

IDENTIFYING THE PREDOMINANT AGGRESSOR

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Objectives



By the end of this module officers will be able to:

1. Define and describe the predominant aggressor
2. Describe tactics a batterer may use to influence an officers ability to identify the predominant aggressor



Domestic Violence
for Public Safety
Dispatchers

SEGMENT TWO

POWER AND CONTROL

Predominant Aggressor



The person who poses the most serious ongoing threat.

Note: An injury resulting from a person acting in self-defense is neither abuse nor a crime.

*International Association of Chiefs of Police, Domestic Violence:
Model Policy, 2006

Tools to determine Predominant Aggressor

- Make sure to **separate** the parties
- Use your skills to **investigate the incident**
- Pay attention to **demeanor**

7 Points To Determine The Predominant Aggressor

- 1- Who's **afraid**?
- 2- What is the **body language** of each party?
- 3- Is there a **history** of violence?
- 4- Where there any **witnesses** to the abuse; past or present?
- 5- Where there any **excited utterances**?
- 6- What does the **crime scene** look like?
- 7 –What are the extent of the **injuries**; which are offensive wounds and which are defensive wounds?

Fear

Who looks and acts scared?

Victim looks like:

- Avoiding eye contact
- Shaking or hysterical

Victim sounds like:

- Timid, quiet voice
- Distress and/or panic

Body Language

Who displays an aggressive stance?

Who is frustrated and trying to get away?

Perpetrator looks like:

- Tense, aggressive stance
- An intense stare
- Standing in close proximity to the victim to remain “present” and “powerful”
- Angry or hostile facial expressions

History of Abuse

Ask both parties (separately): has this happened before?

Is there a protection order in place? Has there been one in the past? Or has she ever considered getting a protection order?

Looks like:

- Past 911 calls
- Hospital visits/medical records
- Attempts to leave/previous stay in a shelter

Witnesses and/or Neighbors

Are they willing to speak to the police?

Sounds like:

- How well do you know your neighbors?
- Have you ever heard them arguing?
- Have you ever seen them do anything that has caused you concern?

Excited Utterances

“A statement relating to a startling event or condition made while the declarant was under the stress of excitement by the event or condition¹”

Sounds like:

- “he’s going to kill me”
- “he’ll take the kids”
- “he’s going to burn down the house”

¹Supreme Court’s (2004) decision in Crawford v. Washington

Crime Scene

What objects are damaged? How personal are the objects?

What does the scene look like?

Looks like:

- Who is upset that the objects are broken?
- Whose belongings have been destroyed?

Injuries

Who has injuries?

What caused the injuries?

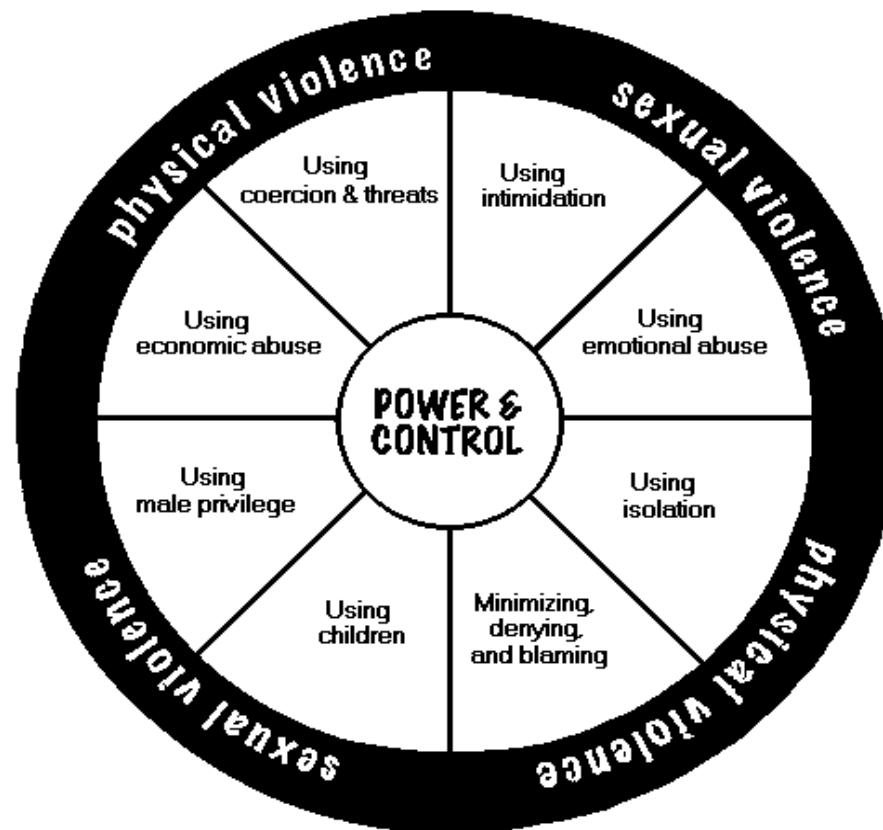
Are any of the injuries defensive?

Looks like:

- Offensive wounds: cuts or bruising to the face, torso, or head
- Defensive wounds: cuts, bruising, bite marks and scratches to the forearms or hands

Batterer Tactics

Many batterers will continue their attempts to control the situation by using the dynamics of power and control with officers on scene



Batterer Tactics – Minimizing, Denying and Blaming

What did you notice about the batterer in this scenario?
What did he do as the officers were arriving?

Sounds like:

- “Nothing happened”
- “It’s no that bad, she bruises easily”
- “She’s crazy! Look, she takes medication”
- “I’m very sorry we bothered you, officer”
- “I didn’t do anything, it’s her fault”

Batterer Tactics – Coercion and Threats

How does the batterer behave? Is he angry? Is he threatening? Is he yelling or making threatening gestures or faces?

Sounds like:

- “If you arrest me, arrest her too”
- “I’ll sue!” or “I’ll have your badge”
- “I’m the taxpayer”
- “I can’t believe she’s doing this; there is no reason for me to live”

Batterer Tactics – Emotional Abuse

Batterer calls you names, makes fun of you, makes accusations about your mental state, humiliates you or tries to make you feel guilty

Sounds like:

- “Pig”
- “You don’t know your nose from your toe”
- “How could you do this to me? What did I do to deserve this?”

Batterer Tactics - Intimidation

A batterer might follow you from room to room, use a threatening stance or an aggressive tone

He may not comply with your directions or question your authority

Sounds like:

- “What are you, a mama’s boy”
- “I want to speak to your supervisor”
- “You can’t tell me what to do in my own home!”

Looks like:

- Crossed arms, flared eyes and/or nostrils

Batterer Tactics - Isolation

Batterers may try to limit your entrance, movement, and access

Batterers often exhibit jealousy

Sounds like:

- “She’s in the shower and can’t talk right now”
- “She’s screwing somebody else, I know it and I got mad; wouldn’t you?”
- “She’s passed out; she drinks too much”

Batterer Tactics – Using the Children

Children are often threatened by batterers so they become afraid to speak out against them.

Children may be told to hide when the officers come or sent to a neighbors

Perpetrator sounds like:

- “The kids will agree with me”
- “The kids know their mom is crazy”
- “I’m going to take the kids and she’ll never see them again”

Batterer Tactics – Economic Abuse

Batterers often control access to money or established credit

Sounds like:

- “I can’t trust her with money”
- “I’m the breadwinner...”
- “No, she doesn’t work; I can’t let her abandon her responsibilities at home”
- “How would you like it if your girlfriend spent your money?”

Batterer Tactics – Privilege

Batterer uses language that implies ownership over the spouse and/or children and denies your authority to act on their behalf

Sounds like:

- “I wear the pants in my family!”
- “I sat her down to have a talk”
- “We are married, how can I have raped her?”

Avoiding Dual Arrests



Although it can be difficult to determine the predominant aggressor if both parties have injuries. **Avoid dual arrests** at all costs!

Use the 7 Points To Determine The Predominant Aggressor to help you in your investigation

Per General Order 304.11, pages 15-16, if you cannot determine the predominant aggressor, call a domestic violence detective.

Review

- Use your 7 point approach to determine who is the predominant aggressor:
- 1- Who's **afraid**?
- 2- What is the **body language** of each party?
- 3- is there a **history** of violence?
- 4- Where there any **witnesses** to the abuse; past or present?
- 5- Where there any **excited utterances**?
- 6- What does the **crime scene** look like; what's damaged and who does it belong to?
- 7 –What are the extent of the **injuries**; which are offensive wounds and which are defensive wounds?

Conclusion

The predominant aggressor is the person who poses the most serious **ongoing threat**

To connect a victim with a **domestic violence service provider** give them with a PD 378-A and refer them to the Domestic Violence Intake Center at 202-879-0152 during DC Superior Court hours or contact SAFE's On Call Advocacy Program (OCAP) at 1-800-407-5048 between 6:00PM and 6:00AM, and 24 hours on weekends and holidays.

Thank you for the work you do