

Intimate Partner Violence: trauma and recovery

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The Universality of Violence Against Women

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture.

--The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women
Beijing, China - September 1995

NIJ/CDC Collaborative Survey

Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women:

Findings From the National Violence Against
Women Survey (USA)

by Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, 1998

Exhibit 8: Percentage of Persons Physically Assaulted by an Intimate Partner in Lifetime by Type of Assault and Sex of Victim^a

Type of Assault	Women (n=8,000)	Men (n=8,000)
Total physical assault by intimate partner^b	22.1	7.4
Threw something ^b	8.1	4.4
Pushed, grabbed, shoved ^b	18.1	5.4
Pulled hair ^b	9.1	2.3
Slapped, hit ^b	16.0	5.5
Kicked, bit ^b	5.5	2.6
Choked, tried to drown ^b	6.1	0.5
Hit with object ^b	5.0	3.2
Beat up ^b	8.5	0.6
Threatened with gun ^b	3.5	0.4
Threatened with knife ^b	2.8	1.6
Used gun ^b	0.7	0.1
Used knife	0.9	0.8

a. Intimate partner includes current or former spouses, opposite-sex cohabiting partners, same-sex cohabiting partners, dates, and boyfriends/girlfriends.

b. Differences between women and men are statistically significant: p-value \leq .001.

The Overlap Between Child Maltreatment and Woman Battering

In families where domestic violence is occurring, numerous studies indicate that children are also being physically or sexually abused. Most estimates of this combined occurrence range from 30-60% of families with children.

Social Conditions Producing Prolonged and Repeated Trauma

- The victim is under the control of the perpetrator and unable to escape.
- The perpetrator may use an array of coercive control techniques, of which violence is only one.
- The purpose of these techniques is to break down autonomy and initiative and to create a defiled and degraded self-identity.

Methods of Coercive Control

- Violence and Threat of Violence
- Control of Bodily Functions
- Capricious Enforcement of Petty Rules
- Intermittent Rewards
- Isolation
- Degradation
- Enforced Participation in Atrocities

---Amnesty International Report on Torture, 1973

Coercive Techniques are Organized to Control and Dominate Victim

Violence Wheel

This wheel helps link the different behaviors that together form a pattern of violence. It shows the relationship as a whole - and how each seemingly unrelated behavior is an important part in an overall effort to control someone.



Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project - Duluth, Minnesota

Common Reactions To Traumatic Events

- Fight or Flight
- Freezing and Numbing
- Submission

Diagnostic Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (DSM-IV, 1994)

- The traumatic event is persistently ***re-experienced*** in recurrent, intrusive images, thoughts, recollections, or dreams.
- Persistent ***avoidance*** of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness.
- Persistent symptoms of increased ***arousal*** (difficulty falling or staying asleep, difficulty concentrating, irritability, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response).

Lifetime Prevalence of PTSD (Kessler et al, 1995)

Men	5.0%
Women	10.4%
Total	7.8%

Complex PTSD

(Herman, 1992)

Survivors of prolonged and repeated trauma suffer from psychological impacts in multiple domains. Symptoms include a shamed and damaged sense of self, disrupted interpersonal relationships, and shattered systems of meaning.

Impact on Children: Developmental Trauma Disorder

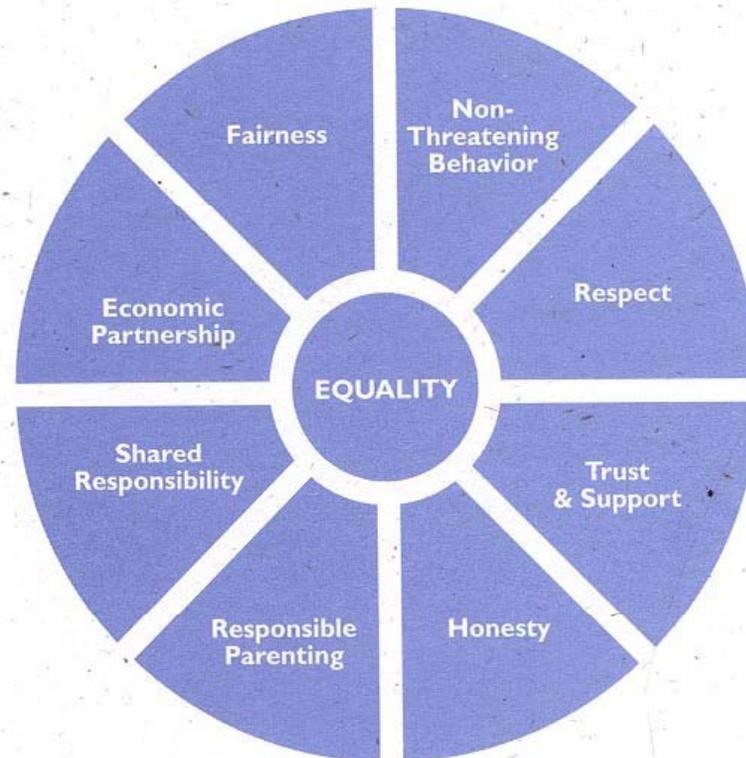
Studies on the sequelae of chronic childhood interpersonal trauma consistently demonstrate chronic and severe problems with emotion regulation, impulse control, attention and cognition, dissociation, interpersonal relationships, and self and relational schemas. These disruptions consistently co-occur, suggesting that they represent a coherent pathology.

----Bessel van der Kolk: *Report to the Work Group for DSM-V*, 2009

Implications for Treatment: Antidotes to Coercive Control

Non-Violence Wheel

The Non-Violence Wheel offers a view of a relationship that is based on equality and non-violence. Use this chart to compare the characteristics of a non-violent relationship to those of an abusive relationship (see Violence Wheel). The Non-Violence Wheel is also helpful in setting goals and boundaries in personal relationships.



Common Reactions To Traumatic Events

- Fight or Flight
- Freezing and Numbing
- "Tend and Befriend"

Adaptive Strategies for Recovery

(Burgess & Holmstrom, 1979)

- Problem-Solving Action
- Affiliative Coping Style
- Mature Defenses: Altruism and Humor

Social Responses to Intimate Partner Violence: 35 Years of Feminist Organizing

- **Public Education**
- **Hotlines**
- **Victim Support Groups**
- **Shelters**
- **Victim Advocacy**
- **Police Training and Arrest Policies**
- **Restraining Orders**
- **Specialized Domestic Violence Courts**
- **Criminal Prosecution Policies (“No-Drop”)**
- **Batterer Intervention Programs**

On the Occasion of International Women's Day

"Women and men united to end violence against women and girls"

-----Yakin Ertürk, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, 2009

The UN mandate for the elimination of violence against women... reflects the demands, interests and aspirations of women in all parts of the world... It is now firmly acknowledged around the world that violence against women is not an inevitable fate, nor can it be justified or excused by any means. It has also given hope to women in all corners of the world that this pandemic can and must be stopped.

On the Occasion of International Women's Day (continued)

... If women are to live a life free of violence, efforts to change attitudes must include strategies to challenge notions of masculinity based on policing women's sexuality and /or on sustaining male supremacy in public and private life. Violence is not only an act of individual men but it is embedded in the way manhood is constructed.

"Women and men united to end violence against women and girls"

Transformative change may not always be an easy task, particularly in view of a deeply embedded patriarchy. Furthermore, such change is inherently disruptive of the comfort offered by the status quo, as oppressive as it may be. While such change may hold risks, it also promises a step forward in greater emancipation for all.

--- Yakin Ertürk, International Women's Day, 2009