

Believing the Voice of Mothers Fleeing Abuse- 209 Survivors Speaking out

- In The Center of the Storm
- The Experience of Immigrant and Refugee Women

Forms of Post-Separation Abuse

- **Perpetual Litigation**
- **Undermining** mothers parenting
- **Brainwashing** the children
- **Use of Access** as opportunities to harass and wear women down
- **Monitoring** her activities
- **Threats and Mistreatment** of her children/ Use of her children
- **Refusing to end the Relationship**

What do mothers want?

Survivor's recommendations...

- An immediate abuse assessment be undertaken by an abuse expert to establish the validity of her claim
- If the likelihood of abuse has been established, then an immediate safety assessment be done to ensure the joint safety and security of the mother and her children.
- Removal of all weapons and licenses
- Supervised access or no access at all if children do not feel safe/comfortable.

What do mothers want?

Survivor's recommendations...

- Sole custody to the mother until the abusive partner demonstrates sustainable change
- Automatic referral of the abusive man to a specialized counselling program that deals with both abuse issues and parenting concerns. This should occur prior to access to the children.
- Establish a process to assess the indicators of effective change that a would have to demonstrate prior to a change in access.

Can an Abuser Change... what to look for....

- Full disclosure
- Recognizes that what he has done is unacceptable and illegal.
- Believes he has choices.
- Ability to access his empathy.
- Is able to identify his controlling and entitled behaviours.
- Able to replace these with respect for himself, his partner and his children.
- Willing to make amends.
- Willing to accept the consequences of his behaviour.
- Accepts that he may have lost his relationship for good.
- Open to learning how to have a meaningful relationship with his children.

Women's Experience of Battering Scale (WEB)

- is a 10 item scale to assess women's perceived loss of power and control resulting from interactions with an abusive partner and indicates exposure to abuse (Smith, Smith & Earp, 1999).

1. He makes me feel unsafe even in my own home.
2. I feel ashamed of the things he does to me.
3. I try not to rock the boat because I am afraid of what he might do.
4. I feel like I am programmed to react a certain way to him.
5. I feel like he keeps me a prisoner.
6. He makes me feel like I have no control over my life, no power, no protection.
7. I hide the truth from others because I am afraid not to.
8. I feel owned and controlled by him.
9. He can scare me without laying a hand on me.
10. He has a look that goes straight through me and terrifies me.

Women Experience Multiple Risks

- Emotional
- Health/Mental health
- Exposure/stigma
- Financial/housing related
- Risk to others
- Systems involvement
- Loss of so much...
- Physical

Social Risks



“Batterer-generated” Risks

- Physical injury
- Psychological harm
- Risks to and involving children
- Financial risks
- Risk to or about family and friends
- Loss of relationship
- Risks involving arrest and legal status

Ref. Jill Davis

“Life-generated” Risks

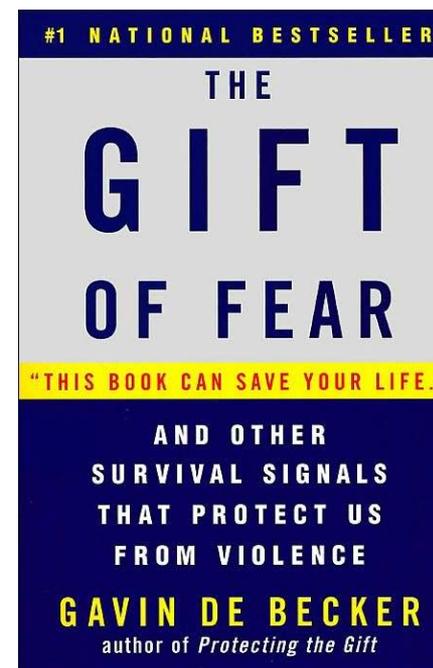
- Financial considerations/fear of poverty
- Geographic isolation
- Physical and mental health issues
- Revictimization due to inadequate responses by major social institutions
- Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, class, ability and /or any other bias

Ref. Jill Davis

Getting inside the head of the abuser

JACA Elements

- J** perceived Justification (for violence)
- A** perceived Alternatives (shrinking)
- C** perceived Consequences (acceptable)
- A** perceived Ability (to execute plan)



- *Critical Reminder*
- **It is critical that sufficient time be taken at the beginning of the case to ensure an accurate assessment and analysis. If the record is not set straight early on, it can take years to undo the damage of an inaccurate assessment. This further damages the mother and children and does not assist the abuser to take responsibility for past behavior, nor assist him to live up to his potential for change if he gets access to effective intervention.**

Assessing the Abuser

- **Assess history of domestic violence in previous relationships.**
- **Assess the frequency and severity of past violence -- this shows you what the**
- **abuser is capable of.**
- **Assess for the abuser's level of denial and minimization.**
- **Does he blame her for everything? Does he see himself as the victim? Is he**
- **bitter, revengeful, depressed, does he believe his life is over without her?**
- **Is he obsessed with the victim? What degree of sexual jealousy exists? Is he**
- **convinced she's having an affair? Is he refusing to end the relationship?**
- **Assess existing stressors in the abusers life and past patterns with these stressors, i.e. history of employment, finances, substance abuse, etc.**

Working with the Survivor of Abuse

- ❑ **Assess for the impact of cumulative trauma-document of all historical abuse.**
- ❑ **Gather your evidence carefully; get a complete and full account of her experience with the abuser, particularly anything that may be used to discredit her at a later date.**
- ❑ **Assess for her level of fear and intimidation of the abuser -- how worn down is she by his tactics? Identify in detail the abusive tactics used against her.**
- ❑ **Get the results of any risk assessment that has already been done by others.**
- ❑ **Use Dr. Campbell's Danger Assessment tool in collaboration with your client- share the results with her-level of risk, strategies for safety, imminent harm vs longer term risks.**
- ❑ **Gather medical records or any other documentation that may be helpful in her case- letters from her advocates/counselor, priest/Elder, family members, friends, and neighbors/ any allies, existing journal/diary entries well before any abuse was ever reported, legal pleadings by both parties if available.**
- ❑ **Interview independently, witnesses who know about the pattern of mistreatment throughout the relationship.**
- ❑ **Have your client document ongoing experiences of abuse -- include dates, times and details written in ink as short a time after the incident as possible/ dated and signed. Have any witnesses do the same.**
- ❑ **Gather items that were damaged and document the damage. Take photographs, wherever possible. Advise client to make a police report as soon after an incident as possible -- physical abuse, threats, stalking, criminal harassment. Request police reports, 911 tapes, and SOCO (Scene of Crime Officer) photos as soon as possible after the incident. If still living with the abuser have these stored at an alternative address.**

Assessing the Impact of Cumulative Trauma/DV on the Children

- ☐ Assess what the children have been exposed to.**
- ☐ Assess their level of fear and intimidation.**
- ☐ How much do they know or have observed?**
- ☐ Have they been directly physically or sexually abused (30 to 60% of kids in DV families have been direct victims of violence).**
- ☐ Identify the tactics that the abuser has used on the children.**
- ☐ Have the children aligned with the abuser? -- do they mistreat the mother, bully younger siblings, and use the abuser's tactics they have learned.**
- Have the children aligned with the mother? – do they believe her, support her in getting away, do they want contact with their father, or they fearful of contact with their dad.**