



HealingVoices

Personal Stories

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USER AND COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE FOR "CHEYANNE'S STORY"

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to increase public awareness of domestic violence among middle school, high school and college students by showing "Cheyanne's Story." The film is also intended to provide a role model of a survivor of teen violence for other victims. We strongly encourage showing it in schools and after school programs to stimulate discussion. Also included on the DVD is "A Teacher's Story." Showing these two films together provides an excellent opportunity for school faculties and in-service training events.

Prior to showing the film in middle and high school arrange to have a school counselor or health professional present to assist with discussion. Be aware that the showing might prompt a student currently experiencing abuse, or a friend or family member of a victim to share that information. Should such a person come forward, it is crucial to guide them to the appropriate professional help. Participants need to be assured that all discussion within the group is confidential.

The discussion following a film viewing must have some parameters set if the topic is to have a valid impact. Information so sensitive is only shared in an environment that lends itself to the feeling of being safe for the student.

Planning Your Event

"Cheyanne's Story" is 9 minutes long. In the film Cheyanne describes the abuse she experienced, and how she regained her self-confidence with the support of her mother, a teacher and developing a special project on Domestic Violence. In "A Teacher's Story" Cheyanne's teacher describes the role she played in guiding Cheyanne's work on the Project and in the classroom.

Classroom settings: Showing "Cheyanne's Story" provides an opportunity for use in a variety of ways and in different settings:

- As part of classes in middle school, high school and college on interpersonal relations and family
- As part of Health and Physical Education Courses at all Educational Levels
- As part of the Family and Consumer Science High School curriculum:

The Family, Careers and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Programs include national projects such as: Interpersonal Relationships, Families First, Stop the Violence, Dynamic Leadership and many more that apply.

The FCCLA STOP (Students Taking On Prevention) the Violence program empowers youth with attitudes, skills and resources in order to recognize, report, and reduce youth violence.

- As part of the Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs such as FCCLA, SKILLS USA, HOSA and many more) where students run organizations and have leadership opportunities that allow them a chance to speak out. (i.e. FCCLA, STAR – Student Taking Action with Recognition – events)
- At Church/Religious Youth Groups

Training Sessions: Showing both “Cheyanne’s Story” and “A Teacher’s Story” provides additional options:

- In-service training days for staff at schools at the middle and high school level
- In college educational courses for future teachers

Each setting will have its own unique requirements.

If you are leading the discussion and find that no one is volunteering questions or comments, a good way to start is to go around the room and ask each person to share a thought or two. Make sure to let the group know that it is OK to pass if they want to. Remember to have a professional in the field of domestic violence present to answer questions and provide general information.

Some suggested questions for further discussion are:

1. What does a healthy relationship look like?
2. How do you build better relationships?
3. Is there a correlation between Education, Poverty, and Domestic Violence?
4. Is there a cultural relationship of acceptance of Abuse as a normal way of life?
5. What does effective communication in a relationship look like?
6. Do varying cultural backgrounds affect communication in relationships? How? Why?

ADDITIONAL USEFUL RESOURCES

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE

www.FCCLAIinc.org
www.loveisnotabuse.com
www.drjillmurray.com
www.breakthecycle.org
www.thatsnotcool.com
www.dibbleinstitute.com

Teen Dating Violence: Warning Signs

Expert on domestic and teen violence Jill Murray, offers advice on how to spot warning signs of emotional and physical abuse and ways for teens to avoid abusive behavior in relationships. These next two sections are taken from <http://absnews.go.com/2020/teen-dating-violence-warning-signs> June 26, 2009).

Warning Signs: A Girl May Be in A Dangerous Relationship If..

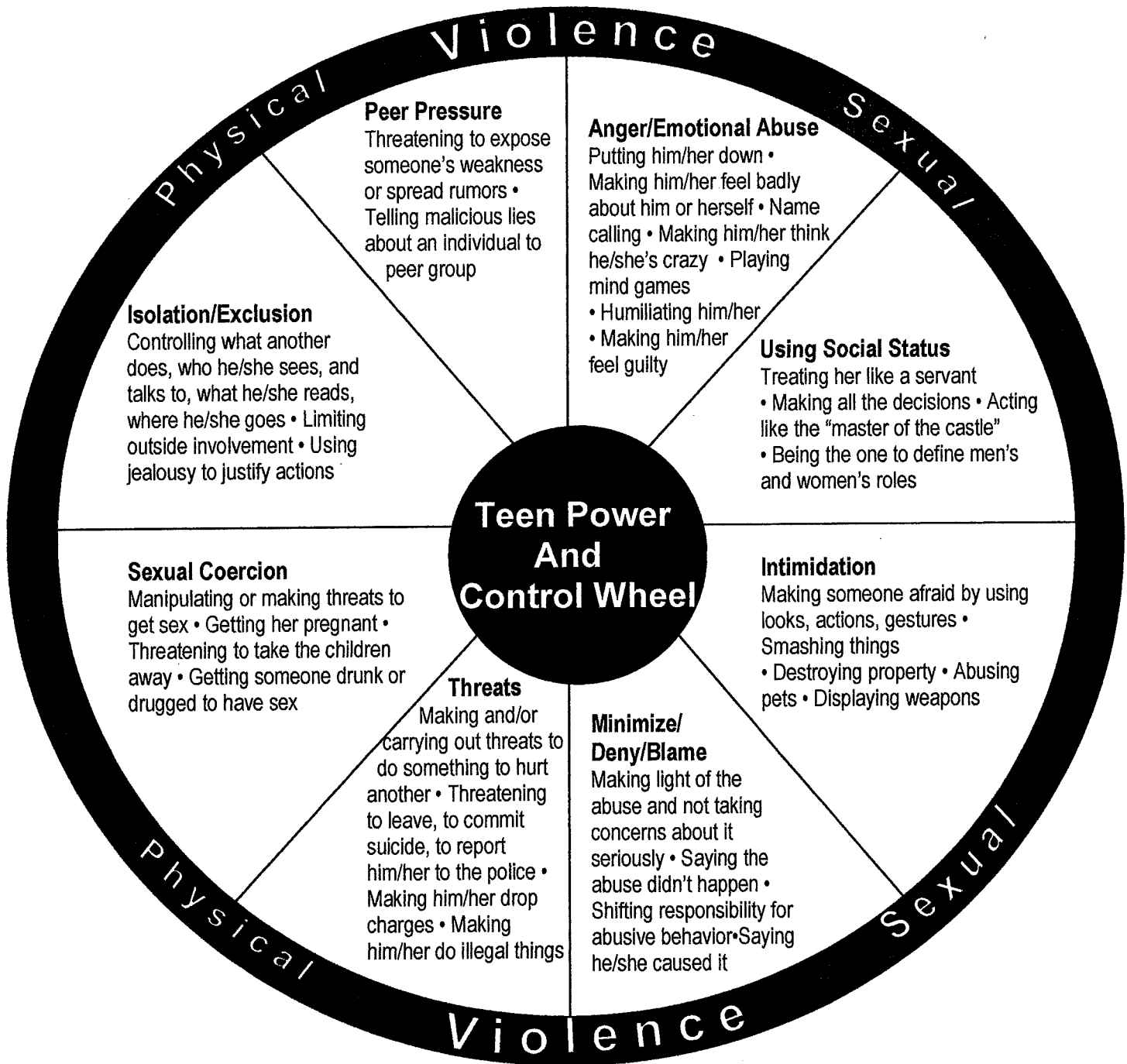
1. Before she met her boyfriend, she had more friends than she does now.
2. Her grades have declined in the past weeks or months.
3. Before she began dating him, she was more outgoing and involved with her family, school activities, and/or place of worship.
4. She frequently cries or is very sad.
5. If he calls or texts her, she must get back to him immediately.
6. He told her that he loved her early in their relationship.
7. He is jealous if she looks at or speaks casually with another boy.
8. He accuses her of behavior she doesn't actually engage in.
9. He is aggressive in other areas of his life; he puts his fist through walls or closets, bangs his fist to make a point, or throws things when angry.
10. He frequently roughhouses or play-wrestles with her.
11. She makes excuses for his poor behavior or says it's her fault.
12. He calls and texts her many times an hour, frequently between midnight and 5 a.m.
13. He has a "tragic" home life; he is or was physically abused or verbally demeaned, and/or one or both parents are alcoholics or use drugs.
14. He drinks or uses drugs.
15. He frequently gives her "advice" about her choice of friends, hairstyle, clothes, or makeup.
16. He calls her demeaning names, then laughs and tells her he was only kidding or that she's too sensitive.
17. She has become secretive since she started dating him.
18. She has recently become very critical of her appearance, talents, or abilities.
19. She frequently has to explain herself to her boyfriend or often says she's sorry.
20. She has bruises she cannot explain or appears nervous about explaining.

How A Girl Can Protect Herself From Abusers:

1. Stay away from boys who put you down, talk negatively about women, or drink and/or use drugs.
2. Don't get involved with a boy who doesn't ask for your opinion or doesn't respect you or your decisions.
3. Set sexual limits and communicate them clearly. Most teenage boys say, "I'll go as far as the girl will let me."
4. Stay sober in social situations.
5. Don't make boys guess what you want – tell them.
6. When on a date, remain in control. Have an alternate transportation plan in case the date isn't going as you would like and you want to go home. Do not rely on your date to bring you home.
7. Listen to and trust your feelings and instincts.
8. As soon as you feel threatened, forget about being a "nice girl."
9. Take care of yourself. Don't assume someone else will.
10. If a boy tries to use physical force and you must defend yourself, do not hit him in the stomach, shoulders, or back. These are the strongest parts of his body. Target the kneecaps, heels, eyes, or crotch. If possible, do not stay and fight. Flee! You have 15 minutes of an adrenaline surge, which will give you energy and extraordinary strength. Use it to run, get help, and yell, "Call 911" or "Fire!"

TEEN POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention in Duluth, Minnesota



Important Statistics related to Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence

Percentage of Victims of that will experience Domestic Violence at some point in their lifetime:

32% or 1 in 3 New Mexico Women

15% or 1 in 7 New Mexico men

Teenage Dating Violence and Abuse Statistics

20.9 % or 1 in 5 Female High School Students

13.4% or 1 in 9 Male High School Students

50% of youth reporting dating violence and rape also report attempting suicide

33% of teenage dating abuse victims are silent.

8 Steps that Explain “Why She Doesn’t Leave”

By Crystal Sanchez

Published in the Huffington Post, February 3, 2016

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The question that is always asked of victims of domestic abuse is “Why don’t/didn’t you just leave?” I know sometimes even victims don’t really understand why.

I’ve heard that question over and over. While there are many different reasons we give for not leaving, there is a “scientific explanation” for why it is so difficult to leave an abusive situation. I will explain the cycle of brainwashing as studied by Psychologist Robert Jay Lifton but will be discussing it as it specifically pertains to domestic abuse.

Last year, after years of hiding my abuse from almost everybody I knew, I decided to publicly share my story. Recently, after my research on brainwashing, I went back to read the story I had written last year. I was shocked. Each experience I described was the step by step brainwashing process. What’s even more shocking, is that my abuser was only 15 years old.

I am not a Psychologist, I speak from years of personal experience and from spending time with women who have endured domestic abuse. When somebody’s only objective is to keep you loyal, they will go to great lengths to achieve it.

This is what the brainwashing process looks like:

Stage I- Breaking Down the Self

Step 1 - Assault on Identity: When somebody is trying to control another, they begin to attack their sense of self, their identity. They start to say things that cause the victim to doubt who they are.

- “You are a slut.”
- “You’re worthless.”
- “You are not a good mom.”
- “You are ugly, nobody will want you.”

The attacks are repeated consistently for days, weeks, and sometimes years. As a result, the victim becomes disoriented, confused, and begins to doubt everything they believed to be true. Eventually the victim will begin to adopt these same beliefs.

The idea of brainwashing is to destroy the old identity and replace it with a new one, one that matches with the beliefs, values, and ideas of the manipulator. The effects of an attack on the identity can last long after the victim is no longer in the abusive situation.

Step 2 - Establishment of Guilt: Guilt is an effective tactic in mind control and is introduced in different ways. The abuser criticizes the victim for any reason, small or large and sometimes no reason at all.

- “This is your fault.”
- “You made me do this.”

The abuser will take a small flaw and embellish it to the extreme. Abusers will shift responsibility of their actions to the victim or justify their behavior by blaming the victim.

“If you wouldn’t have talked back, I wouldn’t have had to hit you.”

An abuser will make the victim feel guilty for disagreeing with them or not meeting extremely high expectations.

An abuser may blame the victim for the abuser’s transgressions by making the victim believe they deserved it, or are a result of something the victim did. After the assault on identity, the constant criticisms cause the victim to believe the punishment and mistreatment are warranted.

Guilt can easily turn into shame when it is internalized. Inducing guilt, humiliation, and shame destroy confidence and self worth. A victim begins to feel culpable all the time and everything they do or say is wrong. When shame sets in, the victim no longer feels bad about things they’ve done, they begin to feel they are bad.

Step 3 - Self-Betrayal: Once a victim is overwhelmed with guilt and shame, they begin to abandon their own needs and make choices that are harmful to their wellbeing. The victim is bullied into cutting off communication from friends and family who share the same beliefs or behaviors. This is when isolation begins, the abuser believes the victim’s friends and family are a threat to the relationship. The abuser will blame friends or family for problems in the relationship. The victim’s betrayal of their own beliefs and the betrayal to the people to whom they once felt a sense of loyalty to, increases the feelings of shame and guilt which further destroys their sense of self. As a result, the more isolated a victim becomes, the more dependent they are on the abuser.

Step 4 - Breaking Point: At this point, the victim no longer recognizes themselves, they don’t know who they are any longer. They may have lost their grip with reality. Gaslighting techniques are used to push the victim over the edge. Gaslighting is an attempt by one person to overwrite another’s reality.

- “You’re crazy - that never happened.”
- “You’re making that up, it’s all in you head.”
- “You’re paranoid.”

The victim is confused and disoriented from gaslighting and from being fed a distorted version of reality. The victim questions themselves constantly and feels like “the crazy one” and/or feels

depressed, anxious, traumatized and other negative emotional and physical symptoms like insomnia and paranoia.

Some may call this a “nervous breakdown.” A nervous breakdown is the point of exhaustion reached after an extended period of extreme anxiety. The overwhelming anxiety, depression, and stress leads to a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and absolute exhaustion. The victim’s ability to think and reason at this stage is severely compromised and they become temporarily unable to function normally in day-to-day life.

Stage II- Possibility of Salvation

Step 5 - Leniency & Opportunity: Just when a victim can literally take no more, the abuser offers leniency. This is when the abuser offers a small act of kindness amid the psychological abuse and the victim feels a deep sense of gratitude completely out of proportion to the deed.

Because the victim’s perception is so skewed, the small act shifts emotions to relief and a sense of admiration. Since these small acts of kindness are so infrequent, the kind gesture is magnified. It can be something as small as offering a glass of water, a hug, or a compliment. This can lead to a sense of false hope. It puts the responsibility on the victim to do things better, to try harder, in hopes the acts of kindness will become more frequent.

These unpredictable responses are detrimental to mental wellbeing, confidence, and self-esteem. The abuser can have an extreme reaction one day, and then the next day have the complete opposite reaction. This unpredictability can cause a great deal of stress and anxiety.

Step 6 - Compulsion to Confess: The victim is so grateful for the small gesture between abuse and manipulation, they begin to agree with the criticisms. For the first time in the brainwashing process, the victim is faced with the stark contrast between the harsh criticism & abuse and the relief of leniency.

This is when the victim looks within and tries to find those “evil” parts of themselves and attempts to remove them from every part of their being. This leads directly to their “new” identity. The victim begins to acquire the beliefs and values the abuser has ingrained. At this point, the victim is willing to say anything to recreate those moments of leniency.

Step 7 - The Channeling of Guilt: The victim does not know what they have done wrong, they just know they are wrong. They begin to feel guilty for who they are and about the beliefs they’ve held. This creates a blank slate so the abuser can attach the guilt to whatever belief system the abuser is trying to replace. The victim comes to believe it is their belief system that is causing all of the problems, the more they accept the abuser’s way of thinking, the more shame they feel about who they were. Essentially, this is when the victim begins to adopt the new way of thinking and relinquishes their old way of thinking.

Step 8 - Releasing of Guilt- Logical Dishonoring: By this stage, the victim has come to believe that they themselves are not bad, but the belief systems they held are wrong, and they can escape that wrongness by completely changing their belief systems. They denounce their former belief system and the people they associated with. They confess to acts associated with their former belief

systems. After a full confession, they complete the process of rejecting their former identity. Now, the abuser offers up the new identity.

These tactics are very similar to those used on prisoners of war or members of a cult. In a domestic abuse situation, the brainwashing process becomes a cycle and the steps continue to be repeated. The moment an abuser begins to feel the victim is "slipping from their control," they will re-assault their identity. This will begin the process all over again. Victims continue to believe in the ideas of their abusers long after they have left the abusive environment. The new belief system has been so deeply rooted, it could take years to change.

There is hope. Abuse thrives only in silence. If you are healing from an abusive relationship, know the most important thing to do is forgive yourself. If you find yourself in this situation, please seek support. An extremely effective way to get out of the darkness of guilt and shame is by shining a light on it. Start talking about it, don't keep the feelings inside. Shame can only survive in darkness.