



Premier's Action Committee
on Family Violence Prevention

Dynamics of Family Violence and the Impact on Children



Community Services
and Seniors

Charlottetown
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Adapted from Work by:

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Joining Together: Conducting Forensic Investigations of
the Young Abused Child, May 3-5, 2006 Calgary, AB
- Evelyn Wotherspoon, MSW
Attachment Theory, Infant Maltreatment & Child
Protection, Oct 22-23, 2009



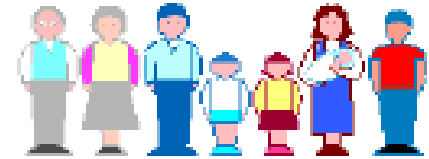
Restaurant Scene



Family Violence

Family violence is any violence by one family member against another. It includes but is not limited to:

- violence by **one partner against another**
- by a **parent against a child**
- by a **child against a parent**
- between **siblings**
- or involving **older adults**



Family Violence occurs across the lifespan



Family Violence can take many forms

- physical violence
- sexual violence
- emotional/psychological abuse
- neglect
- verbal abuse
- financial abuse
- threats/injury to pets
- destruction of property
- spiritual abuse
- homicide

.....and can occur

ANYWHERE and to ANYONE



Domestic Terrorists: Canada: 2000 – 2006

- **44** Canadians killed in Afghanistan including 4 who died in accidents and 6 killed by “friendly fire”
- **16** law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty
- **41** officers died from “non-hostile” causes (including 16 in car accidents, 7 in aircraft accidents, and 3 in motorcycle accidents)
- **66** firefighters died in this period
 - ***TOTAL 167 deaths***
- ***During the same period 500*** Canadian women were killed by the intimate males in their lives

Source: Vallee, Brian (2007). The War on Women



Canadian Statistics

- In 2009 6.4% of women and 6% of men reported being physically or sexually victimized in intimate relationships in the past 5 yrs
 - 20% of women and 14% of men reported being victimized by a *former* partner
- Consequences differ by sex:
 - Women 3x more likely to report experiencing harsher forms of violence
 - Women 6x more likely to require medical attention
 - Women 2x more likely to suffer depression and anxiety
 - Women 3x more likely to fear for their lives



(Andrea Taylor-Butts, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, June 2007; Statistics Canada 2011 Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile)



Canadian Statistics (cont.)

- In 2009 **only 22%** of cases were **FORMALLY REPORTED** to police
 - Almost **2/3** of these victims had experienced **more than one incident** prior to reporting; **3 in 10** reported being victimized **> than 10 times**
- **11%** of **pregnant women** are abused during her pregnancy (**63,300 women** in previous 5 years)
- Overall, **17%** of Canadians reported being emotionally or financially abused by a partner
 - Women were:
 - Nearly **2x** more likely to report being put down or called names that made them feel bad
 - **3x** more likely to report **harm or threats to harm** someone close to them
- **7 in 10** victims of physical or sexual abuse were also victims of emotional or financial abuse, i.e. **MULTIPLE forms of abuse**



(Andrea Taylor-Butts, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, June 2007; Statistics Canada 2011 & 2012 Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile)



Top 10 Risk Factors for Fatal Domestic Violence

1. **History** of domestic violence 74%
2. Actual or pending **separation** 72%
3. **Obsessive behavior** displayed by perpetrator (includes stalking) 56%
4. Perpetrator **depressed** 56%
5. Perpetrator prior threats to commit **suicide** 51%
6. **Escalation** of violence 47%
7. Victim had intuitive sense of **fear** 45%
8. Prior threats to **kill** victim 43%
9. Perpetrator unemployed 40%
10. Prior attempts to **isolate** victim 40%

2011 Annual Report of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee
Office of the Chief Coroner, Province of Ontario: 2012 based on 2003-20011 case reviews



Other Risk Factors

- **Alcohol** or **drug abuse**
- Access to or possession of **firearm**
- **Control** of most or all of victim's daily activities
- Actual or perceived **new partner** in victim's life
- **Choked/strangled** victim in past
- Abuse or neglect of **pets**
- **Health** issues
- **Financial** problems
- **Gambling** addiction



Relationship of Number of Risk Factors to Lethality

- 39 potential risk factors were assessed for each domestic violence homicide
- Lethality appears to increase with the number of risk factors
 - **76% of cases had 7 or more risk factors**
 - 13% had 4-6 risk factors
 - 10% had 1-3 factors

←
← **89%**

2011 Annual Report of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee
Office of the Chief Coroner, Province of Ontario, 2012



Family Violence on PEI

- Between April 1, 2011-March 31, 2012:
 - **Victim Services** received a total of **1050** referrals. Of these **30% (315)** involved **a family type relationship**.
 - Of these **82%** involved a **male current or ex-partner** (current or former husband, common-law husband, or boyfriend)
 - **PEI Family Violence Prevention Services outreach** workers provided assistance to **428 women** (270 for the first time).
 - Staff provided **4,321 supportive contacts** or an **average** of **9.5** per women.
 - **Anderson House** admitted **51 women** (34 for the first time) and **25 children** (all for the first time).



Family Violence on PEI

- Between April 1, 2011-March 31, 2012
 - The **PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre** served **129 clients**.
 - Of **72 new requests** for counselling (62 women, 10 men); **75%** were from **adult survivors of child sexual abuse**.
 - **Child Protection Services** received **3,461** reports; an average of **67 reports per week**
 - From April 1, 2012 - January 1, 2013 (9 month period) reports averaged **70 per week**.



Family Violence on PEI

- Between January 1, 2012 - December 31, 2012:
 - **Adult Protection** received **128 referrals**.
 - Types of abuse/neglect:
 - 45% self-neglect, 17% emotional/verbal abuse, 15% financial abuse, 13% caregiver neglect, 7% physical abuse, 3% sexual abuse.
 - The **perpetrators** were **all known and trusted**.
 - Spouses, children, parents, siblings, other family members, friends/neighbours, paid caregivers as well as staff in hospitals, group homes, nursing homes and community care facilities.
 - **69%** of referrals are **for persons 65 years of age and older**
 - It is estimated that **for each referral** received **many more go unreported**



Dynamics of Abusive Relationships

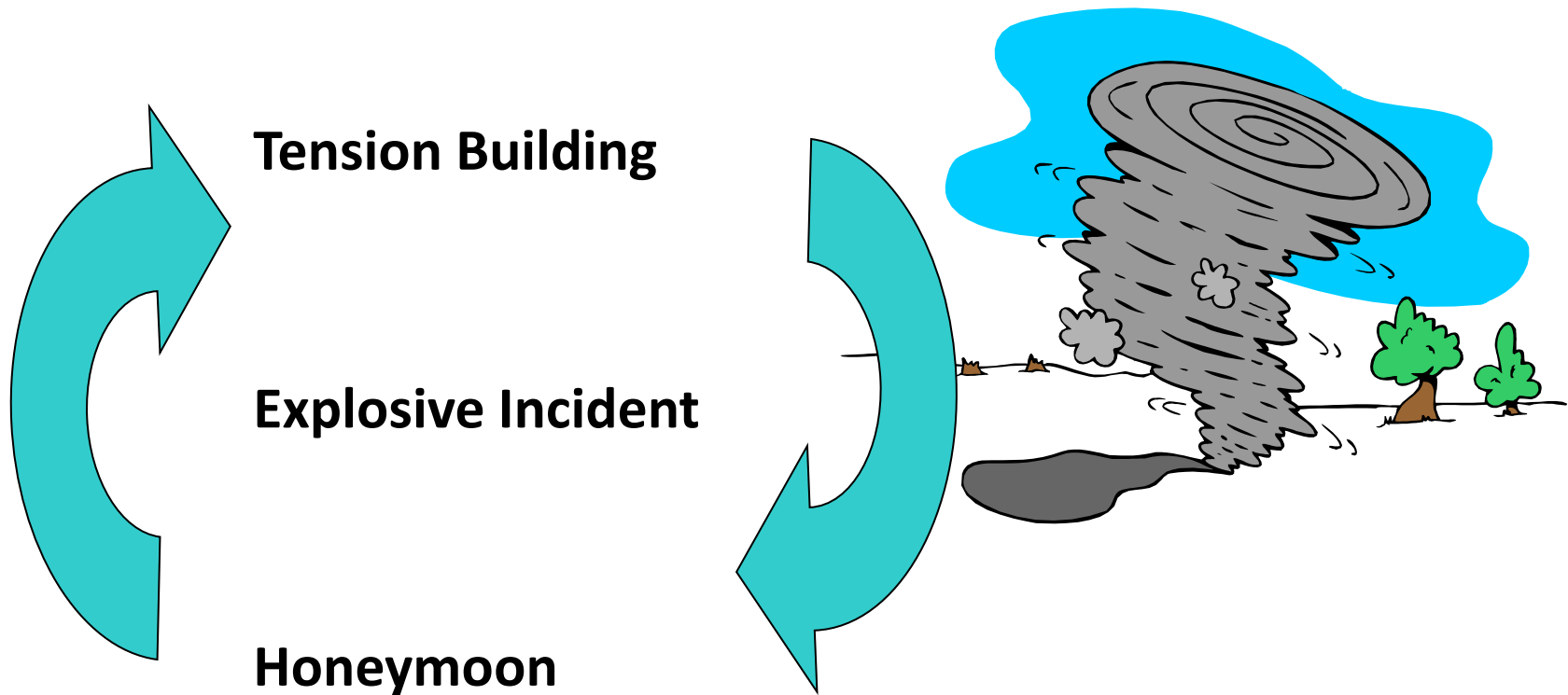


Dynamics of Abusive Behavior

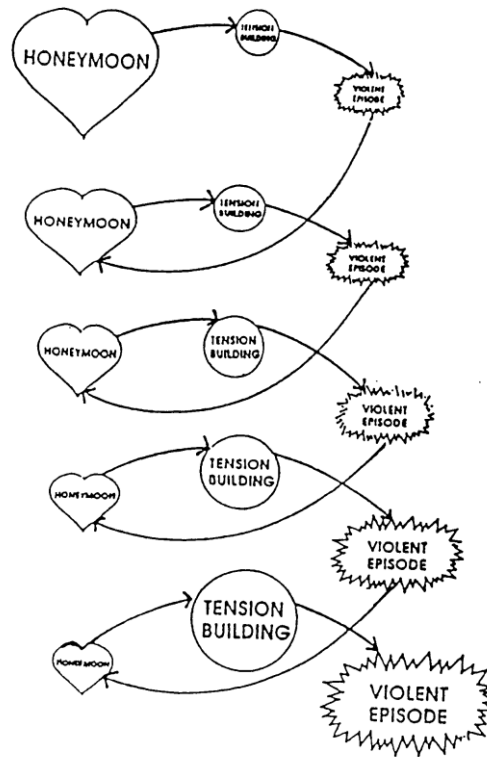
- Often occurs as a **pattern** of assaultive and controlling behavior
- **Purpose of violence** is to intimidate, humiliate and/or frighten victims to make them feel powerless
- Any **isolated act** may appear minor in isolation but **collectively** forms a pattern of physical and emotional abuse to effect control over the other person



Stages of the Cycle of Violence

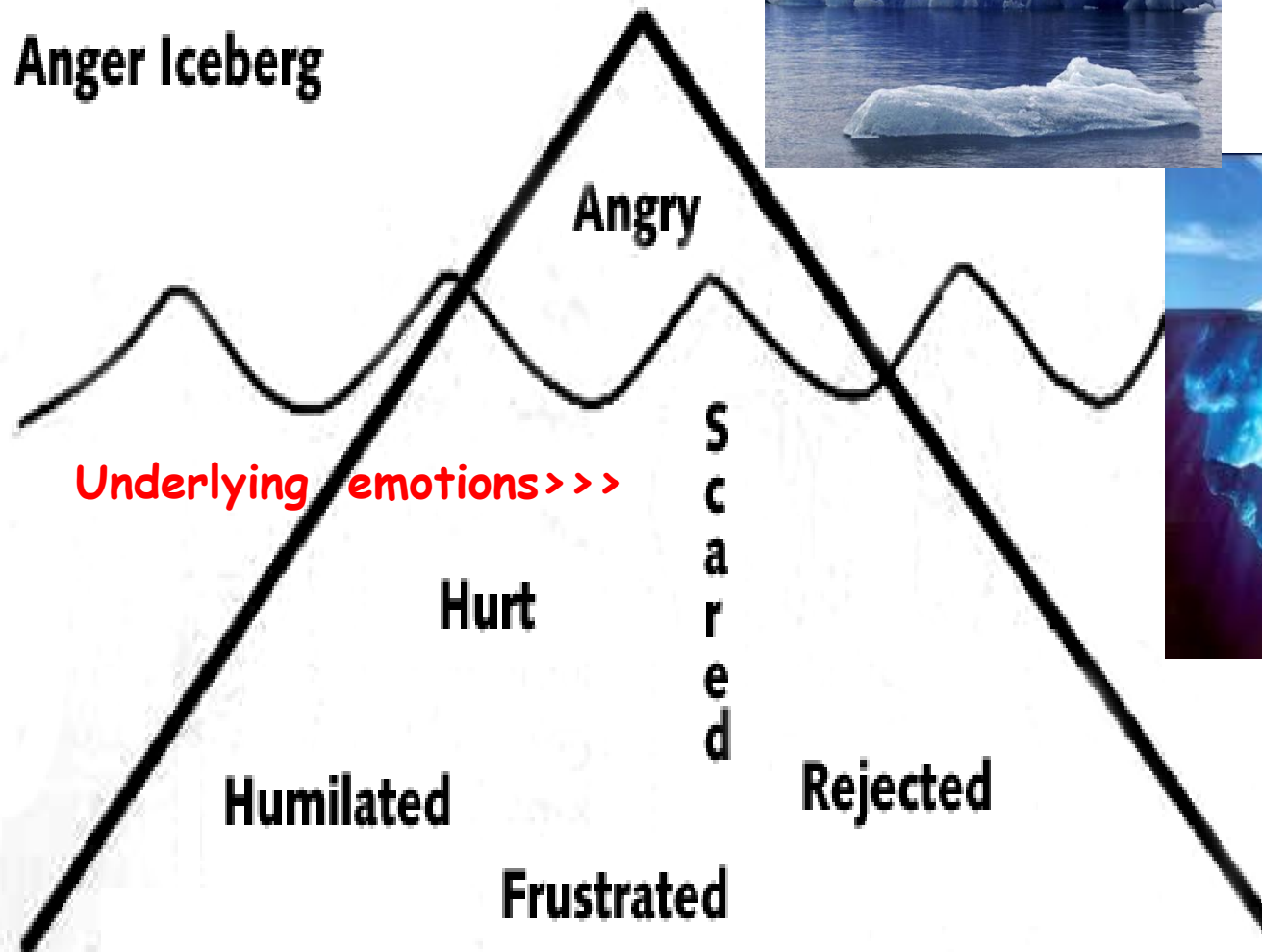


Cycle of Violence



ABUSERS

Anger Iceberg



Reasons Why People Stay /Return

REASON: **DANGER/FEAR**

- **Fear** of being killed or fear of children being killed
- Being worried about being able to **protect the children** when they are alone with the abuser
- Threats by the abuser to **abduct** or gain custody of children if victim leaves
- Concern regarding **fate of pets**, farm animals
- Fear of **not being believed /retaliation**
- *Older adults:* **Fear** of loss of independence, estrangement from loved ones, transfer to nursing home



**FACT: The most *dangerous* time
IS OFTEN when a relationship is ending**



More Reasons Why People Stay /Return

REASON: **CONFLICTING FEELINGS**

- **Pressure** from friends, family, society to make relationship work
- **Hope** and belief that it will get better and partner/situation will change, **reinforced** by offender behavior in the honeymoon phase
- **Loves** partner/family member
- Believes **partner really needs them**
- Fear of the abuser committing **suicide**
- Feeling **responsible/to blame** for the violence



FACT: Use of violence is a CHOICE.

It is not “caused” by the victim.

Someone who TRULY loves their partner would not hurt them.



More Reasons Why People Stay /Return

REASON: CHALLENGES

- Low **self-esteem**, loneliness, exhaustion
- **Isolation, poverty, religion**
- Lack of access to **support services**
(financial, legal, housing, transportation, etc.)
- **Worry** about providing for children and ability to be a single parent
- *Older adults:* **Worry** about loss of independence and being alone at the end of life



FACT: A violence-free life can present challenges

.....AT FIRST



Myths vs. Reality

Myths

- Each partner *equally responsible* for violence
- *Abusers can't control* abuse
- *Women are attracted* to abusive men
- *Women can be as abusive as* their partners and can *provoke* abuse or control abusive partner
- *Abuse is measured by frequency* and *severity* of physical violence

Reality

- There is usually one **primary/dominant aggressor**, often male
- Many abusers are **not violent outside** of the home
- Abusive men are often **charming and flattering**
- **Distinguish motives** and intentions – women often act to protect themselves and abusive men act to dominate and control
- Abuse is measured by the **impact** – fear, health problems, mental health issues

Health Effects of Family Violence: Physical (Acute & Chronic)

- Fractures
- Lacerations
- Bruises
- Burns
- ➔ • Internal injuries
- STIs
- Lowered immune function
- ➔ • Chronic pain disorders
- ➔ • Brain damage
- Sexual dysfunction
- ➔ • Reproductive damage
- Unwanted pregnancy
- ➔ • Miscarriage
- ➔ • Permanent disability
- ***Death***



Health Effects of Family Violence: Psychological (Acute and Chronic)

- Stress
- Depression
- ➔ • Alcohol & drug abuse
- Sleep disturbance
- Anxiety
- Low self esteem
- Self degradation
- Hyper-arousal
- Poor boundaries
- ➔ • Post-traumatic stress disorder
- ➔ • Suicidal ideation/attempts



Other Considerations

- **Males can be victims** of family violence just as females can be perpetrators
 - Important to determine **context** and **history** of violence
- Family violence does occur in **same-sex relationships**
- In some relationships there appears to be **mutual violence**



Family Violence: Impact on Children



Children See. Children Do.



What IS Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence?

- **Witnessing** a violent event directly
 - Being **directly involved** physically
 - Accidentally assaulted
 - Used as a shield
 - Physically **intervening** in the event
 - Being **forced to participate** in the abuse
 - **Hearing** but not seeing a violent event
 - **Observing the aftermath** of an incident:
 - Destruction of property
 - Victim injuries and/or fear
- ***PARENTS may not be aware or may deny that children have heard or seen the violence**



Childhood Exposure to Domestic Violence

- The home is a “**toxic**” environment in which the child’s well-being and development are compromised by fear, anxiety, anger, and tension that pervades the home.
- **Co-occurrence** of domestic violence and **child abuse** is **30%-60%**.



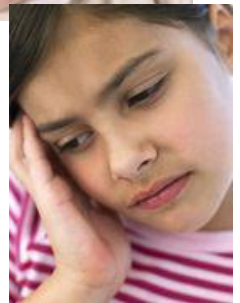
Stress-to-Trauma Continuum

- All children experience stressful events (directly or indirectly)
- **Positive** stress fosters normal development
- **Tolerable** stress occurs during brief periods
- **Toxic** stress
 - Chronic, uncontrollable and experienced without adequate support
 - May actually interrupt child's development due to interference with brain development



Impact of Children's Exposure to Domestic Violence

- Depends on
 - Child's **age** and **developmental stage**
 - Child's **perception** of the danger**
 - Whether child was victim or witness
 - Child's **relationship to victim** or perpetrator
 - Child's **past experience** with trauma
 - **Adversities** child faces following trauma
 - Child's **resiliency****
 - Presence/availability of **adults who can offer help** and protection**



**Recent studies show these factors to be particularly important

- *Reporting of exposure to Child Protection Services required by law for **assessment of child safety** and **well-being**.*

Examples of Impacts on Children by Age

- Infants

- Failure to thrive
- Developmental delays
- *Excessive crying*



- Preschool

- **Aggressive** behavior
- Clinging, anxiety
- **Cruelty** to animals



- Elementary School

- **Bullying**
- General **aggression**
- PTSD symptoms
- **Oppositional behaviour**



Intermediate School

- *Dating violence*
- **Bullying**
- Truancy
- PTSD symptoms
- Poor self-esteem

High School

- *Dating violence*
- **Alcohol/drug use**
- Runaway
- **Poor school attendance and performance**

Family Violence is EVERYONE'S Responsibility

- Family violence is a *public health issue, a criminal justice issue, and a human rights issue*.
- Family violence *can affect ANYONE and can also affect safety and health of those around them*.
- Individual history, family history, and current *circumstances* play a role in family violence.

****We must all work together to end Family Violence****

www.stopfamilyviolence.pe.ca





Thank You

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