

From the ER to the
Courtroom: Interpreting in
Domestic Violence Cases

Facts About Domestic Violence

WE KNOW: The majority of victims are women.

- Approx. 97% of abuse is against women by men.
- A woman is battered every 9 seconds.
- Over 4 million women are battered every year.

(JAMA, August 1999)

We Know: Domestic Violence is common.

- Approx. 1 in 4 women are abused.
- Nearly 25% of women report that they have been raped, and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or date at some time in their life.

(NIJ, CDC Report, Tjaden and Thoennes, July 2000).

We Know: Domestic Violence is the leading cause of injury to women, surpassing muggings, rapes, and car accidents combined.

- 1 out of every 3 homicides of women in the U.S. are committed by a spouse or partner (New England Journal of Medicine, Dec 1999)
- Approx. 4 women are murdered every day due to domestic violence. (For Shelter and Beyond)

We Know: Domestic Violence is not limited by sexual orientation, education, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or religion.

- Domestic violence occurs in heterosexual relationships as well as same gender relationships.
- Approximately 15% of men with male live-in partners report experiencing violence

(NIJ, CDC Report, Tjaden and Thoennes, July 2000).

We Know: Many victims of Domestic Violence are mothers.

- 25% of women seeking prenatal care are being abused.
- 25-45% of battered women say the abuse started or escalated during pregnancy.

We Know: Children are growing up witnessing domestic violence in the home.

- 1.5 million to 3.3 million children witness parental domestic violence each year

(1995 Gallup Poll, Family Violence Prevention).

We Know: Dating violence occurs among teens.

- In Mass., approx. 1 in 5 female high school students reported being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.

(Silverman, JAMA, 2001).

Defining Domestic Violence

- Domestic Violence is a pattern of coercive control which one person exercises over another. Domestic violence is the actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse of an individual by someone with whom they have or have had an intimate or significant relationship.

Defining Abuse

I. PHYSICAL

- Punching, kicking, hitting, grabbing, pushing, shoving, jerking, pulling, shaking
- Slapping, spitting, biting, pinching, squeezing
- Blocking a doorway, throwing objects, driving recklessly

II. EMOTIONAL/VERBAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Isolation: controlling the victims's mobility (access to car), what the victim does, who they see, what they wear.
- Name calling, yelling, swearing, put-downs: using repeated insults with the intent to humiliate and degrade.
- Blame: faulting the victim for abusive behavior, accusations of cheating, harrassment at work, threatening abuse or suicide if victim tries to leave.
- Destroying victim's possessions: abusing or threatening to abuse pets, making threats to hurt or kidnap the children.

III. ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL

- Not allowing victim to work: Preventing someone from keeping or getting a job
- Taking or withholding money: not paying bills, forcing victim to pay for everything.
- Making all the decisions regarding money

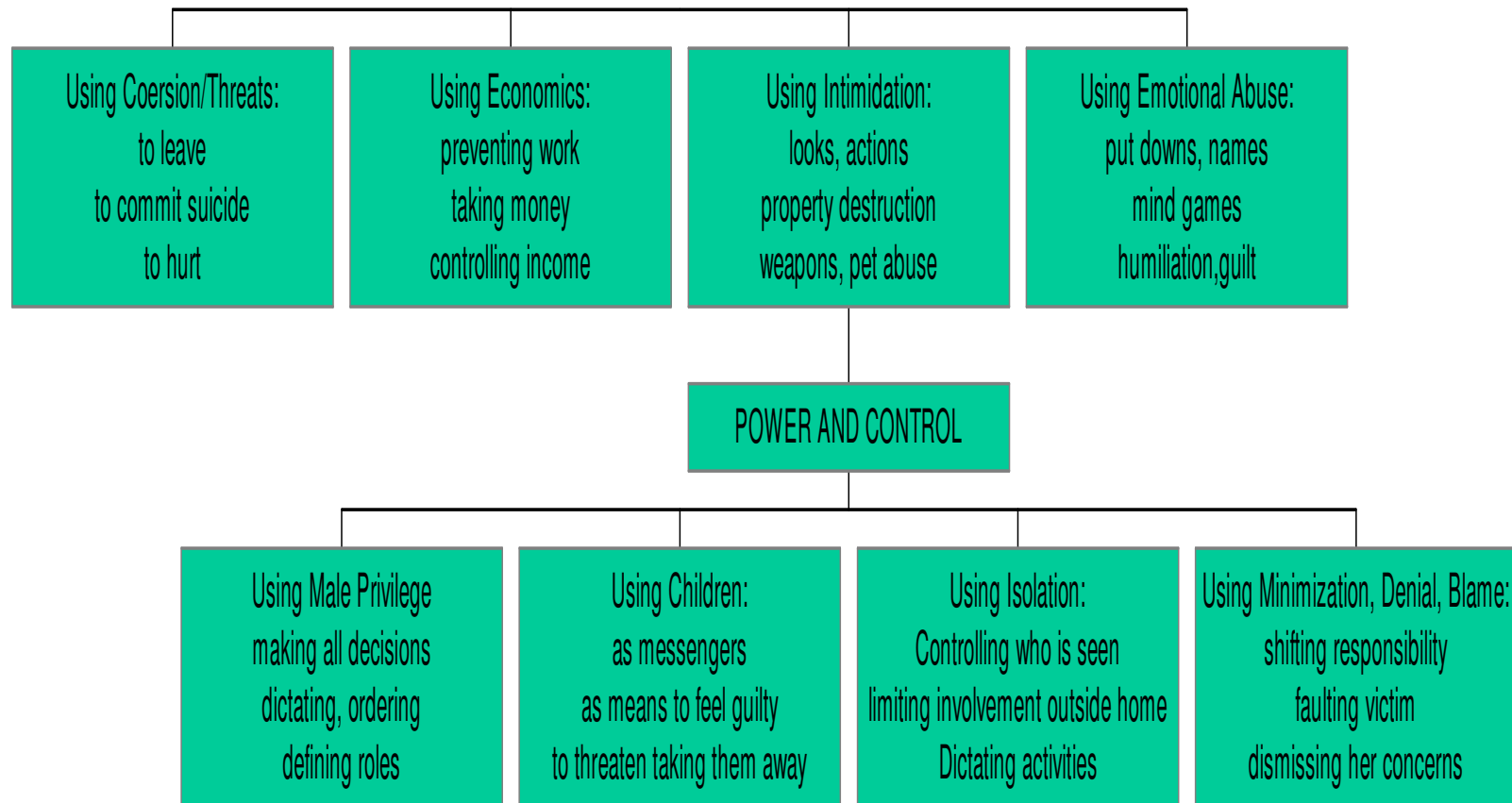
IV. SEXUAL

- Unwanted touching, treatment as a sex object, pressure for sex, sexual comments.
- Rape, sex for the purpose of hurting or gaining control
- Refusing to wear a condom, getting someone pregnant against their will
- Cheating, having affairs, harrassment about imagined affairs

Wave of Abuse

- 1.) **ABUSE:** **Victim** is confused worried and in denial while **abuser** is blaming, sidetracking and successful in getting their way.
- 2.) **REMORSE:** **Victim** sympathizes, trusts abuser's regret while **abuser** demonstrates sadness, helplessness, self-hatred and confusion.
- 3.) **HEARTS and FLOWERS:** "Good times" in which **victim** tries to believe **abuser** wants to "work things" out, forgive and forget, and is showing true self.
- 4.) **CARPING:** Build up of tension where victim is anxious and fearful and feels helpless. Abuser is increasingly negative, frustrated at not getting his way.

ABUSE AS POWER AND CONTROL



Warning Signs of Abuse

- Bruises, cuts: change in dress/makeup, baggy clothes to cover up
- Strange explanations of behavior/injuries
- Withdrawal from regular activities including school/work absenteeism
- Isolation/loss of contact with family, friends, neighbors
- Difficulty making decisions independently of partner
- Skittishness, sudden mood/personality changes
- Increase in shopping, food intake, use of alcohol, drugs
- Depression, suicide attempts
- Unexplained health issues such as headaches and insomnia
- Low self-esteem, self-blame
- Martyr-like behavior: overloaded by demands of others
- No access or control of family finances
- New poverty

In the Courtroom

LOOK

- ...beyond exteriors
- ...for warning signs, behaviors, cues that indicate potential for abuse.
- ...for discomfort on part of any party



Identifying Victims...

- Ashamed
- Self-blaming
- Confused
- Expresses remorse for responsive violence
- Fearful and protective of partner
- Detail-oriented, recalls chronology
- Has attempted to leave, repair relationship
- Narrowed life activities

Identifying Abusers...

- Assertive in claim to be wronged
- Blaming, minimizes personal responsibility
- Exaggerates personal injuries, minimizes injuries to partner
- Vague, nonspecific; omits important details
- Feels victimized

LISTEN

- ...to language of males and females—not just a female issue!
- ...to ask clarifying questions, and interpret word for word



NOTE

... **Tools for Control**

- Name calling: even insignificant
- Immigrant status
- Legal matters
- Restriction of medication/
food/activities



INFORM

- Clinician
- Domestic Violence/
SA Program
- Resources both within
and outside culture
(some want them,
some don't)



Interpreter's Duty:

- 1.) Ensure that the proceedings in English reflect precisely what is said by non-English speaker
- 2.) place the non-English speaking person on an equal footing with those who understand English

Discussion Problems

- What is your reaction?
- How is your interpretation affected by your perception?

