wanting to access help can start by calling the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visiting **www.familyviolence.alberta.ca** for more information. Through translation services, they have immediate access to more than 170 languages. They will have a list of shelters, low-cost counselling, low-cost legal services, etc. They can also help you make a safety plan.

British Columbia

Residents of B.C. can call VictimLinkBC, a toll-free, confidential, 24-hour multilingual telephone service available across B.C. and the Yukon at **1-800-563-0808**. It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence, including victims of human trafficking exploited for labour or sexual services.

It provides services in more than 110 languages, including 17 North American Indigenous languages.

Manitoba

Manitoba Status of Women – Family Violence Prevention Program: http://www.gov.mb.ca/msw/fvpp/resources.html
Toll-Free Province Wide Domestic Abuse Crisis Line (24 hours): 1-877-977-0007

New Brunswick

PLEIS-NB Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick: http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/abuse_and_violence_materials
Family Law Information Line (toll-free): 1-888-236-2444

Newfoundland & Labrador

Newfoundland & Labrador - Violence Prevention Initiative: https://www.gov.nl.ca/VPI/gethelp/index.html

Northwest Territories

Northwest Territories Health & Social Services – Getting Help with Family Violence: https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/violence-familiale/getting-help-family-violence

Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Victim Services – Intimate Partner Violence: https://novascotia.ca/just/victim_services/family_violence.asp
Crisis Helpline: 421-1188 (Halifax area) or 1-877-521-1188

Nunavut
Nunavut Department of Family Services – Family Violence: https://www.gov.nu.ca/family-services/programs-services/family-violence

Ontario
Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services - Services for Women Experiencing Violence: http://www.women.gov.on.ca/owd/english/ending-violence/help.shtml

Prince Edward Island
Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention: http://www.stop-familyviolence.pe.ca/help

Quebec
Quebec - Domestic Violence: http://domesticviolence.gouv.qc.ca/

Saskatchewan
Government of Saskatchewan – Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Programs: http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/victims-of-crime-and-abuse/interpersonal-violence-and-abuse-programs

Yukon
Yukon Government – Department of Justice: http://www.justice.gov.yk.ca/prog/cor/vs/whattodo.html

Books about Understanding Abuse

Two highly recommended books are:

- *Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*, by Lundy Bancroft
- *When Love Hurts: A Woman's Guide to Understanding Abuse in Relationships*, by Jill Cory and Karen McAndless-Davis

UNITED CULTURES
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Chapter 6
Relevant Laws & Legal Remedies Available

The Criminal Justice System: Laws to Support Victims of Crime

Victims of a crime, such as physical or sexual assault, may get help from the police and courts. The first step when seeking help from the criminal justice system is to file a complaint with the police. Persons (complainants) who do not understand English may write the complaint in their own language. If they request, an interpreter can be provided.

On receiving a complaint, the police investigate the crime. They collect evidence and interview the complainant, suspect, and other persons who have information about the crime. If after investigation, the police believe that there is reasonable evidence that the suspect has committed a crime, they will lay a charge against him. The police may then arrest him.

If an arrest is made, within 24 hours the police bring the accused before a Justice of the Peace or a judge for a *bail hearing*. Bail is a conditional release of the accused from police custody before trial. At a bail hearing, the crown prosecutor explains why the accused should not be released. The Justice of the Peace may refuse a bail or grant it with or without conditions. If the crown prosecutor believes that there is a reasonable likelihood of conviction of the accused, he then initiates a *prosecution*, i.e., legal proceedings (a "trial") against that person in a court.

At the trial, in addition to the prosecutor, judge, accused, and (usually) the accused's legal representatives, witnesses will be present. A person who has some information about a crime is a *witness* to that crime. A person who was assaulted is a witness to the crime and will be called as a *witness for the prosecution*. Witnesses must appear before the court when called.

A court's decision is called a *verdict*. If the court decides that the accused is guilty or if the accused pleads guilty, the court may convict him. If the court finds the accused not guilty, that person is acquitted. (Note that if the person who has used abusive behaviours is found "not guilty," it does not necessarily mean that they are innocent. The Crown has to prove *beyond a reasonable doubt* that the accused did it, and this can be very difficult to do.)

If the accused is convicted, the court will pass a sentence for punishment at a *sentence hearing*. The accused can be sentenced to a fine, a jail term, a probation order, community service, or a combination of any two or more of these.

Legal procedures may be expensive, confusing, and intimidating. Many government-funded agencies are available to help people deal with this. Some services may be available free or at a low cost depending upon the clients' income. For example, Legal Aid Alberta offers many programs to provide help to Albertans. It runs Family Law Office through which lawyers can represent a person in Family Law matters (i.e., divorce, custody, access, parenting, guardianship, maintenance, matrimonial property, etc.). People who have been arrested or detained also have a right to legal advice. A duty counsel can provide it to them free of charge. Similar services are available in all regions of Canada.

The Civil Justice System: Laws Related to Divorce, Custody, Access, Child Support, and Spousal Support

A marriage can be dissolved by a divorce on the ground that the relationship has broken down. The breakdown of marriage can be evidenced by the fact that one of the spouses is cruel to the other or is adulterous, or that the spouses have been living separately and apart for one year or more because the relationship is over. Divorce proceedings may be contested or uncontested. If a spouse contests a divorce, it means that he or she is not willing to divorce. If both spouses agree to the divorce, the uncontested divorce proceedings are simple and may not require a lawyer.

In situations where there has been abuse, having an experienced lawyer who understands abuse and can work in the abused spouse's best interest is almost always helpful. The abusive spouse may use divorce proceedings to further abuse and control the person who is leaving. For this reason, collaborative divorce or mediation services typically do not work, because the abusive person is unwilling to work for everyone's best interest. Instead, he wants only what is in his own best interest, and often to cause as much hurt as possible to his spouse on her way out.

If there is a divorce, she can apply for a division of matrimonial property. Matrimonial property is the property acquired by either spouse, jointly or individually, during the marriage. The basic rule for division of matrimonial property is that both spouses get an equal share of this property. This basic rule may vary due to several factors.

Part of matrimonial property is the matrimonial home: a home that is owned or leased by both or one of the spouses and in which the spouses live during their marriage. In certain situations, a court may grant one spouse exclusive possession

of the matrimonial home and other household goods, such as a car, even if they are owned or rented by the other spouse.

Under the *Dower Act*, a spouse who owns the matrimonial home cannot sell or mortgage it without the prior permission of the other spouse who is not the owner. The non-owner spouse also has a right to live in this home. An application for division of matrimonial property can be filed as an independent action or along with the application for divorce, separation, or annulment of marriage. If it is not filed at this time, it must be filed within two years of separation or divorce.

When spouses divorce they must make arrangements for custody and support of their children. The court shall not grant divorce until the custody, access, and child support issues are settled. *Custody* involves rights and responsibilities to live with and take care of each child and to make decisions about the child's day-to-day life as well as the ones regarding education, health, or religion. Custody may be sole, joint, shared, or split.

The parent who does not have custody may still be asked to pay money to meet the child's needs. The court determines the amount of this *child support* on the basis of the needs of the child, number of children, and income of the parents. There are both federal and provincial guidelines for calculating child support. Children who are adults may be entitled to support if they are full-time students or if they are not able to support themselves because of disability or any other reason. A spouse can also apply for spousal support upon divorce or separation. An order for child or spousal support can be registered with the Maintenance Enforcement Program to ensure regular payment.

Some Issues Faced in Immigrant Communities & Legal Remedies Available in Canada

Forced Marriage

If a woman is in Canada and fears that she will be taken abroad and forced to marry against her will, she should contact the police at **911 (Emergency)** or a social worker.

(Non-emergency) Fraudulent International Marriage

If a woman has experienced a fraudulent international marriage and wants to divorce, she may be able to do so in the country in which they were married, or

in Canada. Some abusive people marry abroad but never sponsor their spouses to come to Canada, despite promises to do so. A woman in this situation who is legally present in Canada (e.g., on a temporary visa), and wants to divorce, can apply to a court for divorce, custody and access, child support, spousal support, and division or matrimonial property. She will need to fill out the right forms for her province or territory and file them in a court. Or, as many people do, she can hire a lawyer and to do this work for her.

International Child Abduction

According to the Government of Canada, neither parent is allowed to take the children out of the country without agreement of the other parent or a court order. If a woman is concerned that her abusive spouse may abduct her children:

- She must tell her lawyer.
- If she thinks he may have already taken them, she must call the police immediately.
- If her children have passports, she must inform her lawyer of her fears and request the court to safeguard the passports of the children.
- If her spouse has the children's passports in his possession, she should inform the court or her lawyer.
- If her children are Canadian citizens and do not yet have passports, she should call Passport Canada (1-800-567-6868) and ask to be notified if anyone tries to get a passport for her children.
- If her children have citizenship in another country, she can contact that embassy or consulate to ask them to refuse to issue passports for her children.
- She should keep the custody order with her at all times to show authorities that she has custody of her children.

More information can be found about child abduction and custody issues on the Government of Canada website: https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-info/child-abduction-welfare

Abuse by Sponsor

Many women are sponsored by a spouse or partner for permanent resident status. If she is being abused by that partner, a woman may understandably be worried about being forced to leave Canada. If she leaves the relationship, her immigration status may indeed be at risk. What happens will depend on her immigration

status: whether she is a permanent resident or her sponsorship application is in progress.

Women with Permanent Resident Status
If the woman is a permanent resident, her spouse cannot force her to leave Canada, but it is still wise to contact a lawyer to discuss child and spousal support, as many women in Canada are unaware of their legal rights.

Women without Permanent Resident Status
Unfortunately, if an abusive spouse withdraws his sponsorship application as a control tactic, it can put a woman's immigration status at risk (CLEO, 2017). Applicable immigration law may appear confusing, and it is easy to misunderstand or make a serious mistake. A woman with concerns about her immigration status should try to get legal help before she takes any action. Note that if she does not have immigration status in Canada and she contacts the police, they may decide to contact immigration authorities.

As a front-line professional, one of the biggest ways you can help a woman whose status may be at risk is to let her know where to get legal advice, and to encourage her to do so as soon as possible.

Other Legal Help Available

If she is a Canadian citizen travelling abroad and needs assistance, she can get information about a wide range of legal issues from Global Affairs Canada. This includes if she wants to come back to Canada, is concerned about the laws abroad, or is being forced to marry. The service provides information to people both within Canada and those already travelling:

Global Affairs Canada:
1-800-267-6788 (within North America)
1-613-996-8885 (outside North America)

If she is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and is being abused in a different country, she can contact Government of Canada's consular office. They will provide her with a list of lawyers, social services, shelters, and any other services available.

Directory of Embassies and Consulates: https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/embassies-consulates

Legal Sanctions Available Under the Criminal Justice System

No-Contact Orders

Any person experiencing abuse may also consider protecting herself and her children through a No-Contact Order such as a peace bond, Emergency Protection Order (EPO), or restraining order. If she is unsure which of these may be the best fit for her, she can contact a lawyer, the police, or her local family violence support centre to discuss her options.

Emergency Protection Orders

To apply for an EPO, a person must be in a need for immediate protection, as it is an emergency service. A person can apply 24/7, by herself, or with the help of the police, social service or children's services. Family Law Office of Legal Aid Alberta runs an Emergency Protection Order Program. Under this program, a lawyer is available during office hours, to help a victim of domestic violence to apply for an Emergency Protection Order. This is a free legal service. The order may state that the abusive person may not contact her, come around her, or be in their family home. Once in place, a review will be scheduled within nine working days, and then the EPO will be confirmed, revoked, or a new order will be issued (Today Family Violence Support Centre, 2018).

Peace Bonds

Peace bonds may be helpful in non-emergency situations if a woman fears for her safety. It starts with making a complaint to the police. After she describes how she has been hurt, an investigation ensues, and then there is a process through the court system. The peace bond requires an individual to have no contact with persons named in the order and can also require an individual to stay away from specific locations (Today Family Violence Support Centre, 2018).

Restraining Orders

A person can apply for a restraining order against any person who has by their action or word made the applicant afraid for their safety. It can be obtained by applying directly to the Court of Queen's Bench. Once she fills out the application forms, she may be able to get the order within the same day. It may be a good idea

to seek out help from a lawyer if possible. An application for restraining order can be made with or without notice to the other party. The restraining order is usually in place for three months or permanently, if necessary (Today Family Violence Support Centre, 2018).

Legal Remedies Available Under the Civil Justice System

When a woman leaves an abusive situation, she often will have no financial resources to access legal support or counsel in the first few days and weeks after she has left. This should be kept in mind when making referrals to legal agencies; she may need free or low-cost services, and the process may be slow.

Divorce

A woman who has been sponsored may be reassured to know that she can still apply for divorce, even if she is not yet a permanent resident of Canada. She can apply for divorce on the ground of breakdown of relationship because of cruelty, adultery, or living apart for one year or more. (The latter condition is easiest to prove.) If she is seeking a divorce, she can apply for a division of matrimonial property, which includes the matrimonial home and household goods (Kumar & Srivastava, 2012, p. 30). Many women leaving abusive relationships are not aware that they may have rights to a division of the property, and are manipulated by an abusive partner into agreements that do not serve them before they have been advised by a lawyer regarding what they are entitled to. When women are leaving abusive situations two of the best things we can do is let them know their rights and help them gain access to services that will provide more individualized legal information so that they can make informed decisions when going through the divorce process.

It may be important to let her know that the court will usually not grant divorce until custody, access, and child support issues are settled. Custody is decided by the court based on the best interest of the child. (Remember, though, the court does not always recognize intimate partner abuse as a risk factor for child abuse. See p. 33.) *Access* refers to the right of the child to meet and spend time with the non-custodial parent, and may be supervised or unsupervised (Kumar & Srivastava, 2012, p. 36). Some people are able to settle custody and access issues without going through the court, but in abusive situations, it typically is best for women to seek legal counsel from a lawyer who is familiar with abuse

to help advocate for her. The abusive partner may try to manipulate her and use fear tactics to get her to agree to an unfair arrangement that leaves her in a disadvantaged position.

Child and Spousal Support

If a woman is concerned about the financial well-being of her children and her ability to care for them after leaving the relationship, it may be helpful for her to gain information about child support and what she is entitled to. There are both federal and provincial guidelines for calculating child support (Kumar & Srivastava, 2012, p. 38). She may also choose to speak to a lawyer to learn about her rights and gain individualized advice. For more information about laws relating to divorce, custody, access, child support and spousal support, please refer to "A Self-Help Guide for Victims of Domestic Violence," another publication of United Cultures of Canada Association, available at http://www.ucca.ca.

A woman leaving an abusive relationship may also be eligible for spousal support. Canadian courts recognize that a woman may have made significant sacrifices when moving to join her spouse, in terms of her career, family, and other social supports. In case of a sponsored spouse, sponsorship can be a consideration for granting spousal support as the sponsor is financially responsible for the sponsored person under the sponsorship agreement (Kumar & Srivastava, 2012, p. 62). In fact, even if there is a prenuptial agreement stating that the sponsor will not pay spousal support to the sponsored spouse, the court may ignore it, because the sponsorship agreement between the sponsor and the government of Canada overrides the private contract between the spouses. The amount and duration of spousal support is decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such factors as the need for food, clothing, shelter, and medical services, along with the time and money the woman needs to upgrade her qualifications to find a job, and the limitations to what the sponsoring spouse can provide.

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Chapter 7
Taking Care of Ourselves as Helping Professionals

What can you do when you find yourself in a helping role? Start by taking stock of your time, energy, and capacity. We need to understand our own limits before committing to something we can't truly follow through on. Or before committing to something that will burn us out, leaving us exhausted and resentful. Then when we say yes, it's a true yes - a yes that others can count on. I've made a practice of taking stock in my own life on an ongoing basis. I plan to do helping work for another 50 years, and that means respecting what my body has and does not have to give. (Perry, 2017)

Why We Need Burnout Prevention Strategies

Nowadays, overwork and overload are pervasive. It is happening to people employed in many sectors, but especially those in the helping field or who are serving marginalized communities. The work of service providers occurs in a greater social and cultural context. An ongoing awareness of that context is important in order to recognize those aspects that are dangerous to our well-being, and must be resisted.

Western culture has been greatly influenced by the Protestant work ethic, which emphasizes hard work, discipline, and frugality. Even though ours is a society of diverse faiths and cultures, we hold some very rigid beliefs around what it means to be a "good worker," such as:

Being a good worker involves taking on extra projects and working extra hours.

Being a good worker means making sacrifices in our personal lives, even to the detriment of our own health and well-being.

Being good worker means the more work we do, the better (quantity over quality).

Being a good worker means the more hours we put in face to face with clients, the more we care, and the more we care, the better we are..

Being a good worker means getting things done, and getting them done quickly.

Being a good worker means doing it all ourselves, or being competent at everything.

These values, when put together, tell a story about the society in which we live. Pushing ourselves and taking on more and more are valued. By contrast, slowing down and taking care of our bodies are downplayed. Nothing is ever "good enough." We are often made to feel guilty for not being able to do more. In a word, we live in a society that that predisposes its members to burnout.

Burnout is a mental, emotional, and physical condition characterized by *emotional exhaustion*, *cynicism*, and a *sense of inefficacy* (Maslach & Gomes, 2006). While often experienced in the workplace of the helping professional, it can also occur as a result of an accumulation of helping roles in our personal lives, including volunteer work or caring for a family member or friend.

Let's break down those three elements even further:

1. **Emotional exhaustion**. When exhausted, we often feel like we have no energy and no means of "re-fueling." We may drag ourselves through the whole day, feeling heavy or drained. By the time work is done, we just do not have it in us to do the things we enjoy. Outside work hours, we may retire to the couch, or simply "go through the motions" of what needs doing with little or no enthusiasm left in us.

2. **Cynicism**. This element is characterized by general feelings of negativity and detachment from work. It often shows up as a form of self-protection when situations are too demanding, overwhelming, or traumatizing. The downside is that cynicism can build up and result in a loss of passion for work or connection to clients. The system starts to seem unmovable; there is no hope for change; and we might even wonder "What's the point?" Ultimately, we may become bitter and angry toward people we work with and for. We may start distrusting people's reports of abuse or feeling that they are taking advantage of us. This resentment and contempt may even extend to other areas of our lives.

3. **Sense of inefficacy**. When burning out, we typically feel like our efforts are inadequate, and we are not achieving our goals. Hope and optimism deteriorate and despair takes hold. We start to feel very down on ourselves and might think …, "No matter what I do, it doesn't make a difference."

Recognizing Burnout in Ourselves

Common signs of burnout include:

- Sleeplessness
- Irritability
- Lack of motivation
- Frequent illness
- Forgetfulness
- Low energy
- Having a hard time waking up in the morning
- General sense of tiredness

For example, we snap at a family member or are impatient when we make mistakes at work. We frequently wake up feeling like we do not want to go to work. Some people start to feel like all they are doing is giving. They lose their ability to focus, and feel increasingly overwhelmed and anxious.

Of course, the signs of burnout differ from person to person, so we need to pay attention to our own signs of burnout. Take the time to brainstorm possible signs of burnout in your own life, in terms of any or all of the following six categories.

- Physical signs (eg., exhaustion, increased pain and sickness)
- Emotional signs (eg., irritable, anxious, or depressed mood)
- Mental signs (eg., concentration or memory problems)
- Spiritual signs (eg., questioning faith, hopelessness)
- Social signs (eg., withdrawal from family and friends)
- Behavioural signs (eg., not engaging in activities you usually enjoy, spending more time in mindless or numbing behaviours)

The Importance of Burnout Prevention

It can be easy to underestimate the importance of burnout prevention strategies. Those who have never experienced burnout may be tempted to think, "It won't happen to me" or "I can handle it." Indeed, human beings are incredibly resilient. But in this type of work we sometimes can grow overconfident, exceed our own limits, and lose sight of personal health in the quest to "help others."

The drive to help others needs to remain in balance with what is realistic in our own lives, so that efforts to help do not end up doing more harm than good. The oxygen mask metaphor is a common way of illustrating this.

Every plane passenger is probably familiar with the safety procedure if ever the cabin loses pressure. Oxygen masks automatically drop from the cabin ceiling. If travelling with a child or person in need of assistance, you are instructed to put your own oxygen mask on **first**; then put the mask on the person in your care. The obvious reason is that if you cannot breathe, you cannot help anyone. If you pass out before you finish helping them, then you are both dead (or in serious trouble).

Fundamental to caring for others is that you must be alive in order to do it. Moreover, you must be physically and mentally well enough to be helpful. It is a reality that we too readily ignore, somehow believing that we can ignore the needs that sustain us, like sleep and rest, nourishing food, physical movement, and connection with others.

Within my own field of experience, on a number of occasions someone has gone into a difficult situation with an intention to help, completely ignored their own needs, burned out very quickly, and suddenly dropped out of the circle of care. This can deeply distress a woman who is experiencing abuse, as there may be very few people whom she trusts. When committing to help someone through a difficult situation, a second commitment also applies: to do it in a sustainable way.

So, the first reason to practice burnout prevention? **So that you do not harm the people in your care.**

A second reason to practice burnout prevention is **the sheer length of time it takes to recover from burnout**. Burnout triggers a cascade of physical and emotional impacts with short-term, long-term, and sometimes even permanent consequences. For example, there is some evidence to suggest that a stressful event (or period of chronic stress) can be a factor in the onset of chronic health conditions like migraine, fibromyalgia, and chronic fatigue syndrome. In other words, the effects of burnout do not end when you finally leave the difficult situation or begin to set boundaries. People on medical leave for chronic stress often take months to recover even a fraction of their lost energy. During their leave, they do not feel rejuvenated. Sometimes they cannot even begin to imagine setting new boundaries that will help them return to work. Instead, the months off work are just focused on recovery.

As you can imagine, the time and energy it takes to recover from burnout can have a big impact on a person's financial security, job trajectory, and the balance in their family life, especially if they are also caring for children or elderly parents.

Perhaps most disturbing is the effect of chronic stress on physical and mental health. When in difficult situations (such as supporting someone who is being abused), the body releases a cascade of the stress hormone cortisol. It enables the body to handle that threat – in the short term. The problem is, when the stressful situations are chronic in nature, the effect of cortisol over the long term is quite detrimental. Studies have shown that a high level of cortisol over time can lead to increased risk of:

- anxiety
- depression
- digestive problems
- headaches
- heart disease
- sleep problems
- weight gain
- memory and concentration impairment (Mayo Clinic, 2016)

More and more research is exploring the link between chronic stress and the onset of major illness or chronic conditions. Stress is one causal factor among many, including genetics and environmental and other factors. But it should give us pause before leaping to help others. If we forget about ourselves in the process, it could put our own health at serious risk

Gabor Mate said it well when he interrogated the idea of "compassion fatigue" (another term for burnout) more closely. He suggested that the problem when we take on helping roles is not that we are "too compassionate" toward others. It is that we are not compassionate enough toward ourselves (Mate, 2017).

Burnout Prevention

Four important tools for preventing burnout are mindfulness, fostering hope, self-care, and setting boundaries (Le & Perry, 2016).

Mindfulness

Due to its many psychological and physical health benefits, mindfulness is increasingly being integrated into workplaces, medical systems, and the practice of psychology. Mindfulness is believed to have its early roots in eastern religions and philosophies such as Buddhism and Hinduism. In recent decades, mindfulness has been adopted by western teachers and therapists like Jon Kabat-Zinn, Jack Kornfield, and Sharon Salzberg (Selva, 2017). Psychologists have researched its impacts on areas such as chronic stress, anxiety, and depression, and many schools of psychology now include it in their training programs.

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention in a particular way: without judgment. Through the practice of mindfulness, we are encouraged to be present in the moment rather than focused on the past or the future. And whatever we notice in the present moment, we are encouraged to acknowledge and accept. So, if it is pain that arises, we notice the pain. If it is joy, warmth, or contentment that arises, we notice that. If it is sadness, racing thoughts, or boredom, we notice that too. All of this, we notice without judgment. We simply try to be aware of our experience and bring conscious attention to it.

There are a few ways to incorporate mindfulness, some of them formal and some more informal. Informally, we might practice mindfulness simply by checking in with ourselves and noticing how we are feeling, what we are thinking about, what is happening in our bodies, and what we are taking in through our senses. It

can take 30 seconds, 10 minutes, or as long as we like on any given day. It can be integrated into any point of the day, whether in the shower, at meal time, or just whenever it comes to mind. Some people like to incorporate it during moments of transition like going to work, getting home, waking up, or going to bed. These informal mindfulness moments allow us the time to pause, reflect, and be with our own experience.

The following is an example of a daily mindfulness check-in that can be utilized in day-to-day life. (Many others can be found through apps, guided meditation CDs, books, and so on. Explore around and find the practices that best help you be present with yourself in a non-judgmental way.)

A Daily Mindful Check in Practice

Appreciate your time: Take a moment to appreciate yourself for giving yourself the time and space to do this practice, amidst the hustle of your daily demands. Turning this generosity toward yourself warrants some acknowledgment and recognition. With this small gesture, you're exercising a shift: resisting the tendency to just move along and instead making time and space to take care of yourself. You're making and honoring an intention to see what's really within you.

Kindly attend to the moment. Now bring your full attention to the experiences of your body ... notice your breathing, how your body feels ... now turn your focus to your mind ... any thoughts you might have ... or emotions that you're aware of, just as they are. There's no need to judge, analyze, or evaluate your experience. The focus is simply being with yourself fully, in the present moment and letting it all be. If a tendency to judge out arises, just notice and acknowledge that, then gently return awareness to how you are. Continue directing your attention to the experiences of your body, mind, and feelings.

Acknowledge yourself. As your practice comes to a close, once again acknowledge your willingness to show up and be present to yourself and for yourself, knowing that, in this way, you're contributing to your wholeness and well-being (Stahl, 2016).

In addition to the general psychological and health benefits, mindfulness may also help bring to our attention the early signs of burnout in ourselves. Although it may be possible to write them down (see p. 72), it is common for these signs to go unnoticed until it is too late. For example, we might ignore tired feelings and drink extra coffee. When irritable with a family member, we may blame them for "making us mad." When we do not nourish our bodies in real ways, we make excuses ("I just don't have the time"). Unfortunately, as we ignore these early signs, we get sicker, and our symptoms get worse.

Mindfulness helps by inviting us to notice what we are experiencing on a more regular basis. Everyone feels tired now and again, but feeling tired every day for over a week may be a sign of something larger going on.

The earlier we can notice the signs of burnout, the more able we will be to slow down, reassess the situation, and decide what to do going forward. And just what do you do when you notice these early signs? It may be time to reach out to a co-worker, mentor, family doctor, therapist, or trusted confidante. It may be time to take a step back and focus on your health, even for a short time. It may be time to refocus your efforts where they will be most beneficial. There are a lot of options, but it starts with slowing down and taking the time to decide. Ultimately, a practice of mindfulness allows us to see the truth of our situation, including the effects our actions are having on us. When we can begin with accepting what is true, it leaves us in a better position to make choices about what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves as professionals.

Fostering Hope

The more familiar we are with the realities of intimate partner violence, the more we may become disheartened by the obstacles and challenges so many women still have to face. We have to recognize the systemic injustice that exists; we cannot ignore the work that still needs to be done. Yet, if we become too focused on what is not working or still needs to change, it can be hard to feel hopeful enough to continue helping the women in front of us.

One way to help prevent burnout is to protect ourselves from a great many painful stories of abuse and trauma. If we surround ourselves with trauma in our work, home, news media, and so on, we can start to lose hope. Many helping professionals active in the field of trauma choose not to read the news. Or, they may take breaks from reading about certain subjects or watching TV or movies that are violent. Protecting ourselves from exposure to too much traumatic content is one way to protect our hope and help ensure we do not become traumatized ourselves.

When we talk about hope, we often think of in the context of hope for the future. But the promise of future change is not enough to sustain hope. We need to be able to notice what is already connecting us to hope **in the present**. That means taking the time to turn toward stories of hope and celebrate the successes. We want to make sure we pay attention to the good things that are happening – such as a new service that will reduce barriers, or a client who has done some healing.

Some people choose to read stories of hope, or actively seek out stories of survival and resilience. So ask yourself, "What am I aware of right now that makes me feel hopeful?

In addition to reading about and noticing stories of hope, make sure to do things that keep you connected to life and joy. When engaged in things that help us feel alive, we are more connected to hope, and that helps prevent burnout.

Self Care

Psychologist Ellen K. Baker has identified three components of self-care: self-awareness, self-regulation, and balance (2003). She originally wrote about self-care with therapists in mind, but it is vital to any helping role.

- **Self-awareness** involves being able to tune inwards to observe our mind, body, and emotions. Some may add a spiritual component to this, noticing when they feel out of alignment spiritually or disconnected from their faith. It is important first to be aware of our needs and concerns in order to tend to them. Without self-awareness, we risk doing damage to others and ourselves.

- **Self-regulation** involves managing our affect, stimulation levels, and energy. We might self-regulate through exercise, relaxation exercises, regular meals, or sleep. How well we regulate ourselves is dependent on our level of self-awareness and our willingness to tend to our needs. If we can notice when we are hungry, tired, anxious, or in pain, it will be easier to take care of ourselves and stay regulated.

- **Balance** means ensuring that we have some of everything we need in our lives. As humans, we are sustained best when we take care of ourselves in all areas (mind, body, emotion, and spirit), and when we find a balance in our activities: between work and play, social connection and alone time, rest and excitement, for example.

Ask yourself, "What practices do I have for tuning into my needs, regulating myself, and finding balance?"

Boundaries

Healthy boundaries involve understanding what nourishes us and what drains us, then being intentional with our actions. We all have limited energy and time, so setting boundaries is about deciding which helping actions we are willing and

able to say "yes" to, and which we need to say "no" to. The two biggest types of boundaries essential for service providers are time boundaries and emotional boundaries.

Emotional Boundaries

Emotional boundaries refer to how much we **take in** emotionally as well as how much we **take on**. As helpers, we can inadvertently take in the emotions of the people in front of us. Their distress can easily become ours, and we might find ourselves more anxious, tense, and overwhelmed. Their despair can start to affect our own feelings of hope in the world. Of course, it is normal to be affected by the stories we hear – sometimes deeply so. The problem occurs when we can no longer distinguish between what is ours and what is not. When we get lost in the experiences of other people, it is time to set an emotional boundary.

To set an emotional boundary about what we take in, we first need to be aware that we have taken in the emotions of another person. We can ask ourselves important questions like:

- Am I feeling anxious, overwhelmed, hopeless, or despairing?
- Have I lost touch with what keeps me grounded?

We also need a practice of grounding and regulating our own nervous systems, for example, the grounding and self-regulation skills (54321 and square breathing) explained on pages 53-54.

To set an emotional boundary about what we take on, we can ask ourselves, "What am I able to do?" When thinking about our ability, we want to realistically check in with ourselves about what we have the time, energy, and skills for. Many of us have a lot we would like to give, but far less that is actually within our capacity, especially when it comes to long-term support.

We also want to ask ourselves "What am I **not** able to do?" This can include things that just are not possible and things that do not fall within our specific capabilities. It should also include things that are not our responsibility, things that are out of our control, and things that do not need to get done.

To protect emotional boundaries, some people may choose to:

- Take deep breaths before difficult conversations, and take time after meeting with each person in order to re-regulate their nervous systems.

- Leave time at the end of each day to slow down and allow the hectic feelings of the day to wind down. For example, leave 20 minutes at the end of each day to wind down and put things away. This transition time can act as a reminder that "Work is done now. It's okay to stop."

- Speak with a supporter about their feelings, and process any unresolved emotions that may have come up during the week.

- Engage in relationships at work and outside work that are mutually satisfying and supportive.

And choose **not** to:

- Take responsibility for fixing or saving the person being abused. Instead, offer support and resources, keeping in mind that healing from abuse is a process.

- Be the only one who is helping. Instead, help the person being abused get connected to other resources. Also ask coworkers or supervisors for help so that you do not have to carry the emotional burden alone.

- Take on too big a workload. For example, some counsellors will limit themselves to a certain number of cases at a time, especially those that are complex or involve intimate partner violence.

After setting emotional boundaries of any kind, revisit them often. Over time, changes are likely in our energy levels, our overall stress levels, and so on. As that happens, our boundaries will need to change too. This is absolutely normal – healthy boundaries are responsive to the situation and can adjust according to what works best for us.

Time Boundaries

Time boundaries refer to the amount of time devoted to helping others, including the time spent thinking about work.

To make decisions about our time boundaries, it may be necessary to examine the cost/benefit ratio of the things that we agree to do. Mindfulness might help determine which types of helping are the best fit relative to the amount of time we may have to give. To respect our time, we also need times when we are "off duty" or at rest. Just like everyone else, we need space that is for our own self-care, rather than in service of others.

To protect time boundaries, some people may choose to:

- Ensure they leave work on time every day, even if the work is not done (because let's face it – it never is).
- Ensure they have carved out time in their schedules for practices that sustain them, and they generally do not compromise this time for others.
- Limit difficult conversations to a set amount of time, so that the conversation does not start going around in circles or become overwhelming for either person.
- Allot an amount of time each day to worry about work-related problems. After that time, they mindfully and consciously redirect their attention to the present moment.
- Consider how much of their time is spent helping others versus how much is spent caring for themselves. They ask themselves if it feels balanced, and sustainable.

So ask yourself, "What boundaries do I already have in place to help protect my time and energy?"

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Author, Editor, & Translator Bios

Nicole Perry is a Registered Psychologist with a general private practice in Edmonton. She specializes in working with those who have experienced abuse and trauma. She first learned about supporting people who have experienced abuse in 2006, during her time as a Crisis Counsellor, Trainer, and Educator at the Edmonton Distress Line. She then went on to work at various sexual assault and trauma centres in Alberta and B.C., as well as Police-based Victims Services. As part of the Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton, Nicole co-created an innovative campaign to address alcohol-facilitated sexual assault by focusing on the person who commits the assault. She was also a founding member of ConsentEd, a collective that helped combat myths around sexual violence and educate the general public. In her work as a psychologist today, Nicole uses an approach called Somatic Experiencing, a body-based therapy for healing trauma. She also uses imaginal and mindful approaches to help clients heal painful wounds from the past. Nicole approaches her healing work with warmth and curiosity, and offers people a safe container for working with difficult experiences. She also helps people who are struggling with feeling burnt out and learning to say "no." Perry holds a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology from Yorkville University and an undergraduate degree in psychology with a minor in creative writing from the University of Alberta.

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Fion Lee is the Executive Director of the ASSIST Community Services Centre. She holds a B.S.W. and is a Registered Social Worker. She received the Peace in Families Award for recognition of Outstanding Service to End Domestic Violence in 2010. It is her passion to work with immigrants to facilitate their integration, advocating for systems change to address service gaps and to better meet the needs of immigrants.

Katherine Davies, (Retired) M.S.W., R.S.W., has a combined background in criminology and domestic violence. She has 30 years of experience working in various capacities to end domestic violence. She worked on the Spousal Violence Intervention Team, which is a joint initiative of the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Police Service. She has established herself as a Spousal Violence Specialist and has collaborated with key national and international experts from Canada, Australia, India, and the U.S.A. as well as with various government agencies, such as Immi-

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Morag McLean is a Registered Nurse with over 12 years of experience providing advocacy and nursing services to victims of domestic violence, and sexual exploitation. Morag provides training and consulting services to local, national, and international frontline advocates including medical professionals, community advocates, and police. Morag is a qualified expert witness and provides consulting services for the Alberta Crown Prosecutors Office on domestic violence and strangulation assault files.

Latika Srivastava, L.L.M., Barrister and Solicitor, and legal instructor, has researched and written extensively on various legal issues related to immigrant communities. Prior to her immigration to Canada she worked as Assistant Professor at the Delhi University.

Doaa Elseify, an Egyptian-Canadian translator and interpreter, received her Bachelor's degree in 1999 from the Faculty of Al-Alsun, French department in Cairo, Egypt and her Master's degree (with excellence in Linguistics) in 2004 from Ain Shams University there. Her studies focused on translation, which provided the opportunity for her to explore grammar in depth in both the French and Arabic languages. A member of proz.com, Doaa has been working as a translator for 17 years.

Cheri Balanko, a French-Canadian translator and interpreter, received her baccalauréat ès arts (B.A.) specializing in French and French Literature from the University of Alberta. Her studies focused on translation and French linguistics. She has worked in the areas of immigration as an administrative support for foreign workers and as an immigration assistant and has several years' experience translating in the fields of education, immigration, and law.

This book prepares settlement and other professionals to respond more effectively to abuse directed at new Canadians by their intimate partners. The threats experienced particularly by women across this country are accentuated when people are unaware of Canadian law and judicial procedure – or when a perpetrator deliberately suppresses that information.

The author identifies fallacious and the actual sources of abuse, its cyclic characteristics, and its direct and indirect impact on the lives of the persons who experience it, with special attention paid to children. Working from the empowerment model of helping, she also explains why and how care must proceed at a pace and in a direction determined by the client, in order that her resilience is honored and her capacity for action is enhanced. Legal remedies available to the client within the criminal and civil justice system are outlined.

A final chapter is devoted to self-care among helping professionals to ensure that overwork does not compromise their commitment to excellence in client services. Includes several explanatory diagrams as well as a complete reference list.

The Inclusive Practices Guidelines for Assisting Newcomers to Canada are published by United Cultures of Canada Association (Edmonton) to inform settlement and other professionals as well as volunteers about issues and challenges particular to Canada's diverse newcomer population. Each volume in the series provides reliable, practical, and up-to-date information to clarify the perspectives and experiences newcomers may bring to Canada in regard to health, sexuality, and family life, as well as the norms their new homeland puts forward, and its systems for enforcing these norms. A plain-language booklet of Frequently Asked Questions accompanies most volumes.

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