

TCBIPN

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network

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Multnomah County Community Justice . Solutions . Transition Projects

Summary by Chris Huffine and Marc Hess of a discussion by Tri-County Batterer
Intervention Provider Network Members.

Advantages to Working With Abusive Men in Groups Rather Than Individually

-It provides a better opportunity to circumvent the one up/one down relationship that may occur in individual counseling with a man who has power and control issues. In individual counseling the therapist may be seen as more of an expert or as telling the client what has to happen. In a group setting the facilitator is viewed as less of the authority. It is also easier for the facilitator to model mutual respect--both with the co-facilitator and the rest of the group.

-Power and control issues are a social phenomena. It is a cultural issue rather than reflective of individual psychopathology. A group emphasizes the cultural aspects (i.e., many men are dealing with this) whereas individual counseling tends to imply that it may be primarily due to individual psychopathology.

-Power and control issues are also an interpersonal phenomena. Therefore, a modality that emphasizes interpersonal relationships (i.e., group) is the most appropriate means of addressing these issues.

-Group members may be more receptive to the input and confrontation provided by their peers than what can be provided by the facilitator, either in the individual or group setting.

-Batterer's feelings of shame are more effectively addressed in a group setting. By witnessing the disclosure and nonjudgemental nature of other group members, the client may be more willing to view and acknowledge his own abusive behavior. As a result denial and immobilization can be more effectively addressed in the group than in individual sessions.

-Sometimes small groups within a group can encourage even more intimate sharing and acknowledgment.

-Because there is a strong educational component, repetition increases the likelihood of retention of the material presented. Repetition of material occurs more easily and frequently in a group setting.

-Multiple examples and illustrations of any given behavior or attitude are common in a group setting because of the diversity of group members and experiences.

-Indirect confrontation is more easily done in a group setting. In other words, the client's denial and avoidance are challenged anytime any other group member is challenged on those same issues.

-There can be more effective discussion and processing of multi-media presentations. Likewise, role plays and other exercises are more easily done in a group setting.

-There is a creation of a positive peer culture, reflecting the values all group members are striving for. This is a particularly powerful and influential element that is more difficult to create in individual sessions. There is a stronger level of support for positive change, with many voices encouraging and supporting positive changes in behaviors and attitudes.

-There are opportunities for positive role modeling among group members. Group members who are more accountable and actively working on being nonabusive can serve as a model for others.

-There is less responsibility upon the individual client to drive the process. There is not as great a burden to provide material or issues to examine each week. This can be especially helpful for individuals who are less talkative and/or less self-aware.

-The group setting reduces the sense of isolation that some men feel in attempting to acknowledge and change their abusive and controlling behavior.

-The client is less likely to draw the facilitator into a colluding relationship in a group setting. It is easier for the facilitator to hold group members accountable.