

ACON's Anti-Violence Project presents Tales from the Other Side

BACKGROUND

This video presents stories of survival from those who have experienced domestic or family violence (DFV) in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities.

The resource was produced to:

1. Create an online video resource to assist mainstream domestic and family violence (DFV) services to increase their awareness of, and improve their responses to, LGBTIQ DFV; and
2. Build awareness by presenting accessible, real life and contemporary stories of DFV relevant to LGBTIQ communities and survivors, people who use (or have used) violence, friends and family of LGBTIQ people who have experienced DFV

CONTENT

Common threads of the stories include personal experiences of DFV, strategies for survival, challenging myths about DFV in LGBTIQ relationships, and identifying sources of support (formal and informal) accessed by interviewees.

The video also identifies behaviours and dynamics that are unique to DFV in an LGBTI context such as using 'outing' as a method of control and isolation from LGBTI friends and communities. Other examples can include verbal abuse related to gender identity, controlling medication or access to other treatments and ridiculing the other's expression of sexuality, gender or intersex.

Whilst intersex people are not represented in the video, we know that intersex experiences of domestic violence are similar to that of other LGBTQ people and that family violence can begin at an early age through non-consensual "normalising" treatments and surgeries (find out more at www.oii.org.au).

The video is 7.5 minutes and is available online at the ACON website, YouTube Channel and the Another Closet website (www.anothercloset.com.au).

AUDIENCE

The video targets community, health and domestic violence service providers (including the NSW Police Force), LGBTIQ communities and allies.

DELIVERY

Tales from the Other Side forms part of a broader social marketing and health promotion campaign addressing domestic and family violence in LGBTIQ communities. This includes ACON's StandUP campaign (www.anothercloset.com.au/stand-up) that informs, supports and empowers LGBTIQ people to offer support when they see the signs of domestic violence among their friends and in their community.

For service providers presenting the resource at a team meeting or training session, it is suggested that the background and content sections of this document be used to brief participants and a short exercise be used after-viewing the video.

Group Discussion

After watching the video, divide the participants into teams (if the group is large enough) or pairs and ask them to talk about their thoughts and feelings during and after watching the video.

Provide the groups with a different question to work through and present back to the larger group.

Some questions to explore:

- How might the issues facing survivors of LGBTIQ DFV differ from the issues facing survivors of non-LGBTIQ DFV? What does this mean for our work?
- How can our work change to meet the needs of LGBTIQ survivors of DFV? (Consider that the needs for LGBTQ people may be different for T and I people).
- What are the challenges in becoming more friendly, accessible or inclusive for LGBTIQ survivors of DFV?
- What do you think are the main areas of importance when working with transgender survivors of DFV? What might this mean for our work?
- What do you think are the main areas of importance when working with lesbian, gay or bisexual survivors of DFV? What might this mean for our work?
- Who are our local contacts? How can we keep our relationships strong with the local DVLO and GLLO?

Group Role Play Activity

Divide participants into groups of three to role play different scenarios and then report back to the group. The roles of group members will be victim, worker and observer. Run through one of the following scenarios, switching roles after 2-3 minutes. Ensure that participants feel comfortable and supported in these roles. Explain that there will be debriefing at the conclusion of the exercise.

For NSW Police Force (NSWPF)

When using the resource in a training context with Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers or General Duties Officers, it may be beneficial to include some additional questions alongside the below scenarios, such as:

- What legislation applies to the scenario?
- How might you go about completing an appropriate investigation?
- What additional support could a DVLO or GLLO provide to the PINOP?
- What barriers might you anticipate and how would you overcome these (or where would you go to seek guidance)?
- What appropriate language would you use and how would you go about confirming each person's identity?
- Can you identify any areas of the current NSWPF standard operating procedures that these situations may challenge?
- Are you aware of your local contacts? How can you keep that relationship strong?
- How do you promote reporting in your local area command?

Scenario 1

Maria is a shy 24 year old transgender woman who accesses the service regularly:
After building some rapport with her she tells you that she is struggling in her relationship.

- She is in her first lesbian relationship with Grace; they have been together 5 years.
- Grace has just stormed out of the house and Maria is experiencing high levels of emotional distress.
- Maria reveals that there was some physical violence and a threat by Grace to harm their dog before Grace left the house. The argument started because Maria couldn't find her hormones and she asked if Grace had seen them. Maria suspects that Grace may have hidden them to prevent her from taking her hormones.
- There has been a history of control throughout the relationship which is escalating. Maria reveals that Grace has been pressuring her to dress differently and not to have surgery. She says Grace was supportive when she initially began talking about her gender dysphoria and when she was accessing peer support groups. Maria says that Grace has become less and less comfortable with Maria's transition as her body has changed.
- Maria is financially dependent on Grace. Maria is also completely estranged from her own family. Maria reveals that she was physically abused regularly by her father and siblings when growing up in a remote town.
- Maria says that the abuse from Grace is her fault and that the relationship was fine until she began identifying publically as a woman.
- Maria has a strong network of transgender friends through social media but they are spread across NSW, Australia and internationally and she is too ashamed to talk to them about what is going on.

Scenario 2

Tim is a 48 year old gay man accessing your service/station for the first time:

- Tim wants to leave his partner Joe, with whom he has been in a relationship for 12 years.
- Joe was diagnosed with type 2 bipolar and depression seven years ago and Tim has been his carer during this time.
- Tim and Joe have partial custody of three teenage children (from Joe's previous relationship).
- When you question Tim more, he reveals that he has experienced abuse from Joe which has involved physical violence, financial control, isolation and emotional abuse.
- Tim says that usually the physical violence only happens when they've "had a big weekend" and that the relationship is relatively stable the rest of the time.
- The most recent incident culminated in Joe hitting Tim over the head with a saucepan, resulting in a head injury. When Tim went to the Emergency Department, Joe went with him and persuaded Tim to tell the duty nurse that he had fallen and hit his head.
- Joe has threatened to kill himself if Tim leaves and Joe has alluded to the fact that he would harm the children too.
- Tim doesn't know where to get help, he has been isolated by Joe from friends and family and he wants to leave but has nowhere to go. Tim called DV line but was told there were no accommodation options available and that he should find a friend's sofa to crash on.

Scenario 3

Min is a 38 year old Singaporean lesbian who has just walked into your service/station:

- Min recently immigrated to Australia to be with her partner Jen. They met online 3 years ago and live together locally. Jen works at the local university.
- Jen is prominent in the local LGBTIQ community – she runs a coming out group for young LGBTIQ people and she is regarded as a community role model.
- Since Min got to Australia, Jen has demonstrated controlling behaviour, preventing Min from socialising and meeting new friends.
- Min is studying at Jen’s university and can only work part time. Jen has taken control of their joint finances so that Min has no money of her own and she has to ask for money to make any purchases.
- Min is confused and doesn’t know what to do. She loves Jen and she’s not sure whether she wants to leave. She wants to try couples counselling but she’s scared to suggest it in case Jen reacts badly.
- She wants to stay in Australia.
- Min has no family here and when you ask her about support networks, she identifies two people who she works with at the bookshop on campus neither of whom knows about her sexuality.
- Min says that apart from a few friends of Jen’s, no-one else knows that they are having a relationship.

Scenario 4

Sam is a 24 year old transgender man who has made contact with your service/station:

- Sam has been in a relationship with Anna for two and a half years – Anna is 47 years old and well known in the Sydney LGBTI community as she is a performer.
- Anna has a nasty temper and is abusive to Sam. To begin with Sam thought it was ok because it was just shouting – and to be honest Sam had heard worse growing up in his small town.
- The shouting turned into pushing, which turned into slapping and kicking. The physical violence became regular.
- Last Thursday night Anna went into a rage and threw Sam across the room. The walls were damaged and the carpets stained with blood. Sam’s leg was broken and his arm was lacerated.
- The police turned up and Sam gave a short statement. He says he is worried that he didn’t say enough. Sam says the police didn’t seem too concerned and suggested to him that he toughen up if he wants to be a man.
- Sam is still in their house but doesn’t want to live there anymore. He is frightened that Anna will come back. The lease agreement is valid for another 11 months.
- Sam now feels completely isolated. All of his friends in Sydney were Anna’s friends and he says now they don’t want to know him.
- Sam is frightened about engaging with the police or going to court.
- Sam had not told his family about Anna and hasn’t spoken to anyone from his home town for a while.
- Sam had been studying at TAFE and had almost finished the course. This semester, as the violence escalated, Sam was unable to concentrate and missed several classes. The work has built up and he can’t figure out what to do.

OTHER RESOURCES

Is Your Service GLBT Friendly, ACON

www.acon.org.au/anti-violence

Making Your Service Intersex Friendly, Organisation Intersex International, Australia and ACON

www.oii.org.au

Rainbow Tick Audit tool

www.glhv.org.au/glbti-inclusive-practice