

Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk

B-SAFER RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Key Concepts

Intimate Partner Violence

- Actual, attempted, or threatened physical harm of a current or former intimate partner

Nature of violence

Intent of perpetrator

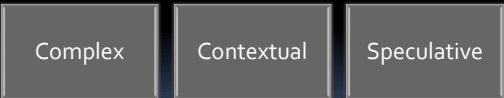
Impact on victim

Relationship status

Gender

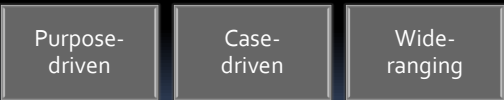
Risk

- A hazard that is incompletely understood and therefore that can be forecast only with uncertainty



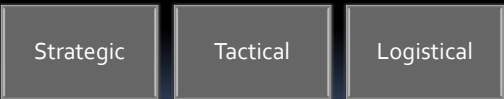
Assessment

- Gathering information for use in making decisions



Management

- Taking action to gain or maintain control



Synthesis

Violence risk assessment

- Process of speculating about violence risk posed by a perpetrator

Violence risk management

- Process of mitigating the violence risk posed by a perpetrator

Goals

Enhance public safety via prevention

- Guide development of risk management plans

Maximize professional accountability

- Improve transparency and consistency of decisions

Minimize legal risks

- Protect patients/offenders and professionals

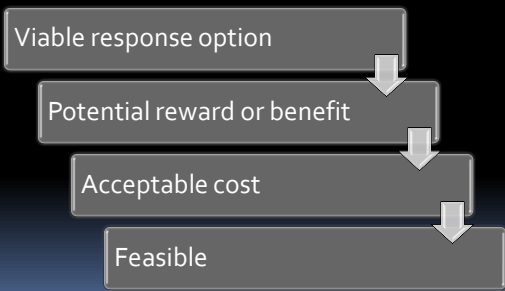
Identifying Risk Factors

Action (Decision) Theory

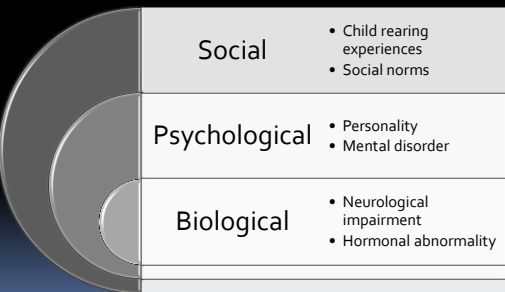
- The proximal cause of violence is a choice or decision
 - Most decisions are not to commit violence

Decisions are:	Decisions are not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal-directed• Planful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conscious• Rational

Thinking About Violence



Influences on Decisions



Risk Factors

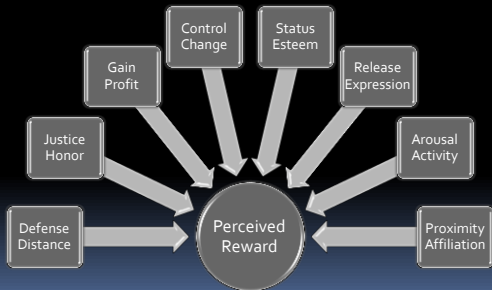
- Risk factors influence decisions



Motivators

- Which factors organized or distorted the person's thought processes in a way that made violence seem like an appropriate response?
- Which factors put thoughts of violence into the person's head?
- Which factors increased the person's perceived gains or benefits of violence?
- What was the person be trying to accomplish by acting violently?

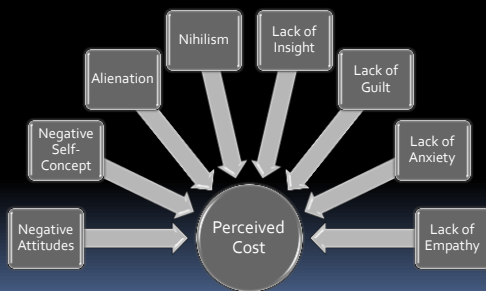
Motivators



Disinhibitors

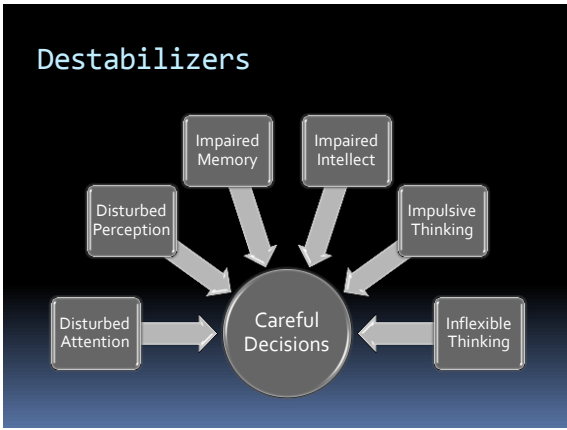
- Which factors organized or distorted the person's thought processes in a way that overcame normal inhibitions against violence?
- Which factors made it difficult for the person to self-censor thoughts of violence?
- Which factors decreased the person's perceived costs or negative consequences of violence?
- Which factors led the person to justify or excuse violence?

Disinhibitors



Destabilizers

- Which factors disorganized or impaired the person's general thought processes in a way that made it difficult to think logically or systematically about violence?
- Which factors disturbed or disrupted the person's basic cognitive functions?
- Which factors prevented the person from properly considering alternatives to violence or the consequences of violence?



Implications

Assess decisions

- Why and how did the perpetrator decide to commit violence in the past?

Manage decisions

- How do we encourage the perpetrator not to commit violence in the future?

Combining Risk Factors

Combining Risk Factors

Discretionary	Non-Discretionary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information weighted and combined according to the evaluator's judgment• AKA informal, intuitive, impressionistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information weighted and combined using fixed and explicit rules• AKA actuarial, algorithmic, mechanical

Problems: Discretionary

- Capricious
 - Lacks accountability
- Fuzzy
 - Lacks detail concerning risks posed
- Unstable
 - May change rapidly

Problems: Non-Discretionary

- Arbitrary
 - Lacks flexibility
- Rigid
 - Simplistic definition of risk
- Fixed
 - May be insensitive to change

Challenge

- How do we combine the strengths of the discretionary and non-discretionary approaches?

Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ)

SPJ

- Relies on guidelines to structure the exercise of professional discretion

Guide prevention via planning	Reflect best practice	Specify basic risk factors
Don't restrict scope	No scoring rules	Good for monitoring change

The B-SAFER

Uses and Users

- For use with (alleged) perpetrators
 - Adults, male or female, ≥ 18 yrs
- At any stage of legal proceedings
 - Pre-arrest, -trial, -sentence; pre- and post-release
- For use by criminal justice professionals
 - With basic expertise in assessment and IPV

Development

- Revision of earlier versions of B-SAFER & SARA
 - 1994, 1995, 1999, 2005
 - Response to feedback
- Updated literature review
 - Scientific and professional literatures

Administration

- 1 • Case information
- 2 • Presence of risk factors
- 3 • Management strategies
- 4 • Conclusive opinions

Step 1

Describe recent and past history of IPV

Identify any proxy perpetrators or secondary victims

Principles of Assessment

- Use multiple methods and multiple sources
- Consider multiple domains of functioning
- Consider dynamic aspects of risk
- Evaluate adequacy of information
- Document information
- Update information

Step 2

Consider standard and case specific risk factors

Summarize judgments about presence, currently and in the past

Coding Presence

Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present• Evidence of presence
?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possibly or partially present• Unsure/uncertain/maybe
N	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absent• No evidence of presence

Coding Presence

Currently	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the last 4 weeks or so
In the Past	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior to last 4 weeks or so

Thinking About Relevance

Drives violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motivates, disinhibits, or destabilizes decisions about violence
Complicates management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes it difficult to implement develop or implement management plans

Intimate Partner Violence

1. Violent Acts
2. Violent Threats or Thoughts
3. Escalation
4. Violation of Court Orders
5. Violent Attitudes

Psychosocial Adjustment

6. General Criminality
7. Intimate Relationship Problems
8. Employment Problems
9. Substance Use Problems
10. Mental Health Problems

Victim Vulnerability Factors

11. Inconsistent Attitudes or Behaviour
12. Extreme Fear of Perpetrator
13. Inadequate Support or Resources
14. Unsafe Living Situation
15. Health Problems

Other Considerations

- Important, case-specific factors not already considered

Step 3

Identify and target relevant risk factors

Specify management strategies, tactics, and logistics

Management Strategies

Monitoring	Supervision	Treatment	Victim Safety Planning
• Surveillance or repeated assessment	• Imposition of controls or restriction of freedoms	• Rehabilitation, including further assessment	• Enhancement of security resources for identifiable targets

Step 4

Communicate summary judgments clearly and simply

Identify important limitations on opinions

Conclusory Opinions

Case Prioritization	Life Threatening Violence	Imminent Violence	Likely Victims
• Degree of effort or intervention required	• Risk for serious or potentially lethal violence	• Urgent intervention taken or needed	• Identity of likely victims of any future violence

Re-assessment of Risk

- Discuss when case should be scheduled for routine review or re-assessment
- Identify any circumstances that should trigger a special review or re-assessment

Contact Information

Randall Kropp, Ph.D., R. Pysch.
Protect International Risk and
Safety Services

+1 (778) 819-7036

rkropp@protect-international.com
rkropp@sfu.ca
