



*Hope and Healing:*

*Domestic Violence Resources for the Church (2004-2007)*

*(Formerly the Turn Off the Violence  
Resource Manual)*

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## About the Manual

The first week of every November in Calgary is **Turn Off the Violence Week**. Communities of faith are encouraged to speak out against violence. It is our hope that this manual will aid you in pursuing this; it contains information and practice resources for faith communities to use during this week and throughout the whole year.

This revised and updated manual is the compilation of five years of materials produced by FaithLink. We have changed the title from the *Turn Off the Violence Manual* to **Hope and Healing: Domestic Violence Resources for the Church** and have re-organized the material for easier use. Previous editions of the Manual are included with the addition of a new section: Religious and Spiritual Abuse. The information is organized into four sections: *Introduction*, *Domestic Violence 101* (basic domestic violence information), *Domestic Violence and the Church Community* as well as *Pertaining to Children and Teens*.

The original 2004 manual was prepared by Suzanne Ranta, BSW, RSW. In subsequent years Jennifer Wushke, BSW, RSW and Marlette Reed, B.Ed, M.A. have contributed updates; Marlette completed the revisions for the new manual. Many thanks to Irene Sevcik, PhD, RSW, Coordinator of FaithLink, for her ongoing contribution to the manual and updates.

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with appropriate credit given to source and to FaithLink.*

## About FaithLink

### History of the FaithLink Initiative <sup>1</sup>

FaithLink developed in Calgary through the desire by key religious and service agency leaders to establish a coordinated, systems-wide community response to family and sexual abuse. A planning group began the work in 1998, developing a dedicated domestic violence docket court. The proposed model would bring together police, Crown prosecutors and defense lawyers, victim services and those offering treatment services to individuals who had acted abusively. The Very Reverend Robert Pynn, then Dean of the Anglican Cathedral Church of the Redeemer, and Karen Walroth, Executive Director of the Action Committee Against Violence (ACAV), were key members of these discussions. They recognized that to achieve a full realization of the goal of a broadly-based community response to family and sexual abuse, the inclusion of religious/spiritual communities was necessary. Events in the next two years would lay the foundation for their dream to become a reality.

In May 1999 a survey<sup>2</sup> identified that 16% of Calgarians would seek help from their faith/religious communities if they experienced a domestic abuse incident. In September 1999 RESOLVE Alberta, the Family Violence Prevention Centre and Sheriff King Home jointly sponsored a two day discussion forum with Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark.<sup>3</sup> Her research confirmed that by working together spiritual leaders and secularly-based service providers benefit to each other's work, thereby augmenting the healing process for victims. Further, she noted: "many religious abuse victims want both the support and care of their faith communities and the skills and services that secular agencies can provide."<sup>4</sup> Nason-Clark's research further confirmed the need for religious/spiritual communities to be considered as significant partners in addressing family and sexual violence.

To explore the question of how religious/spiritual communities could be engaged, a small committee was formed and therein FaithLink was born. One of its first initiatives was to sponsor, in April 2000, a workshop that brought religious leaders and service providers to the same table to discuss the possibilities of working together. This weekend event was sponsored by the Anglican Cathedral Church of the Redeemer and facilitated by Drs. Nancy Nason-Clark and Lori Beaman-Hall. Through presentations and discussions, recommendations emerged that formed the foundation for a long-term initiative to build bridges between religious/spiritual communities and secularly-based domestic and sexual violence service agencies. The work of the FaithLink committee was beginning to take shape.

Over the following two years this committee realized significant achievements, including:

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<sup>1</sup> From Irene Sevcik, Marlette Reed, Andrea Silverstone and Robert Pynn, *Building Bridges of Collaboration: How religious/spiritual communities and service providers came together to address issues of family and sexual abuse*, (Calgary, AB: FaithLink, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Sponsored by: The Action Committee Against Violence, the United Way of Calgary and Area and the Calgary Injury Prevention Coalition

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Nason-Clark is an internationally recognized sociologist, Professor of Sociologist at the University of New Brunswick and Chair of the Religion and Violence Research Team at the Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research. She has done extensive research with religious communities regarding the issue of domestic violence.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Nason-Clark and Lori Beaman-Hall. "Partners or Protagonists? The Transition House Movement and Conservative Churches." *Affilia*. 12 (2), Summer 1997, 176-196.

- ◆ An expansion of its membership to include representatives from both religious/spiritual communities and secularly-based service providers;
- ◆ The choosing of a name – FaithLink - to represent the emerging mission of the work;
- ◆ The beginning work to develop a generic response protocol for religious/spiritual communities;
- ◆ The publication and distribution of a brochure which included quick references to responding to disclosures of abuse;
- ◆ The sponsorship of a training workshop, again featuring Dr. N. Nason-Clark. Eighty-two participants, representing spiritual leaders and service providers, participated.
- ◆ The sponsorship of a training workshop for those providing counsel to couples planning to marry. Again, Dr. Nason-Clark was the keynote speaker. And
- ◆ The development of a database.

The work of FaithLink was always viewed as a community initiative, grounded within collaboration between those confronting family and sexual violence – whether from a spiritual or a secular perspective. The original FaithLink committee continued to meet and broaden in membership. It has evolved into the present Steering Committee with a membership of 30+ representatives of various constituent groups:

- ◆ Leaders from Christian, Jewish and Khmer-Buddhist religious traditions;
- ◆ A member of the Ismaeli community;
- ◆ A member of the Hindu community;
- ◆ Representatives from women’s shelters (emergency and second-stage);
- ◆ Representatives from counseling and family violence intervention services;
- ◆ A professor from the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary;
- ◆ Interested individuals.

As the work developed and broadened, it became evident that it could not be sustained through volunteers alone. Thus funding was sought and a part-time coordinator was employed in January 2003. The Very Reverend Robert Pynn, an initiator of the work, assumed the more formal role of ‘advisor’ to FaithLink’s on-going development.

Although the work first began, and continues, within the Christian community, members of the Jewish community joined the Steering Committee and requested assistance in raising awareness of the issue of family violence within their community. More recently, FaithLink received a similar request from the Khmer Buddhist (Cambodian) community. As the work has developed, five specific areas of focus have emerged:

- Raising awareness of the family violence and increasing capacity of spiritual/religious/cultural communities to respond to disclosures of abuse;
- Raising awareness and building capacity with service providers and spiritual leaders in responding to the impact of abuse on the spirit;
- Building understanding and collaborative working relationships between spiritual/religious/cultural communities and secularly-based service providers;
- Conducting relevant research that explores the interface between the spiritual and the secular regarding issues of family violence; and
- Providing self-care opportunities for service providers who work with those affected by domestic abuse.

### *Mary's Story*<sup>5</sup>

I grew up in a violent and alcoholic home. From a young age, I witnessed and experienced sexual and physical abuse. I did not know what a normal life was. In order to learn what a normal life was from those whom I thought knew, I became a Christian and attached myself to the church. I was 15.

At 16 I met a young man in my church and married him. As all of the members of my peer group in the church were married, I believed that this was the way to belong. We had four children together. Our life, however, went rapidly from sweet dreams to one of poverty and shame. My husband got involved with the occult and became a heavy drug user. We were routinely evicted from our home, and often didn't have enough food to survive.

Throughout this time I stayed with the same church. Everyone knew what was going on, but no one suggested or offered help, not even when my children and I were left by their father for periods of time to fend for ourselves. I was, in fact, told that taking proactive steps in my life would be to rebel against God. The message I received from the church teachings was that my circumstances were trials from God and that I should submit to them. One pastor's wife even told me that I should feel lucky to be that miserable, because when the Apocalypse came, I would know how to live. When I dared to share the pain of the abuse that I was suffering, it was suggested that my job was to give more love to my husband, and God would change him. Again and again I was told to be a better wife and not to hinder God from His work. One male leader in the church went as far as to tell me that I should make a real effort to look more attractive to my husband. My husband, however, was never called by the church leaders regarding his abuse.

After living nine years of despair and desolation, I decided to end my marriage. The church's response was that I was rebelling against God's will for my life. In my mind, I had two options: to remain in my present life of drugs, violence, poverty and misery; or to leave - knowing that it would be difficult raising my children as a single parent, with no education or family support. I chose the latter.

There was no further interest shown from the church; I was left believing that I wasn't good enough for God. I was 25, and afraid of God as the church had portrayed Him.

I had no direction to go. And the direction I headed in wasn't much better than where I had been. I met another man who appealed to me because he didn't drink or use drugs and he had a stable job; I became pregnant with my fifth child.

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<sup>5</sup> Mary is a pseudonym for a person who agreed to share her story for this manual.

It wasn't long before I recognized that abuse takes more forms than physical. The emotional abuse I experienced in this relationship left bruises on the inside, and to my self-esteem; these were every bit as painful as the physical. He not only abused and controlled my life, but the lives of my children, as well. By the end of this marriage, I had no sense of self at all.

It was then that I met a woman from a small neighborhood church. I immediately saw that she listened to me, and never once responded to my pain with platitudes from the Bible. There was a light in her face, and I came to see Jesus through her. I began to attend a small church group with her, where I was encouraged to be honest with my feelings, needs and hurts. Here there was no condemnation; only acceptance, understanding and validation of my hurts.

It was here that the long process of healing began.

It was here that my shame was shed.

It was here that I returned to God.

I came to understand that the previous church had evoked fear-based responses in me, which kept me bound for many years in fear and shame. My new pastor and new church family have shown me how valuable my life is to the Body of Christ - a life I had believed to be worthless.

I have felt affirmation and love directly from God, a God I once feared.

Now I feel that wherever I am, God is there also. And where there is God, there is truth, strength and love.

## ***Section II***

### ***Domestic Violence 101***

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### **A. Defining Domestic Violence**

***Domestic violence*, also known as *spousal abuse* and *family violence*, is the attempt, act or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependence or trust, to intimidate either by threat or by the use of physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and/or exploit through neglect, intimidation, inducement of fear, or by inflicting pain. Abusive behavior can take many forms including physical abuse, emotional/verbal/psychological abuse, sexual abuse, financial or economic abuse, neglect, and isolation. All forms of abusive behavior are ways in which one human being is trying to have control and/or exploit or have power over another.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Calgary Domestic Violence Committee, as quoted in Public Legal Education Network of Alberta Resource Manual (2002), 3.

## **B. Statistical Profile**

- According to a subset of 94 police departments (representing 56% of the national volume of crime), approximately one-quarter (27%) of victims of violent crimes were victims of family violence in 2002. Among all family violence victims, 6 in 10 (62%) were victims of violence at the hands of their spouse.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2004 there were 28,000 incidents of spousal violence reported to the police in Canada. In these incidents, 84% of the victims were women; 16% were men.<sup>3</sup>
- An estimated seven percent of women and six percent of men in a current or previous spousal relationship encountered spousal violence during the five years up to and including 2004, according to a comprehensive new report on family violence. The report, which uses data from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), showed that the overall five-year rate of spousal violence has remained unchanged at seven percent since 1999. This means that an estimated 653,000 women and 546,000 men encountered some form of violence by a current or previous spouse or common-law partner.<sup>4</sup>
- The seriousness of family violence, with its consequences to women and their children, has mobilized community groups and governments to undertake actions and strategies aimed at reducing violence within the family. One vital part of the overall response is the shelter system for abused women and children. From 1992 to 2002, the number of shelters in Canada increased from 376 to 524.<sup>5</sup>
- According to the Transition Home Survey, in a year long period from April 30, 2003 - March 31, 2004 there were 95,326 admissions to 473 shelters: 58,486 women and 36,840 children. One third of this group was women between the ages of 25-34.<sup>6</sup> According to the same survey, 2,496 women and 2,501 children were residing in shelters on a single day (April 14, 2004). However, use of shelters may more accurately reflect the availability of shelters than the actual need for emergency housing among abused women and their children. On the same day, 221 women and 112 children were turned away, most of them because the shelters were full (62%).According to the 2003/04

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<sup>2</sup> “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile,” *Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2004): Cat. No. 85-222-XIE.

<sup>3</sup> This data is based upon a subset of 119 police departments in 8 provinces, representing 53% of reported crime. See “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2006,” (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2006), 11. This may be accessed at [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/85-224-XIE/85-224-XIE2006000.pdf](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/85-224-XIE/85-224-XIE2006000.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, Thursday, July 14, 2005. Accessed at [www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050714/d050714a.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050714/d050714a.htm).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Andrea Taylor-Butts, “Canada’s Shelters for Abused Women 2003/2004,” *Juristat*. Accessed at <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/Statcan/85-002-XIE/0030585-002-XIE.pdf>.

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- Shelters for abused women and their children exist in every province and territory and provide a range of services, including emergency and longer-term housing, counseling and support during court appearance.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2003-2004, approximately 10 percent of the 40,000 crisis calls received at shelters in Alberta were from males. Crisis intervention services and referrals were provided as necessary; shelters also linked callers to short-term emergency accommodation and other community-based resources as requested.<sup>9</sup>
- Findings from a 2003 Statistics Canada Report indicated that the majority of family violence victims seek informal, rather than formal support. 80% of male victims and 48% of female victims who experienced spousal violence during the five years prior to the study did not use any type of social service agency for help. Only 11 percent of female victims and none of the male victims used a shelter. Rather, they tended to stay with friends/relatives; this group of people has thus been considered to be part of the “hidden homeless.”<sup>10</sup>
- In 2002, females accounted for 8 in 10 (85%) of all victims of spousal violence reported to the subset of police departments. Young females aged 25 to 34 experienced the highest rates of spousal violence.<sup>11</sup>
- In 2002, children and youth under the age of 18 represented 23% of the population and, according to a subset of 94 police departments, they accounted for 61% of victims of sexual assault and 20% of all victims of physical assault.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2002, girls represented 79% of victims of family-related sexual assaults reported to a subset of police departments. Rates of sexual offences were highest among girls between the ages of 11 and 14,

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<sup>7</sup> “Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006. Accessible at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/85-570-XIE/2006001/findings/services.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> *The Daily*, Monday, July 23, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> From *Family Violence: It's Your Business: Community Resource Guide*, p. 51. For more information about safe places for men, see the Resource List in Section III D of this manual. Also, the *Family Violence: It's Your Business: Community Resource Guide*, accessible at <http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/fvp/page.cfm?pg=Materials%20and%20resources>.

<sup>10</sup> “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2003.” (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2003). Accessible at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/2003famvioprofil\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/2003famvioprofil_e.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2004.” (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics) Cat. No. 85-224-XIE.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

with the highest rate at age 13 (165 per 100,000 females). Among boys, rates of family-related sexual assault were highest for those between the ages of 3 and 7.<sup>13</sup>

- Witnessing violence in the home has been understood to be related to short and longer-term behavioral problems in children such as aggression and emotional problems such as anxiety.<sup>14</sup>
- Older adults were more likely to be victimized by non-family members than family members (70% compared to 30%). Among those victimized by a family member, older adults were most likely to be victimized by an adult child (38%) or spouse/ex-spouse (26%).<sup>15</sup>
- Data shows that the nature and consequences of spousal violence are more severe for women than for men. Female victims of spousal abuse are more than twice as likely to be injured as male victims. Women are also three times more likely to fear for their life, and twice as likely to be the targets of more than 10 violent episodes.<sup>16</sup>
- The survey indicates that the risk of violence is particularly elevated at the time of separation, especially in the case of women. In 2004, half of the women who reported experiencing spousal assault by a past partner indicated that the violence occurred after the couple separated. In one-third (34%) of these assaults, the violence actually began after separation or increased in severity.<sup>17</sup> The number of men who reported violence during their relationship was too small to produce reliable estimates.<sup>18</sup>
- Data suggests that Aboriginal people were three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence. Overall, 21% of Aboriginal people, or 24% of Aboriginal women and 18% of Aboriginal men, said that they had suffered violence from a current or previous spouse or common-law partner in the five-year period up to 2004. This was the case for 7% of non-Aboriginal people.<sup>19</sup>
- There are also many “unintended” victims of family violence - including children - in close to half a million households in Canada; these witnesses have seen or heard one parent being assaulted by the other.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada, “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile”, *The Daily*, Wednesday, July 14, 2005.

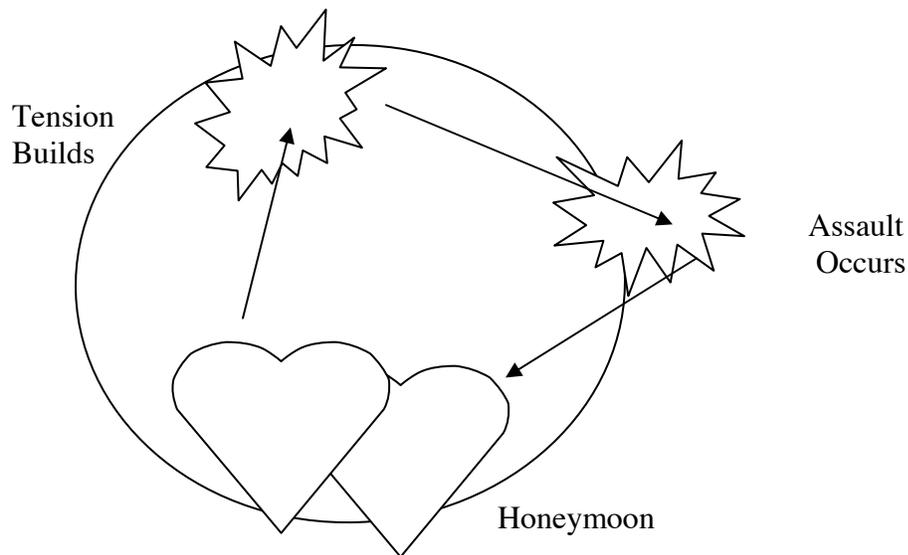
<sup>17</sup> “Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada, “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile,” *The Daily*, Wednesday, July 14, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Data from the 1999 General Social Survey, as reported in Mia Dauvergne and Holly Johnson, “Children Witnessing Family Violence,” *Juristat*, 21,6 (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, 2001), Cat. 85-002-XPE.

## II. The Cycle of Violence



Physical violence between adult partners in an intimate relationship usually follows a defined cycle. An awareness of this cycle can assist a spiritual leader in understanding the complex nature of violence within a relationship.

*The cycle of violence comprises three distinct phases.*<sup>21</sup>

### **The Tension Building Phase**

During this phase, there is a gradual escalation of tension during which the abusing partner uses emotional and verbal forms of abusive behaviors. The abused partner usually attempts to placate, doing what she thinks might please or calm her partner and lessen his agitation.

### **The Acute Abusive Incident**

The tension is broken by an acute violent episode. The incident itself may last a very brief time or it may expand over several hours or days. It is during this phase that the victim is most likely to be sexually assaulted, physically injured or killed. Although the abusive actions are the choice of the abuser, the 'blame' for his actions is placed on the victim.

### **The Honeymoon Phase**

Following the acute abusive incident, the person who has acted abusively may apologize, seek forgiveness from his partner, offer assistance to her, show kindness and remorse and shower her with gifts. The abusive partner may promise he will never act violently again. The victim wants to believe this and may place her hope in his contrition and not seek help. This phase of the cycle may continue for a long period of time, but will eventually end as tension again begins to build. A new cycle of violence begins.

<sup>21</sup> Walker, Lenore. *The Battered Woman* (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1979), 55-70.

***There are three ways the cycle of violence can be broken:***

- The person who acts abusively learns to stop being abusive. However, once the cycle has become established, without external pressure and help, individuals who have chosen to use abusive behaviors almost always continue to do so.
- The person who has been abused leaves the relationship.
- One of the partners dies.

**D. Impact and Consequences of Domestic Abuse**<sup>22</sup>

The enormous physical, emotional, psychological and economic costs of domestic violence are felt most profoundly by the individuals experiencing the abuse. However, family violence also has consequences for the family and the larger community.

For example, the consequences of domestic violence include:

- Physical consequences, ranging from broken bones to the death of the person who was abused;
- Emotional and mental health consequences that might manifest in the form of anxiety attacks, sleep disorders, and/or depression;
- Economic consequences for the person being abused (i.e. costs associated with increased use of medication, time away from work, hospitalization, etc.);
- Economic consequences for society (i.e. increased demand on medical services, counseling services, the civil and criminal justice systems, etc.)

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<sup>22</sup> “The Church as Sanctuary: Guidelines for a Faith Response to Family Violence.” (Ecumenical Task Force for the Prevention of Family Violence).

## II. Responding to Disclosures of Domestic Violence

Disclosures may come from each, or all, of the three family components of concern when violence is present: the adult who has been victimized; the person who has used abusive behaviors; and children/youth who have witnessed violence between members of their family or who have been directly abused. Whoever the family member is who is making the disclosure, the response of the person receiving the disclosure is critically important. This may be the first time that this person has told anyone about the abuse.

Faith leaders and members of faith communities in helping roles are not expected to have expertise in the area of domestic violence or child abuse. However, depending on the nature of the situation, there are some critical steps that need to be taken.

### **A Word about Intervention:**

When children or youth (up to age 18 years) make disclosures of abuse and/or witnessing family violence, their consent for intervention is not required. The law requires that the disclosure be reported to Child Welfare

The adult disclosing abuse to faith leaders, staff or volunteers must make the choice to accept assistance or not. Their decision needs to be respected. Both people and circumstances have the capacity for change. For this reason, providing the opportunity to access information on more than one occasion may be helpful. Intervention should be aimed at maximizing safety and personal options. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, all adults must be assumed to be competent to make their own decisions.

### ***1. Responding to an Adult Who Is Being Abused***

#### **The goals are:**<sup>23</sup>

1. SAFETY of the person being abused.
2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the person acting abusively.
3. RESTORATION of family relationships, if possible, or mourning their loss.

#### **Response Steps**

Faith leaders and faith community members who are in helping roles are not expected to have expertise in the area of domestic violence or child abuse. However, depending on the nature of the situation, there are some steps a faith leader may need to take.

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<sup>23</sup> Marie Fortune. *Guidelines for Pastors and Rabbis: Responding to Domestic Violence* (The Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1988). Accessed at <http://www.cpsdv.org>.

- a. **Assess the safety of the victim.** If the disclosure is made via a phone call from the victim, ask “Are you safe now?” If the answer is “No,” provide suggestions: an emergency shelter; a room that can be locked from the inside, preferably with a phone; a neighbor’s place or a place where other people are around. Encourage the victim to call the police – **911** – if she is in immediate danger, or do so yourself if this is her request.
- b. **Help the abused person develop a safety plan.** If the disclosure is made in person, provide a private space for the individual to contact one of the domestic violence shelters. Shelters can assist callers to assess risk and to develop a safety plan.<sup>24</sup>
- c. **Give information on available resources.** The *24-Hour Help for Everyone* card includes the numbers of all shelters and is available in a number of languages. (See the Resource Lists in Section III of this manual.) Identify those resources that best suit the individual’s needs.
- d. **Helping the victims contact specialized treatment services.**

Individuals disclosing concerns about their behavior being, or becoming, abusive can be helped to contact specialized treatment services. The following steps need to be considered:

  - **Assess the safety of the victim and any children.** Ask “Where is she now? Where are the children? Are they safe? Has anyone been injured?” Ask to speak to the victim or get the phone number where she can be reached.
  - **Assess the safety of the person who has been abusive.** Ask about his present level of anger. If the individual is expressing any degree of concern about his ability to remain safe, and still has easy access to the victim, strongly suggest that he leave the situation. Suggest that he tell his partner that he is leaving the house for a set period of time (e.g. 30-60 minutes), and that he will return but will leave again if he still feels he may become abusive.
  - **Assess the emotional state of the person who has been abusive.** Ask “Are you depressed, anxious, or enraged? Are you feeling suicidal? Have you attempted suicide in the past? Have you been using alcohol or drugs?” If you think he is likely to be a danger to himself, his partner or the children, **CALL THE POLICE.**
  - **Refer the individual to appropriate resources.** (See Section III of this manual for a listing of resources.)
- e. **Report risk to children.** If children are in a home where there are concerns about their safety or their witnessing violence, Calgary and Area Child and Family Services - **Child Welfare - ([403] 297-2995)** must be consulted. Abuse does not need to be proven prior to consulting with Child Welfare.

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<sup>24</sup> See Section III D of this manual for a list of Calgary resources with phone numbers.

- f. **Risk of Harm to Self or Others.** Family violence situations can be very dangerous and volatile. Individuals may make threats to harm themselves or others. These should be taken seriously and may require reporting to the police at (403) 266-1234 or, in an emergency, 911.

**What you can say to the person who is being abused:**

- “You don’t deserve to be abused.”
- “You are not alone.”
- “Abuse is wrong.”
- “You are a courageous person.”
- “I know it wasn’t easy to tell me.”
- “Usually if an abusive individual hits someone, they are likely to repeat the behavior.”
- “I’m afraid for your safety.”
- “The congregation will support you if/when you are ready to leave.”

**Do’s and Don’ts of Responding to an Adult Disclosing Being Abused**

**DO:**

- Find a private place to talk.
- Believe the person disclosing abuse.
- Reassure the person experiencing the abuse that it is not her fault.
- Provide information on agencies and programs specializing in domestic violence. Give a copy of the *24-Hour Help for Everyone* card.
- Support and respect the choices of the person experiencing abuse. If she decides to return home, support her in contacting a domestic violence shelter to develop a safety plan.
- Protect confidentiality. DO NOT give information to the person who is abusing or to others who might pass on information.
- Report risk to children.

**DON’T:**

- Don’t minimize the danger.
- Don’t tell the person who is experiencing the abuse what to do. Provide information and support.
- Don’t react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what you are told.
- Don’t blame the person who has been victimized for the violence. People who are victims often blame themselves.
- Don’t recommend couples’ counseling or approach the abusive spouse and ask for the other side of the story. These actions can endanger the person being abused.
- Don’t recommend “marriage enrichment”, “mediation”, or a “communications workshop.”

## ***2. Responding to an Individual who is Using Abusive Behavior***

### **The goals are:**<sup>25</sup>

1. SAFETY of the person being abused.
2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the person acting abusively.
3. RESTORATION of family relationships, if possible; or mourning their loss.

### **How to respond to a disclosure:**<sup>26</sup>

- REPORT A DISCLOSURE OF CHILD ABUSE TO THE POLICE.
- REPORT A DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AGAINST A FAMILY MEMBER TO THE POLICE.
- Collaborate with other professionals.
- Provide referrals to individuals and agencies that you know and trust.
- Avoid taking a hostile, rebuking stance with the person.
- Know your limits.
- Assist him in developing a plan for getting help.

### **What you can say to the person who is using abusive behavior:**

- “Abuse is wrong.”
- “You are responsible for your abusive behavior.”
- “I know it wasn’t easy to tell me.”
- “You are a courageous person for taking responsibility for your abusive behavior.”
- “You are not alone.”
- “Help is available.”
- “I will support you in getting the help you need.”

**CAUTION:** *Even if a person who has abused a family member comes forward, this does not necessarily mean that the person is motivated to change his behavior. Be careful not to assume that the abusive person is open to being challenged.*

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<sup>25</sup> M. Fortune. *Guidelines for Pastors and Rabbis: Responding to Domestic Violence* (The Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1988). Accessed at <http://www.cpsdv.org>.

<sup>26</sup> Adapted from *The Church as Sanctuary: Guidelines for a Faith Response to Family Violence*.

***Do's and Don'ts of Responding to an Individual who is Being Abusive*****DO:**

- Believe the person disclosing the abuse.
- Address any religious rationalizations he may offer or questions he may have.
- Name the violence as his problem, not the problem of the person who has been abused. Tell him that only he can stop it, and that you are willing to help him get help.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of taking responsibility for the abusive behavior.
- Assess him for suicide or threats of homicide.
- Talk about the importance of safety planning for all members of the family.
- Refer to a program that specifically addresses abusive individuals. Domestic violence shelters and some counseling agencies provide domestic violence treatment programs for people using abusive behavior. The Men's Help Line is also available. Sit with him and provide support while he is making the call.
- Pray with him. Ask God to help him stop the violence, repent and find a new way. Assure him of your support.
- Warn the person who has been abused, if he makes specific threats toward her.
- Work with others in the community to hold him accountable.

**DON'T:**

- Do not meet with him alone.
- Do not go to him to confirm his partner's story.
- Do not bring him and his spouse together to "get at the truth." Although he may behave appropriately in the pastor's office, he may further punish his partner once they get home.
- Do not approach him or inform him that you know about his violence unless:
  - You have his partner's permission;
  - His partner is aware that you plan to talk to him;
  - You are certain that his partner is safe.
- Don't minimize what you are being told; do not be taken in by his minimization, denial or lying about the violence.
- Do not accept him blaming the person he has abused.
- Don't try to find excuses. Abuse is not caused by stress, alcohol, or a significant life change. Many families deal with these issues without hurting each other.
- Do not allow him to use religious excuses for his behavior.
- Don't recommend couples' counseling to address the abuse.
- Don't allow the individual who acts abusively to use religious excuses for his behavior.
- Do not give him any information about his partner or her whereabouts.
- Do not be misled by his description of a "conversion" or any other religious experience. If his experience is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as he proceeds with accountability. If it is not genuine, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system, and maintain control of the process in order to avoid accountability.
- Do not forgive him quickly and easily. DO NOT confuse his remorse with true repentance.
- Do not send him home with simply a prayer.

## **F. Indicators of a Child/Youth who is Being Abused**<sup>27</sup>

### **Emotional/Psychological Abuse**

Physical indicators may include:

- Speech disorders (stuttering, for example);
- Medical conditions that may be associated with or may be triggered by chronic stress (asthma, allergies, headaches, stomach aches, etc.);
- Lags in physical development.

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Inappropriate emotional response to situations;
- Extreme behavior (cruelty, vandalism, stealing, cheating, fire setting, etc.);
- Self-deprecation, or grandiose claims of competence;
- Self-stimulating behavior (tics, tremors, scratching, self-rocking);
- Self-mutilation;
- Suicidal behavior;
- Verbal abuse, directed at the child, by the parents/guardian.

Where there is emotional/psychological abuse, parents/guardians may be witnessed as being verbally abusive towards the child.

### **Neglect**

Physical indicators may include:

- Chronically unattended medical or dental problems, such as infected sores, decayed teeth, glasses not provided when needed.

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Chronic unexplained absences, lateness or fatigue, which can be explained by the failure of parent/guardian to provide for the basic necessities;
- Behavioral concerns, i.e. adolescent pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, risk taking behaviors, by the child, that pose a threat to safety.

Neglect is evidenced by the chronic failure of parents/guardians to provide the basic necessities: food, clothing, shelter, adequate adult supervision.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical indicators may include:

- Unexplained change in physical appearance (bruises, bald spot, burns, etc.);
- Unexplained injuries such as fractures.

Behavioral indicators may include:

- The exhibition of low self-esteem, fear;
- Wariness or inability to tolerate physical touch of others;

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<sup>27</sup> This section has been adapted from the Child Abuse/Domestic Violence Protocol developed by the Calgary Domestic Violence Committee (CDVC), the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic Board of Education, 2004.

- The choice of clothing that covers body and may be inappropriate for weather conditions and avoidance of changing for activities;
- Isolation, inability to form good peer relationships;
- Extremes in behavior: aggression or withdrawal.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Physical indicators may include:

- Difficulty in walking or sitting;
- Pain or itching in the genital area;
- Frequent urinary or yeast infections;
- Wetting or soiling self;
- Frequent, unexplained sore throats.
- Behavioral indicators may include: an unusual interest in sexual matters and seeming to have sexual knowledge beyond their developmental stage;
- Tiredness, withdrawal, hyper-vigilance and behavioral extremes;
- Compulsive masturbation;
- Self-mutilation;
- Sexual acting out towards other children or adults, i.e. sexually explicit behavior.

### **Witness/Victim of Domestic Violence**

Physical indicators may include:

- Physical complaints (stomach aches, headaches, chronic colds, allergies, etc.);
- Sleep disturbances (nightmares, insomnia, bedwetting, etc.);
- Eating disturbances;
- Depression;
- Developmental delays.

Parents frequently report that they have consulted with a physician about the physical complaints of their children, but no medical problem was diagnosed;

Behavioral indicators may include:

(Behavioral indicators include those identified for physical and emotional abuse.)

- Demonstration of anxiety and fear (afraid of loud noises or loud voices);
- Approval seeking, caretaking behavior;
- Behavioral extremes (acting out, isolated, withdrawal, extreme compliance, perfection seeking, impulsivity);
- Absence from school, running away from home;
- Early pregnancy and/or early marriage;
- Self-mutilation, and suicidal ideation;
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse;
- Academic difficulties (the inability to concentrate);
- Low self esteem.

## G. Safety Plans

### *1. A Standard Safety Plan When Choosing to Stay in an Abusive Relationship or Situation*<sup>28</sup>

**Safety plans must be developed to take into account the specific circumstances and abilities of each individual. All or some of the information may be helpful in planning for your safety. For a personalized safety plan, please contact an emergency shelter for assistance.**

If you choose to stay, there are some steps that can be taken to increase your safety if an abusive incident occurs. Even if all these precautions are followed, your safety cannot be guaranteed. **Remember you do not deserve to be hurt or threatened.**

- a. If an abusive situation seems likely, try to avoid rooms with access to potential weapons (knives, heavy objects for example), and with only one exit. Avoid the kitchen and bathroom areas.
- b. Do not run to where your children are, as they may be hurt as well.
- c. If possible, pre-program emergency numbers into your phone (such as **911**). Keep a phone in a room that you can lock from the inside.
- d. Talk to your neighbor or friend that you can trust and arrange a signal or code for when you need them to get help.
- e. Teach your children not to intervene in the violence. Instead, teach them a code for when you need them to get help.
- f. Have an emergency bag packed and hidden in an accessible location. Include: numbers of emergency shelters and police; identification; and few items of clothing and money for phone calls and/or transportation. Have an extra set of car keys or enough money for a taxi or bus. Keep your important papers for you and your children including: Alberta Health Care cards; birth certificates; custody agreements; social insurance numbers; and citizenship and immigration papers.
- g. Ensure that some form of emergency transportation is available upon request. This may be through a trusted friend or through community supports.

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<sup>28</sup> From *Safety from Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual for Service Providers* (Alberta: Public Legal Education Network of Alberta, 2002). Accessible at [www.plena.org](http://www.plena.org).

- h. Have an escape route out of your home. Teach and practice it with your children.
- i. Work out a code word that can be used on the phone with a person that is trusted. The code could mean to contact the police or to inform them that you are leaving. It may also be important to develop signals or codes for neighbors to call the police, such as banging on the floor or wall in case of an emergency.
- j. Look at options for safe places (i.e., a friend, neighbor or relative, a motel, or emergency shelter). If you can do so safely, contact the people in advance to let them know you are coming. This allows them to watch for you and to call for help if needed. Do **not** go to a friend or relative's house if your partner/caregiver is likely to try to find you there. This can be dangerous for both you and those trying to assist you.
- k. A life-call system can be part of a personalized safety plan. The shelters have more information on this system.
- l. Whenever calling a shelter or other resources, phone another number or press several numbers randomly immediately afterwards, so that your partner/caregiver cannot press the redial button and find out with whom you were speaking.
- m. Children should be told that violence is not right, even if the abusive person is someone they love. Tell your children that the targets of violence are not at fault. Neither you nor they caused the violence. The most important thing is for you and your children to be protected.
- n. Review your safety plan monthly.

## 2. A Standard Safety Plan for Leaving an Abusive Relationship or Situation <sup>29</sup>

**Safety plans must be developed to take into account the specific circumstances and abilities of each individual. All or some of the information may be helpful in planning for your safety. For a personalized safety plan, please contact an emergency shelter for assistance.**

- a. If possible, pre-program emergency numbers into your phone (such as **911**).
- b. Keep a phone in a room that you can lock from the inside.
- c. Plan an escape route out of your home. Teach and practice it with your children.
- d. Try to put away a little money at every opportunity, even enough for a phone call.
- e. If possible, try to keep an extra key to a vehicle hidden.
- f. Gather important papers (both your own and your children's), such as birth certificates, social insurance numbers, citizenship and immigration papers, Alberta Health Care cards, immunization records, etc. Put these in a safe place, preferably outside your home, such as in a safety deposit box or with a trusted friend.
- g. Put together a suitcase of essential items such as clothing and medicines and store them in a safe place. Make plans for any pets that you have that you are unable to take but that you cannot leave behind. If you have no place to leave your pets and this will prevent you from leaving, mention this to the shelter when you call.
- h. Have a list of shelters and phone/TTY numbers accessible but hidden. If you are ready to leave, keep checking to see if there is space for you and your children. If possible, check to see if the shelters are barrier free for your needs.
- i. Ensure that some form of emergency transportation is available upon request. This may be through a trusted friend or through community supports.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

- j. Work out a code word that can be used on the phone with a person that is trusted. The code could mean to contact the police or to inform them that you are leaving. It may also be important to develop signals or codes for neighbors to call the police, such as banging on the floor or wall in case of an emergency.
- k. Look at options for safe places (a friend, neighbor or relative, a motel or emergency shelter). If you can do so safely, contact the people in advance to let them know you are coming. This allows them to watch for you and call for help if needed. Do **not** go to a friend or relative's house if your partner/caregiver is likely to try to find you there. This can be dangerous for both you and those trying to assist you.
- l. Whenever calling a shelter or other resources, phone another number or press several numbers randomly immediately afterwards, so that your partner/caregiver cannot press the redial button and find out with whom you were speaking.
- m. If you have a support person of whom your partner/caregiver is not aware, keep that person's name and address confidential.
- n. Review your safety plan monthly.

**The abused person may wonder whether to tell his/her partner/caregiver that he/she is leaving. In cases where there has been physical abuse or extremely controlling behavior, telling the abuser can seriously endanger the abused. Abusers can become increasingly violent when they fear their partner is leaving or that they are losing control over him/her.**

**3. If you have left the abusive situation or relationship, you need to:**

- a. Call the police immediately if the abusive person tries to contact you.
- b. Develop an escape plan and practice with your children.
- c. Change door locks, add dead bolts; if possible install motion sensor lights in the yard or install a security system. Ensure all entrances are well lit and keep doors and windows securely locked. Ask for your landlord's assistance if possible.
- d. Keep a telephone in a room that locks from the inside. If possible, purchase a cellular phone and keep it nearby (purse, pocket, etc.) or in an accessible hiding place.
- e. Obtain a private or unlisted telephone number. If possible, pre-program emergency numbers (such as **911**) into the telephone's directory.
- f. Consider renting a post office box for your mail. Addresses may be listed on legal orders and police reports and can be accessed by the abusive person.
- g. Develop signals or codes for neighbors and friends to call the police, such as banging on the floor or wall in the case of an emergency.
- h. Have a safety plan for the children. Teach your children not to let the abusive person in the home. Prepare the children to respond to the abusive person who comes to their school or day care centre. If a protection order includes provisions about the children, give a copy to the children's school or childcare facility.
- i. If it is not safe where you live, choose a safe place to go (a trusted friend or relative, a motel, emergency shelter, etc.). Check to see which shelters are barrier free for you and if they have accessible support that you require. Do **not** go to a friend or relative's house if the abusive person is likely to find you there. This can be dangerous for both you and those trying to assist you.
- j. Keep a copy of all protection orders and custody orders with you at all times.
- k. Change any appointments of which the abusive person was aware (medical or dental appointments, etc.).
- l. Shop at different stores and frequent different social spots so that the abusive person will be less likely able to find you.
- m. Call the telephone company and ask about "Caller ID", so that you can identify the telephone number of anyone attempting to call you. Ask that your phone be blocked, so that if you make the phone call, no one will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number. In some areas, you can press \*67 before dialing, which will block your number from appearing on the phone that you are calling.
- n. Review your safety plan monthly.

## H. ELDER ABUSE

The Canadian population is aging. Currently, 14% of our population is over the age of 65. This number will increase to 20% by the year 2021.<sup>30</sup> As our population continues to age, it is important to increase awareness about the potential for seniors to be abused. Elder abuse is the misuse of power or force to control an elderly person. It may include physical, psychological, financial or other forms of abuse.

According to the Alliance to End Violence, in Calgary, older adults who are being abused have been overlooked in the broader community response to violence, abuse and bullying. As a result, public awareness is limited; there are gaps in service provision and legislation across government ministries has not been sensitized to the needs of abused older adults. Individuals, including service providers, are to varying degrees, unaware of the services and resources available to them; they may lack the knowledge and confidence to broach the issue with older adults and respond to disclosures.

### Canadian Statistics

In 1999, Statistics Canada interviewed 4,000 older Canadians about their experiences of abuse. Seven percent of seniors reported that they had experienced some form of emotional or financial abuse by an adult child, caregiver or spouse in the five year period preceding the survey. Available figures are likely understated, as abuse victims are reluctant to identify themselves.

### Calgary and Alberta Statistics

In Alberta, 18% of 800 Albertans surveyed stated that they knew a senior who had experienced abuse. Since 1998, more than 4,000 allegations of abuse and neglect have been reported under the Alberta Protection for Persons in Care Act. The Kerby Rotary Shelter in Calgary responds to between 60 and 90 calls per month from individuals experiencing abuse. Recently, 25 outreach workers in Calgary agencies that serve seniors were interviewed. The outreach workers reported a combined total of 99 cases of older adult abuse over a three month period.

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<sup>30</sup> The statistics listed in this section can be found in *A Comprehensive Coordinated Response to Elder Abuse* by The Action Group on Elder Abuse (2004). AGEA may be contacted at the Alliance to End Violence in Calgary at (403) 283-3013.

## 1. What is Elder Abuse?

The abuse of older adults is, in many ways, similar to other forms of abuse and domestic violence. In fact, the abuse of an older adult could be the continuation of spousal abuse, which began much earlier.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, there are some significant differences which are described below.

### Who acts abusively?

The abuse of older adults by others falls into two broad categories: abuse of older adults living alone or with family members and the abuse of older adults living in institutions. Individuals who use abusive behaviors toward the elderly may be spouses, children or caregivers; but the majority of those who abuse older adults are spouses. Caregivers - whether family members or professionals - may also act abusively. It should be noted that, while caregiver stress may be a factor in that abuse, it is not the cause of abuse; abuse is always a choice.

### Some unique contributing factors

Seniors often experience social isolation, which can aggravate the abuse they experience. Another factor in their abuse may be their dependence on others for care. Unlike with children, societal norms do not give responsibility for the care of dependent, older adults to any particular individual or agency. This can leave seniors vulnerable. One who acts abusively towards an elder may be financially dependent upon the senior; conversely, the older adult may be financially dependent upon them.

### Fear of disclosure

Older adults are often unwilling to disclose abuse. They may be afraid of losing relationship with a family member, if, for example, the person acting abusively is an adult child. They may fear losing their homes and becoming homeless or losing financial support. They may hold beliefs about abuse being deserved or beliefs about the priority of family loyalty.

## 2. Kinds of Elder Abuse

In many ways, elder abuse is similar to other forms of abuse, but there are ways in which it is unique. While definitions may differ, elder abuse generally includes the following:

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<sup>31</sup> Pepler and Craig speak of a lifelong pattern of violence that may begin with childhood bullying, transferring later to violence in adult relationships, such as domestic violence and elder abuse. See Debra J. Pepler and Wendy Craig. "Making a Difference in Bullying," Canada: La Marsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution (April 2000), 5.

<p><b>Physical Abuse</b></p> <p>This includes any act of violence, whether or not it results in injury. Physical abuse of seniors may also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misuse of physical restraints or tying seniors to furniture;</li> <li>• Misusing medication – either withholding it or overmedicating;</li> <li>• Unnecessary medical interventions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Psychological Abuse</b></p> <p>This includes any verbal or non-verbal act that reduces one’s sense of self-worth or dignity; it attempts to dehumanize or intimidate a senior. The psychological abuse of an older adult may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making them fear that they may not receive the food or care they need;</li> <li>• Failing to check allegations of abuse;</li> <li>• Socially isolating them;</li> <li>• Being over-familiar or disrespectful;</li> <li>• Repeatedly raising the issue of death;</li> <li>• Being disrespectful through a domineering attitude (ordering them around or treating them like children).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neglect</b></p> <p>This can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to provide adequate nutrition, clothing and/or other necessities;</li> <li>• Failing to provide care or medical attention;</li> <li>• Leaving an incapacitated person alone for too long.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financial Abuse</b></p> <p>This type of abuse of older adults may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to use their assets for their own welfare;</li> <li>• Stealing their money;</li> <li>• Selling their property without permission;</li> <li>• Refusing to move out of their home when asked;</li> <li>• Sharing their home without paying a fair share of the expenses;</li> <li>• Opening mail without permission;</li> <li>• Not paying back borrowed money when asked.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spiritual/Religious Abuse</b></p> <p>This type of abuse of older adults may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ridiculing spiritual beliefs;</li> <li>• Preventing a senior from engaging in religious practices;</li> <li>• Acting disrespectfully towards their beliefs.</li> </ul>	

## ***I. Religious/Spiritual Abuse***

### ***1. Introduction***

In recent years there has developed an increasing body of information on the subject of religious/spiritual abuse. As in the case of all forms of abuse, religious/spiritual abuse is about *power* and *control*. And as in other forms of abuse, Christian faith communities are not immune; leadership within churches abuse congregants and congregants abuse the leadership.

This lengthy section of manual will be divided into briefer sections:

1. Introduction (p. 23)
2. Definition (p. 23-24)
3. Indicators of Religious/Spiritual Abuse in a Victim (pp. 24)
4. Theology that can Result in Religious/Spiritual Abuse (pp. 24-26)
5. Characteristics of a Spiritually Abusive System (pp. 26-30)
6. Long-term Effects of Religious/Spiritual Abuse (pp. 31-33)
7. Pastors who Sexually Abuse their Congregants (pp. 32-36)
8. Congregations who Abuse their Pastors (pp. 36-39)
9. Healing from Spiritual Abuse (pp. 39-43)
10. Staying in or Leaving an Abusive Church Situation (pp. 43-44)
11. Developing Healthy Churches (pp. 44-47)
12. Conclusion (p. 47)

FaithLink has developed this material to provide information on a subject that has become prominent within religious systems. There is no intent to single out any particular leader, church or denomination.

**NOTE:** There is a significant degree of variation in the literature regarding religious/spiritual abuse. The purpose of this section is not to be exhaustive, nor is it to take a defined theological position. Rather, it is to provide a broad overview of the subject. To look more specifically at theological perspectives, titles referenced within this update will provide a variety of paradigms within the Christian tradition on this subject.

In Section 9 of this topic, a number of resources will be specifically identified. The information in these resources would seem to indicate a well-developed understanding of healing from abuse; it may be helpful to pastors, churches and individual congregants.

### ***2. Definition of Religious/Spiritual Abuse***<sup>32</sup>

Religious/spiritual abuse involves control, manipulation, guilt and/or deception to enforce a doctrinal position,<sup>33</sup> and/or to refuse one the right to their own religious

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<sup>32</sup> This definition was originally developed by this author for the *Action Group on Elder Abuse*, January 2006. Some adaptation of the original definition has been made here.

<sup>33</sup> Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 12, 13 and Ronald Enroth, *Churches That Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 29.

beliefs/practices.<sup>34</sup> This abuse of power may occur in the self-serving use of position by a person in authority;<sup>35</sup> it can be perpetrated by a particular organization or can operate throughout a religious system.

Religious/spiritual abuse damages the victim's spirit and/or relationship to God,<sup>36</sup> resulting in a psychological and spiritual debilitation of the individual.<sup>37</sup>

### **3. Indicators of Religious/Spiritual Abuse in a Victim**

Indicators may include:

- Loss of trust: in self (confusion, distrust of one's own judgment),<sup>38</sup> and others - especially spiritual leaders;<sup>39</sup>
- Damage to one's understanding of and relationship with God. "Is there a higher power? Why has this been allowed this to happen? Can God be trusted?"<sup>40</sup>
- Loss of sense of self. "Who am I?"<sup>41</sup>
- Depression;<sup>42</sup>
- Anxiety;<sup>43</sup>
- Anger (which can become bitterness and cynicism towards all religious/spiritual systems over time);<sup>44</sup>
- Shame;<sup>45</sup>
- Feelings of worthlessness;<sup>46</sup>
- Diminishment of emotional, social and vocational functioning.<sup>47</sup>

### **4. Theology that Can Result in Religious/Spiritual Abuse**

There is a great deal of variation in the literature regarding "abusive theology" – doctrines within the Christian faith that are considered by others in Christendom to be

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<sup>34</sup> Fern Martin and Catherine Younger-Lewis, "More Than Meets the Eye: Recognizing and Responding to Spousal Abuse," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 157, issue 11 (December 1, 1997): 1558. See also Rebecca J. Frey, "Abuse," in *Gale Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders*, Vol. 1, eds. Ellen Thackery and Madeline Harris (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 3.

<sup>35</sup> David Henke, "Spiritual Abuse," *Watchman Fellowship Profiles*. Accessed January 8, 2006 at <http://www.watchman.org/profile/abusepro.htm>. See also David Johnson and Jeff van Vonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1991), 21.

<sup>36</sup> Juanita and Dale Ryan, *Recovering from Spiritual Abuse* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity, 1992), 9. See also Johnson and van Vonderen, 20. Keith Wright uses the phrase "spiritual abuse crushes the spirit of an individual." See Keith Wright, *Religious Abuse* (British Columbia: Northstone, 2001), 35.

<sup>37</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Blue, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 50.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Sharon Hilderbrant, M.A. "Recovery from Spiritual Abuse: How You Can Help." Accessed January 5, 2006 at <http://www.dtl.org/cults/article/abuse.htm>.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* See also Leo Booth, *When God Becomes a Drug: Breaking the Chains of Religious Addiction and Abuse* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1991), 16.

<sup>44</sup> Henke. See also Blue, 15 and Booth, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 45 and Booth, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Wright, 27.

<sup>47</sup> Blue, 16. See also Johnson and van Vonderen, 48, 49.

abusive. The intent of this section is not to delve into the belief systems of various groups that come under the banner of “Christian.” Rather, it is to point to some broader principles regarding how theology can be used to control.

In general, beliefs that are used to control people, resulting in their harm are abusive. When such a world-view comes with divine permission/sanction (“thus saith the Lord”), the effect is experienced negatively on many levels, including upon an individual’s spirit. For example, theology that focuses on strict roles for men, women and children can be used in ways that are abusive. The doctrines of “wives submit” and “children obey” have too often been wielded as justification for abuse – within the home and within the church.

The emphasis upon obedience to church leaders is a warning sign of ill-health in a faith community. Verses such as “touch not the Lord’s anointed” (Psalm 105:15) can be utilized by leadership to prevent congregants from questioning. When people are taught not to (respectfully) question authority, they can become very vulnerable to abuse within a religious system and within society as a whole.

An extreme view of loyalty also sets the stage for violation. The perspective that one must be committed to their marriage – at all costs – can be used by the church in ways that are harmful to victims of abuse and their children.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, when the value of being a part of a particular “church family” is paramount, members of a faith system may be reluctant to leave, to their own detriment.<sup>49</sup> “...Potentially abusive churches foster an unhealthy form of dependency, spiritually and otherwise, by focusing on themes of submission and obedience to those in authority.”<sup>50</sup>

Other Scriptures that are commonly misused focus on the themes of self-denial (‘dying to self’), giving, unity and peace in the church, as well as church discipline.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the subtle or overt teaching that God is never satisfied with the efforts of His people is abusive and can inflict great spiritual wounding.

**“If religion has become a burden to you, if you feel that God is a tyrant who can never be pleased no matter how hard you try or how much you do, you need to know that this is not the biblical picture of God – it is not the God that Jesus came to reveal. In every religious community there needs to be a balance between the challenge to grow and the need for rest, between the push to move on to the next goal and the celebration of what we have already accomplished, between praise and positive criticism.”<sup>52</sup>**

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<sup>48</sup> See Carolyn Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Churches and Homes* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1993), 93. See also the Presbyterian Church’s *Turn Mourning into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2001), 33, 34.

<sup>49</sup> Marc Dupont. *Walking Out of Spiritual Abuse* (England: Sovereign World, Inc., 1997), 171.

<sup>50</sup> Enroth, 201.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 92.

<sup>52</sup> Wright, 59.

As abuse is about power and control, a faith community does not have to have an overtly faulty theology to be abusive.<sup>53</sup> The manner in which people (leadership and congregants) are treated is a key determinant of church health, or lack thereof.

“Spiritual abuse, whether it takes the form of overtly false teaching, or whether it subtly masquerades as orthodox doctrine, always depends on fear and intimidation to maintain its hold over people.”<sup>54</sup>

### ***5. Characteristics of a Spiritually Abusive System***

The following are signs that a faith system is spiritually abusive:<sup>55</sup>

#### *a. An Attitude of Elitism with Isolation*

A church that assumes it has “the” truth, and isolates its people from other faith communities and from society is not healthy. Statements such as ‘our church is the only true church,’ and ‘all other church groups are dead’ are indicative of such attitudes.<sup>56</sup> George Otis Jr. notes that with religious pride comes manipulation. He counsels, “When humility is absent *in* a ministry, so should we absent ourselves *from* that ministry.”<sup>57</sup>

The elitist attitude easily slides into feelings of “persecution” when others oppose.

“The most common claims that spiritually abusive groups make is that they are so special in their giftedness, or so unique in their level of spiritual commitment, or so unusual in their circumstances, that it’s only natural for less-gifted, less-committed people, or people less familiar with their special context, to draw incorrect conclusions, perhaps even out of resentment or jealousy. After all, if you’re one the elite, people will be jealous...so the reasoning goes...and will fail to understand our practices.”<sup>58</sup>

Criticism is not accepted, and is assumed to be the unjustified rumblings of discontented people or an “attack of Satan” against the work of God.<sup>59</sup>

A strong indicator of disease within a congregation is when members’ familial relationships are disrupted for the sake of the group. Counsel and

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<sup>53</sup> Enroth, 189. See also Ron Henzel, “The Bible and Spiritual Abuse,” accessed on April 3, 2007 at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/9575/biblespirab.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Henzel, “The Bible and Spiritual Abuse.”

<sup>55</sup> The following are adapted from Marc Dupont, 126-145, Ronald Enroth, as well as Johnson and van Vonderen.

<sup>56</sup> J. Porcello, “Signs of an Abusive or Legalistic Ministry,” accessed on April 4, 2007 at [www.ourfellowship.org/recovery.html](http://www.ourfellowship.org/recovery.html).

<sup>57</sup> George Otis Jr. *God’s Trademarks*. (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2000), 64. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> Henzel, “The Bible and Spiritual Abuse.”

<sup>59</sup> Enroth, 164.

pressure to restrict relationship with family and friends outside of the group is a form of isolationism and is abusive.<sup>60</sup>

*b. Denial of Free Will/Invasion of Privacy*

People are discouraged from thinking and choosing for themselves. In spiritually abusive communities the leadership will become directly involved in congregants' choices and personal decisions. Porcello notes that "undue financial requirements [are] enforced upon the membership."<sup>61</sup> His examples include mandatory tithing, pledges, and disclosure of private financial records.

Dupont adds that leadership will manipulate people into time commitments and assume control over individuals' decisions regarding marriage and career.<sup>62</sup> Enroth speaks of control being exercised over parishioners' mundane life events, such as a minister dictating a coach's choice of plays during a football game.<sup>63</sup>

In the interest of 'unity,' conformity to the group becomes essential. Individuals feel that they have lost themselves – their unique selves – for the ideal of others. Abusive communities "...tend to make people over after the image of a group leader, the group norm, or what the group regards as the ideal personality... They are made to feel guilty for being who they are and inferior for not being what the group wants them to be."<sup>64</sup>

In a much subtler sense, Wright indicates that parishioners can be abused by not being allowed or encouraged to say 'no' to a request for service. He notes the connection between the 'Type A' personality of many pastors and the interpretation of these requests by sensitive parishioners – and that often the overuse of committed members is unintentional.

"...the problem is that people who have been taught to feel guilty about everything will automatically feel that *they* are the ones who must heed the pastor's call to service - no matter how much they are already doing and how many obligations they have in other areas of life."<sup>65</sup>

Blue notes that the drive to accomplish, in the context of relationship, can lead to abuse. "When a leader pretends to be a friend and uses this illusion to

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> Porcello.

<sup>62</sup> Dupont, 134.

<sup>63</sup> Enroth, 89.

<sup>64</sup> Flavil Yeakley, *The Discipling Dilemma* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1988), 33.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, 50. Reverend Wright acknowledges that there are always those in congregations with the time to serve. They need to be (appropriately) challenged to serve. "These people need to see that life is found in giving it away."

dehumanize and manipulate his followers, he is acting abusively.”<sup>66</sup> Note that the *motivation* for relationship here is the problem, not the request in and of itself.

c. *Leadership Without Accountability/Authoritarian Leadership*

**“In the context of love, commitment and humility, a church member should be free to ask questions.”<sup>67</sup>**

While acknowledging that unhealthy religious systems can contain congregants who do not respect the position of the minister, Dupont warns that leadership can have the attitude of ‘lord’ rather than servant, thus refusing to be accountable to the congregation.<sup>68</sup> “Power-posturing” is the opposite of the servant leadership Christ modelled.<sup>69</sup>

Porcello gives a number of examples of lack of accountability:

- i. All policies set and decisions made by one person;
- ii. Church spending and the salaries of church staff are not disclosed in detail;
- iii. Financial statements of the church are not openly shared with the congregation;
- iv. Leaders are unwilling to accept when they make poor decisions.<sup>70</sup>

In unhealthy situations, the leadership may insist upon openness from parishioners (including confession of sin and revelation of personal information), but do not live by these rules themselves. Unquestioning submission is expected. Those who question are deemed to be “in rebellion.”<sup>71</sup>

Enroth notes that in his experience, it seems easier for independent congregations to become abusive than those within denominational structures. The checks and balances within a denominational context can provide accountability.<sup>72</sup> However, in order for this benefit to be experienced by congregations, denominational leaders must take rumours/accusations of misconduct within congregations seriously, to investigate them thoroughly and publicly.<sup>73</sup>

d. *Hazy Boundaries Between Serving God and Serving Leaders*

In unhealthy faith communities, service to leaders may be equated to service to God. This may be subtle, such as a greater respect for service in the church, than for service in the community. Or it may be overt: the teaching that people need to tithe their time, as well as their money to the local church. Scripturally,

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<sup>66</sup> Blue, 13, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Dupont, 135.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen use this term throughout their book.

<sup>70</sup> Porcello.

<sup>71</sup> See Enroth, 115-117, 138-143 for examples.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>73</sup> Wright, 67, 68.

service is part of the life of every Christian. But when one in authority demands “obsequious service and attitudes of followers, he or she is clearly not representing Christ.”<sup>74</sup>

e. *Legalism and Condemnation*

The following is a definition of legalism:

Strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code; the institutionalized *legalism* that restricts free choice.<sup>75</sup>

The emphasis in an abusive religious system is upon outward conformity to rules – typically in areas where the legal system and Scripture allow for personal freedom (the moderate intake of alcohol, for example). The paradigm leaves little room for grey areas; the tendency is toward “black and white” thinking.<sup>76</sup>

When members of the community do not follow these stated or implied rules, there is condemnation.<sup>77</sup> They are said to have ‘backslidden’ or to have broken faith. The congregants may condemn each other; the leaders may condemn parishioners. This judgment may occur publicly and/or privately. Dupont terms this condemnation “cursing;” the labels placed upon those who will not ‘tow the line’ are very damaging.<sup>78</sup>

Other writers speak of the “excessive discipline” of those who will not abide by the group’s rules. The purpose is to control the nonconformist, and the group as a whole, through fear.<sup>79</sup>

**Today’s spiritual abusers kill people through character assassination. They crucify their victims in public humiliation sessions. They flog members of their church with false guilt. And they pursue ex-members with malicious gossip, and through the traumatic memories of their experiences in their abusive groups.”<sup>80</sup>**

f. *Scapegoating and Denial Syndromes*

In ailing faith systems, when goals are not being reached or questions are being raised, individuals who do not conform can be blamed for the congregation’s failure. This arises from insecurity in the leadership, who do not want to admit or take responsibility for what is happening.<sup>81</sup>

g. *A Continuous Turnover of Leaders and Staff*

<sup>74</sup> Dupont, 138.

<sup>75</sup> Miriam-Webster Dictionary. Accessed on April 5, 2007 at <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/Legalism>.

<sup>76</sup> Ron Henzel, “Manipulation.” Accessed on April 18, 2007 at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/9575/manipul8.html>.

<sup>77</sup> See also Porcello.

<sup>78</sup> Dupont, 131-133.

<sup>79</sup> Henzel, “The Bible and Spiritual Abuse.” See also Johnson and van Vonderen, 78.

<sup>80</sup> Henzel, “The Bible and Spiritual Abuse.”

<sup>81</sup> See also Porcello.

Continuous turnover of leaders may happen in unhealthy multiple staff person settings. A senior leader may be intimidated by the strength/ability of the individuals working underneath his/her direction, and these staff members may be fired or forced out for reasons that are unclear or unsubstantiated to the congregation.<sup>82</sup>

Turnover can also occur when staff members understand that the methods/attitudes of leadership are not healthy and seek to confront the situation. If no meaningful changes are made, these individuals may burn out or leave the employ of that church.

A faith community with just one minister may also experience continuous staffing turnover. When a church board places the responsibility for the success of the church upon the pastor, but gives him/her little real authority to carry out the church's mission, the result is pastoral burnout and/or resignation.<sup>83</sup>

Jack Porcello adds a few other signs to Dupont's *Characteristics of a Spiritually Abusive System*:

- Special preference is given to the wealthy and powerful, and to those who make large contributions to the church or church staff;
- The belief that special behaviors reflect deeper spiritual experience (ie, speaking in tongues, prophecy, etc.) is promoted;<sup>84</sup>
- “Inner circle knowledge” (‘deeper truths’ are revealed only to those who are dedicated to the ministry);
- Difficult circumstances, such as poverty, illness or doubt – are attributed to spiritual weakness;
- Nepotism is employed in the appointment of church leadership.<sup>85</sup>

Reverend Keith Wright points out that religion can be a vehicle to bless and to hurt, and that every person is a victim of religious abuse at some point in their lives.<sup>86</sup> Typically, people experience both good and bad within religion, and “if [they’re] fortunate, [they] experience more blessing than wounding; if [they] are unfortunate, the opposite is true.”<sup>87</sup>

Likewise, **a religious system can be healthy in some ways, and unhealthy in others.** Wayne Oates says, “...the term *religion* is very ambiguous...”<sup>88</sup> He avoids the dichotomy of ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’ religion, saying, “Ordinarily [religion] is sick in some respects and well in others at the same time.”<sup>89</sup> One could understand the characteristics of an abusive system to be on a **continuum**. The greater the

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<sup>82</sup> David L. Goetz, “Forced Out,” *Leadership* (Winter, 1996): 42.

<sup>83</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 231.

<sup>84</sup> George Otis Jr. says, “...godly character remains woefully undervalued [in the church] in comparison to giftedness...There is nothing wrong with a silver tongue, a keen mind or a genuine spiritual gift, but these endowments offer no guarantee that the resulting fruit will be godly” (104).

<sup>85</sup> Porcello.

<sup>86</sup> Wright, 19.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>88</sup> Wayne Oates, quoted in Wright, 20.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

number of characteristics a faith community has (and to the greater degree to which each characteristic manifests), the less healthy - the more toxic - that system is.<sup>90</sup>

### 6. *Long Term Effects of Religious/Spiritual Abuse*

Dupont notes the following effects of long term spiritual abuse for those who abuse and are abused:<sup>91</sup>

#### a. *Lethal Love - Shame*

"Shame is the soul-deep sense that there is something uniquely and hopelessly wrong with *me*."<sup>92</sup>

One who experiences long term religious abuse cannot experience the unconditional love of God or the true love of others; the only love that they know is shame-based.

#### b. *Lethal Thinking*

Over time, spiritual abuse leads to very self-destructive thinking, negatively impacting one's emotions and behavior. Those who suffer abuse believe that they are deficient before God and others; this has profound effect upon their emotions (they can suffer from depression, anxiety, anger issues; they may find it difficult to trust their own ability to make decisions, etc.). Their day to day lives can also reflect this abuse and its consequences: emotional and social isolation, poor functioning at work, even suicide.<sup>93</sup> For those who are acting abusively, their own "lethal thinking" – if not corrected – can lead to the "lethal license" discussed in point e below.

#### c. *Lethal Loyalty*

"Instead of standing up for the truth, we become lethally loyal to the system. We would rather keep the peace in the family that breaks the rules, as if our life somehow depended on it."<sup>94</sup>

Dupont indicates that the shame-base leads to a diseased sense of loyalty. As in families with a strong shame-base, in churches those who experience abuse learn to:

- i. **Be blind** to the trouble within the church. 'Ignore it and it will go away.'
- ii. **Be quiet**. It is not acceptable to talk about what is really happening.
- iii. **Be numb**. Because one cannot talk about the pain and anger, the way to deal with it is not to feel.
- iv. **Be careful**. It is too scary to be known for whom one is; 'if people really knew me, they couldn't love me.'

<sup>90</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of a spiritual abuse continuum, see Blue, 12-14.

<sup>91</sup> Dupont, 161-171.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 161. Author's emphasis.

<sup>93</sup> Holderread Heggen, 109.

<sup>94</sup> Dupont, 169.

v. **Be good.** ‘If I am perfect, then I am acceptable.’<sup>95</sup>

People who come to realize that a situation is abusive may stay because they have devoted much time and money to the faith community. While Blue sees this as a legitimate response, at least for a time, Johnson and van Vonderen understand this to be part of the “trap” of a religiously-abusive system.<sup>96</sup>

When a parishioner does leave a long-standing abusive situation, he/she will likely feel shame about having been in such a community. This is often internal; sometimes the comments of others contribute to this shame. (“I *knew* that church was ‘bad news!’ How could you get involved in that?”) Blue gently explains that often those who have become involved in such a system are people who have deeply wanted to follow Christ. He counsels, “It should be comforting to realize that the hurt you may have suffered from church leaders in the past could be due not to something wrong about you, but something *right*; your desire to get close to God...”<sup>97</sup>

d. *Lethal Legacies*

The effects of long-term spiritual abuse can plague a family for generations. Children and grandchildren learn that “this is what religion is,” not realizing that the thinking, attitudes and behaviors of this faith system are unhealthy. As in other forms of abuse, the intergenerational effects are significant.<sup>98</sup>

A person who has experienced abuse within their family of origin is more likely to find themselves in a lengthy association with an abusive faith system. Unhealthy churches often declare themselves to be places to find love and acceptance; those who have not experienced this growing up may later seek it through a faith community, not realizing that the setting they assumed was safe was not.<sup>99</sup>

e. *Lethal License*

Dupont notes that over time, the pride, the power and the control may result in leaders abusing with impunity. Spiritual leaders who get to this point believe they are ‘above the law’ and that God supports them in their efforts.<sup>100</sup>

## 7. *Pastors who Sexually Abuse their Congregants*

As all helping professionals have rules of conduct concerning behavior, so do (should) pastors. Yet Robison states that “the lack of definitive, written rules

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 168, 169.

<sup>96</sup> See Blue, 94 and Johnson and van Vonderen, 185.

<sup>97</sup> Blue, 16, 17. The quotation is from p. 36; author’s emphasis.

<sup>98</sup> The intergenerational effects of violence within the home are well-known. For example, 1993 Violence Against Women Survey found that boys who witnessed their mother being physically abused were three times more likely to be violent in their own homes as adults, than men who had not witnessed violence. Silvern et al (1995) report that women who have witnessed violence against their mothers are more likely to suffer from low self esteem, as adults; Dauverne and Johnson (2001) note that these women are more likely to find themselves in abusive marital situations as adults. (For the discussion about these studies on the intergenerational effects of abuse on men and women, see Tina Hotton, “Childhood Aggression and Exposure to Violence in the Home,” *Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics*, 2003, 5.) For more information about the intergenerational effects of religious/spiritual abuse, see Dupont, 171 and Wright, chapter 2.

<sup>99</sup> For an example, see Enroth, 158.

<sup>100</sup> Dupont, 179-171.

regarding [relationship] between clergy and those in their care has certainly been a contributing factor in the misuse of power in religious institutions.”<sup>101</sup> The role of pastor in a position of power, as well as trust, can blur the boundaries; some faith cultures portray the pastor as ‘friend,’ and this further clouds the issue of borders of the relationship.

While the possibility for abuse is found in the role and within the leader, Holderread Heggen warns about the exceptional power that male pastors have, of which they need to be aware.

“The male pastor embodies the generalized power of men as a class in our sexist society. In addition, the pastor’s religious role carries with it significant inherent power and authority. The pastor is considered by many to be God’s representative and a mediator between the congregation and God. Because of the power advantage the male pastor has as a man, plus the specific power of his pastoral position, he has, with perhaps rare exceptions, significantly more power than any woman in his congregation.”<sup>102</sup>

The imbalance of power in this relationship can result in emotional and psychological violation. It can also result in sexual abuse. At times clergy members who have become physically involved with a member of their congregation will state that the relationship is ‘mutual.’ However, the concept of ‘mutuality’ does not apply; the power imbalance precludes the concept of consent in a physical relationship between pastor and parishioner.<sup>103</sup> Professionals are *always* responsible for the safety of the personal boundaries of those who come to them for help.”<sup>104</sup>

Irons and Roberts have extensively researched clergy sexual abuse. They feel that the lifetime prevalence of perpetration (7%) among all the helping professions – teachers, psychologists and doctors, etc. – is a reasonable estimate for clergy sexual exploitation.<sup>105</sup> Lebacqz and Barton, in a 1991 study, revealed that 10% of the clergy surveyed admitted that they had become sexually involved with a parishioner.<sup>106</sup>

Irons and Roberts profile the types of sexual offenders within ministry. 96% of ministers who exploit sexually are men;<sup>107</sup> some have a sexual disorder, others violate boundaries out of work and stress related problems.<sup>108</sup> Over 80% of sexually exploitive ministers that these researchers assessed were abused as children.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Linda Hansen Robison, “The Abuse of Power: A View of Sexual Misconduct in a Systematic Approach to Pastoral Care,” *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 52, no. 5 (May 2004): 397.

<sup>102</sup> Holderread Heggen, 111.

<sup>103</sup> K. Lebacqz and R. Barton, *Sex in the Parish* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1991), 102.

<sup>104</sup> Nils Friberg, “Wounded Congregations,” in *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, eds. Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 72. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> As discussed in Holderread Heggen, 99.

<sup>107</sup> Irons and Roberts discuss the work of P. Rutter, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* (Los Angeles: Taracher, 1989). See Irons and Roberts, 35.

<sup>108</sup> Irons and Roberts, 35, 36.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

These two researchers provide an ‘archetypal characterization’ of the different kinds of sexual abusers in ministry (the pronoun ‘he’ will be used, because the vast majority of ministers who abuse congregants sexually are male):

a. *The Naïve Prince*

This individual is usually relatively new to the ministry, feels invulnerable, is very busy, and establishes counseling relationships with a number of vulnerable women in the congregation. He does not understand the complexity of the relationship (transference and countertransference).<sup>110</sup> His professional boundaries are only partially developed.

The clergyman is generally psychologically healthy, and when confronted with an ethical violation, can generally realize that he has crossed the line. With professional education and rehabilitation, Irons and Roberts suggest his prognosis for recovery is good.<sup>111</sup>

b. *The Wounded Warrior*

This individual is a very committed pastor, whose sense of personal worth comes from his professional role. His drive to serve his flock comes from the need to maintain self worth and repress shame. The demands upon his time and internal structures lead to one or more romantic affair(s); the resulting shame drives him to greater isolation.

Irons and Roberts suggest that this type of sexually-exploitive minister is relatively healthy psychologically, but may suffer from some addictions (such as a sexual addiction) and from situational depression. Professional rehabilitation may make it possible for this type of individual to re-enter ministry, though only “if such clergy remain in a structured and closely monitored recovery program under a contract that includes provisions for defined limits and boundaries, psychotherapy, and direct supervision during the early and middle stages of recovery.”<sup>112</sup>

c. *The Self-Serving Martyr*

Personal growth and family involvement have been sacrificed for ministry within the church; work is the Self-Serving Martyr’s way of meeting his personal needs for affirmation and worth. Over time the pastor’s innate neediness is expressed through romantic affairs.

This minister has the tendency to rationalize his behavior, believing that professional ethics/boundaries do not apply to him: “I deserve something for me!” He has significant psychological issues, and may present with obsessive-compulsive, narcissistic, dependent or hysterical tendencies. The Self-Serving Martyr tends to have significant addictive disease. In such circumstances, withdrawal from ministry is typically required. Professional rehabilitation is slow; re-entry into ministry – if

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<sup>110</sup> *Transference* refers to the powerful feelings that clients can develop for their therapists (pastors). *Countertransference* refers to the powerful feelings that therapists can develop for their clients. Hansen Robison argues that powerful feelings of attraction can develop between a pastor and a parishioner, when each seeks to have their ego needs met by the other. See Hansen Robison, 400.

<sup>111</sup> See Irons and Roberts, 41, 42.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

feasible – is generally restricted.<sup>113</sup>

d. *The False Lover*

This individual desires to live his life “on the edge.” Irons and Roberts suggest that he has not developed psychosocially past adolescence. He may have one romantic affair after another – inside and outside of the church – convinced that each new lover is his ‘ideal.’ His drive for success in his relationships and in his ministry leads to high-risk behaviors. Sex and chemical addictions are typical.

The minister needs professional rehabilitation, though treatment does not necessarily lead to deep change. Irons and Roberts note that when significant change does occur, it is generally a result of considerable internal change and genuine spiritual awakening. Professional re-entry is not recommended.<sup>114</sup>

e. *The Dark King*

This minister is skilled at using professional power to exploit others. He is often charming and appealing to his congregants. He chooses his victims; when confronted with wrong-doing, he will expend much energy in justifying his actions and trying to prove his innocence. “Expect him to be therapy-wise, psychologically defended and legally informed.”<sup>115</sup>

Dark Kings can present with an array of psychological disorders such as narcissism, antisocial, borderline and schizoid personality disorders. Treatment for such individuals is long and arduous; re-entry into ministry is not recommended.<sup>116</sup>

f. *The Wild Card*

Irons and Roberts describe this sexually-exploitive minister as possessing an erratic personal and professional life. He may have a major mental health diagnosis from Axis 1 on the DSMIV-TR.<sup>117</sup> He may seek treatment, improve for a time and then, through the pressures of the job, return to a state of mental illness.<sup>118</sup>

Sexual misconduct is associated with reduced inhibitions, caused by the mental illness. The Wild Card often requires medication as well as on-going psychological therapy and a “continuing care contract.” Irons and Roberts state that re-entrance into ministry depends upon the success of treatment and the risk of disease recurrence.<sup>119</sup>

Although these researchers suggest that the possibility for rehabilitation exists in a number of these categories, priority in denominations *must* lie with the safety of congregants. Denominational leadership must be careful not to simply ‘shift’ a

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-47.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, 48.

<sup>117</sup> See *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. TR. (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

<sup>118</sup> Note: The most typical Axis 1 mental illness associated with inappropriate sexual behavior is bipolar disorder. However, Irons and Roberts also list other conditions – which are generally not associated with sexual misconduct - and so they have not been mentioned here. For further information re: their description, see Irons and Roberts, 48, 49.

<sup>119</sup> Irons and Roberts, 48, 49.

minister with a history of sexual exploitation to another congregation, in order to give him a ‘fresh start.’

“...It is imperative that in the context of the church, justice not only be done, but that it be seen to be done. We must remember that churches are more than buildings and programs, they are the very body of Christ. Damage to one member affects the rest of the body and impairs its ability to witness for Christ in the wider community. The way the church addresses issues of abuse shapes the image it projects to society at large.”<sup>120</sup>

#### 8. *Congregations who Abuse their Pastors*

“The Current” on CBC radio aired a program in April 2007 called “Bully Pulpit Talk.” In this program research done by G. Lloyd Rediger was highlighted: 40% of Canadian pastors he surveyed reported that they had suffered abuse in their congregations and through denominational leadership.<sup>121</sup>

A study by *Leadership, Christianity Today* and *Your Church* magazines found that 22.8% of the responding readers had been forced out of their church ministry positions at least once during their careers. Forty-three percent said a “faction” in the church pushed them out; this faction was a very small group, often numbering less than 10 people.<sup>122</sup>

Charles Chandler, of the “Ministering to Ministers Foundation” in Virginia, reports that according to the *Abilene Reporter-News* (Dec. 14, 2000), over 1,600 Protestant ministers in the United States are forced out of their church ministry positions each month. “That’s over 19,000 per year. To put it in a more comprehensible picture, it is 369 per week, 53 per day, or one every 25 minutes around the clock every day of the year.”<sup>123</sup>

The following are ways in which a pastor can experience abuse:

- a. *The inherent dangers in the role of the pastor can leave the minister caught in the middle of conflict that becomes ugly.*

Wright speaks of the complexity of the pastor’s role. The minister is the *pastor/priest* (bringing comfort in times of difficulty) and a *prophet* (proclaiming truth). Parishioners may embrace the pastor/priest role, but may balk at the role of the prophet – whether the minister is addressing social issues within society as a whole or is working with an issue within the congregation. A pastor himself,

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<sup>120</sup> “Pastor/Church Worker Abuse: A Guide for Denominations and Church Leadership,” *The Social Action Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Discussion Paper* (Canada: The Evangelical Church of Canada, 1996), 3.

<sup>121</sup> This program was hosted by Anna Maria Tremonti, “Bully Pulpit Talk,” *The Current*, CBC Radio, April 12, 2007.

<sup>122</sup> This study was discussed by Goetz, 42.

<sup>123</sup> Charles Chandler, “‘Aunt Ida’ is Very Perceptive,” *Religious Herald* (March 8, 2007). Accessed on April 18, 2007 at <http://www.religiousherald.org/1285.article>.

Wright wryly notes that the battles between congregants are generally not over theological issues, but rather, over things such as the carpet in the sanctuary! <sup>124</sup>

“The church is a large family <sup>125</sup> and like all families it has its squabbles. The trouble is that the pastor often becomes the focal point of the family feud and ends up the target of the wrath of both sides of the quarrel.” <sup>126</sup>

b. *Unrealistic expectations from the congregation:*

Wright notes the difficulty of the *shepherd/servant* role. The shepherd provides leadership, but in some church situations, the minister is expected to be the servant to all, all of the time! This leads to clergy burnout. <sup>127</sup>

“Many pastors are doomed from the day they join a congregation because the congregation’s expectations are unachievable by any human being.” <sup>128</sup>

Not only is the minister expected to be a servant of the church, his/her spouse is also cast in this role.

“If the spouse is a woman, she is often expected to be an expert Bible teacher, to lead in prayer public, to attend women’s circle meetings, and to arrange meals for the sick. In other words, she is a *partner* in her husband’s ministry, and, as such, she can be praised for her expertise and faithfulness or she can be criticized and attacked, especially by those who do not like her husband.” <sup>129</sup>

The behavior of the minister’s children is critiqued; they are expected to be ‘perfect’ and highly involved in the congregation as well. <sup>130</sup>

c. *Malicious intent within the congregation/denomination;*

G. Lloyd Rediger, in his book *Clergy Killers*, speaks of those within congregations who have deliberate intent to harm the pastor. These are not individuals who have an issue within the faith community; rather these individuals “intentionally target pastors for serious injury or destruction.” <sup>131</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Wright, 106, 107.

<sup>125</sup> Note: the understanding of “the church is family” may be a part of the problem! One is more vulnerable to abuse within familiar relationships than within those that are not as close.

<sup>126</sup> Wright, 107.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* See chapter 7.

<sup>128</sup> George Barna, quoted by Goetz, 42.

<sup>129</sup> Wright., 109.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

<sup>131</sup> G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 8.

This injury comes through the form of continual, disrespectful questioning, gossip, rumors and slanderous letters.<sup>132</sup> It also comes in the form of financial boycotts, church attendance boycotts and anonymous messages on the pastor's voice mail.<sup>133</sup> Not uncommon is for male clergy to have allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment brought against them.<sup>134</sup> Pastors may be stalked; their families may be threatened.<sup>135</sup> These "clergy killers" are not interested in the well-being of the church or the pastor (though they will often say they are). In an extreme example, Pastor Sheron C. Patterson recounts the time a parishioner threatened to kill her, when she wouldn't comply with an unreasonable request!<sup>136</sup>

Clergy killers "are selfish, want their own way, and are determined to get it at any cost to the congregation or the pastor."<sup>137</sup> They may direct their complaints to the church board; sometimes they go beyond the congregation to denominational leaders. Anderson also adds that "clergy killers" can operate within the denominational leadership.<sup>138</sup>

Pastors in these types of situations experience enormous stress, anxiety and depression (the symptoms of spiritual abuse!) Many leave the ministry. "...Good pastors... have been destroyed by their congregations."<sup>139</sup>

Rediger speaks of the "collateral damage" that occurs; not just the pastor is the target of abuse, his/her spouse and children are as well.<sup>140</sup> Many clergy families have to move to a new residence and their children need to change schools; their spouses may need to change jobs. It is common for clergy and family members to lose their ability to trust the church.<sup>141</sup> Marcia Clark Myers reports that Presbyterian ministers' children are not entering the ministry as they once did; she surmises that with the hazards of ministry, pastors are encouraging their children to enter different vocational fields.<sup>142</sup> Abused ministers and their families sometimes leave the Christian faith altogether.<sup>143</sup> The effects, then, of the religious/spiritual abuse of clergy can be long lasting – even intergenerational.

d. *The pressure from denominational boards to conform to determined practices and beliefs.*

All people, including ministers, experience changes in faith over time; life stages, education, and working with people each contribute. Wright speaks of the pressure placed upon pastors to be dishonest when it comes to signing

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<sup>132</sup> See Dupont, 150, 151.

<sup>133</sup> Tremonti.

<sup>134</sup> Irons and Roberts, 34.

<sup>135</sup> Tremonti.

<sup>136</sup> Sheron C. Patterson, "Bullied No More," *Leadership* (Winter 1998): 103,104.

<sup>137</sup> Kristin Anderson. "The Bishops and Clergy Killers," *Lutheran Partners*, Vol. 14, no. 4, (July/August, 1998).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Anderson.

<sup>140</sup> See Wright, 108-111.

<sup>141</sup> Chandler.

<sup>142</sup> Myers, in Wright, 115.

<sup>143</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen note that it is common for victims of spiritual abuse to leave the faith. See Johnson and van Vonderen, 122.

denominational statements of faith that they no longer believe, as well as the push to preach what their congregations want to hear – even if they do not believe it.<sup>144</sup>

Denominations are comprised of churches having common beliefs and practices. Accountability is an important benefit of this; excessive control may be a risk. The type and amount of pressure from denominational boards could be a factor in determining whether *accountability* has become *excessive control*.

### 9. *Healing from Spiritual Abuse*

The literature makes it clear that healing from spiritual abuse takes time!<sup>145</sup> It will not be a single event of prayer at the altar; it involves a period of grieving and of renewal that will be elongated.<sup>146</sup> Whether one is a pastor or a congregant, there are at least several factors that strongly influence how prolonged the period of healing will be:

a. *The health and strength of one's family of origin.*

The stronger one's sense of self is (the greater the psychosocial and spiritual development), the quicker he/she will heal.<sup>147</sup>

b. *How long one spent in the abusive system(s).*

The longer one experiences abuse, the greater the time required for healing.<sup>148</sup>

c. *The degree of abuse.*

As no religious system is perfect, all people experience some degree of violation: the more severe the violation, the deeper the wounds.<sup>149</sup>

d. *One's age at the time of the abuse.*

Children and teens, in their formative years, take much longer to recover. They are more likely to “throw in the spiritual towel” than adults with well-developed coping mechanisms.<sup>150</sup>

Some folks may leave their church situation for another; others will quit going to church for a time. Some may never go back to church again.<sup>151 152</sup>

The following are important elements in healing from religious/spiritual abuse. Victims:

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<sup>144</sup> Wright, 125.

<sup>145</sup> Dupont, 183-191.

<sup>146</sup> Mark Laaser describes the process of grieving within congregations who suffered clergy sexual exploitation. Mark Laaser, “Long Term Healing,” in *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, eds. Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 232-250. See also Dupont, 183-191.

<sup>147</sup> Friberg, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Dupont, 186.

<sup>149</sup> Blue, 96.

<sup>150</sup> Friberg, 59.

<sup>151</sup> Wright, 158, 159.

<sup>152</sup> Because one is not attending church does not mean they cannot live spiritually. Spirituality is the expression of the spirit – one's essence, the image of God within. Religion is one expression of spirituality. For a further explanation, see Booth, 236.

a. *Must realize that they have been abused.*<sup>153</sup>

This is a vital first step; until this occurs, there can be no healing. If one does not recognize what has happened and process it, he/she may be vulnerable to subsequent abuse. Robert Schwab, a United Church minister spoke of the abuse he suffered at the hands of one of his congregations. He indicated that as soon as he realized that this treatment was abusive, he knew he had to act on it.<sup>154</sup>

b. *Need to develop a new view of God*

When spiritual abuse occurs, one's view of God becomes distorted. The victim of spiritual abuse will need to understand the *heart* of God - a heart of acceptance and love. "Survivors will need to be reminded again and again of the true attributes of God and the principle of grace."<sup>155</sup>

This is particularly difficult for those who have been sexually victimized by spiritual leaders. "The process of healing is even more complex and difficult for victims abused in religious settings (such as church schools, religious homes, or churches) by persons who represented spiritual authority or articulated religious faith."<sup>156</sup> As the pastor is often seen as God's representative, the sense of betrayal that the victims, family of victims and (to a lesser degree) that other congregants feel, is massive. "The basic fabric of life is torn."<sup>157</sup> Victims blame both God and the minister for their abuse.

Willersheidt speaks of the victim's need to separate God from the institutional church. She/he needs to shed the idea of a childhood paternalistic God to the God of their adulthood. "Freedom to experience God as an adult in a way that is enriching is a major goal of spiritual healing."<sup>158</sup> This process may take a long time, and the survivor should not be expected to jump back into church life.

c. *Need to develop new view of self*

It is very common for victims of spiritual abuse to feel that their worth is in *what they do*. This common societal message becomes even more potent when theology is tied to it. Wright speaks of the need to move from legalism to a grace-filled faith. One's worth is because he/she *is*, not for what he/she does. The understanding of God's unconditional love and acceptance frees the individual to "become more nearly the [person he/she was] created to be."<sup>159</sup>

In the security of being worthy, a victim of abuse needs to look at his/her particular self-esteem issues, as well as boundaries. Many times Christian women have been socialized to be agreeable and "nice," rather than to be assertive, able

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<sup>153</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 191.

<sup>154</sup> As discussed on Tremonti's "Bully Pulpit Talk."

<sup>155</sup> Hilderbrant

<sup>156</sup> Holderread Heggen, 43.

<sup>157</sup> Friberg, 58.

<sup>158</sup> Phyllis A. Willersheidt, "Healing for Victims," in *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, eds. Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 28.

<sup>159</sup> Wright, 169, 170.

to take care of their own needs. Willersheidt recommends that in this process, a woman be supported in setting boundaries and making decisions in smaller matters. Success begets success, and she begins to “become proactive with regard to taking control of [her] actions and [her] life.”<sup>160</sup>

For a clergyperson who has been abused, healing can be particularly difficult if his/her identity is tied to their particular role and job. Johnson and van Vonderen note that clergy must learn to separate Christian *mission* from one’s job.<sup>161</sup> One’s ‘calling’ is to carry out the Great Commandments, not to be a minister or a minister within a particular church. A new identity, based upon what cannot be taken away, must be forged. God’s truth, energy, love and acceptance must be applied to one’s life.<sup>162</sup>

*d. Will benefit from a healing community*

Many who have experienced spiritual abuse do not return to a faith community. Those who stay in their congregation or move on to another church often find that their story is not heard. Survivors may be ‘rushed’ into statements of forgiveness and told to move on. In this way, Myrla Seibold says that the Church can revictimize victims! Those who have experienced violation benefit greatly from a safe community (or safe members within the community), that can handle the telling/retelling of the story, as this is a key part of the healing. “We can forgive and still tell the story – God does! Affirming our story is a vital component of the journey on the road to forgiveness.”<sup>163</sup>

*e. Need friendship/support outside of the church community*

Isolation is a common experience for those who have suffered religious abuse. If one is a pastor, he/she has invested their life energy into their congregation, and outside relationships often have been sacrificed. Pastor Sheron Patterson, the minister whose life was threatened, said that her objective friend from outside the church was her “life-saver”!<sup>164</sup> Casey McKibbon from the Clergy Support Network advocates mentors for pastors in the healing process.<sup>165</sup>

For parishioners in an abusive spiritual community, being consumed with congregational life (and sometimes being encouraged to give up ‘outside’ relationships) can lead to social and familial isolation. It will take time for wounded lay people to develop a renewed support base. Reconnecting with supportive family members (if these relationships were strained) and with other relationships outside of the offending church, can keep this individual connected to others. These relationships can be healing. They can also combat the

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<sup>160</sup> Willersheidt, 28.

<sup>161</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 175, 176.

<sup>162</sup> In the chapter, “Toward a Healthy Spirituality” Father Leo Booth outlines practical steps that a survivor of abuse can take towards a healthier view of both self and God. See Booth, 185-211.

<sup>163</sup> The thoughts in this section are outlined in Myrla Seibold, “When the Wounding Runs Deep: Encouragement for Those on the Road to Forgiveness,” in *Care for the Soul*, eds. Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 294-308. Quotation: page 299.

<sup>164</sup> Patterson, 103, 104.

<sup>165</sup> Casey McKibbon, featured on Tremonti’s “Bully Pulpit Talk.”

erroneous notion that ‘life’ is found only in a particular church and open up the world to those who have been isolated.

*f. May benefit from professional help*

Professional help may be advisable in healing from significant spiritual/religious abuse. For clergy, there are professional organizations which exist to help ministers who have suffered abuse.<sup>166</sup> For laypeople that have experienced significant abuse over a long period of time, a ‘listening ear’ may not be sufficient. Enroth recommends professional or pastoral counseling from one who understands religious abuse. He raises a word of caution: therapists who blame the victim, or focus on the issues that led to their victimization, do not understand the issue and should not be used.<sup>167</sup>

### Resources in Healing from Spiritual Abuse

#### For Survivors:

Booth, Leo. “Toward a Healthy Spirituality,” chapter 7 in *When God Becomes a Drug: Breaking the Chains of Religious Addiction and Abuse*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1991.

Nason-Clark, Nancy and Clark Kroeger, Catherine. “How Do I Get Started on the Healing Journey?” Chapter 5 in *Refuge from Abuse: Healing and Hope for Abused Christian Women*. Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004.<sup>168</sup>

Willerscheidt, Phyllis A. “Healing for Victims,” in *Restoring the Soul of a Church*. Eds. Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995.

#### Particularly for Pastors:

Goetz, David L. “Forced Out,” *Leadership*. Winter, 1996: 40-49.

Greenfield, Guy. *The Wounded Minister: Healing from and Preventing Personal Attacks*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001.

Oswald, Roy M. *Clergy Self Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry*. USA: the Alban Institute, 1991.

#### For Healing Congregations:

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<sup>166</sup> For example, in Virginia the Ministering to Ministers Foundation works with pastors who have been forced out of their congregations. See <http://www.religiousherald.org/1285.article>. Within Canada, the ecumenical organization “Clergy Support Network” seeks to help pastors who are experiencing or have experienced abuse. See [www.clergyabuse.net](http://www.clergyabuse.net).

<sup>167</sup> Enroth, 179, 180.

<sup>168</sup> This chapter focuses on principles for healing for women abused in familial relationships. However, the principles contained therein are useful for women who have experienced spiritual/religious abuse, as well.

Benyei, Candace R. *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems*. New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998.<sup>169</sup>

Myer Hopkins, Nancy and Laaser, Mark, eds. *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995.<sup>170</sup>

Sevcik, Irene. *Domestic Violence Protocol: For Faith Communities* (updated and revised). Calgary, AB: FaithLink, 2006.<sup>171</sup>

### ***10. Staying in or Leaving an Abusive Church Situation***

It may seem obvious that one should leave an abusive situation. However, one's decision depends upon the degree of the abuse, and the effects of the abuse upon him/her. Blue advises: "In assessing abuse and deciding what to do about it, we need to discern it in terms of degrees. Some minor abuses we ought to overlook entirely; some we need to confront and forgive; others we need to flee from."<sup>172</sup>

A number of writers note that *in certain circumstances of significant abuse*, parishioners may decide to stay *for a time*. For instance, one may stay for a time to attempt to effect change. Johnson and van Vonderen recommend that those who are aware of disease in the church and are struggling with the decision of whether to stay or to leave, should ask themselves the following questions:

- a. Does grace really have a chance?  
Is there a genuine possibility for change? Johnson and van Vonderen say, "If there is a bottleneck of power-posturing leaders at the top who are performance-oriented, the chances of things changing are very slim."<sup>173</sup>
- b. Are you supporting what you hate?
- c. Do you need to be right?
- d. Can you stay and stay healthy both at the same time?  
"Losing your spiritual, not to mention physical, emotional, and psychological health is not worth it."<sup>174</sup>
- e. Can you set your own limits and stick with them?
- f. Do you believe that God cares more about the church than you do?  
(People who come from a shame-based system need to be cognizant of their tendency to take too much responsibility.)
- g. Is it possible that the system might need to die?  
"Leaving does not kill a dead system; it just makes it look as dead as it is."<sup>175</sup>
- h. Are you trying to help the situation, even if you are exhausted?

<sup>169</sup> See particularly chapters 10 and 11 in Benyei.

<sup>170</sup> This book contains a number of chapters, written by various authors, on the healing of congregations from clergy sexual abuse.

<sup>171</sup> See p. 29ff re: "Responding to the Impact Upon the Congregation." Though this document is written for pastors from a perspective of handling a domestic violence disclosure within a congregation, some of the same principles of supporting and educating the congregation apply.

<sup>172</sup> Blue, 95.

<sup>173</sup> Johnson and van Vonderen, 215.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

(Self-care is a must!)

- i. Are you able to listen to the voice of sanity?  
Johnson and van Vonderen advise listening to others who left the church. They too may have tried to effect change.
- j. Do you know where to sow?  
If truth will not be accepted, the “soil” is not good (see Matthew 13:1-23).
- k. If you came today for the first time, knowing what you know now about the system, would you stay?  
“If the answer is ‘no,’ then why do you continue to return?”<sup>176</sup>

If the adults affected have children, it is not advisable to stay in such a situation. As noted above previously, the effects of religious/spiritual abuse upon children are profound.

If one does intend to stay for a time, Johnson and van Vonderen counsel:

1. Be ready for resistance;
2. Continue to speak the truth;
3. Hang onto the Shepherd;
4. Know how a healthy spiritual system functions.<sup>177</sup>

## 11. *Developing Healthy Churches*

**“The real test of religion is, does it make wings to lift a man [woman] up or a dead weight to drag him [her] down? Is a man [woman] helped by his [her] religion, or is he [she] haunted by it? Does it carry him [her], or does he [she] carry it?”<sup>178</sup>**

There are a number of ways to foster health within a congregation and denomination. The following are suggestions from a number of professionals:

*Recognize the power in religion to both heal and harm; minimize the potential for harm.*

Wright recognizes that it is difficult for faith communities to admit that they can act abusively. However, when churches are aware of their power in people’s lives as well as the effects of abuse, they may take steps toward minimizing negative impact.

Reducing power-posturing and other forms of abuse depends upon understanding the dynamics of abuse and working towards the prevention of these factors. Education, policies and procedures within a congregation are helpful.

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<sup>176</sup> Quotation from p. 221. For this list of questions and further discussion, see Johnson and van Vonderen, 214-221.

<sup>177</sup> For more information, plus these authors’ model, see Johnson and van Vonderen, 230.

<sup>178</sup> William Barclay, quoted by Blue, 86.

*Create a climate of health and safety within the church.*

Reverend David Holmes says a church needs to practice good *lawn care*. “If the lawn is healthy, the weeds won’t grow.” He recommends that churches:

- provide clear teaching and modeling on the ethics of relationship;
- emphasize the core values, beliefs and practices of *reverence, respect for all people and honesty* in all situations.

This pastor stresses that a healthy, safe church climate is one in which conflict and mistakes are not feared; they are dealt with.<sup>179</sup> Also recommended is special training for ministers in conflict resolution.<sup>180</sup>

The work of creating a safe climate within a faith community prepares the way for the long-term vision of Wright:

“...The most effective corrective to abuse will come from the change of heart. It will come as the Christian faith reassesses its understanding of power and teaches its adherents a radically new way of looking at this crucial concept. This reexamination would lead Christianity, I believe, to move from a concept of power that encourages and fosters abuse, to an understanding of power that encourages sharing and the empowerment of others.”<sup>181</sup>

*Develop denominational policies and encourage their active involvement.*

The following suggestions have been compiled from a number of sources.

Denominations:

*Need to see, and believe, that there are congregants who seek to destroy pastors.*<sup>182</sup>

ii. *Should encourage the accessing of educational materials on abuse.*<sup>183</sup>

Leadership needs to be informed of the dynamics of spiritual and religious abuse, as well as all other forms of abuse.

iii. *Must clarify their authority in dealing with abusive situations within churches.*

Denominational authorities may experience the following challenges:

- they have no real authority in their churches, because individual congregations are autonomous;
- they fear getting involved;
- they do not understand “the real issues.”

<sup>179</sup> Reverend David Holmes, Interview (Calgary, AB: Robert McClure United Church, March 15, 2007).

<sup>180</sup> Anderson. See also Goetz, 48.

<sup>181</sup> Wright, 133.

<sup>182</sup> Rediger, 143. Anderson.

<sup>183</sup> “Pastor/Church Worker Abuse: A Guide for Denominations and Church Leadership,” 2.

Goetz says that 40% of the pastors in the survey done by *Leadership et al* indicated that their denominational supervisors are “not very” or “not at all” supportive of their pastors in trouble with abusive churches.<sup>184</sup>

As one form of denominational support for its pastors, the United Church will implement a union for its ministers in 2007; it also is going to issue cheques from the presbytery. The intention is to protect pastors from abuse within their churches.<sup>185</sup>

iv. *Should keep better records as to why pastors move.*

If they did, they would be better able to identify “repeat offender” churches and support pastors in congregations known to be hard on their ministers.<sup>186</sup> Hoge and Wenger’s 2002 study involving 963 pastors found that ministers who had left or been forced out of positions strongly agree that denominations need to be candid with prospective pastors in job interviews, as to why previous ministers left.<sup>187</sup>

v. *Need to develop protocols for working effectively with their churches – to support that which is good and deal with that which is abusive.*<sup>188</sup>

Goetz notes, “Most denominations discipline pastors who commit adultery or embezzle money. Why shouldn’t they discipline churches that slander or abuse pastors?”<sup>189</sup>

vi. *Should foster the research and development of clergy support systems.*<sup>190</sup>

Pastors often feel ‘alone out there.’ Hesitancy to disclose difficulties to other pastors, due to the competition between clergyman, as well as reluctance to disclose their struggles to denominational leaders for fear of how this will jeopardize future opportunities, results in very little professional support.<sup>191</sup>

d. *A focus on **intrinsic religion**, rather than **extrinsic religion**.*

A number of researchers have distinguished between religion that brings life, and that which does not. Holderread Heggen says that there are two ways of being religious. One can be *extrinsically religious*,<sup>192</sup> using a belief system for one’s own gain; religion is used to “justify self-centered ends.”<sup>193</sup> People or systems who use religion simply to meet their own needs can often wound. They “make use of religious ideas in order to gain some immediate practical advantage or to aid in the

<sup>184</sup> Goetz, 43, 44. See also Anderson.

<sup>185</sup> As reported by Tremonti.

<sup>186</sup> Goetz, 47. (As a corollary to this, denominations would also be able to track ‘repeat offender pastors.’)

<sup>187</sup> This study involved the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Assemblies of God. See John Dart, “Why Stressed Out Pastors Leave,” *Christian Century*, November 29, 2003.

Accessible at <http://www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu/Stressed.htm>.

<sup>188</sup> Anderson. Rediger, 143, 144.

<sup>189</sup> Goetz, 46.

<sup>190</sup> Rediger, 143, 144.

<sup>191</sup> Dart.

<sup>192</sup> This term originates from Gordon Allport. See Holderread Heggen, p. 82.

<sup>193</sup> Holderread Heggen, 82.

manipulation of other people.”<sup>194</sup> On the other hand, one can be *intrinsically religious*. The intrinsically religious have internalized their beliefs and practice them ‘from the inside out.’ A number of authors note that Jesus only had critical words for those who used religion for their own gain.

“(Jesus) understood that some religious beliefs and practices are used to manipulate appearances and dehumanize people.”<sup>195</sup>

Congregations that are working toward health will focus on the work of God *within* their ministers and congregants, rather than simply on outer actions to prove a level of righteousness. They are grace-based, rather than legalistic, emphasizing forgiveness for sin rather than guilt.<sup>196</sup> The value of *each* individual is recognized and embraced; the abuse of people is not tolerated.

## 12. Conclusion

“The most spiritual human beings, assuming they are the most courageous, also experience by far the most painful tragedies; but it is precisely for this reason that they honor life, because it brings against them its most formidable weapons.”<sup>197</sup>

Religious/spiritual abuse has profound effect upon those that have experienced it. But one’s experience of abuse is not the end of the story. An individual can transcend that experience of violation through the process of healing, emerging with new understandings of the world, self and God.

“Religion is neither all bad nor all good and when we recognize that fact, we can get on with the task of working with God to make it as healthy as it can be.”<sup>198</sup>

<sup>194</sup> T.W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswik, D.J. Levinson and R.N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), 733.

<sup>195</sup> Holderread Heggen, 83.

<sup>196</sup> See Wright, 169-171.

<sup>197</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, as quoted in Dupont, 160.

<sup>198</sup> Wright, 178.

## **Section III:**

### **Domestic Violence and the Church Community**

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## A. The Church's Response

### 1. A Theological Understanding of Domestic Violence

Violence is more than a “sin.” It is an assault to the image of God within the one who chooses to act abusively. It is a spiritual crisis. The God-given desire for relationship is distorted in the one acting abusively; he/she seeks to control and violate, rather than relate in a healthy manner. The ability to feel the pain of others (to empathize) is seriously diminished.

**“Where there is no empathy...the seeds of violence are there.”<sup>1</sup>**

Violence is also a spiritual crisis for the victim. The violation has profound impact upon the spirit of the one violated; he/she is wounded at their very core. In this sense, “all abuse is spiritual abuse.”<sup>2</sup>

The act of committing violence against another as well the wounding that occurs when one is violated separate the individual from their core, the image of God – who is light and love - within each of us.

**“Abuse affects every part of a person’s being, body, mind, soul and spirit. This is true of both the abused (person) and the (person who has acted abusively). For both, abuse can lead to separation from God as well as serious consequences to relationships with others...”<sup>3</sup>**

**“Spirituality is the movement within us to be more fully alive, releasing the light of our own unique life within the world. Abuse and fear harden our internal tenderness, block the light and make it difficult to notice the yearning of our spirits to be free to grow into the persons we really are.”<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Cram, 56-61.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual Support for Victims of Domestic Violence* Pamphlet (FaithLink: Calgary, AB: 2005).

<sup>3</sup> “Abuse in Homes and Church Communities: A Resource for Church and Lay Leadership.” The Social Action Committee of the Evangelical Church of Canada, Brief 13, 1996, quoted in Suzanne Ranta, *Turn Off the Violence Manual* (FaithLink, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> *Spiritual Support for Victims of Domestic Violence*.

## **2. The Importance for the Faith Community to Address Domestic Violence**<sup>5</sup>

Domestic violence is found at every economic level, within every geographic region and every race and ethnic group. It crosses all religious boundaries. There is no evidence that being a member of a specific religious group or faith community reduces the incidence or risk of domestic violence. Rather, it is probably found in every congregation.<sup>6</sup> The only difference may be that members of some faith groups remain in abusive relationships longer because of issues of shame and secrecy.

A Canadian study determined that 83.2% of Canadian pastors have been called to intervene, during their ministry, in a situation involving a woman who has experienced abuse and a man who has used abusive behavior. Seventy percent of Canadian clergy have counseled a man who has used abusive behavior.<sup>7</sup>

Family violence is “an affront to human dignity. It denies the integrity and value of the person who is harmed.... Violence is in total contradiction to the Christian message of love and respect for one another.”<sup>8</sup> It is therefore incumbent upon faith communities to address, openly and directly, the issue of domestic violence.

## **3. Pastoral Leadership**

The position taken by the faith leader towards family violence is pivotal not only for those individuals directly affected, but for the congregation as well. If a minister is dismissive of disclosures of abuse, or attempts to deal with the situation solely within a context of prayer and submission, an important avenue for victim safety is blocked. Disclosing abuse is a significant decision taken by a victim of domestic violence. She likely has come to this decision after careful thought and at considerable risk to herself. If her statement is not validated and her safety – and that of her children – is not addressed as the *primary* concern, she will experience further isolation and continued abuse. It may be a long time before she reaches out again for help. Taking a dismissive position also gives a message of validation to the individual who has chosen to act abusively towards his partner.

If the faith leader responds by validating and supporting the victim - recognizing the need for specialized intervention for all family members and working collaboratively with family violence serving professionals - opportunities are opened for the abuse to end. Avenues are also created whereby the issue of domestic abuse can be addressed directly within the congregation and preventive action taken to make the church a place of safety, care and respect for all.

Ways in which a faith leader can ensure that family violence is addressed openly and directly within the congregation include:

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<sup>5</sup> Much of the information in sections 2-7 comes from FaithLink Domestic Violence Protocol (Calgary, AB: FaithLink, Revised 2006), 5-16.

<sup>6</sup> Grant L. Martin *Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife: How Christians Confront Family Violence* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997): 69, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Gary Collins, in Grant L. Martin, 14.

- Speaking out and condemning the abuse.
- Ensuring that information on domestic violence and abuse is available to members.
- Consulting with Child Welfare about children who have witnessed violence and who are at risk of abuse.
- Supporting the person who has experienced abuse by contacting domestic violence resources to assist in assessing risk, and in developing a plan for the safety of the family.
- Supporting the person who uses abusive behavior to seek domestic violence treatment.
- Assisting in the development of a plan to address the spiritual needs of the family.
- Clarifying the role of the congregation in ensuring safety.
- Organizing staff training on domestic abuse.

This is not to say that addressing family violence is easy. The pastor's role in responding to situations of domestic abuse is perhaps more difficult than other service providers because he/she is called upon to: uphold the values and beliefs of community of faith; respond in practical and supportive ways to the victim; and provide spiritual direction to both the person who has been abused and the one using abusive behaviour. However, because the faith leader is, in many situations, the first person a victim will contact for help, he/she can have an important and influential role in helping people experiencing abuse.

#### **4. Pastoral Care Considerations**

##### **The Priority of Safety**

When dealing with domestic abuse, the safety of the victim and her children must be the **primary** priority. Violence within an intimate relationship **always** has the potential to become lethal. In Canada, spousal homicides accounted for 18% of all homicides for the period 1978-97; three times more wives than husbands were killed by their spouses (1485 women and 442 men). For this same period, in Alberta, 165 wives and 67 husbands were the victim of spousal homicides.<sup>9</sup> A victim is in greatest danger immediately after having left the relationship.

A faith leader may struggle with how to uphold the sanctity of marriage while, at the same time, addressing domestic violence by ensuring victim safety. There may be apprehension that if secular community resources are accessed, the victim will be counselled to leave the relationship.

It is within the marriage relationship that the values of individual dignity, the security of person and mutual respect should be paramount. When abusive behaviour by one partner is used against the other, these values are disavowed. Rather than being respected, the victimized partner is violated, denigrated and devalued. Under these circumstances one could question whether her marriage is indeed sanctified.

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, 1999.

By addressing violence within the relationship openly and directly, the faith leader is, in fact, upholding the sanctity of the marriage relationship. By taking actions against continued victimization and oppression, he/she is speaking for a relationship that honours individual worth, security and mutual respect.

### **Avoiding Couple Counselling**

It is common for a couple that is experiencing abuse, particularly the abusive partner, to request couple counselling. In making the request, the couple may be sincerely asking for help to make their relationship healthier. However, couple counselling is **never** advisable when violence is present. The partner who has used abusive behaviour may be requesting couples' counselling for different reasons: as a way of stopping his partner from leaving; of controlling what she discloses to the pastor/counsellor, of saving face within the congregation. The reality is that unless the abuse is named, the victim is safe and the abusing partner has taken responsibility for his behaviour, the violence will continue. Couple counselling is only advised when the violence has completely stopped, both partners have received specialized counseling and the partner who has used abusive behavior is practicing safe and respectful choices. In joint counseling both parties need the freedom to express their concerns honestly and openly. If violence is still occurring in the relationship, the victimized partner cannot appropriately engage in the counseling process without placing herself at increased risk.

### **Avoid 'The Truth' Trap**

Disclosures of abuse may come at unexpected times and from unexpected individuals. Disclosures may include disturbing details – information that may appear 'unbelievable' given the spiritual leader's impressions of and trust in the person who is being named as the perpetrator of the abuse. The 'abusing' person may deny the alleged behaviour. These apparent contradictions may move the faith leader to want to 'determine the truth' of the situation before taking action (before assessing safety and involving appropriate authorities). Although this may seem logical and prudent, the reality is that a pastor cannot determine 'the truth;' attempting to do so is counterproductive on a number of levels.

- If the disclosure is one of abuse against a child, any attempt to do one's own 'investigation' has the potential of placing the victim at increased risk. It also hinders the investigation by Child Welfare and/or the police. In cases of alleged child abuse, the responsibility for determining 'the truth' lies with the courts.
- A disclosure of abuse by a victim is a statement of her own experience – a statement of her reality. It therefore cannot be denied, even if it may seem difficult to 'believe' the actuality of what is described. A faith leader must work with her disclosure and take whatever action is appropriate to ensure her safety as well as to access appropriate community resources.
- Individuals who choose to use abusive behaviours often deny or rationalize these choices. These patterns make it difficult, if not impossible, to determine 'the truth' of any given situation. It is more productive to take a position that encourages the taking of responsibility for being safe and respectful with relationship and of seeking appropriate counselling.

- Attempting to determine ‘the truth’ in domestic violence situations places the pastor in a position of taking sides for one party against the other. The taking of sides automatically alienates one party from the leader’s involvement. If it is the minister’s intention and responsibility to provide spiritual guidance and support to each member of the family, he/she must take as neutral a position as possible in the question of ‘who is to blame.’ Becoming polarized also immobilizes the minister, keeping him/her from helping the congregation deal with the fact that one of its families is experiencing domestic abuse.

### **Learning to Hear the Stories of Those who Have Experienced Violence**<sup>10</sup>

There can be the tendency within Christian faith communities to quickly move a victim toward forgiving the one who has violated her. A victim who needs to speak of her experience may be told she is “unforgiving;” she can be deeply wounded by the response of her faith community to her losses when she struggles to “forgive and move on.” A survivor of violence needs to be able to tell her story in a safe setting in order to process and to heal.<sup>11</sup>

**“To shut out some of our past in the name of forgiveness is to fragment ourselves rather than to bring healing... Telling our stories is not incompatible with forgiveness. In fact, God chose historical narrative as the primary way to reveal himself in the Bible. We can forgive and still tell the story - God does! ...Affirming our story is a vital component of the journey on the road to forgiveness.”<sup>12</sup>**

### **Referral is Not Failure**

The Calgary community is fortunate to have an array of specialized services to address family violence. These include: a specialized Domestic Conflict Unit within the Police Service; emergency (three week residency) and second-stage (six to twelve months residency) shelters for female victims and their children; treatment services for adult victims, child witness and/or victims as well as the individuals who have used abusive behaviours; services to address sexual assault, addictions, mental health and other related issues. There is a coordinated response among the police, justice and treatment services for victims and those charged with domestic violence related offences.

Utilizing these services, and working collaboratively with the professionals involved, allows for an enhanced level of support and counselling for the family members affected. The spiritual leader is freed to provide pastoral care – his/her area of expertise – to family members. Secular professionals can address the physical, emotional and

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<sup>10</sup> Jezierski, Marlene, RN, BA in Nursing, *Creating a Safe Place: Encourage to Change*, eds. Lyla Pagels, RN, Parish Nurse Coordinator and Jayne Kane, Encourage to Hope Ministries. (Minnesota: Anoka County Faith Community Peace Initiative, 2000), 96.

<sup>11</sup> The thoughts in this section are outlined in Myrla Seibold, “When the Wounding Runs Deep: Encouragement for Those on the Road to Forgiveness,” in *Care for the Soul*, eds. Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 294-308.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

psychological effects of the violence, confident that the spiritual needs of clients will be addressed by the minister. A collaborative working relationship also enhances the support provided to those affected by domestic abuse and reduces any conflict some family members may feel in accessing ‘secular’ resources. Referral to, and working with community resources, is an appropriate and helpful course of action – not an admission of failure. In speaking to this point Martin notes, “The basic principle here is: don’t try to deal with family violence by yourself. A team approach is needed, not only for safety reasons, but because violent families have a multitude of needs and will need to draw on many resources to work for change.”<sup>13</sup> Family violence organizations are listed in Section III of this manual.

### **Empowerment of and Patience with the Victim**

Faith leaders may find it frustrating to work with domestic violence situations. Part of this frustration comes from the indecision many victims experience in taking steps to leave the relationship. They may leave, but then return to, the relationship numerous times. There are many reasons for this vacillation. What is important is for the faith leader to exercise patience with her process and to allow any decisions to be hers. Within the abusive relationship she learned to be very cautious and to not make decisions that will increase the likelihood for further violence. If a faith leader takes a directive approach, for example, advising her to leave and arranging for space within a shelter, she may comply but the decision will not be hers. The more the minister can give her information and be supportive of her – whatever choices she makes – the more the victim is empowered and therefore strengthened in her position.

One of the struggles a faith leader will face is deciding what limits need to be placed on the person who has been abusive within the congregation. The victim may feel unsafe to attend services if her partner may also be present. The abusing partner may use activities at the congregation as a means of having contact with her. This contact – even indirect – may be used to exert control or to intimidate.

The first consideration of the faith leader is the safety of the victim and her children. Therefore, any restrictions imposed will be applied to the abusing partner. These restrictions may include requests to attend alternate services (if the congregation offers more than one worship service), or to attend another congregation. If there are legal sanctions that prohibit contact with the victim and/or the children, it may be necessary to request that he not attend any public services and/or activities offered by the congregation. While imposing constraints on the attendance of public services and/or activities, the faith leader can offer support and counsel on a private basis. This would allow the individual to meet with the faith leader during the week ensuring no contact with the victim occurs.

The lifting of constraints should be done with the consent of the victim and only with clear evidence that the individual has taken responsibility for his actions and has sought specialized counselling. The victim is the best person to speak to her own safety, and that of her children. If the couple are living together, she knows whether the abuse has stopped or only taken a different, more subtle form. Even if the couple are separated

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<sup>13</sup> Martin, 71.

and there have been no further incidences of abusive behaviour, the victim may continue to fear for her safety until her healing process is complete.

### **Spiritual Issues**

Abuse victims that are also members of a faith community are frequently confused about how to interpret their experience within the context of their beliefs. It is not unusual for abusing partners to use scripture to justify their abusive choices. It is therefore important for the victim to know that her faith leader and community do not condone the violence she has experienced. Ask:

- How has the abuse you have suffered affected your relationship with God? With the church?
- Have you found some helpful Bible passages to read during this painful time? (Offer a listing of Scripture passages that support respectful marital relationships, condemn violence, and focus on healing.)
- Do you feel supported by your faith community during this period of crisis?
- Have you been able to talk with God about the abuse you are experiencing? Can I pray with you?

## **5. A Theology of Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a fundamental belief of the Christian faith. Christians who experience abuse within an intimate relationship often struggle with the expectation to forgive the person who has been abusive towards them. Those who choose to act abusively often, during times of remorse following a violent incident, seek the forgiveness of the person they have harmed. Thus it is important for both the victim and the abusing partner to understand what forgiveness is – and is not. It is also important for faith leaders and others working with victims to place the act of forgiving within the context of the healing process.

Forgiveness is **not**:

- Forgetting: The experience of being victimized is traumatic and will be remembered.
- Reconciliation: Forgiving does not imply, or require, that the victim re-establish the relationship with the person who has been abusive towards her.
- Condoning: Forgiveness does not accept the abusive behavior as being justified. The granting of forgiveness should not be used by the offender as a rationalization to avoid taking responsibility for his actions.
- Dismissing: Forgiveness does not lessen the seriousness of the abusive acts. Abuse within the context of a family setting is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- Pardoning: Forgiveness does not remove consequences from the person who has been abusive.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For further information about what forgiveness is and is not, see R.D. Enright, E.A. Gassin, and C. Wu, "Forgiveness: a Developmental View," *Journal of Moral Education*. Vol. 21 No. 2, (1991): 99-114.

Forgiveness **is** a personal transaction that releases the victim from the offence.

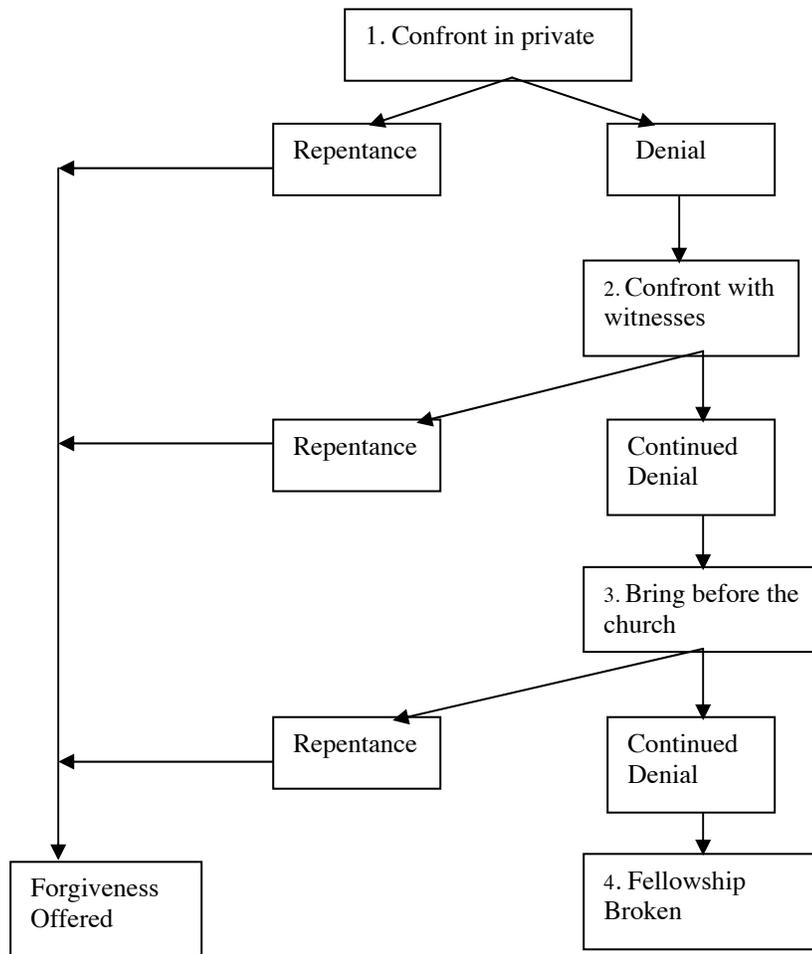
The decision to forgive is most appropriately taken near the end of the healing process. The timing of the healing process and the readiness to forgive is for the victim to decide. To require that she forgive before she is ready hinders the process of healing and therefore her ability to truly be released from the offence. The process of forgiveness includes the following steps:

- Acknowledging the feelings related to the victimization (such as hurt, anger, and shame) and committing to address these honestly and directly.
- Identifying the specific acts of victimization. The focus is on the offending behaviour, not the person using the abusive behaviour.
- Deciding to not seek revenge or nurse the hurt; deciding, instead, to work towards forgiveness. Consciously making this decision – even when she may not be ready to actually forgive - is critical to the process of forgiveness.
- Formulating a rationale for forgiving. (For example, “By forgiving I can experience inner healing and move on with my life.”)
- Thinking differently about the person who used abusive behaviour. This is not to condone the behaviour, nor is it to refuse to hold him accountable for his choices. It is seeing him as a person of worth, separate from his behaviour.
- Accepting the pain suffered. The harbouring of anger and resentment hinders continued healing. Accepting the pain is to decide to take control and move on with life.
- Choosing to extend goodwill to the person who was abusive. Again, this does not imply an acceptance of the behaviour. Rather, it focuses on the worth of the person and represents a desire for him to make choices that will enhance his well being.
- Thinking about how it feels to move beyond a victimized position to a position of being in full control of one’s life.
- Realizing the paradox of forgiveness: one lets go of the feelings which come from being victimized and experiences release from the abuse suffered.

Matthew 18 identifies a **four step model for forgiveness**. It needs to be applied carefully in family violence situations. **Requiring a victim to follow these steps in literal form could place her in further danger of abuse and hinder her healing process.** The steps may be more appropriately applied by faith leaders vis a vis the *relationship between the person who has been abusive and the congregation.*<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This model, on pp. 10 and 11, was developed by Dr. Irene Sevcik and is included in the FaithLink Domestic Violence Protocol. See I. Sevcik, *Domestic Violence Protocol: For Faith Communities*, Revised Edition (Calgary: FaithLink, 2006), 12.

*Matthew 18 Model of Forgiveness*

**1. Confront in private:** It is unsafe for the victim to confront the person who has been abusive towards her by herself. To do so places her in danger of further physical and/or emotional abuse. If she wishes to take this step, it should only be done in the company of another person and come well into her healing process. The expectation should not be that, with forgiveness, comes reconciliation of the relationship. A faith leader may wish to confront the abusive person in private, if this can be done without endangering the victim partner.

**2. Statements of repentance** should be accompanied by concrete actions and behavior change. Care should be taken that the remorse expressed is not part of the cycle of violence. Real change requires the abuser acknowledging the wrongfulness of his behavior and taking responsible actions to ensure that he can be safe and respectful within relationship. To do so requires a period of counselling with a professional therapist who has expertise in the domestic violence field.

**3. Confront with witnesses:** If there is no repentance at the time of the first meeting, the faith leader may choose to confront the abusing person in the company of two or three witnesses. *The goal here would be for some form of resolution of the breach of*

*trust between the congregation and the person who has been abusive. Under no circumstances should the victim be asked to be a part of this step.* She should not be placed in a position of again confronting his behavior unless there is reason to believe there has been genuine change and that she can have some re-assurance that she will be safe and respected. Again, repentance should be accompanied by concrete evidence that safe and respectful choices are being made by the person who has been abusive.

**4. Bring before the church:** This is a step for the congregation to take under the direction of its leaders and can assist in bringing closure to the situation. In taking this step the leaders should be very clear about what is required, and what granting forgiveness is and is not. If the person continues to deny his abusive actions or refuses to take responsibility for making non-violent choices, the congregation can take the decision to ask the person to leave the fellowship.

**NOTE: The Matthew 18 principle is never to be utilized in place of legal intervention. In situations of child abuse, the offense MUST be dealt with by Child Welfare. A spiritual leader who does not refer a situation of child abuse can be charged with clergy negligence.<sup>16</sup>**

## 6. Providing Care to Family Members

“Walking alongside each other may be the most effective ministry we can provide anyone – in the name of Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

Domestic violence is a difficult situation to address, not only for the church community, but for social agencies and our community as a whole. There are many facets that need to be considered and a range of services to be provided. It also has long-term implications for all affected. The community of faith has an important and vital role to play when violence touches families within its midst. The following are suggested ways in which the faith community can be responsive:

- **Support:** Isolation is one of the characteristics of families affected by violence. The abusing partner may deliberately hinder the victim from involvement with

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<sup>16</sup> In a court decision in Ontario in 2003, a church was held responsible for not engaging the law in a situation of child abuse within his congregation. Matthew 18:15-18 has sometimes been interpreted that Christians should not involve the legal system in their disputes. Where the safety of a child is concerned, the law will overrule a religious body’s right to interpret their sacred texts. This “ruling is important for all clergy or individuals involved in pastoral counselling, as it establishes a precedent for liability being imposed against churches, clergy and pastoral counsellors in situations where they provide negligent counselling or advice.” See Mervyn F. White and Suzanne E. White in “Recent Decision Casts Doubt on Use of Matthew 18: 15-18 to Address Church Disputes,” ed. Terence S. Carter. Church Law Bulletin No. 3, April 27, 2004. Accessed at <http://www.carters.ca/pub/bulletin/church/2004/chchlb03.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> John Toews, with Eleanor Loewen. *No Longer Alone: Mental Health and the Church* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1995), 134.

friends, family and social events. The victim may feel that the congregation would not be accepting if it were aware of the abuse and so limits her involvement. If she is being physically abused, she may withdraw when she is bruised or injured. Children also learn to 'keep the secret' of their family. The individual who has acted abusively may feel ashamed of his actions.

Once a disclosure is made, the congregation is in a position to offer support and acceptance to each member of the family. The victim may be in need of practical assistance, may need to talk about the abuse experience, and will want to 'make sense' of her experience within the context of her faith. Although the behavioural choices made by the abusing partner are not condoned, his worth as a person can be affirmed. He can be encouraged to seek specialized assistance in making better choices. If his partner chooses to leave the relationship, he may become depressed or frantic in his efforts to avert the ending of his marriage. He needs strong support to accept the consequences of his actions. Children need to know that their friends do not hold them to blame for the actions of their parents. They need support in continuing to 'love' the abusing parent even though they 'hate' his abusive actions. Continued involvement in the activities of the church can provide stability and sanctuary at a time when their family life may be very disruptive.

- **Understanding:** It is easy to become impatient with a victim who seeks help but, seemingly, takes no steps to act on the advice or to access resources available to her. She may leave the relationship, only to return later. It is important for the congregation to not 'give up' on her and her situation. Women who experience family violence will often state that they do not want the relationship to end – they want the violence to stop. Abusive relationships are not always all negative. There are times when they are very good, and the victim holds on to the hope that the abuse will eventually end.

Understanding some of the dynamics about domestic violence allows the faith leader and/or congregational members to take a 'longer-term' view. It is critical for the victim to know that support is available, whenever she chooses to access it. She will choose the time that is right for her.

It is also important for those who become the supports for family members to be supported themselves. The congregation may want to consider establishing a family violence response team.<sup>18</sup> This would allow some to be primary supports to the victim, some to the partner who has acted abusively and others to support the 'caregivers.' A response team can also carry the responsibility of making decisions about the level of involvement the abusing person should have within the congregation. Having the response team make a decision, for example, removes an individual from a position of authority, thus freeing the faith leader to continue to act as a spiritual guide to the person.

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<sup>18</sup> FaithLink can assist congregations in developing a protocol for handling disclosures of domestic violence that are compatible with their own denominational policies/procedures.

- **Prayer:** Prayer is a vital part of helping a victim to reconcile her experience with her faith. She may feel that, because God did not answer her prayers for the abuse to end, that she is abandoned by God. If she separates from her partner, she may feel disobedient to God and therefore unworthy of His forgiveness. Praying with and for her helps her to again feel the presence of God in her life.

As the individual who has acted abusively begins to acknowledge responsibility for his choices and actions, he may be overcome with guilt and a sense of being separated from God. The development of empathy for the person he has harmed is a positive step towards making safe behavior choices. Prayer can be an avenue through which he can seek personal forgiveness from God.

- **Growth:** It is not unusual for those who have experienced very difficult circumstances to identify a new perspective to life as a result. Recovering from the trauma of being victimized within one's family can provide opportunity for psychological and spiritual growth. The person who has acted abusively may have used Scripture to justify his actions. He will need guidance to broaden his perspective of the marital relationship and the worthiness of the individual.

## **7. Personal Safety and Self Care**

While recognizing the potential for healing and support a faith community holds for those affected by domestic violence, the decision to respond should be taken with awareness for personal safety and the supports in place to ensure appropriate self-care for the faith leader and those lay leaders who may become involved in handling the impacts upon the congregation.

- **Personal Safety:** Given the volatility of domestic violence situations, a faith leader is well advised to be careful for his/her own safety. Police services consider domestic disputes to be some of the most dangerous situations they have to confront. Thus it is prudent for a faith leader to take precautions to minimize personal risk: interview family members in neutral, safe settings; when possible work in pairs – preferably a male and female leader – or have someone else close at hand; avoid intervening directly in violent episodes (call the police).
- **Self-Care:** Working with victims of abuse requires listening to the recounting of the violence experienced. Part of the healing process is the telling – and re-telling – of the experience. A victim needs someone with whom she can 'process' her emotional pain. Likewise, the person who has acted abusively, if he acknowledges his behavior and its effects, will want opportunity to process his feelings. This may include processing personal experiences of victimization. Both partners will seek to understand the abusive incidents and the dynamics of their relationship within the context of their faith.

The faith leader will want to be available to the family members, but in doing so needs to recognize the impact upon their own psychological health. *Vicarious victimization* occurs when a listener enters into the healing process with those who have been victimized. Just as the direct victims need opportunity to tell

someone of their experiences, so too the listener needs opportunity to process the impact he/she feels through the extension of empathy.

Dealing with the immediacy of a crisis situation is demanding, but resolution to the issues faced by family members in the aftermath may not be easily or quickly resolved. Issues of custody and safe visitation for the children, housing, court appearances, as well as financial concerns may arise. Additionally, there may need to be difficult decisions made within the congregation, with resultant impacts upon the life of the congregation that will need to be managed. A significant time commitment can be required in addition to an enormous output of physical and emotional energy.

Those most directly involved in assisting the family and managing the impacts upon the congregation requires support and the opportunity to debrief. Each person involved will have been impacted by the abuse itself, by the struggles of making decisions, and by carrying what could be a considerable emotional burden for an extended period of time.

To ensure that faith leaders and congregational leaders who are called upon to assist the family and the congregation it is recommended that two levels of support be put in place:

- Administrative support and guidance from *denominational* personnel ensures faith leaders and lay leaders feel they are making decisions within the context of *denominational policy* and that they have the support of the larger church body behind them.
- A resource person, from outside the congregation, who can assist individuals and the leadership group debrief their feelings and experiences in working with the family and resultant impacts upon the congregation. This person could be from another congregation in the city, someone from *denominational administration*, or a local professional. Their role is to listen and provide objective feedback and spiritual guidance. Because they are integral to the healing process they need to be readily available. They should be chosen on the basis of their counselling skills, their ability to maintain confidentiality (within the limits of the law), and their understanding of family violence.

## **8. What Can our Congregation Do to Help Prevent Violence?**

1. **Learn about domestic violence.**
  - Invite a person working with domestic violence issues to address the various organizations in your congregation. Call **FaithLink** at (403) 283-3013.
  - Borrow books, materials, and videos on domestic violence from the **Alliance to End Violence** at (403) 283-3013.
  - Purchase denominational materials about domestic violence for use in Bible Studies, youth groups, and Sunday School classes.
  - Learn about community services for victims of abuse from **FaithLink and Alliance to End Violence**. Obtain copies of the Domestic Violence Resource Inventory available through the **AEV**.
  - Obtain copies of the Domestic Violence Protocol from **FaithLink** ((403) 283-3013). A protocol contains practical information for faith leaders when addressing family violence.
  
2. **Let people know the congregation is concerned about abuse in families and would like to help.**
  - Display brochures and other information about domestic violence, such as this manual, in your church foyer; have brochures or *24 Hour Help for Everyone* cards in your washrooms.
  - Break the silence. Talk about domestic violence – in all its forms - from the pulpit. State publicly that violence in the family is unacceptable. Use the reference materials in **Hope and Healing: Domestic Violence Resources for the Church** to assist you in preparing your service.
  - Educate the congregation. Set up programming that will educate as well as begin to prevent abuse within your church community.
  - Encourage the youth groups to use the activities included in this manual.
  - Offer programs and workshops on the topic of family violence, teen-dating violence, elder abuse and establishing healthy relationships. FaithLink will provide workshops to groups or to the congregation as a whole.
  - Include healing prayers for inner wounds resulting from domestic violence in workshop and prayer groups.
  
3. **Create an atmosphere of openness and support for people who experience abuse.**
  - Be alert for signs of abuse among congregational members of all ages.
  - When a person discloses abuse, *believe them!*
  - If you suspect abuse, ask direct questions, “Is someone at home hurting you?” Assure them, no matter what their age (child, adult, senior) that the abuse is not their fault.

- If you are working with an abuser, say, “I believe you don’t want to hurt your family, you have to get help.” Don’t excuse their behavior.
  - Use a part of the marriage preparation as a time to educate couples, checking how they can handle disagreements and problem solving.
  - Have a written action plan in place to follow if an abused person or a batterer asks for help.
4. **Encourage members to become involved in community services that assist families in abusive situations.**
- Sponsor an event for the Turn off the Violence Week. In Calgary this is the first week of November every year.
  - Encourage members of your congregation to knit worry dolls or Strong Women Dance hats, or to make dream pillows or duffel bags for the local shelters. (Patterns are included in this manual.)
  - Support seniors’ organizations and the Kerby Centre by volunteering or gathering donations.
5. **As a community, model empathy and respect for all people, especially vulnerable groups.**
- Treat all members of the congregation with respect and care.
  - Speak out against the belittling or disrespect of any group of people.
  - Work on reducing the isolation of seniors in your congregation by visiting and providing support.
6. **Take practical steps to ensure that the people in your congregation are safe when in church.**<sup>19</sup>
- Make a police check mandatory for church volunteers who work with vulnerable people groups – children, youth and the elderly – to make sure that they have not been criminally convicted of violence.
  - Obtain training for Sunday School and youth workers on child abuse reporting requirements and child welfare practices.
  - Develop policies for responding to misconduct or abuse by spiritual leaders to ensure safety of congregants; know when to refer incidences of clergy abuse to the police.

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<sup>19</sup> The following three points are adapted from *Toolkit to End Violence Against Women*. National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women. Accessed at <http://toolkit.ncjrs.org/default.htm>.

## B. Pastoral Helps on the Issue of Violence

### *1. An Adaptation of* “Christian Myths About Sexual and Domestic Abuse”

By Mary Potter Engel, PhD <sup>20</sup>

- a. **Myth: Sexual and domestic abuse does not occur in nice Christian families.**  
**Reality:** Statistics show that sexual and domestic abuse occurs as frequently in religious households as in non-religious households.
- b. **Myth: Sexual and domestic abuse occurs in “those other” denominations, not in Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, (etc.) faiths.**  
**Reality:** All Christian denominations are affected by sexual and domestic abuse. To deny this is to try to find yet one more way to avoid the injustice and shift the responsibility.
- c. **Myth: Theology is irrelevant to sexual and domestic abuse.**  
**Reality:** A theology that is more hierarchical and patriarchal than egalitarian is one, among many other factors, that can increase the likelihood of the abuse of women and children.
- d. **Myth: The power of God alone will change the situation.**  
**Reality:** By “turning it all over to God,” the individual avoids the help that God sends to us through the hands and hearts of other human beings, whether they be social workers, ministers, friends, other family members or counsellors. In other words, it is a fallacy to assume that God works WITHOUT any effort on the part of human beings. We are created to be responsible selves, and thus we are human beings. We are created to be responsible selves, and thus we are obligated to use the gifts for healing that God places before us in this life. (And for the person who has acted abusively, accepting responsibility is the first step towards changing their behaviour patterns.)
- e. **Myth: Accepting Jesus as his or her personal Savior will solve the problems of the abuser.**  
**Reality:** Domestic and sexual abuse are rarely one time events. Often they are patterns of behaviour that are very difficult to overcome. A sudden conversion experience will not cure a person of deeply ingrained patterns immediately. Therefore, it is necessary to make use of whatever legal, psychological and pastoral aids and services which are available, to assist the person who has acted abusively in his or her recovery toward wholeness.

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<sup>20</sup> Adapted from Mary Potter Engel, cited in Jezierski, 90-92.

**f. Myth: Redemption only comes through suffering.**

**Reality:** Personal suffering can be an occasion for our own growth, but it is never the cause of growth. In other words, suffering is not necessarily redemptive. It embitters some persons rather than urging them towards growth. We can be redeemed in our suffering but we are never redeemed because of our suffering. God does not require any one or any groups of persons to pay a demanding price in order to purchase redemption. God grants wholeness and healing as free gifts of peace.

For women in the church, the revolutionary theology of the cross of Christ, a witness to His active choice to take a stand against the injustice in the world, has been distorted into a reactionary theology of suffering, a justification for the passive and unprotesting acceptance of their own unjust victimization.

**g. Myth: God teaches us, trains us, through suffering, therefore it is to be accepted as a gift.**

**Reality:** The belief that God has a divine plan, purpose or reason for the ills that one must suffer during his or her own life may bring comfort to some victims by giving them a sense of control of their reality. (If they cannot control what happens to them, they can at least control the interpretation of it.) In other words, this theological belief may be part of the survival mechanism of the victim and should be dealt with sensitively and gently. The aim, however, would be to lead victims and survivors to see that there are acts of violence that have systemic roots, (i.e. caused by an unjust system in society), which impinge upon their individual lives in a random way (i.e. the acts are irrational and they are not personally singled out for some divine purpose).

**h. Myth: Suffering is a punishment for past sins.**

**Reality:** Many women feel that they are beaten or sexually assaulted or otherwise abused as a punishment for previous sin (usually previous sexual activity). They need to know that they are not being punished for previous choices. They also need to know that they do not deserve the treatment they are receiving; that they are the unwitting and involuntary victims of an unjust system. It is the person who has chosen to act violently, because of his abuse of force or authority, who carries the full responsibility for his actions.

**i. Myth: Suffering is a divine vocation.**

**Reality:** Women will occasionally argue that it is their “mission” or vocation to redeem their husbands by their example of patient forbearance. While each one of us is given a divine vocation, no one of us is called to save another human being. That is as presumptuous as it is impossible. It is the work of God to redeem.

**j. Myth: Suffering gives victims a “moral edge” or moral superiority.**

**Reality:** This is a romantic view of suffering that treats victims of abuse as one-dimensional creatures, as victims alone, rather than seeing them as the incredibly strong and resilient survivors that they often are. Our own need to romanticize

suffering can blind us to the great strength and dignity that are present in the lives of survivors, as well as to the full horror of the harm that has been done to them.

**k. Myth: The suffering of women and children is random.**

**Reality:** In his popular book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* Rabbi Kushner presents suffering as a random event. While this view is helpful to counter the suffering as punishment and to help us understand the suffering we experience with terminal diseases and other “natural” physical ills, it is not helpful for the victims of sexual and domestic abuse. The suffering in our society of women, children, and elders, like that of the Jews and people of colour, is not totally random. Rather, it is a consequence of an unjust, exploitive social system that dehumanizes women. (Within an individual relationship, the person who acts abusively is making a deliberate choice within that particular relationship. He is often not abusive in other relationships, which demonstrates that he can, in fact, “control” his actions; they are not “random”.)

**l. Myth: The suffering of individual women is a result of choices they have made.**

**Reality:** While the suffering of women as a group is not random, the suffering of a particular woman is. What this means is that there may be no final explanation for this woman specifically, as to why a certain abuse happened to her and not to her sister or friend. In other words, we must be extremely careful not to blame her for the suffering she experiences individually, when exploitation of vulnerable persons is a *societal* problem.

Within an individual relationship, the exploitation of a particular woman is due to the choices of the one who has acted abusively towards her.

## **2. Suggestions for Religious Professionals When Ministering to One Who Has Been Sexually Assaulted by an Acquaintance**<sup>21</sup>

- a. Believe the survivor.
- b. Help her to understand it was not her fault.
- c. Do not minimize the trauma and name it as sexual assault.
- d. Be *with* the survivor. Hear her story.
- e. Be careful about using Scripture verses that tell a survivor how she should feel or that may be seen as platitudes. “God loves you” may be hard for the survivor to believe after the assault; it may also be interpreted simply as something religious to say when the clergy person doesn’t know what to do or say.
- f. Know the limits of your professional capabilities. Refer to secular professionals.
- g. If possible, work in collaboration with the secular professionals. Continue to offer spiritual care when the survivor is receiving professional help in the community.
- h. Do not judge the survivor.

One woman said, “Even if I had been angry with God, listen. Hold on to the hope that the survivor can change, but let her be right where she is. Whatever space I am in at the moment, be there with me and don’t be afraid to be there with me...”<sup>22</sup>

- i. For some women, it is very important that the spiritual leader they confide in is female.
- j. Be very careful about touching the individual who has been assaulted. One woman indicated that her spiritual leader had said, “When you don’t know what to do, hug the person in need.” Her response to this was a strong “no!” A year after the assault, she did not want to be touched by most people.

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<sup>21</sup> The following is an adaptation of advice given to Kristen J. Leslie from sexual assault victims who have sought pastoral care from spiritual leaders. See Kristen J. Leslie, *When Violence is No Stranger: Pastoral Counselling with Survivors of Acquaintance Rape* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 56-98.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 74.

### **3. An Understanding of Personal Boundaries**

#### **a. Introduction**

At any age or stage in life, the exercise of personal boundaries is a must for personal health and positive relationships. The following information deals with the topic of boundaries, defines what boundaries are, gives a scriptural rationale for personal boundaries, and distinguishes between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

#### **b. Definition**

Cloud and Townsend state:

“Boundaries define us. They define *what is me* and *what is not me*. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership.”<sup>23</sup> Boundaries provide physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and social safety by keeping within one’s life that which is beneficial, and keeping out that which is not.

#### **c. Types of Boundaries**

1. Physical – A person’s skin is a basic physical boundary. Other people may not touch him/her without consent. Certain places are off limits.
2. Emotional - Boundaries of the heart. Taking responsibility for one’s own emotions; NOT taking responsibility for someone else’s. Emotional boundaries involve “guarding one’s heart” (Proverbs 4:23).
3. Spiritual – With adequate spiritual boundaries, one nurtures that which is beneficial and keeps out that which is not. Taking ownership of one’s own spiritual life, not allowing others to control beliefs, practices, etc.
4. Psychological – Boundaries of the mind. Biblically, thinking on that which is true, honorable, noble... (Philippians 4: 8). From the framework of psychology, this is doing cognitive work; thinking rationally.
5. Social – keeping company with those one chooses. People who cannot say “no” to social engagements they do not wish to be a part of struggle with social boundaries.

#### **d. Helping Children to Set Boundaries**

- i. Three Phases of Child Development<sup>24</sup>
  - a. Hatching (0-4 months)  
Child doesn’t “need” mom so much. Begins to learn that “mom is not me; I am not mom.” A very important stage as the process of “individuation” has begun.

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<sup>23</sup> Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 29.

<sup>24</sup> Much of the information for this section comes from Cloud and Townsend, 61-82.

- b. Practicing (5 months- approx. 18 months)  
A child feels omnipotent. Parents need to allow him/her to be exuberant while setting safety limits. An example of such a limit is what the child is allowed to touch, and what she is not allowed to touch.
- c. Rapprochement (18 months – 3 years of age)  
The child realizes that she cannot do everything. She comes back to mom, but with a sense of self.

These three stages pop up again in adolescence, as well as when the teen leaves home and enters adulthood. This process of separation and individuation, in the context of parental unconditional love, is the construction of a soul.

#### ii. How Children Set Boundaries

- a. They establish ownership – “MINE!”
- b. They express their wishes: “NO!” is an important boundary-setting word!

#### iii. How Parents Help Them Set Boundaries (and Gain a Sense of Themselves)

- a. Helping the child feel safe enough to say “no”.
- c. Helping the child respect other’s boundaries (respecting others’ “no”).

Children do all of this learning in the context of being bonded securely to their parents. Parental limits are crucial as children work through this; so is unconditional love. If kids feel love is being withdrawn, they’ll learn to hide – either behaviors or parts of their souls.

**“You can’t have “me” until you first have a “not-me”.... You must first determine who you *aren’t* before you discover the true, authentic aspects of your God-given identity.” <sup>25</sup>**

#### e. Boundary Setting in Adulthood

Adults who have not learned to set healthy boundaries tend to have trouble saying “no.” As a result, they may feel like their lives are “out of control”; they also may struggle with knowing who they are. They often feel exploited; they are at great risk of experiencing abuse within their relationships.

Learning to set boundaries in adulthood, as in childhood, is a process. It involves challenging familiar ways of thinking and behaving in order to establish new patterns.

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<sup>25</sup> Cloud and Townsend, 66.

Like a child learning to understand who she is by the limits she sets, an adult will come to a greater sense of self through saying “no,” exploring areas of personal interest, making choices.

Carol Henry recommends that adults learning to know themselves practice the following:

- Positive mental assertions (challenging negative self-talk).
- Engaging in satisfying activities in which success can be experienced.
- Being with affirming and supportive people.<sup>26</sup>

Cloud and Townsend recommend practicing newly formed boundary skills – saying “no” and taking ownership - in a safe environment, in situations where the limits set will be respected. With practice the adult will become more adept at setting boundaries with individuals who are not as inclined to respect them.<sup>27</sup>

**"The purpose of having boundaries is to protect and take care of ourselves. We need to be able to tell other people when they are acting in ways that are not acceptable to us. A first step is starting to know that we have a right to protect and defend ourselves. That we have not only the right, but the duty to take responsibility for how we allow others to treat us."** <sup>28</sup>

#### f. A Theological Perspective on Boundaries

The topic of boundaries is sometime questioned in Christian circles. Did not Jesus say, “Turn the other cheek”? (Matthew 5: 38-42) <sup>29</sup> The Scriptural foundations for personal boundaries can be found in a number of passages, a few of which are listed here.

**Proverbs 4: 23:** “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

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<sup>26</sup> Carol Henry, “Setting Boundaries,” North American Mission Board Website. Accessed on June 28 at <http://www.namb.net/site/c.9qKILUOzEPH/b.695611/k.796/Boundaries.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Cloud and Townsend, 134.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Burney, “Setting Personal Boundaries.” Accessed on June 28 at [http://www.silcom.com/~joy2meu/Personal\\_Boundaries.htm](http://www.silcom.com/~joy2meu/Personal_Boundaries.htm).

<sup>29</sup> This passage has sometimes been interpreted as an injunction against self-defense. To this, David R. Reid advises that the context of this verse is about refusing to take personal vengeance. He notes that Jesus upheld the Jewish Law, which required that justice be brought to bear in circumstances where wrong has been committed. This command is not a “carte blanche” against personal boundaries; rather, it is a caution against personal retaliation. See David R. Reid, “Turning the Other Cheek,” *Devotions for Growing Christians*, V-3, 1977/78. Accessed on June 21, 2006 at <http://www.growingchristians.org/dfgc/cheek.htm>.

Our hearts – who and what we entrust the deepest parts of ourselves to – are to be guarded carefully. A lack of personal boundaries can lead to deep wounding, which in turn will affect our ability to relate to others and to God in a healthy manner.

**Galatians 6: 2, 5:** “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.... Each one should carry his/her own load.”

Cloud and Townsend discuss that in the Greek, “burdens” means “excess burdens” – burdens too heavy for a person to carry alone. “Load” means “cargo” or “the burden of daily toil”. We *are* to come alongside others and help them with their “excess burden;” each of us is expected to carry our own “cargo”.<sup>30</sup>

**Matthew 7: 12:** “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.”

Healthy personal boundaries mean that one respects the boundaries of others, also.

**Mark 12: 31:** “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all you mind and with all your strength.... Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Only with healthy boundaries can one truly love. Having healthy boundaries enables one to love God, him/herself and others, choosing to *give* rather than to be exploited by others.

**“Don’t boundaries turn us from other-centeredness to self-centeredness? The answer is no. *Appropriate boundaries actually increase our ability to care about others.*”<sup>31</sup>**

**Galatians 5: 22:** “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.”

A fruit, a result of the Spirit’s working in an individual’s life, is *self-control*. God does not control individuals; He empowers them to live a life of love. Individuals have freedom of choice and are responsible for their actions.

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<sup>30</sup> Cloud and Townsend, 30, 31.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 103, authors’ emphasis.

### g. Characteristics of Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships <sup>32</sup>

Relationship Factors	Healthy Relationship	Unhealthy Relationship	Abusive Relationship
Sharing feelings	You feel safe and strong enough to share how you really feel with your partner.	You feel awkward or anxious sharing how you feel with your partner.	You are afraid to share how you really feel with your partner because you fear getting put down or threatened.
Communicating	You are respected and listened to even when you and your partner have differing opinions on a topic.	You are ignored and your opinions are not respected when there is a difference of opinion.	You are treated with disrespect and your ideas and feelings are treated with contempt.
Disagreements	You can have disagreements and still talk respectfully to each other. Disagreements get resolved.	Your disagreements often turn into fights.	You are afraid to disagree because you fear your partner's angry or violent response. The disagreement is an excuse for abuse.
Intimacy and Sex	Both parties can be honest concerning their feelings about physical affection and sex. Neither of you feels pressured to do anything unwanted.	You are embarrassed to say how you feel because you think your partner may not listen or care. You "go along" with some things.	Your needs and wants are ignored. You are pushed into situations that are painful, frightening or degrading to you.
Trust	You trust each other and are comfortable with your partner being in the presence of other men or women.	You feel jealous if your partner talks to other women or men. Your partner feels jealous if you talk to other men or women.	Your partner accuses you of flirting all the time and orders you not to talk to another man or woman.
Time Alone	You can each spend time alone and consider this a healthy part of your relationship.	You think there may be something wrong if you want to do some things without your partner. Your partner tries to keep you to himself or herself.	You are not allowed to spend time doing things on your own. Your partner sees this as a challenge or threat to your relationship.
Violence	No intentional harsh words or comments. No physical violence.	Some incidents of emotional abuse. No pattern of physical violence.	Pattern of escalating, ongoing abuse: emotional, physical and/or sexual.

<sup>32</sup> Adapted from "Dating Abuse," 4.

#### **4. Guidelines for Creating a Safe Place in Your Faith Community**<sup>33</sup>

*In this guide and the following handout (**How to Create a Safe Place in Your Faith Community**) you will find a list of activities that your church may want to consider implementing in an effort to address violence and abuse. The activities fall into two primary categories – raising awareness and sensitivity; and educating and training. When planning and programming, there are some basic principles that should be applied:*

- a. Prayerfully consider what would be best for your church. Through prayer you will be asking for God's will, which helps to make personal agendas secondary.
- b. Begin with simple awareness-raising activities, working slowly through to some of the more complex ones.
- c. Think along the lines of short-term planning, i.e., activities to do in one year's time and also do long-range planning, i.e., in the next two to five years.
- d. Plan a variety of activities for different groups. For instance, a child-focussed program can be strengthened by parallel adult education curriculum.
- e. Even though the activities are categorized, this does not mean that the activities may not be pertinent to other groups. For example, an elder group may be interested in providing brochures for victims and for those who have acted abusively. Go for it!
- f. The "other" line on the form was put there to indicate that you may have a unique idea for your church. The activities that are listed are not meant to be limiting, but instead to stimulate and to help create.
- g. If an activity is not well received, do not give up or think that it will never work. Learn what you can from the experience and consider doing it again another time or in a different context. For example, if the youth group did not respond positively to a presentation on the topic of dating violence, try doing it again another year at a confirmation retreat.
- h. Do not expect just one sector of the congregation to carry the burden of implementing this type of programming. Incorporate as many people from various sectors to assist. This will be awareness raising and educational in itself.
- b. Consider partnering with another congregation, especially when taking on a bigger project. This will also help give the community at large a sense that the faith community is concerned.

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<sup>33</sup> Developed by Jane Kane of Encourage to Hope Ministries and cited in Jezierski, 146. For support and training in creating a safe place in your faith community, contact FaithLink at (403) 283-3013.

### How to Create a Safe Place in Your Faith Community <sup>34</sup>

#### For Children

- Education on conflict resolution/healthy attitudes
- Mentoring programs for kids
- Service projects related to others
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### For Youth

- Dating violence education
- Mentoring for teens
- Peer counselling
- Service projects
- Confirmation education on serving in the community
- Education on prostitution
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### For Victims/Survivors of Abuse

- Verbal prayer in worship (without naming individuals)
- Help cards (names and numbers of resources) <sup>35</sup>
- Healing services
- Training for lay people to become advocates
- Provide space for support groups
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### For Those Who Have Acted Abusively

- Resources/phone numbers and brochures
- Verbal prayer in worship (without naming individuals)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### For Pastors

- Formal training on family violence <sup>36</sup>
- Incorporate abuse screening in premarital counselling
- Screen members seeking counselling and refer victims and those who have acted abusively to the appropriate community resources.
- Homilies/sermons <sup>37</sup>
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>34</sup> Kane, as cited in Jezierski, 150.

<sup>35</sup> Contact FaithLink at (403) 283-3013 for copies of the “24 Hour Help for Everyone” cards.

<sup>36</sup> For training of clergy or lay people in dealing with family violence, call FaithLink at (403) 283-3013. FaithLink will provide presentations and resources on a variety of issues relating to domestic violence to different groups within congregations. Presentations and materials are age-appropriate and theologically sensitive.

<sup>37</sup> FaithLink recommends that the subject of domestic violence be addressed from the pulpit once a year. For examples of domestic violence sermons, see “Sample Sermons” in Section III 5 of this manual.

**For the Congregation**

- Verbal prayer for victims and those who have acted abusively (without identifying specific individuals)

Adult education / forums on:

- Family violence in general
- Child abuse
- Dating violence
- Prostitution
- Speakers from local resources
- Bible study on the use/misuse of Scripture and violence
- Elder Abuse
- Effects of violence upon children
- Sexual violence
- Lay workers training on family violence
- Special offerings and fundraisers for related agencies/resources

**Media Events**

- Brochures
- Books
- Posters/banners
- Displays
- Artwork
- Videos
- Bulletin articles
- Advertising the church as a "Safe Place"
- Partnering with other churches
- Provide activities promoting the family
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**For the Elderly**

- Education on elder abuse
- Service projects
- Mentoring children
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**For Leaders, Staff and Health/Wellness/Social Ministry Committees**

- Training on family violence
- Contact legislators about issues/bills supporting families
- Develop congregational policies denouncing violence and supporting families
- Assist with and support any of the activities listed above
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **5. Sermon Themes** <sup>38</sup>

### ***Suffering, Abandonment, Hope***

*These texts demonstrate the range of emotions that survivors of violence may feel. The journey towards healing involves intense pain and intense feelings, including feelings of being abandoned by God. Caring church people can become a source of hope when they provide safe places for pain and a whole range of feelings to be expressed.*

**Biblical Text:** Psalm 22  
Psalm 27  
Romans 8: 31-39

### ***Church's Response to Survivors***

*Sometimes our tendency is to blame the "victim" for the abuse they have suffered. These passages demonstrate that Jesus honours people's pain and suffering. Jesus' healing power is demonstrated by his compassionate non-judgmental response to suffering.*

**Biblical Text:** John 9: 1-7  
John 4: 7-14  
Luke 8: 40-48  
Luke 10: 29-37

### ***Church's Response to Those Who Have Acted Abusively***

*Responding to those who have acted abusively in our midst may be one of the most difficult challenges we face. Our tendency might be to avoid or "shun" offenders. The biblical texts emphasize naming offences as sin, holding offenders accountable for their actions, and challenging them to repent, to turn away from evil.*

**Biblical Text:** Matthew 18: 15-18  
Galatians 6: 1-2

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<sup>38</sup> Excerpts from a compilation by the Faith Committee of COMVAC Community Violence Action Committee of Johnson County, KS, PVS. Quoted in Jezierski, 104.

## 6. Sample Sermons

FaithLink recommends that ministers address the topic of family violence once a year from the pulpit. The sermons found here are merely samples of how some ministers have approached the topic.

*“Bullies and Family Violence”* looks at the various forms bullying takes and its relationship to family violence. Kiely offers suggestions for what can be done to prevent bullying.

*“Domestic Violence Sermon: Be Safe and Well. Peace. Joy. Courage”* takes a broad perspective, educating the congregation about domestic violence, both locally and nationally (American). It also examines the issue from a biblical perspective.

*“Forgiveness – An Act of Grace”* deals with the topic of forgiveness from the author’s experience of having to forgive and needing forgiveness herself.

Additional sample sermons may be found online at:

<http://www.vawnet.org/DomesticViolence/PreventionAndEducation?Approaches/FaithBased.php>.

### ***a. Bullies and Family Violence***

#### **Reverend Brian J. Kiely, Unitarian Church of Edmonton, May 2, 2004**

It used to be that I thought bullies were limited to boys a few years older than me in grade school. They walked with a swagger and threw their weight around in the locker room. They picked on kids who were smaller than them usually causing more humiliation than harm, but not always.

I believed that once I grew up, once I got as big as they were, bullies would bother me no more. And since I grew quickly, even in elementary school, they didn’t bother me for long. I can only remember two or three times. Each was a random act of meanness by a bigger kid I did not know with whom I had never had contact. The events, thankfully, were over quickly and never repeated.

I was lucky.

I never had to experience some of the day-to-day kind of abuse suffered by many children. A young girl, Kaiyla wrote the Canadian website [bullying.org](http://bullying.org), “Every day I go to school I have to worry about people making fun of me.” A girl named Leah replied, “I know how you feel. At the moment I’m getting sort of bullied by people who are supposed to be my best friends. You see I am in a class with two other girls, they make fun of me for everything and try to make me feel small. I really hate them.” That’s the kind of bullying most often experienced by young girls, but no less devastating than a punch or a kick. And violence by girl bullies is on the rise.

I did literally come between a bully and victim in high school. I say 'literally' because in the class we shared, I sat behind the bully and in front of the victim. Joe had a mean streak a mile wide and a tongue that cut like a sabre. In that department, foreign born, mild mannered Tommy just couldn't defend himself. Every day, it seemed I had to stop Joe, some times verbally, sometimes physically. I wasn't being a hero, I was just caught in the cross-fire. A few times in the hallway I had to pull Joe off of Tommy. It wasn't hard. I was bigger than both of them put together. You don't have to be physically large to be a bully. In fact, statistics suggest girls who verbally bully others through exclusion and gossip are usually physically weaker than their victims.

I can't say I was ever Tommy's pal. I didn't much like him. But in the home in which I grew up you just didn't pick on people. It wasn't fair. I would learn later that Joe grew up in a very different home. He fought daily and bitterly with his foster father. I heard stories of violence, but never knew for sure. He found his own apartment when he was 16. An old girlfriend of his said he had been seriously abused. According to [bullying.org](http://bullying.org) "Bullies often come from homes that are neglectful and hostile and use harsh punishment. Bullying may be learned by observing high levels of conflict between parents." In other words, bullying is frequently an outward expression and sign of family violence in the home.

There is an element of low self-esteem in bullies. In fact studies show that "Bullies/victims are the most insecure, the least likeable, and the most unsuccessful in school." (Stephenson and Smith, 1989) That was true of Tommy, the victim. Joe got good grades, but he never had a lot of friends.

I know Joe committed at least one major act of violence. He killed himself in his early 20's. Tommy changed schools at the end of the year. I have not heard of him since. I hope he has found some happiness. He's earned it.

What happens when bullies grow up? Last week I heard a Rocky Mountain House police constable on the radio. It seems that municipality has just adopted a strong anti-bullying by-law that includes penalties for bystanders who egg a bully on. The constable freely admitted to being a bully in his youth and helped create the by-law as a means of redress.

Statistics show that incidents of bullying tend to decrease as children grow older. 26% of grade 1-3 students report incidents. By grade 7-8 this drops in by more than half to 12%. Apparently some bullies learn other ways of getting along and managing their feelings. Some, apparently, just grow up and get married.

This week Provincial Children's Services Minister Iris Evans is holding a series of family violence roundtable discussions and has asked clergy to preach on the topic. In the background material, the ministry links bullying and family violence:

"Power and control imbalances exist in both bullying and violent family relationships. Children who bully and are bullied are sometimes from homes where they have been

exposed to family violence...Family violence is the abuse of power within relationships of family... that endangers the survival, security or well-being of another person. Family violence includes many forms including spousal abuse, parent abuse, seniors' abuse and neglect, child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and witnessing the abuse of others in the family... Family violence is not a mental illness. It is not caused by alcohol or drug abuse, although these substances can contribute to family violence. Family violence is not a loss of control – it is a choice by the abuser to use violence or the threat of violence to gain control over another person.”

It's all about power in the end. Bullies learn, usually in childhood, that aggression is a tool that works for them. Since it keeps working, they keep using it. In fact, studies have shown that when someone intervenes, bullying stops within 10 seconds over half the time. That someone is most often a peer. In other words, when aggression does NOT work, bullying stops.

Bullies have a need to dominate another person in order to feel good about themselves and tend to blame the victims for forcing them to punish them. In the playground, any difference is enough of a reason to provoke a bully who already arrives with poor impulse control and a preference for aggression. In spousal and other adult situations, the bully finds fault with the victim: an appointment missed, a disagreement over something small, a child that cries too much. It's always someone else's fault. Usually that someone is the victim.

The bully is one of those contradictory characters in our society. He—or she—seems so strong, but it's not real strength. The bully acts out of fear and anxiety. Unsure of their place in the world, perhaps told time and again how worthless they are, bullies use whatever power can be mustered to try and prove their worth. And they look for the unequal advantage. Bullies are the masters of the 'pre-emptive strike', the situation where you lash out and attack first.

It's easy to see this in the playground, but it happens in the adult world too. There are people who will sabotage co-worker efforts or who will undermine others with vicious rumors and innuendo, because they see these others as a threat to their position in the workplace. This is bullying. There are bosses who will yell at their underlings knowing that they have the power ultimately to fire them. But they seldom use this power, preferring to control with fear. There are coaches in both boys' and girls' sports who seldom praise their charges but prefer to harp on every little mistake. By criticizing they reassert their power.

Because they have a poor sense of self worth they mask it in a quest for power over others. They fear that they will be unmasked and seen for the worthless people they perceive themselves to be (whether it's true or not.)

Oddly the biggest failing in the bully might not be the abusive behavior. It might be their inability to confront their own fears and inadequacy. Tom Owen Towle, a Unitarian Universalist minister and writer on men's issues has noted,

“As men we have been brought up to suppress and ignore rather than acknowledge and embrace our fears. We expend enormous energy projecting our anxieties onto external foes while we rarely deal with the demons inside our own souls, the ones Jesus called ‘the enemies within our own household.’”

I think Tom’s idea holds true for a large number of women as well. We project our fears outwardly onto those who are less powerful than we are. And if we in fact do fail at something, we often look for a scapegoat.

The growing tide of racism and bigotry in this country is a form of bullying that has grown more intense as some people have felt their jobs and lifestyles threatened. If people are having a hard time finding work, the age old tradition has been to blame the newest immigrants to the land whether they be Swedes or Irish or Italian or more recently Chinese or Indian. Oh, and we can always pick on the First Nations people too. They are very handy in the west.

Or, perhaps we will lash out at anyone different from us, gays and lesbians, women, the poor or the rich. By blaming them we try to put them into a one down position. We mock and disparage and exaggerate and circulate falsehoods about the latest wave of ‘others’ in order to solidify our position as the ‘real’ citizens of this country.

We exploit the weaknesses of anyone who is different and force them ever more tightly into their marginalized communities for self-protection and then wonder why they are not more willing to be like us and honor our ways. And that is no different from the act of the playground bully who shoves the child two years younger than she is.

You have probably noted that I keep saying ‘we’. The fact is there are likely some of us here today who have bullied someone at some time. But more than that, we are part of a society that bullies. We may work to change it, but the fact is we are still active in that society and a good many of us benefit from the imbalance of power. The guilt belongs to us all.

All of this is wrong. As Unitarians we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person and assert the need for justice and compassion in human relations. These principles stand so clearly in contrast to the actions of the bully that we have no choice but to confront and condemn the behavior.

So what do we do?

On a personal level we can look for the signs of victimization in children, relatives and adult friends. I know for years, having never been a victim, I never noticed or even considered that someone else might be.

Physical changes like sleeping trouble, frequent stomach aches, lack of appetite are all possible signs. Bruises, limps and other injuries are also suggestive. Children and adults who delay or avoid going certain places –even home- may well be afraid. Look for a decline in self-esteem a change in habits or unexplained absences.

If you see any of those things, speak with the person involved. Ask them if they need to talk. Don't be afraid to ask questions, even quite direct ones, about potential abuse. Victims tend to cover for the bully either out of shame or fear or both. Don't be afraid to ask a few times, whenever your suspicions are aroused.

Secondly, don't put up with such abuse when you witness it. Most bullies, especially of children, want and need an audience. Don't give them one. If you can't intervene, you can still walk away and hopefully take others with you. When you can, call the bully on their behaviour. Remember it will stop the event over half the time. In the case of an adult, you may have to call police. Their training and sensitivity to domestic violence is improving every year. Don't be afraid to get them involved. You could save someone serious injury or even death.

Finally, work with systems to change the culture of bullying. Schools where the Principal draws a firm line around bullying have significantly lower rates of victimization. But parents, teachers, students and the wider community must be supportive.

Support the ideas of shelters and transition houses, zero tolerance policies for domestic violence in government and police. Give Minister Iris Evans the feedback she seeks. Tell her domestic violence is not acceptable, that we need more support for victims and more education and training for offenders. If you can, support institutions like the Youth Emergency Shelter and transition houses for battered spouses.

Bullying and victimization must be addressed from a systemic perspective, but the system involves and includes people like you and me. We are the ones who must say, "Stop!" and "This is not right." Why? Our UU Principles say we should. And besides, too often the victims can't speak for themselves.

**b. Domestic violence sermon: Be safe and well. Peace. Joy. Courage.  
By Rev. Dr. Sandra Bochonok<sup>39</sup>**

Introduction

Welcome to America the brutal. Our focus today is on domestic violence. Domestic violence against women is shockingly common. Every year millions of women experience battering. Every 10-15 seconds finds a woman in the United States being battered, usually by an intimate boyfriend or husband. Domestic violence is our number one public health problem for women. Spousal crime is the most unreported crime in our country today. Children carry the terrible lessons of violence and neglect with them into adulthood. Domestic violence affects the very young, the middle aged and very old in every social, economic, educational, sexual orientation, cultural, ethnic background, and religious gathering in our country. Domestic violence is a crisis and "every crisis in life is a call to healing."

In this week's local newspaper in the Dear Abby column, she noted that "...male batterers are responsible for the murders of at least four women a day in this country—and when secondary victims of their unbridled rage (children, relatives, neighbors) are added, the numbers probably double." Abby shares this insight with us after consulting with experts in the field: "Batterers rarely accept responsibility for their violent behavior; and because of that, they are not motivated to change. The victims of domestic abuse are the ones most likely to be helped by counseling. They often believe the batterer when told the abuse was their own fault, but with the help of a trained counselor, this untruth can be exposed and the unwarranted guilt can be erased."

The American dream often consists of the family being a haven for security, offering comfort, love and joy. But we live in a world full of broken dreams. Our churches and society face an enormous challenge. Often we have been reluctant and uncomfortable in acknowledging domestic violence. Sometimes we have even promoted domestic violence through well-intentioned religious teachings and societal pressures. But domestic violence is always unacceptable to God.

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**Central truth: God can change lives.**

We have good news in the midst of all this bad news. God can change lives. There is great hope for the battered, the batterer, and their children. "And every crisis in life is a call to healing." Sam Shoemaker, founder of Faith at Work, often said that a "conscious spiritual journey begins with two words, "Help! Help!" If domestic violence is ruining your life or the life of someone you know, ask God for help today.

We can break the terrible cycles of domestic violence in our homes, neighborhoods, churches, counties, cities and country. It is God's will for people to be safe and well in their homes. It is never God's will for people to be terrorized, brutalized and beaten in their homes by the people they love. It is never God's will for us to teach our children to be next generation of batterers and the battered. We should be very concerned for our neighbor's safety.

***Shalom Bayit*—Domestic harmony, peace in the home**

Even the ancient rabbis understood people had a biblical obligation to remove potential dangers from their homes. The first time God spoke to Adam, God noted his loneliness for a companion. Adam needed Shalom, God's peace, which signifies wholeness, completeness, and fulfillment. Peace in the home (*Shalom Bayit*) or domestic harmony was one of the first ideals for the good and welfare of all the home's inhabitants. Peace in the home is actually considered a forerunner to peace on earth. But when peace in the home is impossible due to domestic violence, divorce has always been an option according to Jewish tradition. *Shalom Bayit* is impossible to have in a home ridden with domestic violence.

**What exactly is domestic violence?**

"Domestic violence, spouse abuse, battered women, family violence and domestic disputes all describe the mistreatment of a woman by a man with whom she lives or has lived. It can be considered a pattern of living, in which a member of the household uses violence and emotional abuse to gain control and dominance over the others. Abusive behavior takes many forms and is not limited to physical actions. But there is often a combination of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect." And it must be noted that domestic violence is a problem for people from all sexual orientations.

**Who is affected? The young, middle aged and old, mostly women and children**

An estimated one of every two marriages have experienced at least one episode of violence between spouses. Family violence is everyone's concern. Maltreated people impact the well being of our entire community. Children carry the terrible lessons of violence and neglect with them into adulthood.

### **When religion is a harmful roadblock**

Often there is a religious component, acknowledging the sanctity of marriage above one's personal safety. Some women believe this is God's will for them and their clergy encourage them to stay in dangerous relationships. They have been taught marriage is forever. Even if it is physically dangerous.

Christian teaching about marriage has traditionally focused heavily on Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Corinthians and Colossians. Misinterpretations and misplaced emphasis on these texts have actually led to the horrible idea that wives and children must submit to abuse from husbands and fathers. Rather than be "the Good Book," the Bible is used as a book to justify domestic violence.

Well intentioned, usually conservative male clergy from patriarchal religious institutions often perpetuate domestic violence without realizing it. While serving as a former navy chaplain, I remember listening with horror to three senior male chaplains during a pre-marriage counseling retreat for sailors.

The most senior male chaplain began the pre-marriage training using a story about a female dog, owned by a man who loved her very much. He began abusing her and treating her shamefully. He beat her and left her for dead. Somehow she survived and lovingly, loyally returned to her owner. In remorse, he began treating her more kindly and they were very happy together.

This is dangerous and no way to prepare people for marriage, using the biblical texts from Ephesians, Colossians and Corinthians to justify male dominance and female submission in marriage relationships. When I challenged these dedicated and zealous spiritual leaders on their teachings, these powerful senior male officers in the chaplain corps told me I "had an attitude problem with biblical authority."

### **Equally deadly secular attitudes**

And while serving on a navy ship for two years, a number of my sailors were jailed for beating their wives. Some of my senior male navy officer colleagues would actually encourage me to look the other way when suspecting domestic violence. "Everyone smacks their girlfriends and wives around from time to time, chaplain," they'd say, "It's no big deal." But it is a big deal. Domestic violence is always wrong. It is a crime. It is a sin. It needs to stop. It can lead to murder.

### **October's local newspaper documents domestic violence**

Rarely a week goes by without mention of local domestic violence in our newspapers. Here are just a few examples of what is happening in my local community. The front page of Thursday's paper carried the story of a Kitsap County Sheriff's Deputy in jail without bail pending his first court appearance on a domestic violence felony

allegation. He allegedly grabbed his wife by the throat and pushed her while their two minor children were watching.

This past Friday a man threatened to cut off his wife's face with a knife. When deputies responded to the 911 call, the wife revealed fresh bruises from her recent beating. Her husband was arrested and later released on bail. Earlier in the month, a Seattle firefighter stabbed his pregnant girlfriend to death in his apartment.

A local man in Silverdale saw his wife in a car with a friend. He got into his own car and began pursuing them. He crashed his moving vehicle into theirs three times. The other driver had the presence of mind to drive into the Kitsap County Sheriff's department parking lot where their assailant was apprehended.

And who among us has not heard of the Bainbridge Island case that was recently held in Everett. Prosecutors said last Tuesday that they will try again to convict a man accused of abusing his wife for years, while the state paid him to be her caretaker. Jurors were unable to reach a decision on a charge of second-degree assault. The husband had imprisoned his wife for years on a filthy boat in Bainbridge Island. His wife had been starved and beaten and suffers permanent brain damage. She will require skilled nursing care the rest of her life from her injuries.

There is only one-battered women's shelter in Kitsap County. Due to lack of space, 70 desperate women were turned away in September. 50 others were turned away in August. Many of these women are sleeping in cars and our local parks, rather than return to physically dangerous homes. Will we help them or ignore them?

### **Children are affected by domestic violence**

Approximately 50 - 75% of batterers beat their children. I know of one family whose eldest son suffered a broken arm. His father allegedly threw him down the stairs before spanking him. Concerned family members were told it was rude and impolite to ask questions. The battered wife believed it was God's will for her to remain in the abusive marriage for religious reasons after speaking to her priest.

The very sight of her second son seemed to enrage her husband. Her son now tells the story as a grown man, of how his father beat him with every tool hanging in the garage. Once his father even chased him down the street with a gun, threatening to kill him. His mother eventually had to send him away in desperation to distant relatives in another state, fearing for his life.

Today, both of these boys are now grown men, married with children. Both refuse to hit their wives and children. They insist that their wives discipline the kids, because these grown men are worried about becoming like their abusive father. "If I hit even once," said one; "it's over. I'll hit again and again." Both of them decided the terrible cycle of domestic violence would end with them, with God's help. Both men realize they are high-risk life-partners. They candidly discuss these fears and possibilities

with their wives, pastors, friends and families. They are in accountability relationships. Here is the hope for children in domestic violence. God will help you end the terror of domestic violence in your life.

### **Many family members are surprised**

Sometimes domestic violence comes as a great surprise to extended family members. Let me tell the story of a young woman who married someone who seemed loving while they dated. But within the first year of marriage, he began to beat her. Before she knew it, she had three young children. No one in the family knew her secret. Her husband threatened to beat her even more if she told anyone.

Their story is actually quite common. First the couple begins experiencing increased tension. The battered woman will often deny her needs and feelings to defuse the batterer's anger. In doing this, she accepts responsibility for his behavior and actually escalates his anger. This tension eventually escalates into a major destructive incident where the batterer completely loses control of his anger. This rage blinds his control over his behavior and can last for hours or days. He wants to teach her a lesson and the woman is often severely beaten. After the violence, often there is a period of calm, sometimes with kindness and contrite loving behavior from the violent one. The batterer knows he's gone too far and becomes extremely loving and tender. He will ask for forgiveness, truly believing she has learned her lesson and that he will never beat her again. And he may be quite sincere, until the next time.

One terrible night, one of her little boys called his granny on the phone. He was crying hysterically, "come Granny, help, Daddy is hitting Mommy again." Two years later, the children are still afraid to be in the same room with their father.

### **So why do women stay?**

What are common obstacles? There are many home, society, church and financial realities. People involved in domestic violence experience powerlessness, hurt, guilt, shame, isolation, impaired trust, depression, helplessness, anger, humiliation, embarrassment, degradation and fear. Often the woman denies the abuse and excuses her abusers behaviors. Many women are convinced their batterer will change. But the batterer will not change as long as they stay together.

Often there is a fear of exposure, retaliation or making the home situation even worse. "If you leave, you will really get it; you think this is bad, just try leaving. I'll kill you before you can leave me. I'll hunt you down and kill you if you leave me. I'll kill you, the kids and then myself." Battered women suffer from low self-esteem, do not believe in their abilities, decision making. Both their bodies and self-esteem are battered.

Both church and society at large have historically been reluctant to identify homes where brutality and coercion take place to "normal" people. Some of the most

dangerous abusers are the most overtly religious, law abiding and outwardly respectable citizens. These can include leaders in church, society and in the workplace.

Family and cultural issues pressure many women to stay. "Surely you are mistaken. You must be causing him to lose his temper when he drinks a little and hits you a lot." Denial is the greatest barrier to getting help.

### **Good news: God can and does change lives when we cry out for help**

Here is God's good news for domestic violence. "Every crisis is an opportunity for healing." God can change your life. Here are several spiritual lifelines for domestic violence:

#### **Lifeline # 1**

Jesus Christ can show us how to live. We must love ourselves enough to get help whether we are battered or battering. We must love our neighbors enough to be deeply concerned if we see, hear or suspect domestic abuse. We need to care enough to look at the situation and not look the other way. We should also be very concerned for the children.

#### **Lifeline # 2**

The best gift we can offer is our nonjudgmental listening. Jesus Christ offers wise insights for all religious traditions, when he said, "come to me, all of you who are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Every one of us needs safe friends who will listen to our stories of pain and suffering, while honoring our confidentiality needs. We need wise spiritual friends and advisors who will help and not hinder those in domestic violence situations.

#### **Lifeline # 3**

Help people find empowering spiritual resources. Often God seems silent for those experiencing domestic violence. Take courage. God sees. God cares. God wants you to be safe and well in your homes. God wants to empower you with peace, joy and courage. If you are feeling abandoned by friends, family members, work colleagues, and God seems silent-cry for help through praying the Psalms. Desperate people have drenched these pages with their tears, finding help in their deepest moments of need. The Psalms help us remember that God is closer than our breathing, nearer than our hands and feet.

### **Serenity prayer wisdom**

Cling to the wisdom of the famous serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to

know the difference." We are called to be safe and well in our homes. If our homes are not safe and well, and an abuser refuses help or to accept responsibility for their violent behavior, then have the courage to seek a safe place with the help of God.

### **What can I do?**

Get involved and make a difference. How can we be people of faith and look the other way from those in such dire need? Begin listening to the news. Look at the local papers for "911" domestic violence incidents. Begin praying for both adults and involved children.

Consider getting involved with the local battered women's shelter. Mother Teresa used to say, "If you can't feed 100 people, then feed 1." With domestic violence realities, be willing to help one person. Winter will soon be upon us. There are dozens of women sleeping in their cars and in our parks, for lack of safe shelter. They will be cold, frightened and hungry. As a church we've gathered warm blankets for those in dire need overseas. Imagine what would happen if we gathered even just warm blankets for those without safe shelter.

### **Summary**

Here are several suggestions from "A Few Ways Any Adult Can Make Ending Domestic Violence His or Her Business." (From the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and the National Domestic Violence Awareness Project. 1-800-537-2238)

1. Cultivate a respectful attitude toward women in your family and at your workplace. Avoid behaviors that demean or control women.
2. When you are angry with your partner or children, respond without hurting or humiliating them. Model a nonviolent, respectful response to resolving conflicts in your family. Call a domestic violence or child abuse prevention program for their help if you continue to hurt members of your family.
3. If you have a friend or co-worker who is afraid of her partner or who is being hurt, offer her your support and refer her to the 24-hour, toll-free, National Domestic Violence Hotline number at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
4. Learn about the domestic violence services in your community. Contribute your time (volunteer!) resources, or money. Call 1-800-END-ABUSE to find out more.
5. Call the police if you see or hear violence in progress.
6. EXAMINE YOUR OWN LIFE for violence and oppressive behaviors. Try to live a VIOLENCE-FREE life.

May God bless each one of you. Be safe and well. May your lives be full of peace, joy and courage. Always remember—nothing is impossible for God. There is great hope and help for all affected.

### *c. Forgiveness – An Act of Grace*

By Jo Ann Marchuk, MEd, CPsych, Grace Women's Health Centre  
Calgary, AB

Forgiveness! What does this powerful, heart-wrenching word really mean? This word that has been the subject of innumerable sermons, countless sleepless nights, and a myriad of instruction books on how to live. The lack of forgiveness in the human heart has led to untold deaths, limitless lost loves, and a multitude of sorrows.

I feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the subject, yet it looms before me every day. In ten years as a therapist I have spent hours helping women with the daunting task of forgiving others - and forgiving themselves. Too many times to count – as a co-worker, friend, daughter, mother, and wife – I have faced the challenge of forgiving, and basked in the glory of being forgiven.

For most of my life I have thought of forgiveness as a demand. That really isn't surprising. What child hasn't been forced to deliver the perfunctory "I'm sorry" or the obliging "It's okay"? Who among us hasn't been told to forgive and forget, as one follows the other as naturally as night follows day? Parents, teachers, and religions have long commanded forgiveness: an instantaneous act of asking for and granting absolution – accompanied, of course, by memory loss.

While such a formula may work for the occasional foible of human forgetfulness or thoughtlessness, I have not seen or felt it work for those transgressions further along the moral continuum. Deep wounds take time to heal and may leave scars. I have come to view forgiveness as a process, an often time-consuming task. We must all put behind us the ritualistic notions of forgiveness we learned as children and move ahead on our journey. We must learn to see ourselves both as forgivers and as transgressors.

So often when I think of forgiveness, I think of the granting of it. But I have learned that the root of forgiveness lies elsewhere. Forgiveness grows when I examine my own humanness, the times I have been the transgressor and in much need of being forgiven. Herein lies the need of being forgiven. Herein lies the road to empathy, that almost obsolete trait of being able to walk in someone else's shoes.

Courageously now, I think of a time when I seriously offended another human being. Of course there are excuses: that person deserved it, I was tired, I was going through a rough time. Not legitimate excuses, but understandable ones at least. And yet, the angry, slight stings, the long silence hurts, the betrayal of trust wounds. In time, the damaged relationship or the guilt, the shame or the hiding make me wish for the freedom that can only come by facing the person I offended and seeking forgiveness. My biggest fear? Not to be forgiven. I know I want that feeling of joy and renewal. The literature about forgiveness tells me what will go a long way to increase my

chances of being forgiven – a sincere apology with appropriate guilt, genuine contrition, real empathy, and an acknowledgment of the broken rules. When I have been granted that longed-for forgiveness, I am elated, relieved, but also fascinated by my feelings towards the forgiver. For a time, the person I have wounded stands on higher moral ground than I do. She has been able to reach across an unspeakable void and grant me the feeling of joy and renewal. Interestingly, sociologists view this feeling of gratitude and esteem to the forgiver as an innate response to which we may attribute our survival as a species. The forgiver is seen as having broken an escalating revenge pattern that, in more primitive times, would have meant each wrong being more artificially righted by another wrong until we had wronged ourselves out of existence. The forgiver who stopped this upward spiral of hurt and warring has, of course, contributed to the greater well-being of the community and is entitled to a higher social status.

Remembering the relief and benefits of being forgiven, and knowing also that my own esteem will rise, I feel a greater desire to forgive others and even to forgive myself. But how different it feels to be transgressed against than to be the transgressor! Why is she so angry with me? How could he say that? What did I ever do to hurt her? So many of my wounds come when I don't expect them, and so I feel vulnerable and used. But as my anger and sadness continue, I may find my health failing and my relationships suffering. I need a balm to soothe and heal the pain of this open, festering wound. The only cure is forgiveness. And so the journey – the process – begins. I need to grant myself the time to get to the point where I can say “I accept your apology” instead of falling back into the ritualistic pattern of childhood with an automatic “Oh, forget it.” More challenging: I may need to forgive without receiving an apology. And perhaps the most challenging of all: I may even have to forgive myself.

Researchers in the area of forgiveness are now examining just what this process of forgiveness might look like. What brings a person closer to the act of forgiving? I have found the following steps helpful in many cases. I begin by getting the offender to tell his or her story. (Of course, this may be difficult or unwise in some circumstances; in others, it may even be impossible.) For me, this chance to listen is extremely healing. As I listen to the offender's side of the story I attend to my feelings, explore my responses, examine my past experience with such an offense, and then let time help me to process it. Perhaps I can find a place for empathy. If I courageously acknowledge my own failures, I can try to understand my transgressor's humanness. I may explore the costs and benefits of forgiving or not forgiving by talking to a friend, a therapist, or by writing in my journal.

Finally, I have to gather up my thoughts and feelings, my hopes and dreams, my courage and resolve, and make a decision. At this point, such a leap of faith often seems impossible. Forgiveness seems such an unnatural act. This is when I need something more, something to help me take that final step towards forgiveness. I need grace: the grace of God, a higher power, a spiritual grace. The grace of the Good Samaritan, the days of atonement, of compassion and forbearance. The grace

that surpasses all human understanding. Some acts of forgiveness may be easy; some require something more divine. And once I have forgiven, have bravely gone through the process, grace helps me to continue to forgive. Grace helps me to view the scars of an old moral wound as reminders of what I have learned from this journey towards forgiveness.

For me, then, forgiveness is a never-ending act of Grace. For my mental and physical health, I need to forgive 7x77 times. For my spiritual and social health, I need to forgive others. For the power and strength to offer this most magnanimous gift, I need Grace.

## **7. Prayers for Worship** <sup>40</sup>

The following prayers can be offered in public worship services.

### *Prayers of Confession*

O God, You know our hearts, our minds, our feeling, and our thoughts. You know the heavy stones that weigh down our spirits. Comfort us as we mourn the loss of women's lives to violence. Strengthen us as we break the silence, confront evil, and cry out for justice. Help us see the chains that bind us and the chains that we place around others. Set us free to walk in the fullness of life that is promised to all people. Let us live into that promise with every moment of our lives. AMEN.

O Merciful One, we confess that by our silence and inaction we have passed by on the other side, leaving a sister suffering by the side of the road. We confess that in our fear, we have hesitated and turned away from life, adding to the pain and suffering. Bring us to repentance.

O Holy One,

Open our eyes to see the violence in our lives, within us and among us.

Open our mouths to name what we see and to acknowledge our own pain.

Open our hearts to let in the pain and suffering of family members, friends, child victims, adult survivors, and our neighbours.

Open our mouths to call to account those who have harmed others.

Be merciful and bring us back to life in Christ. AMEN.

### *Prayer of Dedication*

We offer ourselves to you, O God our Creator. We offer our hands.

Use healing touch to comfort sisters, brothers, and children who are afraid.

We offer our eyes and ears. May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.

We offer our hearts and our tears as their hurt and sorrow echo within us.

We offer our own stories of violence.

May we be healed as we embrace each other.

We offer our anger. Make it a passion for justice.

We offer all our skills. Use our gifts to end violence.

We offer our faith, our hope, our love. May our encounters with violence bring us closer to You and to each other.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ who knows the pain of violence. AMEN.

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<sup>40</sup> The following prayers are found in Jezierski , 117, 118 (excerpts, with some adaptation), except where otherwise noted.

*God of Peace and Comfort*

God of peace and comfort,  
We pray for those who are not safe in their own homes,  
Or with people they care about, because of domestic violence.  
Give strength and courage to those who are abused and battered.  
Grant strength to those who abuse the ones they love, that they may take  
responsibility for their actions and learn new, life-giving behaviours.  
Help us all to nurture one another in the spirit of love and peace  
Proclaimed by Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. AMEN.

## **8. Marriage Preparation**

Preparing for marriage is an exciting and wonderful time for most couples. However, even at this happy time, there can be warning signs of the potential for future abuse or abuse that may have already begun. Premarital counselling or marriage preparation offers an opportunity for intervention in the form of counselling, referrals or the recommendation not to marry.<sup>41</sup>

### **a. Red Flags**

During premarital counseling, there is an opportunity to work with a couple, helping them to begin to address issues which may arise through their marriage and to better understand each other. Generally, literature about preventing domestic violence presents several warning signs of future abuse, or abuse which has already begun. A clergy member, or church leader, who is conducting premarital counseling can be alerted to the potential for abuse by exploring a variety of areas with the couple and listening for potential “red flags” in the following areas.<sup>42</sup>

When a red flag is raised, that is a cue to explore that issue to further to better understand how that issue is playing out in the relationship. If you feel that the red flag requires more counseling help than you are capable of offering, referring the couple to outside counseling is advisable and appropriate.

#### **1. A whirlwind beginning**

The relationship began very romantically and has moved very fast. It may seem overwhelming to one partner. It may also have a “heady” or “swept away” feel to it. One partner may feel grateful or rescued, “No one’s ever loved me like this before.” On probing it may be that one partner has a nagging feeling that things are moving too fast.

#### **2. Possessiveness**

One partner wants control of the other. The couple is always together, spending every possible minute with each other. One or both people may be neglecting friendships or family relationships. One may not want the other to see friends or they always see friends together. One partner is very jealous of the other.

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<sup>41</sup> The information was compiled with the help of Colonel William Ratcliffe of the Salvation Army. For more information, contact him in Calgary at (403) 253-1700.

<sup>42</sup> These red flags were compiled from information in the following resources: B. Engel, *Breaking the Cycle of Abuse: How to Move Beyond Your Past to Create an Abuse-Free Future* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2005); N. Nelson, *Dangerous Relationships: How to Identify and Respond to the Seven Warning Signs of a Troubled Relationship* (Cambridge: De Capo Press, 1997); M. Paterson, *Broken by You: Men’s Role in Stopping Woman Abuse* (Etobicoke: United Church Publishing House, 1995); E. Weiss, *Family and Friends Guide to Domestic Violence: How to Listen, Talk and Take Action When Someone You Care About Is Being Abused* (Volcano, CA: Volcano Press, 2003).

**3. Poor conflict resolution**

Couple discusses conflicts in which they insult or put each other down. The couple has arguments which go on for days or weeks. One party will use intimidation, silent treatments or threats to win the argument. One or both admit to violence, often in minimizing ways, "We were wrestling."

**4. Not taking responsibility**

One partner blames the other for any and all conflicts or problems. One partner blames others, the outside world, anyone else, for his/her problems.

**5. Verbal abuse**

This may include put downs, derogatory nick names, speaking for the other partner, or making fun of the other.

**6. Controlling behavior**

One partner is making all of the decisions. When discussing marriage expectations, one person expects to be in charge of everything or to have financial control.

**7. Fear**

One partner seems afraid of the other. Signs of fear may include, letting the other partner do all the talking, deferring quickly when they disagree, cowering or looking down when partner is speaking.

**8. Defensiveness**

If the couple is questioned about the possibility to abuse, one person becomes defensive, justifying any questionable behavior or withdrawn.

**9. An abusive childhood**

One partner was abused as a child or his/her parents were in an abusive relationship which the child witnessed. Being abused as a child does not cause abuse, nor does it justify abuse, but it is a red flag.

**10. Substance abuse**

While alcohol and drug use do not cause abuse, there is a strong correlation between their use and domestic violence.

### b. Sample Questions <sup>43</sup>

Below are examples of questions which will help any couple to better understand each other and prepare for marriage. They also can alert a premarital counselor to potential red flags. These questions can be written up in a survey format with other questions and filled out by each partner before a counseling session.

Question	Potential Red Flags
<b>Personal History</b>	
What is the worst thing that has happened to you? (After asking about the best thing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being abused as a child,</li> <li>• growing up in a household where parents were abusive towards each other,</li> <li>• past abusive relationships or</li> <li>• history of violence or criminal activities.</li> </ul>
Have you been married before? (If yes, exploring why that marriage didn't work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse in previous relationship,</li> <li>• name-calling or villainizing of past partner,</li> <li>• charges laid or unresolved legal issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations</b>	
What are your expectations for the marriage, keeping in mind the need to give as well as receive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very different expectations from partners about roles, money management.</li> </ul>
What needs of yours do you expect your partner will meet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet all needs,</li> <li>• expectation that one person will make the other happy or fulfilled</li> </ul>
<b>Family Life</b>	
<i>Ask about family of origin and expectations in upcoming marriage</i>	
Ask about caring for the children, including discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong belief in corporal punishment,</li> <li>• rigid beliefs/expectations about children's behavior,</li> <li>• expectation that one partner will be responsible for child.</li> </ul>
Ask about settling arguments in family of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One authoritarian parent,</li> <li>• fighting,</li> <li>• violence,</li> <li>• expectations that one person will have authority.</li> </ul>
Explore beliefs about showing affection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief that one partner must always reciprocate affection,</li> <li>• childhood where affection was withheld,</li> <li>• belief that affection is a reward.</li> </ul>
Finances/chores	Rigid childhood roles/expectations about who handles finances or has responsibility for chores.

<sup>43</sup> The questions were derived from the Salvation Army marriage preparation manual, "Preparing to Share Life Together," by Cyril and Helen Boyden.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Personality</b></p> <p><i>A personal assessment of one's qualities on a spectrum with opposite characteristics. E.g. leader – follower, sociable – unsociable, listener – talker. These can help partners to better understand each other and also alert one to possible red flags. Remember that abusive behavior is a choice, not a personality characteristic.</i></p>	
Happy – moody	
Aggressive – defensive	
Tolerant – intolerant	
Trusting – suspicious	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Values</b></p> <p><i>Rating the importance of values can help a couple to better understand each other. Discussion about some values can alert one to potential red flags.</i></p>	
Openness (especially in relationships) Sense of justice Morality (lifestyle, ethics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very different perspectives,</li> <li>• one partner having inflexible or rigid beliefs,</li> <li>• expectation that a person must behave in a certain manner.</li> </ul>
<b>Substance Use</b>	
How often do you drink alcohol? How much do you drink at a given time? Does your partner ever comment on your drinking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regret about drinking too much on any occasion,</li> <li>• considering cutting down,</li> <li>• defensiveness or annoyance when questioned,</li> <li>• missed work because of drinking,</li> <li>• having more than two drinks on any one occasion</li> </ul>
Do you use any illegal drugs? How often?	Any regular use of illegal drugs (red flags as with drinking.)
<b>Financial matters</b>	
Do you agree on money matters? Have you discussed how finances will be managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to have control of the finances, “I make the money, I’ll make the decisions.”</li> </ul>
Do you gamble? How much?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Losses of large amounts of money,</li> <li>• regrets about gambling,</li> <li>• defensiveness about gambling,</li> <li>• growing debt due to gambling.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	
How do you communicate, e.g. are you able to talk and listen, understand each other?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One person not able to express self,</li> <li>• expressed frustration or fear about communicating feelings, needs or thoughts,</li> <li>• inability to understand each other.</li> </ul>
Do you openly share feelings?	
Do you talk about ideas and your beliefs?	
How do you cope with conflict?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One person always ‘giving in,’</li> <li>• conflicts degenerating into screaming, name-calling,</li> <li>• violence (against people, animals or objects),</li> <li>• intimidation.</li> </ul>

<b>Sexuality</b>	
How do you feel about friendships with the same sex?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Desire to limit outside friendships,</li><li>• contact with people outside the relationship</li><li>• jealousy of friends.</li></ul>
How do you feel about friends with the opposite sex?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very jealous,</li><li>• believes no opposite sex friends tolerable.</li></ul>
Do you agree about mild flirtations?	
How jealous are you?	

## *C. Exercise for Adults*

### *1. Women Created in God's Image as Equal to Men*

Time: 60 minutes

Goals:

- To compare and contrast the different Bible passages which describe women and their role in society.
- To uncover truths about women being created in God's image as equal to men.
- To explore personal relationships and compare them to God's design for marriage.

Materials:

- Bibles
- Copies of the Scripture Wheels (See next two pages.)
- Flipchart paper
- Markers

Procedure:

-Prior to the discussion, the group leader should familiarize him/herself with the passages outlined in both of the Scripture Wheels.

-Open the discussion with introductions.

-Hand out the Scripture Wheels. Ask the group to choose a few passages from each section to read (you may wish to read them all if time permits).

-Choose volunteers to read the passages from the "Power and Control in a Patriarchal Society" wheel. Have group members articulate how they interpret these passages. Record the comments on one half of the flipchart paper. See diagram below.

-Choose volunteers to read passages from the "Women Created in God's Image as Equal to Men" wheel. Have group members articulate how they interpret these passages. Record the comments in the second half of the flipchart paper. See diagram below.

#### *Flip Chart Exercise:*

-Compare and contrast both sides of the chart and discuss the overwhelming presence of passages that point to God creating women as equal to men. Discuss why there are contradictory passages.

Patriarchal	Equal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimizing</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Emotional Abuse</li> <li>• Coercion</li> <li>• Threats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Kindness</li> <li>• Negotiation</li> </ul>

-Follow Up Questions:

How do you feel God meant for women to be viewed in our society?

In what ways do your personal relationships mirror God's design?

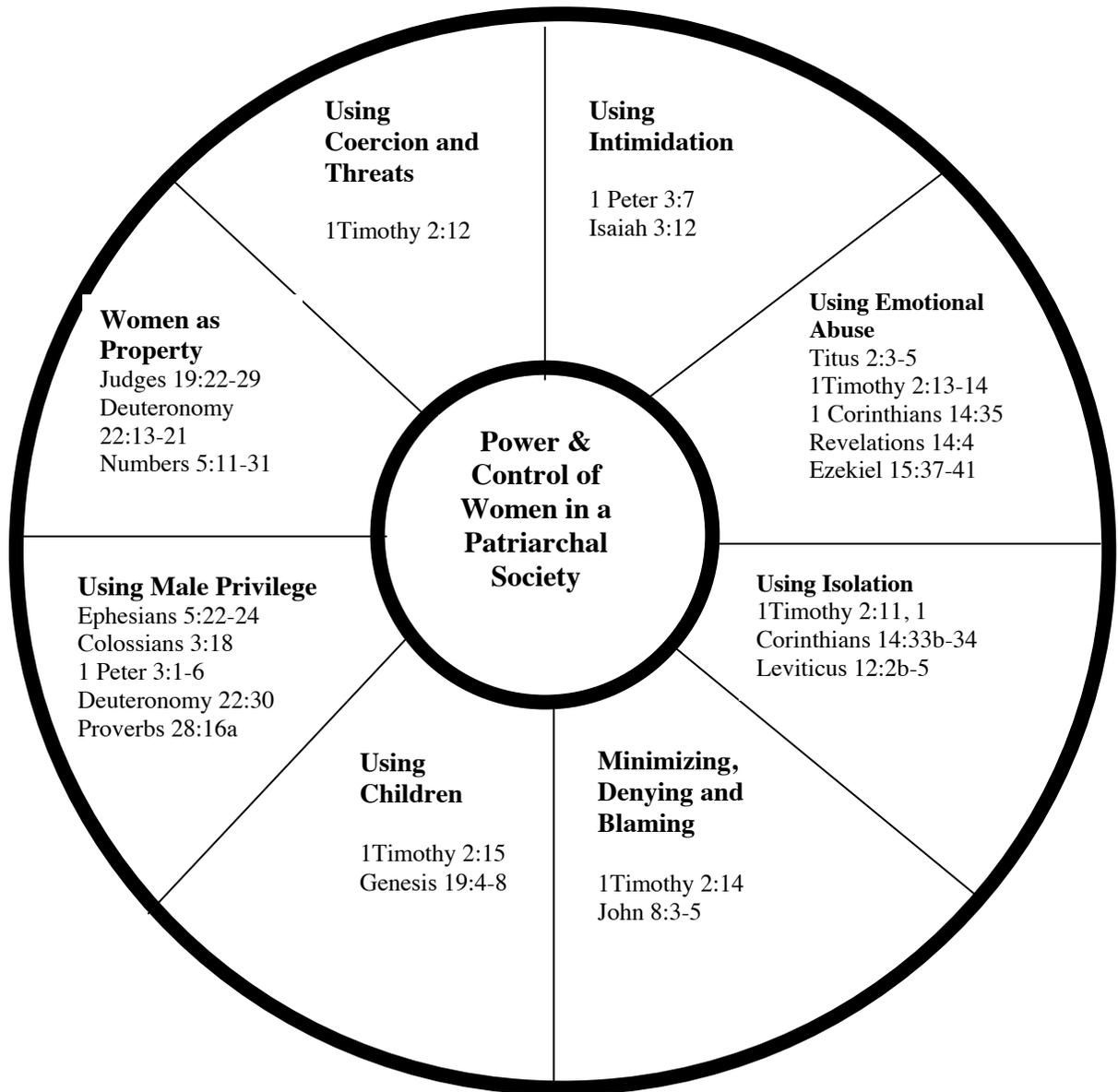
What steps can you and your partner take to get closer to God's design for marriage?

## ***2. Power and Control Wheels For Group Discussion***

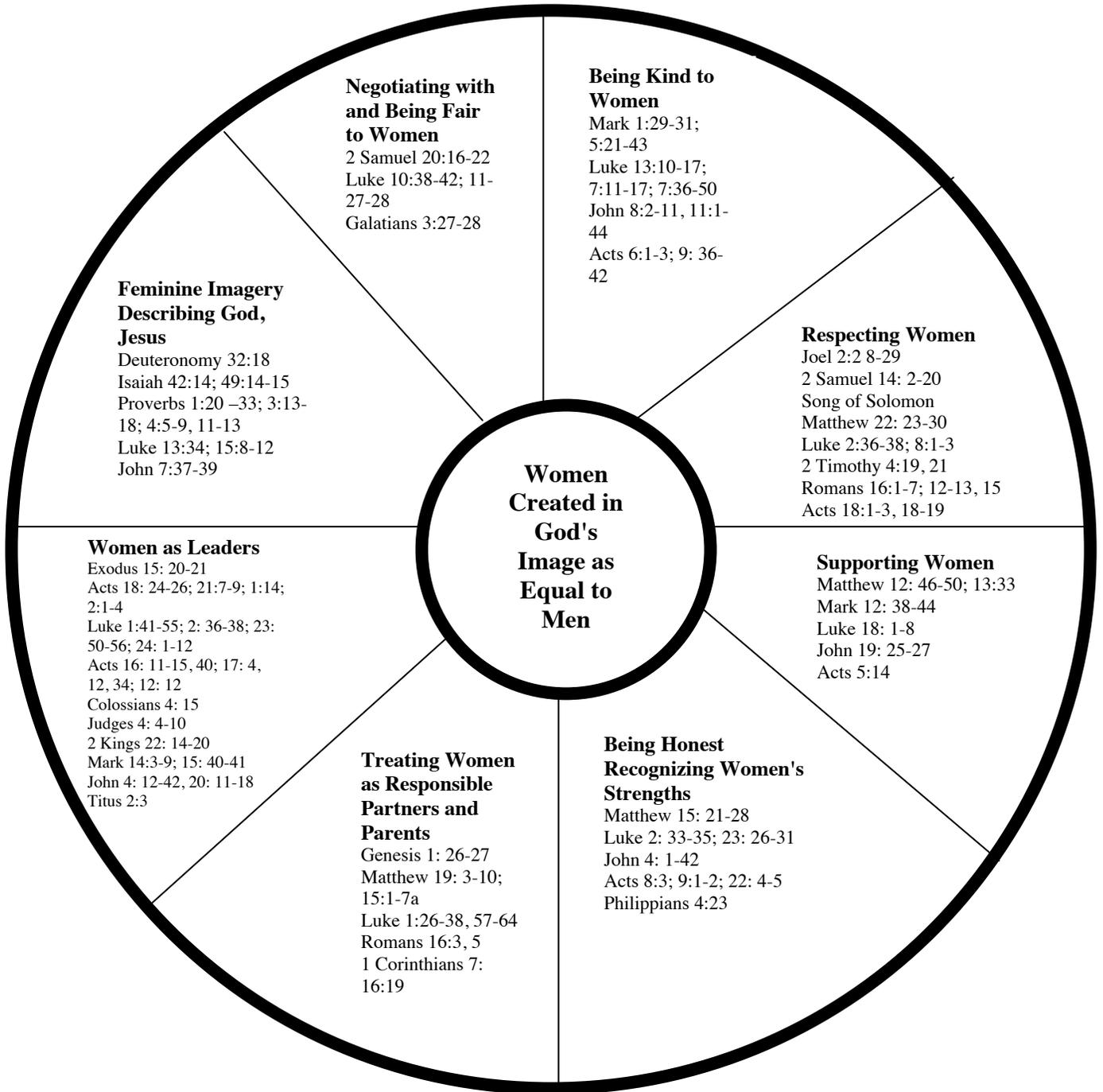
Most biblical texts referring to women, directly or indirectly, are to be found on the [accompanying] wheel, "Women Created in God's Image as Equal to Men." There are specifically 73 total positive, as compared to 26 total negative, texts listed. It is striking that, of the 73 positive tests, 50 are to be found in the Gospels and in Acts. In other words, 68% of the positive texts about women are to be found in the words and actions of Jesus, and in Jesus' immediate legacy of the early Christian Church. By contrast, no references from the Gospels or the Book of Acts are found on the wheel entitled, "Power and Control of Women in Patriarchal Society."

What becomes apparent is that the weight of Christian scripture attests to the fact that women are created in the image of God, and Jesus reaffirmed the value of women as capable persons who should have the same options as men. However, very early in Christian history, something happened to change the Church's direction toward full inclusiveness. The systematizing of Christian theology by the Church Fathers created a heritage received by all women. Because of this heritage, many centuries passed before women were allowed to own property; to vote; to decide whether, or whom to marry; and to speak the Word of God. Because of this heritage, many centuries passed before women were no longer subject to the chastisement of their husbands by any means, including domestic violence.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES <sup>44</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Jeri Gray-Reneberg, "Domestic Violence: A Focus Guide for Clergy and Religious Leaders," prepared by Lincoln-Lancaster Department, Health Promotion and Outreach Division, Nebraska, 1996.



### 3. Potential scenarios in the faith community: for discussion

The following pages contain six scenarios that a faith community may consider discussing to measure and to increase their awareness and understanding about family violence.<sup>45</sup>

#### a. Young mother with concerns about marriage

A woman in her early 30's who is a member of your faith community asks to speak privately with you about something personal. When she comes for her meeting with you, she shares the following concerns about her marriage.

- She is having difficulty being a good wife and explains that her husband works late frequently and is tired due to a demanding job so he is not able to help her much with the children and household chores.
- She is unable to attend church regularly because her husband won't help her and often refuses to go.
- She has three children, is pregnant with a fourth and feels overwhelmed with the child care and household duties.
- She has had many health problems including "low blood" which adds to her fatigue, and seems to pick up every virus the children bring home.
- She feels very depressed, cries a lot, and does not feel she is a good mother or a good wife.
- Lately, she is often too tired to pray, and when she does, she gets no sense of peace or support from her prayers.

Discussion points:

Are there any issues here that may suggest a potential for abuse in the home? If so, what are they?

What general questions might be appropriate?

Would you ask this woman a question about abuse in the home? If you decided to ask, what words would you use? How might the conversation play out?

If you suspect or are told there is some form of abuse, what resources might you suggest?

If she is in an abusive situation, what kind of spiritual support might be helpful?

#### b. Woman who is afraid of her husband

You receive a phone call from the wife of one of the leaders of the church. She tells you she is afraid of her husband, that he watches pornographic movies and subscribes to pornographic materials. In addition, he hit her and threatened her. She is afraid of telling anyone, fearful she would be responsible for his failure or other negative

<sup>45</sup> Adapted from *Creating a Safe Place: Encourage to Change* (Anoka County, Minnesota: Anoka County Peace Initiative, 2000), 138-141.

consequences if others learn of his habits. She is currently struggling with her relationship with God because her husband has been clear that she must defer to his interests and desires, including sexual, and that is God's intent in the scheme of things. She feels distant from her faith and struggles with guilt because of it.

Discussion points:

- What might be some suggested initial responses to this woman?
- How concerned would you be if you took this call?
- What actions and words would someone in a position of church leadership do?
- What actions and words would a clergy or someone who counsels parishioners do?

### c. Couple seeking marriage counseling

A couple you know only slightly, who are regular attendees at church services, have come for an appointment with you, the pastor, for marriage counseling. The husband called and made the appointment. You learn the following: The wife has held 3 jobs in the past 18 months, each time leaving because it wasn't working out at home. The husband insists she just needs to manage the finances better and be home for their children. An 11 year old son is having trouble at school with bullying. The wife has had numerous health issues including stomach problems and headaches. The husband espouses a strong faith, stating "God is the leader in our house" and "He knows the way for all". He espouses devout faith, stating he leads family bible reading, discussion and prayer times with the entire family most evenings. He states they need to continue to worship faithfully and regularly at home and at church, learn to pray better and listen to God, and He will provide strength and guidance.

Discussion points:

- Do you see any "red flags" in this situation? If so, what are they?
- What questions would you ask the couple?
- What would you say to the couple?
- What concerns and constraints might you have?
- What would your next steps be?
- What resources would you recommend?

### d. Behavior changes noted in long-time member

You observe some changes in a long-term, active member of your community, a 54 year old single male and member of the church council. You know he lives with another man who is his roommate. When he joined the church ten years ago he was an energetic, active man with a good sense of humor, eager to participate in faith

community activities and was a reliable volunteer. Within the last year you have noted the following:

- Bruising on his jaw;
- He wore a sweatshirt one hot July day on a day a group painted the exterior of the church;
- He has had several episodes of illness and problems with chronic back pain;
- He has become quiet and speaks less in groups than in the past;
- He has stopped teaching Sunday School and attending Bible Study;
- His church attendance has gone from every Sunday to once or twice a month.

Discussion points:

What concerns do you have about this man?

Is there anything that you might say to this man?

You are president of the parish council. If you have identified concerns, are there any actions you feel would be appropriate?

You are the co-pastor. If you have identified concerns, are there any actions you feel would be appropriate for you to take?

#### e. Stormy teen relationship

You are the parish youth director. You have known a 16 year old girl who has been involved in youth activities in your community since she was 12. She has been an active, energetic participator in many activities and is well-liked by her peers. She begins bringing her boyfriend to weekly youth group after-school gatherings. He accompanies her to every gathering. He is a very gregarious, talkative individual who likes to tell jokes and entertain others. Over a period of months you notice the following changes:

- The girl and her boyfriend come late on several occasions;
- The girl interacts minimally with other teens and when she does the interactions are very brief;
- When you ask her questions, the boyfriend answers;
- She has failed to show up twice after volunteering to teach Sunday school;
- After several months their attendance drops off and you only see her about every month.

Discussion points:

What might concern you in this situation?

What might you say to whom?

What could you do?

If you feel there are any needed, what resources exist in the community?

**f. General marital problems**

A woman in the church confides in you that she is having marital problems. She reports that her husband often puts her down and calls her names and sometimes shoves her around. During the last argument he "lost it" and pushed her off of the bed and she hit her head on the dresser. She says he has not hit her in over a year but last week locked her out of the house after a violent argument. The couple and their three small children have come to your church regularly for several years and the husband has been serving on the education committee.

**Discussion points:**

What concerns do you have about this situation? Are there any risks?

You are a deacon in the church. What responses might be appropriate to this woman?

You are the co-pastor. What responses might be appropriate to this woman?

Does the co-pastor have any responsibilities to the husband? If so, what are they?

What are the best ways you can help the children?

#### 4. Practical Responses

The following are suggestions for practical help.

##### *a. Abuse Shelter Client Wish List*

When a woman leaves a shelter to start a new life, she is in need of many items for herself and her children. Church groups can donate to any shelter (names and phone numbers in this manual) to assist women in this transition. The following is a list of suggested items.

**Household Products:** toilet paper, paper towels, garbage bags, plastic wrap, foil.

**Cleaning Products:** laundry soap, dish soap, disinfectant/cleaners, window cleaners, bleach, deodorizers.

**Baby/Children's Needs:** diapers, baby wipes, baby toiletries, school supplies, backpacks.

**Children's New Clothing:** T-shirts, pajamas, slippers, sweat suits, socks, underwear, runners, boots.

**Personal Items:** deodorant, hairbrushes/combs, shampoo/conditioner, hair spray, ethnic hair care items, feminine products, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hand soap, bubble bath, candles.

**Food:** canned meats/vegetables, sugar, flour, oil, tea/coffee, cereal, ethnic foods, salt/pepper, spices.

**New Women's Clothing:** underwear, socks, sweat suits, bath robes, pajamas, slippers, pantyhose.

**Linens:** towels/face cloths, tea towels, twin and double sheets, pillows/pillow cases, blankets/comforters.

**Bus Tickets and Grocery Store Gift Certificates**

### **b. Dream Pillow Project**

The FaithLink Committee and the YWCA Family Violence Prevention Centre invite you to become involved in the **Dream Pillow Project**.

Dream pillows are used as a therapeutic tool with children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Many children who have lived in such circumstances have been taught to keep their worries and fears to themselves. It becomes difficult for them to trust others, even adults who play a helpful role in their lives.

The Dream Pillow is used in both individual and group treatment to address night terrors and fears and to develop coping strategies to deal with nightmares. Children are encouraged to write or draw a picture of their dreams and are then invited to discuss their nightmares and exchange ways of dealing with scary dreams.

The success of the dream pillow is exciting and hopeful. However, the therapeutic benefits they provide would not be possible without the help of volunteers who lovingly create them. We need your help to create these dream pillows as the supply is running out. If you are unable to sew the pillows yourself, we invite you to bring this project to the attention of anyone who you feel might have the time and talent to devote to this worthwhile project. Directions for making a dream pillow are enclosed. Pillows can be brought directly to any of the shelters identified in the Calgary Family Violence Services Resource List in Section III D of this manual.

### **Dream Pillow Project Instructions**<sup>46</sup>

#### **Materials:**

Fabric remnants (select patterns with stars, moon, etc.)  
Thread  
Flannel

#### **Instructions:**

##### **Inside Pillow**

Out of plain broad cloth, cut two pillow shapes 15 x 22 inches.  
Sew pillow pieces together leaving an opening at the end for the child to stuff the pillow.

The mom and the child or the therapist and the child will then sew up the child's nightmares.

##### **Outside Pillow**

This time, using a pattern on one side and plain flannel on the other, cut out two pillow shapes 15 x 25 inches.

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<sup>46</sup> Marilyn Lay, Liana Lowenstein, Geraldine Crisci, *Paper Dolls and Paper Airplanes: Therapeutic Exercises for Sexually Traumatized Children* (USA: Champion Press, 1998).

The back of the pillow (the plain flannel) needs to be two pieces 3 inches longer than the front, sewn together so the pieces overlap (in order that the inside pillow can be inserted into the opening).

*c. “Strong Women Dance” Hats*<sup>47</sup>



**Suggested Needle Size: US 5 or 6 20 inch circular with set of US 5 or 6 dp’s.**

Gauge: 5 stitches to the inch over charted pattern. (Check your gauge!)

Suggested Yarn: main color (MC) 3.5 oz. of worsted weight with 2 oz. of a contrasting color (CC). If making a chemo cap, use a soft yarn. You may need to hold two strands of a soft sport weight together in lieu of 1 strand of worsted.

Using the long tail cast on with an extra 4 yards of length on the tail (above what you would normally have), cast on 112 stitches in MC. Place a marker and be sure not to twist your stitches as you join them in a round.

Making the braided edge: with both the ball end and tail end yarns in the purl position, purl two rounds in the following manner: Purl the first stitch with the “yarn end” which should be the furthest to the right. Bring this over the “ball end” yarn, make your stitch, and then drop the “yarn end” yarn. Use the “ball end” yarn and purl the next stitch, bringing it over the

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<sup>47</sup> Tina Shaddox. Accessed at [www.charitablecrafters.org/strong\\_women\\_dance.htm](http://www.charitablecrafters.org/strong_women_dance.htm).

unused “yarn end” yarn. Continue in this manner, bringing alternate “yarn end” or “ball end” yarn over the strand not in use. Purl to the beginning of the row.

In the next row, purl in the same manner, but instead of bringing the strand in use over the strand not in use, bring it under.

When you have completed these two rounds, abandon the tail end and weave it in as you continue to knit your hat, negating the need to weave it in at the end.

Knit 4 rounds in MC.

(See chart \*\*) Knit 1 round in CC.

Next round: \*K 1 MC, K1 CC\* repeat around.

Knit 1 round in CC.

Knit 3 rounds in MC.

Begin \* chart at bottom right corner, carrying yarn loosely across back of work.

Knit to end of chart.

Knit 3 rounds in MC.

(See chart \*\*) Knit 1 round in CC.

Next round: \*K1 MC, K1 CC\* repeat around.

Knit 1 round in CC. You will not need the CC anymore.

Knit 4 rounds in MC. OR Knit 2 rounds in MC and Purl 2 rounds in MC. The purl rounds will give you a definitive border between your color knitting and your decrease for the top. It's your choice.

Decrease rounds:

Next round: \*Knit 6, Knit 2 together\* all around.

Knit 1 row.

Next round: \*Knit 5, Knit 2 together\* all around.



### *d. Duffel Bags for Shelter Clients*<sup>48</sup>

Children and moms often come to the shelters with only the clothes on their backs or their belongings in garbage bags. These individuals already feel pretty badly about themselves, and the idea of having to use a garbage bag to carry all of their "worldly" items makes them feel like "garbage", too. A duffel bag gives them a strong and attractive carryall in which to keep their belongings. Completed duffel bags can be brought directly to any of the shelters identified in the Calgary Family Violence Services Resource List in Section III D of this manual.

#### **Duffel Bag Pattern**

Step 1: Duffel Bags can be made of any scraps of fabric you might have. A general size is two pieces of matching fabric, 22" x 25" to 36" for the body of the duffel, and two pieces of matching or contrasting fabric 6" x 25" for the straps. You will also need a piece of cord or a matching sewn cord approx. 45" to 50" for the drawstring. Use whatever size fabric scraps you have and adjust the bag accordingly. Size of the bag can be varied according to the size of the child also.



Step 2: Shown are straps for the bag. Press over 1/4" the entire way around each strap then fold in the middle, meeting the edges together. Sew around the folded edges to fasten them together.

Step 3: Matching the sides and bottom of the bag, sew around. You can attach the bottoms of the straps into the bottom seam at this time or you can attach to the bag back before seaming. One can use a 1/4" seam allowance and go around the bag a second time with a wide zigzag stitch to make it more secure.

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<sup>48</sup> Information and duffel bag adapted from "Fostering Love for Children." Accessed at <http://fosteringlove.tripod.com>.



Step 4: You can add the straps in two ways. They can be attached into the bottom seam (as in picture below), or sewn about 3" up from the bottom (as in picture above) and 4" down from the top. The straps should be placed close together at the bottom of the bag and 6 to 8" apart at the top to allow for carrying on the back



Attach the straps to the top of the bag by placing them about 4" down from the top of the bag and about 8" apart. This allows the child to carry it on his/her back. Sew in a square on the top of the strap and then sew an "X" across the square to make the strap attached strong. To finish the bag, turn under top 1/4" then under 1". Sew around leaving a 1" opening for a drawstring. You can sew a drawstring from leftover fabric or use cording. Tie in a knot after threading through the casing to prevent it from being pulled out. One may add pockets to the front for brushes, combs, etc., and add velcro to keep it closed.



Step 5: Fold open the bottom and side seams flat to form a corner. Sew a diagonal seam up about 3" from the point to form depth to the bottom of the bag. You need to do both sides.

### ***e. Worry Doll Project***

Worry Dolls are used as a therapeutic tool with children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Many children who have lived in such circumstances have been taught to keep their worries and fears to themselves. It becomes difficult for them to trust others, even the adults who play a helpful role in their lives. The Worry Doll is a safe object to which a child may confide their concerns and thus release some of the anxiety and fear that they feel. It is suggested to the child by the therapist that they tell the doll their worries and then place the doll in its bag. The doll will then hold onto the worries, thus relieving the child of this burden. Children have reported that these dolls are a comfort to them and help with such difficulties as nightmares, anxiety, anger and nervousness. After confiding to the doll, children often become better able to talk about their problems with the therapist. Completed dolls can be brought directly to any of the shelters identified in the Calgary Family Violence Services Resource List in Section III D of this manual.

#### **Worry Doll Instructions**<sup>49</sup>

##### **Designer's Tips**

- Use smaller needles for doll and clothing. Use larger needles for bag.
- Standard abbreviations are used.
- Choose you own colors; pattern differentiates colored areas only.
- From the bottom up, legs, torso and head are worked in 1 piece. Arms are knitted separately and sewn on.
- At beginning and end of each yarn color, leave a tail approximately 13 cm (5 in) long to use for sewing up.
- Sew doll and clothes using ladder stitch; knot yarn end, then push into doll.
- Use small amounts of stuffing; push into doll with eraser end of pencil.
- Bag is worked in vertical rows.

##### **You need:**

A small amount of sport-weight yarn in white and desired colors for clothes, hair and skin

Pair of 3.75 mm needles\*

Pair of 3.25 mm needles\*

Polyester stuffing

Stitch holder and tapestry needle.

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<sup>49</sup> These instructions are reprinted with the permission of Canadian Living Magazine. The original article entitled "Hello Dollies!" by Jo Calvert appeared in the November 1997 issue.

\*OR whichever needles you require to produce the tensions given below.

### **Tension**

22 sts and 44 rows = 10 cm (4 in) in garter stitch (knit every row) using larger needles. 25 sts and 36 rows = 10 cm in stocking stitch using smaller needles.

### **To Make**

#### ***Body***

#### **Legs.**

With shoe color, cast on 8 sts for right leg. Knit 1 row.

**Next row** (right side): K2 into each st to end of row. 16 sts now on needle.  
Beg with k row, work 4 rows St st\*

**Next row:** K4 [k2tog] 3 times, k6. 13 sts now on needle.

**\*\*Next row:** Purl.

Change to sock color. Beg with k row, work 4 rows St st.

**Next row** (right side): Purl.

Change to skin color. Beg with p row, work 11 rows St st. thus ending with right side facing for next row.\*\*

Break yarn. Slip sts onto st holder.

Work left leg from \* to \*\* as given for body right leg.

**Next row:** K6 [k2tog] 3 times, k4. 13 sts now on needle.

Work from \*\* to \*\* as given for body right leg. Break yarn.

#### **Torso**

Change to white. Knit 13 sts of left leg then knit 13 sts from st holder: 26 sts now on needle. Beg with p row; work 7 rows St st thus ending with right side facing for next row.

Change to shirt color(s). Work 10 rows St st.

**Next row** (shoulder shaping): K5, [k2tog] twice, k8 [k2tog] twice, k5. 22 sts now on needle.

**Next row** (wrong side): Knit.

***Head***

Change to skin color. Beg with k row; work 2 rows St st.

**Next row:** [K2, k2 into next st] 7 times, k1. 29 sts now on needle.  
Beg with p row, work 13 rows St st.

**Next row:** [K2togk1] 9 times, k2tog. 19 sts now on needle.

**Next row:** Purl.

**Next:** K1, [k2tog] 9 times. 10 sts now on needle. Break yarn, thread through sts, pull tight; knot.

With wrong sides to inside, shape into cylinder so side edges of head and torso meet at centre back and edges of each leg meet at inside. Beg at shoe and stuffing firmly as you go, sew each leg seam, then up centre back to top of head.

***Arm with short sleeve***

(Make 2): \*With shirt color(s), cast on 4 sts.

**Row 1** (right side): K2 into first st, k to last 2 sts, k2 into next st, k1.

**Row 2:** Purl

Rep these 2 rows 2 times more, thus ending with right side facing for next row. 10 sts now on needle.\*

**Next** knit 2 rows.

Change to skin color. Beg with k row; work 12 rows St st.

**Next** [k2tog] to end of row. 5 sts now on needle. Break yarn, thread through sts, pull tight; knot.

***Arm with long sleeve***

(Make 2): Work from \* to \* as given for arm with short sleeve. Cont with shirt color(s), working 10 rows St st.

Change to skin color. Work 4 rows St st.

**Next:** [K2tog] to end of row. 5 sts now on needle. Break yarn, thread through sts, pull tight, knot.

With wrong sides to inside, shape into cylinder so long edges meet. Beg at hand and stuffing firmly as you go, sew up arm to bottom inc row. With seam toward body and outside top at shoulder, stitch open arm end to torso, adding extra stuffing to joint. Weave matching yarn twice around neck above shirt; pull tight to gather and knot.

***Face***

Thread tapestry needle with eye color. Push through back of head and out at eye position (halfway up face, 1 to 1-1/2 rows from centre front.) Stitch horizontally

over 3 rows or vertically over 1-1/2 sts. Rep 3 times in same spot, then push needle out at other eye position. Stitch eye. Push needle out back of head and knot. Thread tapestry needle with mouth color. Push through back of head and out 2 rows below centre of 1 eye. Push back into head 2 rows below centre of other eye and out at midpoint of stitch, 2 rows below. Take tiny stitch over first stitch to anchor it in place and shape smile, then push needle out back of head and knot.

### **Dress them up**

- For striped shirts, sweaters and hats, knit 2 rows each of 2 different colors or 1 row each of 3 different colors.
- For checked shirts or sweaters, work 2 colors into alternating checks, 2 sts wide, 2 rows high.
- Stitch lazy daisy flowers into hat brims, bibs or shirts.
- Sew French-knot buttons.
- Add pockets anywhere. Cast on 4 sts, work 5 rows St st and cast off knit wise. Sew pocket(s) to clothing with open cast off edge(s) at top.
- Make and sew on all hats before stitching hair, with one exception: make braids, then sew to head before hats so top ends are hidden underneath. Hand stitch bangs and hair below hats using stem or satin stitches.

### ***Pants***

\*Cast on 20 sts for right leg. Knit 1 row. Beg with k row; work 12 rows St st, thus ending with right side facing for next row.\* Slip sts onto st holder.

Work left leg from \* to \* as given for pants right leg.

\*\***Next row:** Knit across 20 sts of left leg, then 20 sts from st holder 40 sts now on needle.

Beg with p row, work 10 rows St st

**Next row:** [P2.p2tog] to end of row. 30 sts now on needle.

Cast off. With wrong sides to inside, shape into cylinder so side edges meet at centre back and edges of each leg meet at inside. Beg at bottom, sew each leg seam, then up centre back. Put on; stitch waist to shirt hem.\*\*

### ***Overalls***

Work as given for pants; do not cast off.

\***Next row:** Cast off 11 sts, k8 and slip onto st holder (for bib), cast off 11 sts. With wrong side facing, join yarn to 8 sts on st holder.

**Next row:** K1, p6, k1.

**Next row:** Knit.

Rep these 2 rows 3 times more.

**Next row:** Knit  
Cast off. Put on.\*

**Strap** (Make 2): Cast on 22 sts, then cast off.  
Sew each strap to 1 top corner of bib, working a French-knot button through strap and bib. Cross at back, tuck under waist 6 mm (1/4 in) from centre back on either side; stitch. Stitch waist to shirt hem.

### ***Shorts***

\*With cuff color, cast on 20 sts for right leg. Knit 1 row.  
Change to shorts color. Beg with k row, work 4 rows St st, thus ending with right side facing for next row\*. Slip sts onto st holder.  
Work left leg from \* to \* as given for shorts right leg. Work from \*\* to \*\* as given for pants.

### ***Skirt***

Cast on 60 sts. Knit 1 row. Beg with k row, work 12 rows St st, thus ending with right side facing for next row.

**Next row:** [K2tog] to end of row. 30 sts now on needle.  
Cast off. With wrong sides to inside, shape into cylinder so side edges meet at centre back. Put on; stitch waist to shirt hem.

### ***Fair Isle Bibbed Skirt***

Work from \* to \* as given for skirt.

**Next row** (right side): Knit.

**Next row:** Purl

**Next row:** [With skirt color, k1; with contrast color, k1] to end of row.

**Next row:** with contrast color, purl to end of row.

**Next row:** [With contrast color, k1; with skirt color, k1] to end of row.  
With skirt color and, beg with p row, work 7 rows St st.

**Next row:** [K2tog] to end of row: 30 sts now on needle.

Work from \* to \* as given for overalls bib, sewing up centre back of skirt before putting on. Make straps and sew on skirt as given above.

### ***Peaked Cap***

\*Cast on 3 sts.

**Row 1** (right side): K2 into each of first 2 sts, k1.

**Row 2:** K2 into first st, p2, k2 into next st, k1.

**Row 3:** K2 into first st, k4, k2 into next st, k1.

**Row 4:** K2 into first st, p6, k2 into next st, k1. 11 sts now on needle.

**Row 5:** Knit.

**Row 6:** k1, p9, k1\*

**Row 7:** Cast on 11 sts, knit across row; cast on 11 sts. 33 sts now on needle.

**Row 8** (wrong side): knit.

\*\*Beg with k row, work 8 rows St st, thus ending with right side facing for next row.

**Next row:** [K1, k2tog] to end of row. 22 sts now on needle

**Next row:** purl

**Next:** [k2tog] to end of row. 11 sts now on needle. Break yarn, thread through sts, pull tight; knot. Sew up centre back.\*\* Stitch to head.

### ***Baseball Cap***

Work from \* to \* as given for peaked cap. Rep rows 5 and 6 twice more. Cast on 11 sts, knit across row, cast on 11 sts. 33 sts now on needle.

**Next row:** Purl.

Work from \*\* to \*\* as given for peaked cap. With 2 strands of contrasting color, make French-knot button at tip. Stitch hat to head.

### ***Wide-brimmed Hat***

Cast on 33 sts. Work from \*\* to \*\* as given for peaked cap. Fasten off.

Cast on 7 sts for brim. Work 65 rows in garter st. Cast off. Sew 1 long edge of brim to bottom edge of hat, joining cast-on and cast-off rows at centre back. Stitch hat to head. Turn up brim front; tack to head.

### ***Straw hat***

Cast on 33 sts. Knit 1 row. Work from \*\* to \*\* as given for peaked cap. Fasten off.

Using 2 strands, cast on 3 sts for brim.

**Row 1:** K1, p1, k1.

Rep row until brim reaches around bottom edge of hat. Cast off. Sew 1 long edge of brim to bottom edge; join cast-on and cast-off rows at centre back. Stitch hat to head. With strand of contrasting color, make twisted cord. Tack cord to hat; knot and trim ends.

***Toque***

Cast on 33 sts. Knit 6 rows St st. Work from \*\* to \*\* as given from peaked cap. Sew up centre back, reversing seam at row 6 for brim. Stitch toque to head.

***Bag***

Cast on 98 sts. \*Work 5 rows garter st.

**Next row:** K8, yon, k2tog, k to last 10 sts, k2tog, yon, k to end of row\*.

Rep from \* to \* as given for bag in random stripes, until work measures 12.5 cm (5 in). Knit 2 rows. Fold in half so eyelets are at top edge; sew side edges together.

With 3 strands, make twisted cord. Thread through eyelets; knot and trim ends.

## ***D. Resource Lists***

### **1. Calgary Family Violence Services**

**Note: The following are resources within Calgary. For shelter information outside of Calgary, and for information for men who are experiencing abuse, see the boxes at the end of this list.**

**Awo Taan Calgary Native Women's Shelter**

Administration line: (403) 531-1970

24 hr crisis line: (403) 531-1972

(A secure, 21 day shelter with counseling for abused women and children)

**Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse:**

Administration line: (403) 237-6905

24 hr crisis line: (403) 237-5888

**Calgary Counselling Centre:**

(403) 265-4980

(Individual / group counseling for women, children and men affected by violence)

**Calgary Immigrant Women's Association:**

(403) 263-4414

(Counseling, including family violence, literacy, legal, settlement services)

**Calgary Legal Guidance:**

(403) 234-9266

(Court preparation; quick restraining orders)

**Calgary Police Service**

Child Abuse: (403) 206-8390

Domestic Conflict Unit: (403) 206-8339

Sex Crimes Unit: (403) 206-8390

Victims' Assistance Unit: (403) 206-8398

**Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services**

**(Child Welfare/ Emergency Social Services)**

(403) 297-2995

24 hr. Response Team: (403) 297-2995

**Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter:**

Administration: (403) 290-1556

24 hr. crisis line (403) 234-7233

(Secure, 21-day shelter and counseling for abused women and children.

Community based services to abused women who are unable to access shelter.)

**Child Abuse Hot Line:**

1-800-387-5437

(Telephone crisis support for children and youth)

- FaithLink:** (403) 283-3013  
(Support to faith leaders and communities regarding family violence situations)
- Kerby Rotary House:** (403) 705-3250  
(Long term shelter for abused seniors, male and female)
- Legal Aid Society of Alberta:** (403) 297-2260  
(Free legal services; financial means testing required)
- Men's Crisis Line:** (403) 266-4357  
(Telephone crisis counseling and support)
- Sonshine Community Services:** (403) 243-2002  
(Long term housing and counseling for abused women and children.  
Community based counseling for women)
- YWCA Sheriff King Home:**
- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Administration:     | (403) 266-4111 |
| 24 hr. crisis line: | (403) 266-0707 |
- (Secure, 21day shelter and counseling for abused women and children.  
Group counseling for men who have acted abusively)

**For Help Outside of Calgary:**

**Alberta Council of Women's Shelters: 1-866-331-3933**

(A toll-free number for direct help or to be connected with a shelter  
in one's area.)

***Help for Men who are Experiencing Abuse***

***All women's shelters or other service providers can help men with children who identify risk of violence with access to short-term emergency hotel accommodation, province- wide, through Crisis Units in Calgary and Edmonton. As well, the Wheatland Communities Crisis Shelter in Strathmore ([403] 934-6634) accommodates abused men with children.<sup>50</sup>***

<sup>50</sup> For more information on options for men experiencing abuse, see *Family Violence: It's Your Business: Community Resource Guide*. Accessible at <http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/fvp/page.cfm?pg=Materials%20and%20resources>.

## 2. Specifically for Seniors

### **Calgary Seniors' Resource Society**

The Calgary Seniors' Resource society offers a variety of services to help seniors experience a better quality of life. It relies on a core staff of social workers, as well as the assistance of hundreds of volunteers, who are recruited and trained to help seniors:

Access the Calgary Seniors' Resource Society at:

- (403) 266-6200
- [www.calgaryseniors.org](http://www.calgaryseniors.org)

### **Kerby Centre**

The Kerby Rotary House is the first shelter built in North America specifically for abused seniors. It offers safe, secure shelter to male and female victims of abuse who are over 60 years of age in Calgary and the surrounding area. The shelter provides crisis intervention, support, advocacy, referral, short-term housing and the necessities of daily living. Access the Kerby Centre at:

- [www.kerbycentre.com](http://www.kerbycentre.com)
- 24 hour crisis line: (403) 705-3250

### ***Seniors' Line at the Distress Centre***

The Seniors' Line (of the Distress Centre) offers 24 hour support for seniors and their caregivers – handling calls pertaining to seniors' care and elder abuse.

Access this line at:

- (403) 264-7700

### **OWLS program through the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (CWES)**

Older Women's Long-term Survival (OWLS) offers four different group experiences to women 50 years of age and older. OWLS helps participants deal with the long-term effects of domestic violence that may be related to an ongoing situation of violence, or to abuse that occurred previously in their lives. Three of the groups meet weekly, and the fourth is offered once a month. The latter group incorporates a support component, and brings in guest speakers from various community-based agencies. Access information about this program at:

- (403) 253-2912

### **Calgary Police Service – Senior Liaison Program**

This program works with seniors who have been victimized by financial abuse or scams. It will assist with other senior-related issues as well as provide information seminars about elder abuse. Access information about this program at:

- (403) 266-1234

### **3. Educational Resources on Domestic Violence/Abuse and/or the Christian Church**<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> VIOLET: Law & Abused Women website is a plain language, woman-friendly, safe space on the Internet providing passive and interactive services to meet the legal information needs of abused women and their service providers in Alberta. It is an example of a project that developed from the collaboration of women in the community, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Alberta's shelters and the Legal Studies Program at the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta. These collaborators are interested in testing and providing web-based learning opportunities for women involved with family violence. This site, developed in 1997 by the Legal Studies Program, has evolved and will continue to evolve as users' comments and suggestions are incorporated.

## ***Section IV: Pertaining to Children and Teens***

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## ***A. Child and Teen Violence***

### **1. Responding to Child Abuse Disclosures**<sup>1</sup>

**Reference: Calgary and Area Child and Family Services  
Child Welfare (403) 297-2995**

#### **Goals**

- The safety of the child/youth making the disclosure;
- Reporting the disclosure to Child Welfare; and
- Maintaining confidentiality.

#### **Response Steps**

If a child/adolescent discloses that they have been abused or child abuse is suspected **do not contact the child's family**. Take the following steps:

1. Offer to support the child/adolescent.
  - Listen calmly;
  - Believe the child/adolescent (and tell him/her that you believe them);
  - Reassure the child/adolescent that they are not to blame;
  - Do not interview the child/adolescent to collect more information;
  - Do not agree to any involvement that causes you to feel uncomfortable or is outside your role.
2. The person who receives the disclosure is responsible for ensuring that the information is reported to Child Welfare authorities. If possible have the child's birth date, his/her address, and the school s/he attends.
3. Consult with Child Welfare. **You are not required to prove that the child is in need of protective services.** You are only required to report disclosures of suspected abuse. It is essential that reporting to Child Welfare be prompt, at the earliest possible time following the disclosure of abuse. This allows time for a Child Welfare worker to respond. **The name of the caller need not be disclosed.**

**Ask for, and follow, instructions from the Child Welfare screener.**

Document observations or disclosures, action taken, and the plan for further action as communicated by Child Welfare.

Have information on community resources available for easy reference. Work with community professionals in providing individuals and the family the required assistance, including continued spiritual support.

**Seek support for yourself. Listening and responding to a disclosure of child abuse is stressful.**

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Calgary Domestic Violence Committee (CDVC) Protocol Project in conjunction with the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic Board of Education, 1999.

## **Do's and Don'ts of Handling Disclosures of Child Abuse**<sup>2</sup>

**DO:**

- Report disclosures and indicators of abuse to Child Welfare.
- Deal with any medical emergencies.
- Accept the seriousness of what has been disclosed.
- Give the child as much time as s/he needs to tell what happened.
- Let the child know that the full range of feelings they may be experiencing is normal.
- Let them know that s/he did not do anything to cause the abuse.
- Encourage the child to let you know what happens.
- Keep the information confidential. Inform only those people who need to be aware of the abuse.

**DON'T:**

- Don't notify the parents or guardian that a referral to Child Welfare has been made.
- Don't guarantee confidentiality (information that indicates a child may be at risk must be reported to Child Welfare), "quick fixes," or make promises that can't be kept.
- Don't promise that the abuse will stop.
- Don't display a strong emotional reaction. Expressing discomfort, disgust or embarrassment may make the child feel responsible for you or communicate that you are not comfortable hearing about the abuse.
- Don't assume that the crisis has passed because time has passed since the last incidence of abuse. This is particularly true of sexual abuse.
- Don't probe for information if abuse is disclosed; this is the role of the Child Welfare worker.

**You Can Help By:**

- Assisting the child to identify people in his/her life who will be supportive.
- Assisting the child to find the community resources s/he may need.
- Continuing to provide a safe and supportive environment for the child.
- Continue to be aware of behaviors or incidents that cause concern. Child Welfare workers may need more information to pursue an investigation.

**Seek support for yourself. Listening and responding to a disclosure of child abuse or domestic violence is stressful.**

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted the Calgary Domestic Violence Committee (CDVC) Protocol Project in conjunction with the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic Board of Education and in consultation with Calgary and Area Child and Family Services, 1999.

## **2. Recognizing the Child Witness/Victim of Domestic Violence**

Physical indicators may include:

- Physical complaints, i.e. stomach aches, headaches, chronic colds, allergies;
- Sleep disturbances, i.e. nightmares, insomnia, bedwetting;
- Eating disturbances;
- Depression.

Parents frequently report that they have consulted with a physician about the physical complaints of their children, but no medical problem was diagnosed.

Behavioral indicators may include:

- Fearful, i.e. afraid of loud noises or loud voices;
- Approval seeking, caretaking behavior;
- Behavioral extremes, i.e. acting out, isolated, withdrawal, extreme compliance, perfection seeking;
- Absence from school, running away from home;
- Early pregnancy and/or early marriage;
- Self-mutilation;
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse.

(Behavioral indicators include those identified for physical and emotional abuse.)

### 3. Bullying

#### a. Introduction

In a community survey done by “Safer Calgary” in 2004, the most pressing issue connected to crime and violence, as viewed by 8 out of 10 Calgarians, was the problem of bullying.<sup>3</sup> There is a widespread belief that bullying is not a problem within communities of faith,<sup>4</sup> but research reveals that religious communities experience abuse at about the same rate as the general population.<sup>5</sup> The effects of bullying, in all its forms, are devastating and lasting.

#### b. Definition

“Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate, hostile and repeated behavior by one or more people, which is intended to harm others...(it) is the assertion of power through aggression.”<sup>6</sup>

“Bullying is repeated violence.”<sup>7</sup>

Bullying can be carried out by a single individual, or by a group. The target of bullying can be an individual (the victim) or a group.<sup>8</sup> These behaviors are not limited to childhood. Pepler and Craig note that the school yard bully left unchecked may become the one who is violent in dating relationships, later practicing sexual harassment at work; this individual may also choose to act abusively towards spouse and children, as well as towards elderly parents.<sup>9</sup> Power and control exerted throughout one’s life.

The term “bullying” does not apply to conflict between two individuals of equal strength (physically, psychologically, positionally within a social setting). There is,

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<sup>3</sup> “Building Communities Free from Bullying,” *Safer Calgary: Safety in the Community*. Summer 2005, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Hecker Cram. *Bullying: A Spiritual Crisis*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 48.

<sup>5</sup> For example, a 1989 survey within the Christian Reformed Church revealed 28% of congregants had experienced at least one form of abuse: 12% reported physical abuse; 13% reported sexual abuse; 19% reported emotional abuse; and many had experienced more than one form of abuse. See Ann W. Annis and Rodger R. Rice, “A Survey of Abuse Prevalence Within the Christian Reformed Church,” *Journal of Religion and Abuse* 3, Issue 3/4 (June 18, 2002): 7-40. See also Mary Potter Engel, quoted in Marlene Jezierski, RN, BA in Nursing, *Creating A Safe Place: Encourage to Change*, eds. Lyla Pagels, RN, Parish Nurse Coordinator and Jane Kane, Encourage to Hope Ministries (Minnesota: Anoka County Faith Community Peace Initiative, 2000), 90.

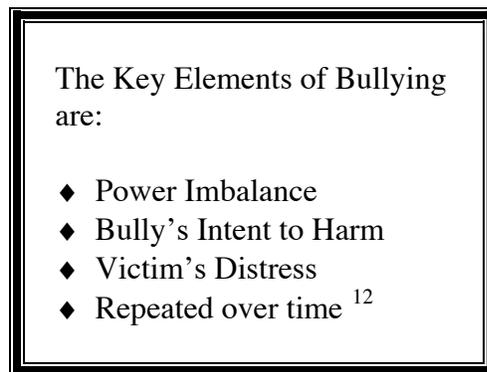
<sup>6</sup> Debra J. Pepler and Wendy Craig. “Making a Difference in Bullying.” Canada: La Marsh Centre for Research on Violence and Conflict Resolution (April 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Cram, 59.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Olweus. *Bullying at School* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 9, 10. See also Deanna S. Pledge, *When Something Feels Wrong: A Survival Guide About Abuse* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2003), 52.

<sup>9</sup> Pepler and Craig, (2000): 5.

rather, an imbalance in power.<sup>10</sup> It is an illusion of true relationship; bullying is “relation without empathy, sympathy or caring.”<sup>11</sup>



#### c. Forms

Bullying itself can take many forms:

1. Physical: hitting, pushing around, kicking, pinching, restraining another;
2. Verbal: taunts, put-downs, racist and sexist comments;
3. Psychological/emotional: intimidation;
4. Social: exclusion from the peer group;
5. Financial: extortion, stealing money/possessions.

Direct bullying involves blatant attacks on the victim (s). Indirect bullying involves the intentional exclusion of a victim from a social group.<sup>13</sup>

#### d. Statistics (School Children)

-Bullying occurs approximately every 7 minutes on the playground and every 25 minutes within the classroom.<sup>14</sup>

-6% of 4,743 Canadian children in grades 1 to 8 admitted to bullying others “more than once or twice” in the past six weeks.<sup>15</sup>

-15% of children reported that they had been victimized at the same rate.<sup>16</sup>

-Boys report more bullying than girls, but the discrepancy between boys' and girls' rates of bullying is not as great in playground observations.<sup>17</sup>

-Boys report more physical forms of bullying; girls tend to bully in indirect ways, such as gossiping and excluding.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Olweus, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Cram, 58.

<sup>12</sup> Pepler and Craig (2000): 4.

<sup>13</sup> Olweus, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Wendy Craig and Debra Pepler. “Observations of Bullying and Victimization in the School Yard.” *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 13, no. 2 (1997): 41-60.

<sup>15</sup> The National Crime Prevention Council of Canada (1997). Quoted from “Facts About Bullying” (BC Ministry Education). Accessed on June 17, 2006 at [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/live\\_vf/bullies\\_2.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/live_vf/bullies_2.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Pepler and Craig, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* See also Olweus, 19.

- Both boys and girls who are victimized report symptoms of depression (sadness, loss of interest in activities, etc.).<sup>19</sup>
- 85% of bullying episodes occur in the context of a peer group.<sup>20</sup>
- 80- 90% of students indicate that watching bullying makes them feel uncomfortable.<sup>21</sup>
- 60% of boys who were bullies in grades six-nine had at least one court conviction by the age of 24.<sup>22</sup>

e. Characteristics of Bullies

1. Aggression *and* physical strength;<sup>23</sup>
2. Understand violence to be acceptable;<sup>24</sup>
3. Impulsivity;
4. The need to dominate others;
5. Lack of empathy.<sup>25</sup>

The research is divided on the issue of self-esteem in bullies. Some researchers conclude that bullies assert power outwardly because of a lack of internal self-worth.<sup>26</sup> Olweus asserts that they have average to above average self-esteem.<sup>27</sup> While the motivation may differ within individuals who practice bullying, the pattern of behavior is reinforced when there is no intervention.

f. Characteristics of Victims

Generally, victims are categorized into two groups: passive and aggressive.

1. Passive

- a. Avoid aggression and confrontation;
- b. Do not elicit help from peers;
- c. Cry easily;
- d. Do not fight back;
- e. Are not assertive;
- f. Are anxious in social situations.

<sup>19</sup> See Phillip T. Slee, "Bullying in the Playground: The Impact of Interpersonal Violence on Australian Children's Perceptions of Their Play Environment," *Children's Environments* 12, no. 3 (1997): 61.

<sup>20</sup> Pepler and Craig, 1997, quoted in Pepler and Craig (2000): 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Olweus.

<sup>23</sup> The research would indicate that the *combination* of these two characteristics are involved in bullying. Many physically strong boys do not engage in bullying behavior. See Olweus, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Homes in which aggression is present is understood to be a contributing factor in bullying. There may be physical punishment used, and children may be taught to use force themselves in dealing with interpersonal problems. See Pepler and Craig (2000): 6.

<sup>25</sup> Olweus, 34.

<sup>26</sup> Anita Roberts. *Safe Teen: Powerful Alternatives to Violence* (Vancouver: Polestar, 2001), 26-29.

<sup>27</sup> Olweus, 59. See also G.M. Batsche, and H.M. Knoff, "Bullies and Their Victims: Understanding a Pervasive Problem in the Schools." *School Psychology Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1994): 165-174.

2. Aggressive (Provocative)
  - a. May behave in ways that irritate others;
  - b. May tease and taunt others;
  - c. Lack social skills;
  - d. Tend to be aggressive;
  - e. Will often respond to others aggressively.<sup>28</sup>

Victims are often more anxious than other students; they may be cautious, sensitive and quiet. They tend to have low self-esteem, with a negative view of themselves as well as their situation. A victim tends to have few friends, or has friends who are not able to stand up for him/her.<sup>29</sup> In boys, victimization is often associated with physical weakness.<sup>30</sup>

g. Why Bullying Exists and the Power of Intervention

Bullying behavior exists because it is permitted to. Children learn to behave aggressively through (a) observing aggression, (b) having their own aggressive tendencies reinforced through resulting dominance and status and/or (c) through being bullied themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Pepler, Craig and Roberts noted in a 1996 study that supervising teachers on a school playground intervened in bullying incidences only 4% of the time.<sup>32</sup> Many adults – parents, teachers, coaches, and youth leaders – do not take bullying seriously. They feel that it is “just a part of life.”<sup>33</sup>

Adults have a vital role in the prevention of bullying. Researchers suggest that schools implement clear rules about violence, and intervene consistently with consequences. They also suggest that consistent intervention may help children with tendencies towards aggressive behaviour to maintain a “prosocial orientation” as well as be more likely to choose appropriate ways to defend themselves.<sup>34</sup> When adults who observe bullying intervene, the behavior is effectively stopped.<sup>35</sup> The consistent intervention of significant adults greatly reduces bullying.<sup>36</sup>

Peers also play an important role. Pepler and Craig (1997) note that bullying stops in less than 10 seconds 57% of the time when peers intervene on behalf of the victim.<sup>37</sup> However, those who intervene are at risk for becoming “the next victim.”<sup>38</sup> And

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<sup>28</sup> Pepler and Craig, (2000): 32.

<sup>29</sup> M.J. Malone Jr., and D.G. Perry. “Features of Aggressive and Victimized Children's Friendships and Affiliative Preferences.” Poster presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Indianapolis, IN, March 1995. Information obtained from “Facts About Bullying” (BC Ministry of Education).

<sup>30</sup> Olweus, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Debra J. Pepler, Wendy M. Craig and William L. Roberts, “Observations on Aggressive and Nonaggressive Children on the School Playground,” *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 44 (1998): 20.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Pepler and Craig (2000): 12.

<sup>34</sup> Pepler, Craig and Roberts (1998): 20.

<sup>35</sup> Pepler and Craig (1997).

<sup>36</sup> Olweus, 101.

<sup>37</sup> Debra J. Pepler, Wendy M. Craig and Jennifer Connelly. “The Teen Relationship Project: Bullying.”

Accessed on June 17, 2006 at [http://www.arts.yorku.ca/lamarsh/projects/trp/trp\\_wv101.html](http://www.arts.yorku.ca/lamarsh/projects/trp/trp_wv101.html).

<sup>38</sup> Pepler and Craig (2000): 9.

without guidance, peers are likely to intervene aggressively, rather than prosocially. Children need to be taught how to handle bullying situations appropriately.<sup>39</sup>

Oxley and Taylor, in their anti-bullying work, advise that children:

1. Practice empathy: how would you feel if you were being bullied?
2. Keep a strong sense of who you are.
3. Be a friend and have at least one good friend who will stick with you through thick and thin.
4. Be a part of a group, and know when to leave the group when it isn't serving you well.
5. When you see someone being bullied, tell an adult.
6. Tell the bully to STOP THE BULLYING.
7. If you can't stop the bullying, walk away, get help from an adult, and get others to do the same – bullies want an audience.
8. BE A WITNESS; a courageous act!<sup>40</sup>

To effectively deal with bullying in the school setting, a cooperative, comprehensive approach among teachers, support staff, community supports, parents and students is necessary.<sup>41</sup> It follows that in any group setting involving children, a cooperative, educated response between adults and children is vital.

#### h. Parents Protecting Their Children

##### **1. What can I do if my child is being bullied?**<sup>42</sup>

If you suspect your child is being bullied, ask them directly. "*Are there any bullies in your class? What kinds of things do they do or say? Who do the bullies pick on? Do they ever bully you?*"

If the answer is yes - here are seven ways to take action right away.

##### **a. Offer comfort**

Let your child know you are there to support them, and that you will do all you can to help him/her feel safe. Let your child know the bullying is not his/her fault.

##### **b. Work with the school**

Contact the school immediately to make sure the situation will be monitored so your child will be safe. Ask the school for advice about contacting the parents of the child who is bullying and the parents of other victims. Check the school's plan for supervision and intervention during recess and noon hour. Work with the school to

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Jacki Oxley and Bill Taylor, HDSB. "Bullying Prevention: A Whole School Approach." Presentation at the Safe School Conference, Feb. 23, 2005. Information accessed on June 19, 2006 at <http://www.canadiansafeschools.com/pdf/WKSPH%20Bullying%20Prevention%20-%20Presentation.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> From "How Can I Tell if My Child is Being Bullied?" Alberta Government. Accessed on June 27, 2006 at <http://www.bullyfreealberta.ca/tips.htm>.

implement an anti-bullying program involving students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members.

**c. Make arrangements for safety**

Identify a safe adult and a safe place at school, so your child knows where to get help. If the bullying happens on the way to school, arrange for your child to go with older, supportive children, or take them to school yourself until the threat of bullying is gone.

**d. Help develop confidence**

Create "Circles of Support" for your child. If your child is shy or doesn't have friends, encourage them to participate in clubs or social groups that share similar interests. Encourage your child to invite other children to your home, one at a time. Suggest your child contact another student the night before to ask if they would like to play at recess or noon. Children who bully tend to pick on children who are isolated, so everything you can do to help your child develop confidence in his/her social skills will help. Tell your child to always be with a group and not be alone anywhere that bullying could happen.

**e. Practice effective responses**

Explain that crying or getting upset only encourages bullying, and work with your child to practice more effective responses to bullying situations. For example, s/he could say, "No" firmly and walk away. Another strategy is to have a reply ready for the bully's usual taunt. For example, "yes, my hair is very red and I like it."

**f. Build self-esteem**

Create opportunities for your child to do something well - a task, a sport or hobby - and praise him/her for it to help build self-esteem. Research shows that kids who survive bullying had at least one adult that cared about them, and the child realized that he/she was competent in something. As another way to build confidence, try to find opportunities for your child to mentor younger children.

**g. Communicate**

Encourage your child to talk with you about his/her feelings and ideas. This may take numerous attempts before your child is able to break free from the fear of tattling.

**If these steps don't work**

If you have tried the above options and your child is still overwhelmed with a negative atmosphere at school, consider giving your child a new start at a new school. If that is not an option, reassure your child that you will keep working until the situation is resolved.

## **2. What shouldn't I do?** <sup>43</sup>

If your child is being bullied there are five things you shouldn't do:

**a. Don't minimize, rationalize, or explain away the bully's behavior.**

If you do, you are inadvertently telling your child s/he is in this all alone.

**b. Don't rush in to solve the problem for your child.**

Unless your child is in physical danger, your taking over the situation will convey to your child that s/he really is helpless, and convey to the bully that your child really is a vulnerable target. Ensure the safety of your child, but also give him/her the tools to fend off and stand up to the bully in appropriate ways.

**c. Don't tell your child to avoid the bully.** <sup>44</sup>

Avoidance can be a short-term but not a long-term solution. Your child can't keep running and hiding remaining in fear of the bully. S/he will become an ever-weakening victim.

**d. Don't tell your child to fight back.**

Don't teach your child that fighting is the answer. Defend, yes. Be assertive, yes. But tell him/her to use their head and feet first. "This is a dumb place to be, I'm out of here." Kids who act assertively are more successful in counteracting the bully than those who fight back.

**e. Don't confront the bully or bully's parents alone.**

The bully learned to bully somewhere, maybe from his/her parents. They may be defensive, uncooperative and blame the victim. Enlist the help of the school.

## **3. How can I tell if my child is bullying others?** <sup>45</sup>

Children who bully may exhibit these 10 behaviors:

- a. Using verbal or physical aggression to deal with conflict.
- b. Coming home with items or money that do not belong to them.
- c. Hanging around with other children who appear aggressive.
- d. Having a hard time expressing feelings.
- e. Being unable to play cooperative games with others.
- f. Becoming angry when they lose a competitive game.
- g. Talking about "getting even" with others.
- h. Reacting to questioning with anger or avoidance.
- i. Playing inappropriately with much younger children.
- j. Putting down other children in conversations.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> There is variation in the literature on this point. Some sources counsel children to avoid people who bully them. See, for example, the *Staying Alive* Website, "Other Ways to Stop Someone from Bullying You." Accessed on June 28, 2006 at <http://www.stayingalive.ca/bullying.html#300>.

<sup>45</sup> "How Can I Tell if My Child is Being Bullied?"

#### **4. What can I do if my child is bullying?** <sup>46</sup>

A child who bullies must learn it is unacceptable and there will be consequences. If you learn your child is bullying, here are 11 ways to take action:

**a. Stay calm**

Try to get as much information as you can from teachers and others about your child's behaviour. Avoid blame and focus on potential solutions.

**b. Be firm**

Let your child know firmly that bullying is not acceptable, and that it must stop. Discuss positive and negative power, and how their actions can be helpful or hurtful. Stress that you still love him/her and will help him/her to change the bullying behavior.

**c. Ask questions**

Talk to your child about how bullying affects the victims. Ask your child how s/he would feel if they were being bullied.

**d. Encourage expression**

Encourage your child to express his or her feelings. Find out if there is something troubling your child and try to help solve the problem.

**e. Use non-violent consequences**

Work out an effective, non-violent consequence that is appropriate to your child's actions and age. For example, take away a privilege.

**f. Encourage responsibility-taking**

Reinforce the understanding that your child is responsible for his/her behaviour. Work out a way (with your child) for him/her to apologize and, if possible, for your child to make a gesture of restitution towards the victim of the bullying.

**g. Set rules**

Keep an eye on your child's activities, whereabouts and friends. Set clear but reasonable rules, and give immediate feedback on progress.

**h. Seek help**

Cooperate with the school in working to change your child's aggressive behaviour. Keep in touch with teachers/counselor to find out how your child is doing.

**i. Spend time**

Spend time with your child and offer praise when s/he shows non-violent, responsible behavior. Work with him/her to find non-violent ways to deal with anger and "let off steam."

**j. Model non-violent behaviour and monitor TV**

Make sure your child does not see violence between family members and monitor

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Some adaptations have been made to the original material.

television and video-game playing for violent content. Encourage discussion about suitable role models and heroes.

**k. Reflect**

Examine your own behaviour to see if you are using your power as a parent appropriately. Remember that you are a powerful role model in your child's life. Practice healthy interpersonal skills in your relationship in the family and in the community.

**5. What if my child is a witness to bullying?**<sup>47</sup>

Children who see another child being bullied may be reluctant to interfere or tell adults for fear that the bully will try to get even with them. But silence encourages bullying. If your child witnesses bullying, here are five ways to take action:

**a. Set a caring example**

Talk with your child about how the victim must feel. Try to help them feel empathy for others. Set a good example by letting your child see you care for others.

**b. Encourage support**

Talk with your child about the importance of standing up for others. Point out that if enough children stand up to the child bullying, s/he will have to change.

**c. Explain the need to tell**

Encourage your child to report bullying to an adult. Explain that there is a difference between tattling and reporting to prevent another child from being hurt.

**d. Encourage solutions**

Get your child to talk about what might stop someone from bullying. For example, s/he might create a distraction by changing the subject or suggesting a game.

**e. Help assess the situation**

Encourage your child to speak up for a bullying victim. But also help him/her determine when a situation is dangerous enough to go for help immediately.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3. Dating Violence

#### a. Introduction

Any relationship has the possibility for abuse – one party seeking to exert control over another. Dating violence – “the physical, psychological or sexual abuse of one partner by the other in a dating relationship where the couple is not living together”<sup>48</sup> – is prevalent within our society. The following section clearly defines what dating violence is, discusses why it happens, and enumerates the signs, for parents, that a relationship their child is in may not be healthy.

“Both guys and girls can abuse in dating relationships. But guys can cause much more damage.”<sup>49</sup>

#### b. Forms of Dating Violence

1. **Emotional/psychological:** controlling where one’s girl/boyfriend goes, making fun of him/her in front of others, blaming, threats, destroying possessions.

Note: Much physical and sexual violence begins with emotional/psychological abuse.<sup>50</sup>

2. **Physical violence:** hitting, punching, slapping, physically restraining a person, for example.
3. **Sexual Harassment:** Physical, verbal, psychological threats, but with a sexual connotation; unwelcome sexual references, sexist comments, unwelcome sexual advances. This may take the form of verbal assessments of a person’s body; jokes; leering; making obscene gestures; spreading sexual rumors; pulling on someone’s clothing, such as flipping up skirts or pulling at bra straps; and touching, pinching, or hugging with a sexual tone. Though both males and females may engage in sexual harassment, research shows that males do most of the harassing.<sup>51</sup> Sexual harassment is illegal.

**One child defined sexual harassment as “behaviour that makes you feel bad about being a girl or being a boy.”<sup>52</sup>**

<sup>48</sup> “Safety from Domestic Violence,” The Public Legal Education Network of Alberta (PLENA). Accessed on July 5, 2006 at [http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/community/plena\\_resource\\_manual.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/community/plena_resource_manual.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> *Right From the Start* Video (British Columbia: Victoria Women’s Transition House, 1992). Gamache says, “While both young men and women report having inflicted and received physical abuse, the experience and consequences are not equal. Females are more likely to be the victims of severe forms of physical violence and sexual violence.” See Denise Gamache, “Domination and Control: The Social Context of Dating Violence,” in *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Barry Levy (Washington: Seal Press, 1998), 73.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Cram, 163-166.

<sup>52</sup> *Appropriate Action: A Guide for Educators on Dealing with Sexual Harassment* Video. (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1998).

**Distinguishing between healthy flirting and sexual harassment: flirting is respectful and mutual; sexual harassment is an expression of power.**<sup>53</sup>

Note: When physical contact occurs, sexual harassment may cross over the line into sexual assault.<sup>54</sup>

4. **Sexual Assault:** Any form of sexual activity without a person's consent.<sup>55</sup>
5. **Date Rape:** forced vaginal or anal intercourse. Both males and females can be raped. When males are violated in this way, it often raises for them questions of their sexual orientation.<sup>56</sup>

Note: The term "rape" is no longer used in the Canadian criminal justice system. "Sexual assault" is the term used for any intentional sexual touching that is not consented to (section 271 of the Criminal Code).<sup>57</sup>

**"Rape is a violation of (a woman's) whole self. It is a soul wound."**<sup>58</sup>

c. Statistics

1. The population group most at risk for sexual harassment is adolescent girls between the ages of 14 and 18.<sup>59</sup>
2. The Statistics Canada 1993 Violence Against Women Survey found that:
  - 16% of all Canadian women (1.7 million) have been involved in at least one incident of sexual or physical assault by a date or boyfriend since the age of 16.
  - Half of all women who reported an incident of dating violence were between the ages of 18-34.
  - 24% of women 18 - 24 years had been sexually and/or physically assaulted by a date or boyfriend. This figure is 50 per cent higher than the national figure of 16%.
  - For single women 25-34 years of age - most of whom have been dating for longer periods of time - the percentage ever assaulted by a date is 29%.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Cram, 165.

<sup>55</sup> Sher Morgan and Judith Blackwell, *Right From the Start Study Guide* (British Columbia: The Victoria Women's Transition House, 1992), 12.

<sup>56</sup> Johnson and Shrier, (1987); Rogers and Terry (1984); Sebold (1987), as quoted in Frederick Mathews. *The Invisible Boy: Revisioning the Victimization of Male Children and Teens* (Ottawa: National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 1996), 38.

<sup>57</sup> For a summary of sexual crimes in Canada, as outlined by the Criminal Code, see "Sexual Assault," Sexual Assault Care Centre. Accessed on July 5, 2006 at <http://www.sacc.to/sya/crime/law.htm#sec271>.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, 180.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>60</sup> Holly Johnson, *Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada* (Canada: Nelson Canada, 1996), 112, 113.

3. In 2000, 40% of female victims of sexual assault were assaulted by a friend or casual acquaintance, 23% by a family member (including a spouse or ex-spouse), and 23% by a stranger.<sup>61</sup>

NOTE:

### **Dating Violence in Ethno-Cultural Communities:**

Young women from cultures in which dating and sexuality are prohibited and shameful are vulnerable to dating violence. They may be unable to seek help from their family or community for fear of being judged and blamed for ruining the family honor.

### **Same-Sex Dating Violence**

Dating violence can also occur in same-sex relationships. Individuals in same-sex relationships may be fearful of disclosing the abuse because they will have to “out” themselves and may be fearful of the responses from family and peers. This can pose a major barrier for many youth involved in violent dating relationships.

#### d. Why Does Dating Violence Occur?

Like all forms of abuse, dating violence is an issue of power and control. The following are reasons why dating violence is so prevalent within our society.

1. **The socialization of men:** Society is socialized to believe that men are naturally aggressive and dominant. The ideology of male superiority is still supported within the family and within society.<sup>62</sup> Boys may grow up thinking that it is acceptable to use force.<sup>63</sup>
2. **The socialization of women:** Women are socialized to be passive in their relationships with men and subordinate.<sup>64</sup> Young women and girls are taught that their worth as women is found in their sexual appeal; they are encouraged, via media, peer pressure and often their families, to “have a boyfriend” and to stay in relationship.<sup>65</sup>
3. **Inexperience in handling the emotional and social demands of the dating relationship:** Social worker Denise Gamache says, “Young women usually have not had dating and sexual experience on which to base decisions or to trust themselves to take actions on their own behalf in a relationship. Teens tend to confuse control and jealousy with love. Teens also tend to reject assistance from adult authorities and rely only on peers.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Statistics Canada, 2001.

<sup>62</sup> Gamache, in Levy, 71.

<sup>63</sup> *Right from the Start* Video.

<sup>64</sup> The University of Oklahoma Women’s Outreach Centre. “Dating Violence and Sexual Assault.”

Accessed on June 19, 2006 at <http://www.ou.edu/womensoc/>.

<sup>65</sup> Gamache, in Levy, 74. *Right from the Start* Video.

<sup>66</sup> Gamache, in Levy, 74.

Some researchers cite “the typical dating game” – where “no one knows what they want or says what they mean.”<sup>67</sup> They express the opinion that miscommunication can escalate into one person saying “no” to sexual activity, but the other not respecting that boundary. Bateman replies to this by saying, “While improved communication will help, let us not excuse the offenders by blaming the victims for not saying what they mean.”<sup>68</sup>

“In the past it’s been very common to blame the victim for provoking attack, for ‘asking for it.’ **Victims of sexual assault (or abuse of any kind) are never to blame, and are never responsible for an attack.**”<sup>69</sup>

e. Parents Protecting Their Children

There are some key things that parents can do to protect their children during these years.

1. Teach/Model the values of empathy and respect for all.

Cappello recommends that families *have* strong value systems, discuss value issues openly (and age appropriately), and *live* by those values.<sup>70</sup>

Teach them that force and insults should not be allowed in caring relationships and that no person has the right to possess and control another person.

Teach them that excessive jealousy is not a sign of love. It is a sign of insecurity and a need to control.

Teach them that forcing intimacy is not a sign of caring. It is the opposite. It shows disregard for the feelings of the person being forced.<sup>71</sup>

“These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6: 6-8)

2. Beware of parental messages sent to children.

- a. Is there the message in your home that your kids must be dating?
- b. Are your children allowed to say “no” within the context of the family?  
The ability to set boundaries – to say “no” - begins within the context of one’s family of origin.

<sup>67</sup> *Right from the Start* Video.

<sup>68</sup> Py Bateman, “The Context of Date Rape,” in *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Barry Levy (Washington: Seal Press, 1998), 96.

<sup>69</sup> Morgan and Blackwell, 12. Authors’ emphasis.

<sup>70</sup> Dominic Cappello. *Ten Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children About Violence* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 295.

<sup>71</sup> These last three points are from the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence *Dating Violence Fact Sheet*. (Alberta Family and Social Services.) Accessible in Kendra Nixon, *Safety From Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual for Service Providers* (Alberta: PLENA, 2002), 64.

## c. Are daughters taught to be assertive?

Author Lisa Graham McMinn speaks of the need for parents in religious families to nurture their daughters' voices, to "break the silence sphere" in all aspects of life, including the home. Teaching daughters to be assertive in the home, to give a place for them to make their voices heard about what they like and don't like, feel comfortable with and don't feel comfortable with, is a great protection for them in all arenas in life.<sup>72</sup>

Researchers Brown and Gilligan discuss the differences in psychology and in the socialization of boys and girls within society when they say, "...Men often (speak) as if they (are) not living in relationship with others – as if they (are) autonomous or self-governing, free to speak and move as they pleased. Women in contrast, (tend) to speak of themselves as living in connection with others and yet (describe) a relational crisis which (is) inherently paradoxical: a giving up of voice, an abandonment of self, for the sake of becoming a good woman and having relationship."<sup>73</sup>

Encourage daughters to speak up in the family, to voice their opinions, to say "no" at home and in other contexts. Support activities that develop their self esteem, their sense of mastery (such as sports, music, etc.)

## 3. Help teens build self-esteem by:

- Acknowledging the positive things they do;
- Being positive when correcting them;
- Listening respectfully when they are telling you something;
- Believing what they say and taking it seriously;
- Allowing them to make decisions appropriate to their ability;
- Encouraging them to express their likes and dislikes.<sup>74</sup>

4. Help young people to be self-reliant by allowing and encouraging them to do things for themselves.<sup>75</sup>

## 5. Keep the lines of communication open.

- a. Can your child talk to you about his/her friends?
- b. Is your home open to his/her friends? Do you know them? Do they know you?
- c. Can you talk about issues such as boundaries and sexuality with your child?
- d. Encourage your children to talk about the things that are bothering them.

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<sup>72</sup> See Lisa Graham McMinn, *Growing Strong Daughters: Encouraging Girls to Become All They're Meant to Be* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan. *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2.

<sup>74</sup> From the *Dating Violence Fact Sheet* (Alberta Family and Social Services). Information can be accessed in Nixon, 64.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

6. Be aware of the signs of abusive behaviour in the person your son/daughter is dating.
  - a. Control
    - i. Are your son or daughter's other relationships being set aside for this one person?
    - ii. Do you see a change in your child's personality through this relationship? Is he/she less confident, more fearful?
  - b. Humiliation
    - i. Does the boy/girlfriend of your child humiliate him/her in front of others?
  - c. Jealousy
    - i. Is this individual jealous of your child for no good reason?
    - ii. Is he/she not "allowed" to speak with others of the opposite gender?<sup>76</sup>

These are significant warning signs that the relationship is abusive; recognize these signs before your child's dating relationship gets really out of hand. **ADDRESS YOUR CONCERNS WITH YOUR CHILD.**

- d. Further signs that your child may be experiencing abuse in a dating relationship include:<sup>77</sup>
  - Signs of injury (bruises, sores, scratches, broken bones) – especially injuries that don't match up with the story you are told about how the injury happened);
  - Skipping school;
  - Dropping out of school;
  - Falling or failing grades;
  - Mood or personality changes;
  - Change in their style of clothing or make-up;
  - Emotional outbursts; over-reacting to seemingly small things;
  - Withdrawing from friends or family; not being around as much; not being at events or activities of which they used to be a part;
  - Drug or alcohol abuse, especially increased use of alcohol or drugs;
  - Not being able to make decisions;
  - Pregnancy (One pattern of abusive relationships is that a pregnancy occurs fairly early in the relationship. As well, in abusive relationships, the first violent incident often occurs during pregnancy.)

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<sup>76</sup> *Right from the Start* Video. See also "Safety from Domestic Violence" (PLENA).

<sup>77</sup> From Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Draft Pamphlet "Dating Abuse" (AB: Alberta Children's Services, April 2006), 11.

## ***B. Exercises for Children and Teens About Violence***

### **1. Sunday School Lessons**<sup>78</sup>

#### **a. Grades K – 3**

**Scripture:** John 3:16; Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:36-37; Luke 9:46-48; Luke 15:11-32  
Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22

#### **Activity: Kindness Basket**

Make a basket by cutting two circles from construction or cardstock paper. Fold the circles in half and overlap them to form the basket. Glue or staple the basket together and add a paper handle. Shredded paper or Easter grass may be added.

Write a kind deed you can perform on the flower stem.

#### **Activity: “Beloved” Flowers**

Draw simple 4” flowers heads from construction or cardstock paper. At the centre print “I AM THE BELOVED CHILD.” Bend in half and twist a pipe cleaner and insert the pipe cleaner into the centre of the flower and fold flat the two ends. The pipe cleaner serves as a stem and a handle. Have children make two or more, one for them and one(s) for them to give to others.

Children need to know that people are valuable, no matter what they do, just because they exist. Parents, teachers, older brothers and sisters, friends and even kids they don’t particularly like, are all valuable and are all “beloved” children of God.

Just being told, we are **VALUABLE** is not enough, we must also treat each other and our self as valuable children of the Creator (John 3:16; Matthew 22:39).

In addition to being valuable, we are also **FALLIBLE** – we make mistakes – all of us, adults as well as children (Luke 15:11-32). Sometimes we hurt each other. We need to learn to notice our impact on others and when we have caused harm or hurt, we need to be accountable (admit our hurtful behavior). Adults need to be willing to model this with children as well as teach children to be accountable.

After we have admitted to understanding that our choice to behave in that way has caused hurt and acknowledged our sadness/disappointment at causing another pain, we may want to ask the other person to accept us as friends again. The person we have hurt may not be ready to be friends again. Sometimes we have to wait. They may even decide to find other friends and our friendship with them may not be restored, but we have done what we could. Hurtful behavior harms relationships. Forgiveness helps us heal. Even when

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<sup>78</sup> The following lessons for K-3 and 4-6 were developed by Betsy Young, Pastoral Care Coordinator, United Church of Canada, Calgary Presbytery.

another will not forgive us, we can learn to forgive our self and stop that hurtful behavior in the future.

Sometimes when we are hurt by another's behavior, we may decide that it is best for us not to continue in relationship with that person. This is sometimes difficult when the person who has hurt us is an adult that we rely on in some way. Sometimes we need to ask for help from other kids or other adults to understand how to resolve hurtful relationships.

Even when we make mistakes, we are still **VALUABLE**. Our value is a gift to us from the Source of all life that loves us and all living things and calls each of us to keep learning and growing and telling the truth and loving, even when it's hard. We sometimes forget that we are **BELOVED** and sometimes others lie to us and tell us or treat us as if we have no **VALUE**, as if we do not matter, but that is not the truth. We learn from Jesus and from all the sacred stories that life does matter, no matter what.

### **Activity: Hurtful to Helpful**

- Make a list of hurtful and helpful behaviors. (See next page for a possible list.)
- Ask the children to identify each behavior as either hurtful or helpful.
- Invite them to talk about what those behaviors feel like, when receiving AND doing them.
- Ask the children why they think people act in those ways (both hurtful and helpful).
- Ask the children what they have seen people do when they realize they have hurt another.
- Ask the children how they would like someone to approach them if they had hurt this person's feelings.
- Point out that our feelings help us to discover what behaviors help us and which ones do not help us. Learning to be kind to others and to our self is not easy.
- Ask the children what they can do when someone hurts them. This is a good time to talk about the difference between TELLING and TATTILING.
- Telling involves getting help for yourself or others, maintaining safety, speaking up when you are hurt or afraid.
- Tattling involves getting someone else in trouble in order to make yourself look good, or to appear better than someone else in another's eyes; it is manipulative and dishonest.

Hitting back is often easier, but then we have become hurtful to another. Sometimes kindness tells us to walk away, sometimes it tells us to get help, sometimes it tells us to stand up and say STOP. What else might kindness/helpfulness tell us to do?

## Possible Behaviors to Name:

hitting	smiling	name-calling	slapping
kicking	sitting together	inviting to play	sharing snacks
yelling	pushing	laughing at	excluding from play
ignoring	not inviting	talking about	destroying property
listening	hurting pets	taking their things	helping
defending	teasing	tattling	asking for help

**b. Grades 4-6****The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

Luke 10:25-37

**TEACHERS:** This story offers a good opportunity to explore our responses to violence, our attitudes toward victims and to examine social and cultural expectations that can influence our priorities and our choices. The story also provides an example of the new way, the “reign of God” that Jesus is encouraging us to grow up to.

This story could be used as a mini drama where the children are divided into 4 groups: victims, priests, Levites/teachers of the law, and Samaritans. The children are invited to listen to the story from the perspective of their character and to notice how the story sounds / feels / looks from that point of view. The story does not tell us a lot about who these people were but we might imagine:

**VICTIM:** A young, strong man travels a rocky road by himself, on foot between Jerusalem and Jericho, a distance (*as the crow flies*) of about 30 km and likely a fair bit longer on the ground. Road bandits likely were a known hazard, but the man in the story still felt safe enough to take the journey. Although it is not stated, we might imagine that this man was a Jew, as he was traveling from Jerusalem. Or perhaps he was not a Jew, which the Levite

discovered when he looked closely at him. Perhaps the Levite discovered that the victim was not one of his community and therefore he had no, or at least less, duty to assist.

PRIEST: This man was also traveling alone. We know from other stories in the Bible that purity was an important religious consideration for there were many rules about what you could eat, touch, do and remain pure enough to perform rituals of worship.<sup>79</sup> The priests were the only people who could enter the Holy of Holies without fear of death. Failure to maintain the purity codes also was believed to result in death.

LEVITE: This man, also traveling alone, belonged to a special clan who, since the time of the Exodus, had been set apart, purified and given the task of caring for the Tent of God's presence. (Numbers 8:5-26). Levites were to be the servants of the priests (Numbers 2:5-13). Before the Exile to Babylon, Levites had not always been priestly celebrants at the altar. Many of them were "teaching priests" (II Chronicles 15:3, 17:9, 35:3). Their vocation was to give the people Torah, or teaching about the ways in which God was to be worshiped and served.<sup>80</sup>

In the Hebrew community, these groups of men were considered to be especially knowledgeable of the ways of Yahweh and close to Yahweh. They could be trusted to know what was correct and good.

SAMARITAN: By the time of Jesus, the Jews despised the Samaritans. From the Jewish standpoint, the Samaritans had been corrupted by mixing with the foreign peoples when the Assyrians had settled in the area north of Judea. The Samaritans were a Semitic people who shared with Judaism the belief that the Law of Moses was the Word of God, although their version of it differed slightly from the accepted Jewish version. But their chief point of disagreement was on the place of worship (Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem), where they had their own priesthood distinct from the Jerusalem priesthood. Samaria was a kind of enclave within predominately Jewish territory. The Samaritans felt that they were faithful adherents to the Mosaic tradition.<sup>81</sup>

Earlier in their history, the Samaritans had shared the Jewish interest in rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem after the return from the Babylonian exile. The Samaritans' offer to help rebuild the Temple was spurned by Zerubbabel, so the hand of friendship curled into a fist. Samaritan hostility was not prompted by the Jewish rebuff alone, however, for there undoubtedly was economic and political rivalry between the two peoples as well. But in any case, the Samaritans then did everything in their power to disrupt the building of the Temple. (See Ezra 4 – 5.)<sup>82</sup>

The characters in this story represent two very different social groups that the audience of Jesus would have understood. The priest and Levite were very good, righteous, Godly men who would have been well respected by the community and who were the keepers of the

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<sup>79</sup> See the entire book of Leviticus. No priest was to make himself ritually unclean by taking part in funeral ceremonies, even when a relative died (although there were some exceptions – see Leviticus 21).

<sup>80</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson. *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957) 225, 379, 380.

<sup>81</sup> Howard C. Kee, Franklin W. Young, and Karlfried Froehlich. *Understanding the New Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), 310, 311.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, 440.

community's faith tradition – very important positions for the communities well being. These men had been entrusted with tasks that looked after the welfare of the people. The Samaritan, on the other hand, would have been seen as having VERY LOW status; he even would have been despised. He would have had NO social / cultural obligation to care for the victim, especially if the victim were a Jew. In fact, the victim might even have objected to being cared for by a Samaritan. The social / cultural pressure would have encouraged the Samaritan to simply walk on by for he “owed” the victim nothing.

The Samaritan represented the group in this time and in this culture with the LOWEST status, perhaps only higher than those who were ill with the dreaded skin disease (leprosy). You might invite the children to imagine what group in their culture would represent a similarly prejudiced group. Who are the most vulnerable people?

THE GROUPS: Have the children form into these different groups and help them get a feel for the attitudes, expectations and pressures on their character. Set the stage for the children by helping them to imagine who might play these roles in today's world. Who do people *look up* to and respect? Who are the powerful, influential people? How do/might they respond to the vulnerable, wounded, and needy? Who are the groups that people *look down* on? Who are the voiceless, forgotten people? How do/might they respond to the vulnerable, the wounded, the needy?

THE STORY: Read the story of the GOOD SAMARITAN found in Luke 10:25-37.

#### REFLECTION & QUESTIONS:

1. What did the story feel like as your character?
2. a. Why do you think your character acted as he did? (It is important to remember that the priest and the Levite are not bad, selfish people. They had priorities that placed certain “correct” behavior ahead of kindness and helping someone in serious need.)  
b. In what ways do we do the same today?
3. What were the priorities of your character? Or, how did your character decide what to do?
4. For what reasons do you think that the Samaritan stopped to help? Why did he continue to help until the victim was in a safe place? It is important to note that help included SAFETY.
5. In what ways were the Samaritan and the victim alike?
6. What factors do you think enabled the Samaritan to help the victim and what factors blocked the priest and the Levite from helping?
7. Jesus tells this story as part of his answer to the question, “What must I do to receive eternal life?” What does the story teach us today about what it means to live an eternal, full, abundant, deeply human life?
8. What do you think Jesus wanted his audience to understand about the “dream / reign of God”?
9. What do you think and feel about this story?
10. Who or what will this story help you to notice? (This is one reason why it is important to teach and know the sacred stories of our tradition.)
11. How does this story impact our laws and expectations? (Do the children know about Good Samaritan legal precedents? What is affecting these choices today?)

## 2. Discussion Scenarios on Bullying

Using the definition for bullying, categorize the following statements under one of the three headings:

*Definitely Bullying*

*Could be Bullying*

*Definitely not Bullying*

- A group of senior boys wolf whistle as Helen walks past them in the corridor.
- Carol was teased by her friend about a boy liking her.
- A group of boys was continually putting down a new student from India.
- Sally decided that no one was to speak with her friend Tracy.
- Jim chased Susan around the playground demanding a kiss.
- The teacher didn't realize that the tune the students hummed every day was done to upset Susan.
- Angela took Mary's money from her, bought herself lunch and gave back Mary 10 cents change.
- Karen's friend told her she needs to go on a diet.
- The teacher uses sarcasm to control her class.
- The principal runs the school in a bossy way, pulling rank whenever challenged by the staff.
- The way the caretaker yells at the students scares them.
- At recess the other boys would not let Tom join in their game, claiming he is too stupid.
- Two boys had a fight on the school ground.
- Mr. Jones is constantly telling his son that he is useless.
- Peter, who saw himself as a leader, criticized anyone who spoiled the game.
- Gary forced his way in front of the little kids in the lunch room line up.
- Kathy made fun of the woman on the bus, who was dressed, in what she thought, were old fashioned clothes.

### **3. To Be Kind or Not To Be Kind**

By Kelly Gross<sup>83</sup>

*This is a skit about two kings and the consequences of how they rule. One is kind; the other mean.*

#### **Skit for 11 or more persons**

Narrator  
King Kindness, King Meanness  
Master  
Shepherd 1, Shepherd 2  
Army men  
Guard 1, Guard 2  
Slave 1, Slave 2

#### **Duration:**

Approximately 15 minutes

#### **Target Age:**

Grades 2-6



#### **Scene One: King's Throne Room**

- Narrator** Once upon a time in a faraway kingdom lived a ruler named King Kindness. He always showed kindness and fairness to all people, no matter what their status in life. He was well liked and had many friends. On one royal morning...
- King Kindness** Well, good morning fellow guard! How are you this lovely morning?
- Guard 1** *(Bows while speaking)* Just fine your majesty. Thank you for asking, sire.
- King Kindness** So what is on the agenda this morning?
- Guard 1** A shepherd has a problem and would like to speak to you.
- King Kindness** Please show him in.
- (Guard one brings in shepherd. Shepherd falls to his knees, begging for the king's help.)*
- Shepherd 1** Oh, royal king! My sheep, (catching his breath), my sheep...

<sup>83</sup> Used with permission.

- King Kindness** Take your time my good fellow, take your time.
- Shepherd 1** (*Speaking excitedly*) My sheep are running out of grazing area. If they run out of grazing area, they'll starve. If they starve, they'll die. If they die, I am out of a job. If I'm out of a job, I'll...
- King Kindness** Calm down. Calm down. Everything will be fine. Just take what you need of my land. I have more than I need.
- Shepherd 1** Thank you, dear king! How can I repay you?
- King Kindness** By taking care of our kingdom's sheep. That is all.
- Shepherd 1** (*Bowing as he speaks*) I will! I will! Thank you, your majesty! You are so kind! (*Leaves stage*)
- Guard 1** (*Guard brings in slave*) Your majesty, this slave was caught running from her master. What do I do?
- King Kindness** Bring in her master, please. (*Guard brings in master.*) Tell me why has your slave tried to run away?
- Master** (*Master has an attitude. He does not bow or show any respect.*) Well, O royal one, she was asking for more grain to feed her SLAVE family. I, of course, said no! Why does a slave family deserve more grain? It would only take away from the rich!
- King Kindness** Slave, is this true?
- Master** (*Master is very upset that the slave is allowed to speak.*) You're going to let a slave speak? They don't have the right!
- King Kindness** They do in my kingdom! (*King looks kindly at slave.*) Now please tell me, is this true?
- Slave 1** (*Bowing*) Yes, O king, my family was hungry. We have worked the fields, but never receive enough grain for one day's meal. I was running away to try to save my family from starvation!
- (*King stands up shakes his head and points directly at master in disapproval.*)
- King Kindness** I am very disappointed! Your slaves are there to serve you. Yet you do not show them any kindness in sharing grain. Not even for one day's meal! I grant your slaves freedom from you and as much grain as they need to feed their families.
- Master** (*Gets on his knees begging for mercy.*) But, but, but king that would be over half my property! Please reconsider!

**King Kindness** That is final. Maybe next time you will show more kindness in your decisions.

*(Guard walks them out with master still pleading.)*

**Narrator** As the years passed the king continued to show much kindness in all his decisions in his kingdom. The people loved him and his kingdom prospered. Then one very, very sad day King Kindness died at a very ripe, old age. Unfortunately King Kindness only had one heir and that was his nephew King Meanness. He took over the kingdom and treated the people poorly, without any kindness. He had few friends, if any, and many enemies. And on one royal morning...

### **Scene Two: Another King's Throne Room**

**King Meanness** *(Yelling for his guard.)* Guard! Guard! Where is that good for nothing guard? Guard!

**Guard 2** *(Runs in out of breath and bowing and breathing heavily)* Yes, sire!

**King Meanness** What problems await me today?

**Guard 2** Well, sire, I am glad you asked because... *(King rudely interrupts.)*

**King Meanness** Just tell me already!

**Guard 2** A shepherd is here to speak to you about a problem, he is... *(King rudely interrupts again.)*

**King Meanness** Oh, just show him in and let's get this over with!

**Shepherd 2** *(Bows and begs for help.)* Oh, your majesty, your majesty! I am in great need of your help!

**King Meanness** *(Speaking disrespectfully)* Who isn't?!

**Shepherd 2** My sheep will soon run out of grazing area and they will surely die of starvation without more land.

**King Meanness** And what do you expect me to do? Give you land? *(Laughs)* Giving a lowly shepherd land! *(Laughs again.)* How ridiculous! It's your problem, now go...

**Shepherd 2** But king, please, I need your help or...

**King Meanness** Go; you tire me! Guard! Take him away! How absurd, me, give land away. A mighty king, never!

- Guard 2**                    *(Brings in slave.)* Your majesty, this slave was caught running away from her master. What do I do?
- King Meanness**        Must I know everything?! Just throw her in prison, of course!
- Slave 2**                    *(Bows down.)* Oh king, I was only running away to find food for my family! Please, not prison, sire; my family will never survive. They need your help!
- King Meanness**        *(Stands up in anger.)* Did I say speak? Did I just hear a slave speak to me - the king of all the land? A slave speaking to royalty! Have you lost your mind? You're not worthy to kiss the ground I walk on. Guard, take her away, immediately!
- Guard 2**                    But, sire, don't you want to hear the whole story?
- King Meanness**        Have I not made myself clear?! She is a slave! Now take her away! *(Starts talking to himself)* Why do I put up with that guard? *(Mocks guard's words)* Don't you want to hear the whole story? If I wanted to hear the whole story, I would have asked to hear the whole story. What I put up with around here!
- Narrator**                King Meanness continued to treat people in this way. He only got meaner and meaner. It caused the people to lose hope in their kingdom and they started to move away, only leaving the old and weak who were unable to move. His kingdom was growing smaller and his enemies were growing larger.  
Then on yet another royal morning...
- Guard 2**                    *(Runs in out of breath)* Oh, king, bad news, bad, bad, news! It's just terrible and horrible! Just wait until you hear this...
- King Meanness**        Just tell me already!
- Guard 2**                    There is an army marching in from the North to take over your kingdom! What should we do?
- King Meanness**        *(Calmly)* Just gather up my army.
- Guard 2**                    But king, I am your army!
- King Meanness**        *(Starting to realize there is trouble.)* What? Then gather up my people to form an army.
- Guard 2**                    What people, sire? The only people in your kingdom are the old and the weak. The rest have moved away!

**King Meanness**      *(Very upset)* Oh, what do I do? I'll lose my castle! I'll lose my lands! I'll lose my kingdom! I'll lose everything!

**Guard 2**              And now you've lost me! *(Guard runs out.)*

**Foreign Army Men**   We are taking over this kingdom and now you are our prisoner!

*(Two guards from the army come on stage and take king prisoner.)*

**King Meanness**      *(King says as they drag him out)* Where's my army? Where're my people? Please let me go! Let me go! No! No!

**Narrator**              As God's Word says...  
*(Narrator reads Luke 6:31; Proverbs 11:17; and Ephesians 4:32.)*

## **5. Youth Workshop: Practicing Non-violence** <sup>84</sup>

**Time:** 3 hours (can be divided into shorter segments)

**Goals:**

- To explore and examine the presence of violence in our everyday lives, including the sacred stories found in the Bible.
- To develop a stronger sense of what is meant by “violence.”
- To explore alternatives to violence put forth in societies around the world, as well as in the Bible.

**Materials:**

- Flipchart paper
- Colored markers
- Glue sticks
- Old magazines
- Bibles

**Step One: Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)**

Each person will share their name and what community s/he is from.

**Step Two: Where Does Violence Live? (30 minutes)**

Divide the teens into small groups. Ask each group to choose one of the following places: home, community, a public space, the legal system, a faith community, and government. Give each group a piece of flip chart paper, markers, glue sticks and magazines. Give the groups the following task:

Think through “a day in the life of” your group’s focus (for example, a day in the life of a home or church). Think about the events that could happen in the course of a day, the things people see and hear, and the actions they would take.

Then brainstorm:

- Where in the course of a day might the average person encounter violence?
- How does s/he encounter it? Record the responses collectively in as creative a way as possible. (For example, draw a house and fill it with drawn or cut images and words.)

After 20 minutes, gather the groups back into a whole, and have every group briefly present their findings. Then discuss:

- What forms does violence take?
- Is violence common place in our society?

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<sup>84</sup> Barfoot, G. Ed. *Making Waves*. Spring 2002: Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada. Reprinted with permission, June, 3, 2002. (Not recommended for younger teens)

**Step Three: Is Violence Sacred? (30 minutes)**

You might start this section by acknowledging that many religions are focused on sacred scriptures that send mixed messages about violence. The Bible is a case in point; it contains stories that are filled with violent acts and yet are central to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths. Often we hear these stories again and again from a very young age.

Ask the small groups to gather again. Give each group a slip of paper with one of the following readings, asking them to appoint someone in the group to read the passage aloud:

- Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)
- The Depravity of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-11)
- Penalties for Disobedience (Leviticus 26:27-39)
- Tamar and Amnon (2 Samuel 13:1-21)
- Massacre of the Infants (Matthew 2:13-18)
- Jesus Cleanses the Temple (Mark 11:15-19)

After the passage is read, and any questions have been answered, the small group should discuss:

- How did you feel about the passage you read?
- In the group's view, does the story portray a form of violence?
- What is the violence taking place? What is it intended to accomplish?
- What impact might these sacred stories have on our faith communities?

**Break****Step Four: How do we respond to violence? (30 minutes)**

This is an exercise that involves moving around, so it requires some space. Explain that you are going to read out some scenarios that involve, or potentially involve, violence.

*Part A:* Ask people to respond to the following question: Do they feel that this scenario is violent and/or contributes directly to violence?

Explain that the group will respond by putting itself on a line continuum. One end of the room will be "yes" and the other "no", with points between representing a spectrum. People should position themselves according to their first reaction to the question. Remind the group that this exercise is not a judgment. All responses are valid.

Explain that after each scenario, people who wish to can offer a brief explanation of their position on the spectrum. If their explanation leads others to wishing to change their positions, people should feel free to do this!

Scenarios: read these, one at a time, leaving time for people to find their place on the spectrum.

- Swearing at a driver who cuts you off.
- Fighting back if you are physically attacked on the street or at school.
- Shoving the guy who called your friend a name.

- Getting tear-gassed at a demonstration, picking up the tear gas canister, and throwing it back towards the police.
- Cat calling at women in the street.
- Getting worked up at kids' hockey games and screaming at the opposing team.
- While out on the picket line, slamming your sign or your fist in the hood of a car that is trying to cross the line.
- Shouting down a local politician at a meeting.
- Buying your kids a computer game that features people shooting each other.
- Paying that portion of your taxes that goes towards military spending.

*Part B:* Now tell the group that you will run through the scenarios again. This time the question is: would you do this? (For example, would you swear at someone who cut you off?) If possible, place the continuum so that it runs at a different angle than the previous one. Again, stress that the intent is to share our reactions, not to judge any of these responses.

*Part C:* Debrief with the whole group. How did the second continuum feel different than the first? What is the overall response to this exercise? Time permitting, ask the question:

- Based on our discussion so far, what is violence? How do we begin to draw the line between what is violent and what is non-violent?

#### **Step Five: Sacred examples of non-violence (30 minutes)**

Sacred scripture can be very contradictory. Explain that while the Bible contains stories of much violence, it also offers stories of those who resisted violence. Ask the group to return to the small groups. Give each group one of the following readings, asking them to appoint someone in the group to read the passage aloud:

- David Spares Saul's Life (1 Samuel 24:1-22)
- The Future House of God (Micah 4:1-5)
- The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (Matthew 26:47-56)
- Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2:1-13)
- Concerning Retaliation (Romans 12:9-21).

Then discuss in small groups:

- What was unusual about these stories in Biblical times? What would be unusual about them in today's world?

Return to the large group, and discuss:

- In what ways do these stories challenge us as modern people of faith?
- In what ways might they inspire a modern alternative to violence?

#### **Step Six: Daring to see another way (15 minutes)**

Following on the examples of non-violence offered in the Bible, invite participants to name people or groups (be they locally or globally famous) who have inspired or modeled non-violence. Do this quickly, writing down only the names.

Then go back over the list, asking:

- Why or for what are they remembered?
- How did or do they challenge mainstream society's approach to conflict? What was, or is, society's response?

### **Step Seven: Creating alternatives to violence (25 minutes)**

Often it seems that non-violent alternatives get no press in our society, or are not taken seriously. While it is true that practical alternatives to violence may seem few and far between, they do exist. And most are grounded in the hopes and work of a few people who are tired of being trapped in endless circles of violence.

Ask people to choose one of the following groups and to brainstorm alternatives to violence in the home, community, schools, faith community or government.

In the groups brainstorm the following, centering your discussion around your group's specific setting.

- What are alternatives to violence, which are already in place in this situation?
- What are practical and realistic steps that can be taken to support these initiatives?
- What are the needs, related to the prevention or aftermath of violence, which are not addressed?

Invite the groups to write down summaries as they go. After 15 minutes, call the groups back. Ask one person from each group to report back briefly.

### **Step Eight: Follow-up (10 minutes)**

If time permits, discuss:

- Is there follow-up on any of these present initiatives or new ideas that this group can contribute? Is another meeting required to talk about this further?
- Are there areas of continued learning and discussion that this group can carry forward?

Make notes of these responses. In a separate column, write the names and contact information for those people who would like to do further work.

### **Step Nine: Closing and Reflection (5 minutes)**

After a period of silence, ask the group to share their own reflections on the conversation of the past few hours. When all those who want to have spoken, close with a prayer.

## **6. Handouts for Teens**

The following 2 handouts can be used in a home or a church setting to speak with teens on dating safety:

**a. Dating Safety Tips**<sup>85</sup>

1. Consider double-dating the first few times you're out with someone new.
2. Plan to be safe.
  - Plan in advance different ways to be safe if you should find yourself in a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation.
  - List adults you could tell about abuse, including people at school, such as teachers, principal, counselor and security staff.
  - List friends you can ask to help you remain safe.
  - Use the buddy system for going to school, classes and after school activities.
  - List who you could call for a ride home if you were stranded.
  - List places you could go quickly to escape an abusive person (for example, a convenience store or gas station that is open 24 hours).
3. Before you leave on a date, make sure you know the exact plans for the date and make sure a friend or family member knows these plans and what time they can expect you to be home.
4. Always ensure a reliable friend or family member knows where you are.
5. Let your date know that you are expected to call or tell that person when you are home.
6. If you are leaving a party with someone you do not know well, make sure you tell a person you trust about your plans and whom you are with. Ask a friend to call and make sure you arrive home safely.
7. Be aware of your decreased ability to react under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
8. Trust your instincts. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, stay calm and think of a way to leave.
9. If a person frightens or intimidates you or shows a lack of respect for your wishes, ask for help. Then call the relationship off.
10. Expect to be treated with respect. Practice saying, "You need to show some respect." And know that you're worth it.

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 8.

**b. Seven warning signs that you are dating a person who is abusive and could be violent** <sup>86</sup>

If you experience any of these signs, know that you are in a dating situation or relationship that is abusive and could have the potential to become violent.

1. Your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures you, soon after you begin dating, to make the relationship very serious, or presses you to have sex.
2. Your boyfriend or girlfriend becomes extremely jealous and possessive, and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
3. Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to control you and to make all decisions where the two of you are concerned. Your boyfriend or girlfriend does not take your views or desires seriously.
4. Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to keep you from spending time with close friends or family.
5. Your boyfriend or girlfriend verbally and emotionally abuses you by doing such things as yelling at you, swearing at you, manipulating you, spreading false and degrading rumors about you, and trying to make you feel guilty.
6. Your boyfriend or girlfriend threatens physical violence.
7. Your boyfriend or girlfriend has abused a previous girlfriend or boyfriend, or accepts and defends the use of violence by others.

**If you believe you are in a violent dating relationship...**

- \* Recognize that no one has a right to control another person;
- \* Put the blame where it belongs, on the abuser;
- \* Tell someone trustworthy about the violence;
- \* End the relationship as soon as possible;
- \* Consider reporting a date rape or a physical assault to the police;
- \* If you are in school, consider telling someone you trust (e.g. guidance counselor or teacher). <sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Dating Violence: An Issue at Any Age: Awareness Information for People in the Workplace* (Health Canada: 1996), 20. Accessed at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/violence.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/violence.pdf).

## C. Pastoral Helps



A hundred years from now,  
It will not matter what my bank account was,  
The sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove -  
But the world may be different,  
Because I was important,  
In the life of a child.

### The Lord's Prayer<sup>88</sup>

If our images for God, such as Father-God or Lord and King, are exclusively male, the woman battered by her husband, or the child abused by a father or father-figure, may have no means for perceiving God as loving and protective of the vulnerable.

The disparity between image and experience, and the delicate issue of language about God, is powerfully illustrated in this anonymous prayer-poem, written from the perspective of children who have experienced "father" as abusive, distant, and untrustworthy.

**Our Father: *This is us three kids talking to you.***

Who art in heaven

*You're so distant and so aloof. It seems like nothing touches you.  
And every day you go off to work someplace, you're never around.*

Hallowed be thy name

*And yet, boy, do we ever feel your presence. Everything is done in your name.*

*"Wait till your father gets home." We know what you will allow or what you demand. You don't even have to be there to tell us.*

Thy kingdom come

*You want us to*

Thy will be done

*do everything you say*

On earth

*at home*

As it is in heaven.

*just like they do at the office.*

Give us this day

*Can we have some money*

Our daily bread

*to buy lunch?*

And forgive our debts

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<sup>88</sup> Author Unknown.

*Why can't you be as understanding*

As we forgive our debtors.  
*as our friends?*

And lead us not  
*Oh, please don't make me do it,*

Into temptation  
*not again.*

But deliver us  
*It's my fault.*

From evil  
*I'm the guilty one.*

For thine  
*You decide,*

Is the kingdom  
*you name,*

And the power  
*you take,*

And the glory  
*you destroy,*

Forever.  
*always.*

***Amen***