

Minutes from Tri-County Batterer Intervention Network Meeting  
June 4, 2002

Members Present – Chris Huffine (Men's Resource Center), David Houston (Men's Resource Center) Michael Davis (Changepoint), Marc Hess (Multnomah County Adult Community Justice), Paula Manley (Private Practice), Courtenay Silvergleid (Portland State University), Naomi Morena (Probation – Washington County)

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, edited by Chris Huffine

Roundtable Discussion: What do we do to educate men about sex abuse?

One member offered that what he does in groups is to have a brainstorm about sex abuse. The discussion is usually very provocative and raises quite a bit of awareness. Most people are used to thinking of sexual abuse as primarily involving forceable physical rape of an actively resisting person or sexually abusing a child. During the brainstorm, he brings up things that aren't usually mentioned and asks the group whether these things are abusive. For example: unwelcome sexual jokes, pouting, punishing, and whining. This person often asks the men whether it is possible that even if your partner says yes to sex it is still sexual abuse? An example would be when a woman says yes because she knows that if she says no she will have to deal with him being upset with her, nagging her and depriving her of sleep for 90 minutes as opposed to 15 minutes of sex and then she can go to sleep. Another example would be if he has clear power over her, such as her employer. This providers also lists for the men in his groups a number of other examples of sexual abuse including: misleading about future intentions (e.g., saying he's interested in a long term relationship when he's only interested in a one night stand), using alcohol and drugs, whistling at or commenting on the physical appearance of women he doesn't know (e.g., in the grocery store, in the mall). He also asks them to discuss what is the difference between coercion and seduction. A complete list of common sexually abusive behaviors generated during the brainstorm is listed at the end of the minutes.

How do we teach men about this stuff? Discussion is strikingly effective. It is important however to realize that work around this topic cannot be done in isolation. As you work at these men's ability to be empathetic, they will start to realize that women are human beings too. If they have been educated about the "act like a man" role, discussions about sexual abuse become more relevant. Some of the power dynamic stuff helps too. Maybe another place to try to stretch men's minds is by asking them what they get from sexual abuse? Does it really just come down to wanting sex or is there something more? Try to help men discover other ways to get nurturance besides just having sex. It might be helpful to think of the batterer intervention group as a practice place for how to give and receive nurturance. Most of the men that come into group are really afraid of intimacy. They don't know how to be intimate or even the value of intimacy. As the group goes on, they begin to see "oh, this is what having a friendship with my partner is all about".

The key to being non-sexually abusive is non-coerced, informed consent. She needs to say yes, know what she is saying yes to and there needs to be no outside coercion to say yes, either explicitly or implicitly.

With the Hispanic clients, one thing that works really well is role-playing. Have the men in group play the women and the female co-facilitator play the man. One member suggested that it might be useful to have a woman coaching the man who is playing a woman since he might not be able to truly get at what she might be experiencing without some help.

What impact does having women in the group have on disclosure of sexual abuse? One woman who has led groups said that she didn't think that it was a barrier once the group got started. Men would often come to her and reveal their own personal experiences of being abused. When a woman is present, it may be a bit slower to warm up. Once conversation gets going, however men are willing to be explicit. With only men in the room it can sometimes turn into a joking session and can be inappropriate.

The Duluth curriculum has a great piece on sex abuse and rape. It opens up the boundaries about what is sex abuse is. What is necessary is an ongoing discussion about boundaries, needs. Goal is to be able to tell before the person says no that they are not connecting, that they are not interested. It is a different definition of sex abuse than most men will say. It is the man's job to monitor his partner's reactions to his behavior as he goes along. Shifts responsibility from the woman to the man.

There is often a great deal of shame about the men in talking about sexual abuse they have done. Encouraging men in the group to start discussing this topic and their own past sexually abusive behavior will typically increase the level of disclosure of other men in the group.

#### Forms of sexual abuse

- Badgering for sex
- Making her suffer for saying "no" (e.g., whining, pouting, complaining)
- Making inappropriate or unwelcome sexual remarks
- Using guilt and other control tactics to get sex
- Physically forcing sex
- Using the other person for sex
- Using sex to get what you want
- Using alcohol or other drugs
- Willfully withholding sex
- Making her do undesired sexual activities
- Affairs
- Catcalls/unwelcomed physical compliments
- Excessive staring/intrusive looks
- False pretenses/deceptions
- Using power over/status
- Using prostitutes