

Minutes from Tri-County Batterer Intervention Network Meeting  
November 5, 2002

Members Present – Judith Applegate (DVRC), Paula Manley (Private practice), Gustavo Picazo (Changepoint), Stacey Womack (ARMS), Chris Huffine (Men's Resource Center), Courtenay Silvergleid (Portland State University), and Marc Hess (Multnomah County Adult Community Justice)

Minutes taken by: Courtenay Silvergleid

Topic for today: Non-domestic violence: How do we work with it?

One member offered that when violence outside the domestic sphere exists, DV is likely. It seems as though there is a ton of cross-over. Men will often identify that they have a "temper" issue (e.g., "I take my aggression out in the car, bars and workplace, etc") which is a good indication that they engage power and control tactics at home too.

Another member offered that based on what is known about lethality, if there is violence outside the family, it may be an indication of more severe and frequent violence inside the home. It also might be an indication of anti-social personality disorder.

Reflecting on the "DC sniper", it is clear that domestic violence and other violence are intertwined.

Power over approach and utilization of violence is widespread in our culture. For example, the military trains men to be violent, trains them to shoot, kill and hurt "the enemy". Soldiers are taught that if their country is hurt, they should hurt back. It is hard to imagine that this mentality doesn't impact the domestic sphere.

Group discussed whether there are cultures that don't have DV? Members offered that they believed that there were countries or cultures where incidence of domestic violence was substantially lower; for example in the matriarchal cultures of the Amazon. Group expressed interest in learning more about rates of violence in other countries/cultures.

Another member mentioned that even in cultures that are known for non-violence or egalitarianism, like the Quakers, there are still high levels of domestic violence and child abuse.

Returning to the discussion of how to work with these other forms of violence, Chris Huffine pointed out that the Men's Resource Center is technically a men's violence intervention program, not only a men's domestic violence program and so they accept clients that have committed road rage and work place violence, as well as other forms of aggression. He doesn't think it is difficult to work with these men in groups composed primarily of men who have been mandated to attend because of domestic violence. It is fruit from the same tree and the basic principles and concepts from the intervention program apply.

What about sibling violence? Brothers assaulting siblings – how do we work with these men? If you get down to their original intent it sounds like same domestic violence story.

One concern with widening discussion to include non-domestic violence is that you give men an “out” to avoid talking about abuse in the home. One practitioner noted that often his groups will gravitate to talking about work and road violence as opposed to violence in home. Why? There is less shame in violence committed outside the home. It is “uglier” in the home. It is more complex to talk about the really terrible things that they did to their wife or girlfriend than to talk about what they said to a random stranger on the street. It is more uncomfortable. It is more socially accepted to have a fight with another man. There is less stigma. One member proposed that another reason that men may avoid talking about the violence they committed in the home is because they don’t want to admit to the fact that they committed the crime that brought them to the group. If they talk about road rage or workplace violence they can still hold up the façade that they don’t deserve to be in the group, that they didn’t do anything wrong. If they admit that they hurt their partner, it is as good as admitting that they deserve to be in the group.

Violence is represented in confusing ways in the media. For example, bad guys use violence for bad or random ends, but good guys use the same violence for good ends. Is there really a difference? One member talked about the fine line between defending himself and retribution. When he is defending himself, the violence is justified/ok, but when he moves towards retribution, then the violence is no longer “ok”. Another member brought up the fact that it used to be that superheroes (for example Superman) would use his strength to contain the violence of the bad guys, but not actually use his strength to commit violence towards the bad guys. Now our superheroes use violence and destruction in an effort to contain the bad guys. Rarely does a bad guy live at the end of the movie anymore.

One member asserted that it is appropriate to address non-domestic violence with people who have been violent in their intimate relationship, because it speaks to underlying power and control issues. As a movement we haven’t looked adequately beyond domestic violence. We need to get the message about power and control out to more people. If you work with a man who has not been caught for domestic violence, but who has committed road rage or work place violence, you may be helping the women and children in his future.