

# CHUTES AND LADDERS FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Total time: 45 min.

Exercise time: 20 min

Processing time: 25 min

## PREPARATION

To run this exercise, you will need the following:

- The script
- Cards describing the different people who are participating in this exercise
- **Green** money cards (random amount)
- **Pink** assistance cards (random amount)
- Four boxes or baskets to collect cards
- 6 posters with statements below
- Masking tape

Before running this exercise, create 6 posters, one for each location listed below. Sample posters are attached.

HOME (you, your partner, your kids and your dog)

Free

HOTEL (you, your kids and sneak your dog in with you)

Pets aren't allowed so you have to hide your dog

Costs 2 **green** money cards for lodging per use

You always have to hide your dog

RELATIVE'S HOME (you, your children and your dog plus your relatives)

The home of your relatives with whom you're not very close

Costs 1 **pink** assistance card per use

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER (you, your children, but not your dog)

There are no other residents or staff of your demographic

The house is full of noisy children.

If you can't climb stairs you have to sleep on the living room sofa

Costs one **pink** assistance card per use

APARTMENT (you, your kids and your dog)

Located in a high crime neighborhood

Cost 2 **green** money cards for rent per use

If you're disabled, costs one **pink** assistance card for help with daily activities

YOUR CAR (you, your kids and your dog)

Free

**Green**

Represent the financial costs of your choice

**Pink**

Represent the emotional toll the choices you make take on you

## **SET UP**

Put up the posters in different areas of the room far enough apart so people can gather in front of them. If possible, arrange the furniture in the room so participants can move freely to each location. Position boxes or a person near the posters to collect cards from participants.

Have each participant take random amounts of money cards and assistance cards and a copy of who they are. During this exercise, people will be playing one of four different roles at the same time. If too many participants are present to have everyone move around to the posters, provide a map for audience members to join in from their seats.

## **DIRECTIONS**

Explain to the audience that this interactive exercise will help us to understand why some women stay, why some women leave relationships at various times and why some leave and then return to their abuser.

Describe the procedure to participants.

Everyone starts at the poster marked HOME. Then a series of situations will be described. At the end of each situation, participants must decide what they will do. Deciding to leave may cost them either financially and/or will take an emotional toll. At the end of each situation, participants will be told if there's a cost (the costs of their choices are written on the posters).

**Green** cards represent financial costs. **Pink** cards represent the emotional and mental toll it takes on you to seek out an alternative to an abusive relationship. Both are often taken into consideration by victims when deciding whether to leave or return. If you decide to leave, put your cards in the box by the location you go to. It is always free to stay home. If you run out of **green** or **pink** cards, you must return home.

## **START THE EXERCISE**

Everyone gets a card describing who they are for the exercise. Give participants time to read who they are and summarize the four roles for all participants.

Have everyone start at the poster marked HOME. Then the trainer reads each scene and asks participants if they want to stay home, or go to any of the possible locations (shelter, hotel, family's house, etc.). They are not eligible for the nursing home while they are in good health. Pause after each scenario to let people move and pay (by putting cards in the box or handing it to the person minding the location).

### Role #1

You are a 72-year old woman who was widowed 3 years ago. You have bad arthritis in your hips and knees, it's difficult for you get around and sometimes have to use a walker. A year ago you met a man and since you considered him your new life partner, you invited him to move into the home you have owned for 30 years. You are not married for financial reasons but you do depend on his income to help meet all of your expenses.

### Role #2

You are 33 years old and newly married. You have a chronic nerve condition that is occasionally painful and sometimes requires you to use a wheelchair. You and your husband have a two year old daughter with special needs.

### Role #3

You are 46 years old. You have been with your partner for 3 years. No one in your family or at work knows you are a lesbian. You fear one day being "outed" and losing your job and the support of your family. You have an 11 year-old little dog who you love very much.

### Role #4

You are a 28-year-old woman from Korea. You came to the U.S. 5 years ago on a fiancée visa and married your husband, who is a U.S. citizen. He never filed the proper paperwork to adjust your immigration status – so you have become undocumented which is illegal in U.S. You have two children, ages 5 and 4, who are U.S. citizens. You speak a small amount of English and have a job as a cashier at a local grocery store. Your husband frequently tells you that if you try to leave him, he will report you to the immigration authorities and take the children away from you. You are afraid that if you're deported you'll never be able to see your children again.

## TO EVERYONE

- #1: Every Tuesday you go out with your friends for dinner. This Tuesday as you prepare to leave, your partner gets upset and starts yelling at you. Your partner is so upset you call your friends and cancel your plans. You are concerned about your partner's increasingly controlling behavior. Do you leave or stay? (Remember: going somewhere else will cost you)

## TO THOSE AT HOME

- #2 A few months later you go shopping with your partner. Your partner is angry because you spent money on an air purifier that your doctor recommended to help with your asthma. Your partner continues to argue with you when you get home. You tell your partner that you are going to call the police and he/she shoves you. You are able to call 911 before he/she yanks the phone from the wall. The police arrive and minimize the situation. They tell your partner to "take a walk" and "cool off". Do you leave or stay? (Remember: going somewhere else will cost you)

## TO THOSE AT HOME

- #3 A few weeks later you have plans to go visit your best friend. Your partner is not feeling well but you decide to go anyway. Your partner becomes angry, grabs you by the arm and pushes you hard into the living room wall. Your partner has badly bruised your arm. The next day at work a co-worker notices the bruise and asks you if you need to talk. You tell her that everything is fine that you are just clumsy. Your co-worker gives you a tear off sheet with the 1-800 number on it. Do you leave or stay? (Remember: going somewhere else will cost you)

## TO THOSE NOT AT HOME

- #4 You left home quickly so you need to buy some new clothes. You find that your partner has canceled your ATM and credit cards and all you have is the cash you left with. If you want new clothes, it will cost you 1 green money card. If you are at a shelter it will cost one pink assistance card to take something from the clothes closet. Do you buy new/used clothes or wear what you have and hope no one notices?

## TO THOSE AT HOME

- #5 Several months later, your partner is angry that dinner is not ready. Your partner pushes you and you fall down the stairs and break two ribs. You go to the hospital. Your partner, who pays for your insurance, threatens to cancel your insurance policy if you don't return home. This means that you will have to pay for your medical expenses out of pocket. Without insurance, leaving will cost 1 additional green card of out of pocket

money so that you can get your meds. Do you leave or stay? (Remember: going somewhere else will cost you)

### **TO EVERYONE**

- #6 This stress of what you're going through is making you feel like you might lose control. You think you may need counseling to help cope with the anxiety and fear you feel. You are told you have too many resources for free help and counseling is not covered by your insurance (if you still have insurance). Seeing a counselor costs 1 green card. Do seek counseling or just try to hang in there?

### **TO THOSE NOT AT HOME**

- #7 You decide to talk to your minister for help in deciding whether to return to your partner and home. Your minister reminds you that God does not give us more than we can bear. The pastor suggests that regular church attendance and prayer might improve your life and encourages you to give your relationship another chance. Do you stay where you are, go somewhere else or return home? (remember: staying where you are or going somewhere else will cost you)

### **TO THOSE NOT AT HOME**

- #8 You think your partner is now stalking you. You see your partner's car when you are shopping and find notes on your car windshield begging you to come home. You see your partner hanging around near your work and your place of worship. You call the police to report the stalking. They tell you that they cannot do anything unless you have a TPO. Do you stay where you are, go somewhere else or return home? (Remember: staying where you are or going somewhere else will cost you)

### **TO THOSE NOT AT HOME**

- #9 One minute your partner is threatening and scaring you and the next is begging you to come back. Your hours at work have been cut because you've had to miss shifts to go to court to get a TPO. You can't make your car payment and the used car lot has repossessed your car. You must get to and from work. Arranging transportation costs you 1 pink assistance card.

***\*\*At this point in the exercise, provide an opportunity for participants to "earn" 1 green money card by selling drugs.***

## TO THOSE NOT AT HOME

- #10 For those of you staying at your relative's:  
One night you overhear your relative's husband wondering if they should ask you to leave for their safety and the safety of their children. Do you stay where you are, go somewhere else or return home? (Remember: staying where you are or going somewhere else will cost you)

## TO THOSE AT HOME

- #11 A long time friend expresses concern about you and asks if you are OK. You reluctantly tell her about what's happening and ask her if she can help. She says her apartment is pretty crowded, but she offers to let you stay on her couch. Your fear that your partner will find out you told someone about the abuse and your embarrassment at having to ask for help costs you a pink assistance card. Do you stay or leave?

## TO THOSE NOT AT HOME

- #12 For those of you with children:  
You are served with divorce papers and the batterer, with the help of his attorney, is seeking full custody of your child/children. You will need to find an attorney or the batterer may succeed in taking your child/children. The local shelters tell you they don't know any attorneys who will represent you for free. Hiring an attorney will cost you 2 green money cards. Do you hire an attorney or try to represent yourself?

***\*\*At this point in the exercise, provide an opportunity for participants to "earn" 2 green money cards by stripping a couple nights a week.***

## TO EVERYONE

- #11 The abuse you've experienced has you in constant crisis. To help cope, you begin drinking heavily. A couple of times you've blacked out and can't remember what happened. Getting help for your drinking problem will cost two pink assistance cards. Do you get counseling or try to cope on your own?

For the women in the shelter:

You've been exited due to coming back to the shelter drunk. Do you go somewhere else or return home?

## **TO THOSE AT HOME**

- #12 Your partner is angry that you visited your friend. Your partner takes the shotgun out of the closet, lays it on the kitchen table, starts drinking and talks about killing you. Do you stay or leave?
- #13 You hide your partner's gun. Your partner finds it, loads it and comes after you. You call 911. The police come, confiscate the gun and arrest the batterer. The batterer tells you that he/she will bail out in a couple of hours just like last time and next time you are going to be in a body bag. Do you stay or leave?

## **TO THOSE NOT AT HOME**

- #14 Your family member or friend says you can no longer stay with them. The shelter says your time is up and you must leave. Do you go somewhere else or return home?

## **TO THOSE AT HOME**

- #15 At breakfast, you can't find your dog. Your partner laughs but says nothing. You fear the worst when your dog remains missing for the rest of the week. Do you stay or leave

## **TO THOSE NOT AT HOME (different endings for each scene)**

- #16 For older woman and person with disabilities:  
The stress of the abuse has taken its toll. Your disability has progressed and you now require daily medical assistance. The shelter is no longer an option. If you have resources, you can go to the hotel or the apartment and pay one **green** money card for professional assistance in addition to the cost of the hotel or the apartment. You can also go to your relative's home if you have **pink** assistance cards left. Or you can return home and have your partner provide medical care and assistance to you. What do you do?

For immigrant women:

Your partner shows up at your job and makes a scene. You are told to come home or else your partner will get you fired. Following this incident, your boss tells you that he needs to talk to you tomorrow first thing. This job is under-the-table and you need to keep it since it's hard finding work as an undocumented woman. What do you do?

For lesbians:

Your partner has given you 24 hours to return home or she will tell your employer and your family and everyone you else you know that you are a lesbian and that she is afraid of you. What do you do?

### **END THE EXERCISE**

Note where everyone that is participating ends up. Discuss the experience with participants.

Processing Questions:

- What was it like? Who would like to share their experience?
- Was there anyone who never left home? If so, why?
- For those who ended up back at home, what led to your decision to return? How did it feel going back?
- For those who were exited from the shelter due to drinking, what did that feel like? Exited because time was up?
- For those who chose to earn money, by doing “special jobs”, why did you choose to do that? Were you worried about what others might think, or getting arrested, losing custody of children, etc?
- For Korean immigrant, how did the language barriers or fear of deportation affect your decisions?