



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

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Power & Control: Tactics of Men Who Batter

The "Control Chart" is a way of looking at the primary tactics and behaviors individual abusers use to get and maintain control in their relationships. An emerging attitude in working with men who batter is that violence springs from a desire for power, rather than a short temper or uncontrolled anger. This theory sees battering as an intentional act used to gain power and control over another person. Physical abuse is only one part of a whole system of abusive behavior.

The power and control chart symbolizes the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each spoke represents a tactic used to control or gain power. It is important to realize that many forms of abuse are operating here, such as emotional, financial, sexual, etc. The actual physical violence is only one way in which the man takes control. Power and control are central to the entire system. Physical abuse surrounds and supports the wheel, increasing the batterer's control over the woman.

Battering is linked to the batterer's perception of what he expects and wants his partner to be and do. With few exceptions, a batterer believes that as a male, he has certain rights, or entitlements, in relationships with women. These include the right to be in charge, to control what his partner does, thinks and feels. He feels justified in establishing and maintaining his position through many means, including the use of violence. Certainly, the belief system which underlies battering is learned. It is taught in our culture and reinforced constantly.

A closer look at one form of abuse described on the Control Chart, isolation, reveals the batterer's underlying belief system and its effects on both partners.

Isolation involves any attempts to control what she does, who she sees and talks to, or where she goes. Specific actions might include:

- putting down friends and making it hard for her to spend time with certain people
- monitoring phone calls, listening, commenting on every call, limiting her privacy
- making her dependent on him for transportation

- making her economically dependent
- not supporting her personal growth, going to school, doing artwork, writing developing skills, etc.
- making it hard for her to go to school, work, women's groups, bowling, softball, cards, etc.
- strictly defining roles and limiting her to housework and childcare

The batterer justifies these actions with the following beliefs:

- He has the right to monitor her life
- He has the right to "let" her do something. He can give her permission.
- He has the right to judge her family and friends.
- He should be the center of her world.

And, this behavior works for him. He can stay the center of her world. Isolation forces the woman to become dependent on the abuser.

A careful look at the other forms of abuse on the Control Chart would also show that, with few exceptions, abuse is a deliberate attempt to control.