



"WORKING WITH THOSE THAT ARE SILENCED"

A Training Program for Working with Men Affected by Domestic Violence."

8th National Men's Health Conference 2009

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My Background

Health Social Worker and Health Educator 28 years
 Worked in the men's health promotion area for 17 years
 Past work in adolescent health, sexual health - specialist sexual health counsellor & educator
 Currently work as a Men's Health Consultant providing:

- Professional men's health & wellbeing training courses
- A range of men's health promotion programs
- Community event management services
- Produce **emale** national men's health bulletin

I provide a range of male friendly services with a focus on improving the state of male health and wellbeing, thus improving the wellbeing of the whole community.


My interest in this work

- Past clinical interest in domestic violence work
- Past clinical group work with men who have experienced childhood sexual assault - Hunter New England Area Health Service Men's Support Group Program 2003 – 2004
- Running programs for men on Understanding Relationships, Dealing with Difficult Emotions and Anger Management
- Long time advocate for men who suffer violence and abuse in their relationships
- Growing awareness in the health, welfare and men's health areas that the needs of men who are experiencing violence and other forms of abuse within relationships are not being met

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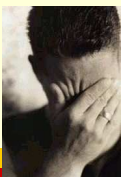
Background of problem

- The WHO defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.
- Worldwide, in the 15-44 year age group, all violence (including suicide) accounts for 14% of deaths among men and 7% of deaths among women
- **New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics figures show that over the past eight years, the number of women charged with domestic abuse has rocketed by 159 per cent.**
- **In 2007, 2,336 women fronted court on domestic violence charges, compared to around 800 in 1999.**




Background of problem

- Violence is an issue that impacts significantly on the lives of men, women and children
- We need to address the complexity of violence in the community and in intimate relationships
- Perpetration of physical violence by men **and against men** needs to be regarded as an important men's health issue
- The needs of male victims are largely unmet
- Domestic violence policy frameworks (in NSW) have not considered the needs of men



Myths about men as victims

- Male victims come from all walks of life, social backgrounds, cultures and sexualities (majority are heterosexual)
- Male victims suffer society's stigma for not protecting themselves
- Male victims become depressed in their isolation, feel suicidal and sometimes take their own lives without disclosure
- Male victims can be victimized because they fail to conform to the Macho man stereotype
- Male victims are perceived as wimps



Myths about men as victims

- Male victims are often disbelieved because they are men
- Male victims can be refused the status of victim
- Male victims are caring, sensitive men, good fathers, partners and providers. They want help often for themselves and the abuser, not further abuse from society and the caring agencies.
- Male victims are removed from or asked to leave their homes because it is the easy option.
- Male victims have no support systems in place.
- Often they have no one to talk to



Challenging the myths

- When a woman is violent and abusive in a relationship, it is not necessarily assumed that she is a bad mother.
- If a man is violent towards his partner, it is automatically assumed that he is an unfit parent.
- The law presumes that the children are almost always better off with their mother.
- Consequently the only options for men seem to be to put up with the abuse or to leave the home, since under the law there is no real protection for them.



Challenging the myths

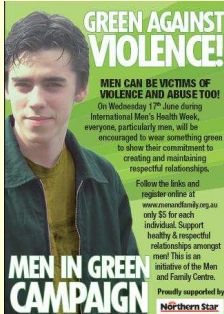
- If a male victim seeks help, society should offer the same protection and help to him and his children as is given to female victims.
- Women should be judged by the same standards as men, and people who are violent should be held legally responsible for their actions.



Maybe we need a new campaign

From Canada
 "Speak up for those who are silenced. Call the family violence info line."

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Violence is not simply a gender issue

- It is a social issue affecting men, women, children and our elderly - sometimes whole communities
- We need to look at the context in which violence happens
- We need to provide services for men who experience violence in their lives
- We cannot expect to find real solutions to the problem while it is treated largely as a women's issue.

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Overview of Training Program for Working with Men Affected by Domestic Violence

Offered initially as a one day program training includes:

- Background to the problem/ what we need to do
- The affect of DV on a person – what's different for men
- Strategies for working with men from a strengths based perspective
- Counselling approaches that work for men
- Groupwork approaches
- Building services for male victims of DV into your agency – what you need to consider
- Promoting work for male victims of DV

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Pilot Training Program Evaluation

What were the most positive aspects of the session you attended?

- The difficulty men have in communicating to others about domestic violence
- That domestic violence is a perceived gender problem rather than a social problem
- Now realise men go through the same issues as women
- Not looking at domestic violence from a feminist perspective
- There is a clear need for services to help men by providing information, support and referral services

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Pilot Training Program Evaluation

What have you learnt from this training?

- This is similar for men and women however hard for men to due to socialisation and how society sees men
- Men have the some responses/feelings afterwards as women
- Definitely a lack of services for men both in domestic violence and sexual assault areas
- Men underreport and this hides the real problem
- The different situation for gay male victims of DV

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Contact me if you are interested in conducting a Training Program for Working with Men Affected by Domestic Violence in your area.

Check out my other training programs at www.menshealthservices.com.au

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