

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence



Learning Objectives

- ❖ Participants will explore the intersection of intimate partner violence and substance use/abuse.
- ❖ Participants will learn ways batterers use substance abuse to gain and maintain power and control.
- ❖ Participants will explore community collaborations for survivors using substances.

DYNAMICS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



Defining Intimate Partner Violence...

Intimate partner violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors in which one partner wants to gain and maintain power and control over the other partner.



Domestic Abuse Intervention Project Power and Control Wheel



Abuse, Violence, and Trauma Across the Lifespan

- ❖ Women are twice as likely to develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD) and depression after trauma exposure and may use substances to manage the traumatic effects of abuse.
- ❖ Adverse childhood experiences may have the potential to increase the risk for health, mental health, and substance abuse problems as an adult.

Felitti et al 1998, Kessler et al 1995, Weigh et al 2010, Rees et al 2011, CDC NISVS 2011

It is Important to Note....

- ❖ Not all people who experience trauma across their lifespan will experience intimate partner violence.
- ❖ Not all survivors of intimate partner violence have had adverse childhood experiences.
- ❖ Adverse childhood experiences should never be used as an excuse for battering.

At the Same Time...

- ❖ Experiencing a substance abuse condition puts someone at greater risk for being abused.
- ❖ And symptoms may be a direct result of coercive control.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE & SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE



The Scope of the Issue

- ❖ Across studies of women seeking alcohol treatment, 47-87% of women report having experienced violence by a male partner. (Stuart, O'Farrell, & Temple 2009)
- ❖ 74% of women in substance abuse treatment have experienced sexual abuse. (Covington & Kohen, 1984; Kubbs, 2000)
- ❖ 75% of wives of alcoholics have been threatened and 45% have been assaulted by their partners. (AMA, 1944)

The Scope of the Issue



In a 2012 review of the literature, 22-72% of survivors in a domestic violence shelter have current or past problems with alcohol or other substances.

(Schumacher and Holt 2010)

The Scope of the Issue



Between 55 and 99 percent of women who abuse substances have been victimized at some point in their life; between 67-80% of women in substance abuse treatment are survivors of intimate partner violence.

(Cohen, et al, 2003, Downs 2011)

Co-Occurring Problems

- ❖ A Nida study noted 90% of women in drug treatment had experienced severe domestic and / or sexual violence from a partner during their life time. (Miller 1944)
- ❖ Women who have been abused are 15 times more likely to abuse alcohol and 9 times more likely to abuse drugs than women who have not been abused. (Shipway, 2004)

Common Myths: DV & Substance Abuse

- ❖ Substance abuse causes domestic violence.
- ❖ Survivors who use substances are liars.
- ❖ Survivors who use substances are not good parents.
- ❖ Children of survivors who use substances will become addicts themselves.

Substance Use Coercion Tactics

- ❖ Making survivors use substances or use more than they want.
- ❖ Controlling access to alcohol or drugs.
- ❖ Inducing withdrawal symptoms.
- ❖ Isolating partner from recovery and other helping resources.

Substance Use Coercion Tactics

- ❖ Justifying sexual abuse or other forms of violence based on drug use.
- ❖ Sabotaging recovery efforts.
- ❖ Coercing survivors into illegal activities (dealing, stealing, trading sex for drugs).

Intimate Partner Violence and Substances



Survivors who are battered and living with substance abuse issues face unique challenges. They are attempting to survive in a world that condemns both their substance use and their choice of partner.

Power and Control

"The drugs are an element of control. If they can keep you on the drugs, using or addicted to the drugs, they're in control. And it's like strings on a puppet. They just keep you under control because you want that other hit. You want that other drink."

National Center on Domestic Violence,
Trauma and Mental Health



When intimate partner violence and substance abuse co-occur

- ❖ Substance use does not cause abuse, but can contribute to a perpetrator's use of violence and increase the risk of serious injuries or death.
- ❖ Alcohol or drugs can be used as an excuse for violence.
- ❖ Survivors of abuse might turn to alcohol or drugs to help alleviate stress or escape.

Adapted from: Texas Council on Family Violence, Home Visitation Guidelines 2011

Substance Use as a Coping Mechanism

Experiencing Trauma = Utilizing Coping Skills

- ❖ Substance use can be a coping skill:
 - To self-medicate from the effects of physical abuse.
 - To escape the verbal, mental and psychological abuse.
 - To prevent abuser from physically harming children and/or survivor.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES



Service Barriers

- ❖ Women impacted by multiple issues are often ill-served in our programs, and perceived as disruptive when their substance use symptoms become evident.
- ❖ They often need our services the most yet are among those least likely to seek or receive services.

(Bland 2008)

Barriers to Accessing Help

- ❖ Employment, housing, health insurance, or child custody may be threatened by public disclosure of current or past substance abuse problems.
- ❖ Access to treatment due to parenting responsibilities may be denied which can lead to isolation, blame and shame.
- ❖ Fewer economic resources.

Barriers to Accessing Help

- ❖ Lack of gender-specific, family focused services.
- ❖ Social stigma and guilt
 - Survivors who use substances face tremendous stigma.

Barriers to Accessing Help From Law Enforcement

❖ Survivors fear:

- they won't be believed.
- they may be arrested.
- their children may be removed.
- deportation may be triggered by an arrest.

Trauma Responses as Barriers

- ❖ Trauma responses are often considered signs that the survivor is lying:
 - Lack of eye contact.
 - Reacting with anger instead of fear.
 - Describing the violence with no emotion or different emotional expression than we would usually expect.

Trauma Responses as Barriers

- ❖ Trauma responses are often considered signs that the survivor is lying:
 - Not remembering or being confused about details of the violence.
 - Going back and forth about whether to seek help or participate in civil or criminal court proceedings.

TRAUMA-INFORMED SERVICES



The Wrong Questions

- ❖ Why don't you just leave?
- ❖ Why don't you just quit using?
- ❖ Why don't you just pull yourself together?
- ❖ What's wrong with you?



Validate

- ❖ No one has the right to hurt you. You did not deserve this.
- ❖ It is never your fault when someone harms you even if you were drinking, or using or off your meds. You did not cause this to happen. An abuser chose to be violent.
- ❖ You deserve a lot of credit for finding the strength to talk about this. Your safety can improve your children's safety and well being too.

Avoid Re-Victimization

- ❖ People do **not** choose to develop substance use disorders any more than they choose to be battered.
- ❖ Think before speaking. How would you like to be spoken to?
- ❖ Remember to offer respect, not rescue; options, not orders; safe treatment rather than re-victimization.

Voices of Survivors

- ❖ “I don't think I could deal with one issue alone. It was critical that I deal with the domestic violence, to get away from it, because it was just getting worse and worse. But I couldn't deal with the domestic violence if I was still getting all drugged up.”
- ❖ “You've got to be sober, at least a little bit, to be able to even look at the domestic violence. But if you get sober, and you don't look at those issues, you're not going to stay sober, not in the long run.”
- ❖ “I couldn't recover from substance abuse if I was still being physically abused, mentally abused, because I would be right back to using. So they walk hand in hand. I would not recover from one unless I address the other, and vice versa.”

What is Your Role?

- ❖ Challenge your own beliefs, feelings, and prejudices about substance abuse.
- ❖ Just because an individual drinks or uses drugs, it does not mean they are an alcoholic or drug addict or deserve to be abused.
- ❖ Advocate for survivors, provide education, and referrals.

Culturally Competent Intervention

- ❖ Incorporates awareness of our own biases, prejudices, and knowledge about the people we serve and their culture.
- ❖ Recognizes professional power (the power differential between you and the survivor) in order to avoid imposing your own values on others.

How We Respond and the Environments We Create Make a Difference!



When we respond in culturally attuned, trauma-informed, survivor-defined/person-centered ways, people feel safer talking about their experiences, are more likely to access our services, and are more likely to find our services helpful.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Community Partnerships

IPV

- ❖ Advocates are your local IPV experts.
- ❖ Refer survivors to your local certified domestic violence center!

Substance Use

- ❖ Behavioral health providers are your local experts.
- ❖ Refer survivors to your local substance use professional!

Trauma-Informed Partnerships

- ❖ Form relationships with each other across disciplines.
- ❖ Provide services without re-victimizing survivors.
- ❖ Provide information and education through interdisciplinary training opportunities.

Resources and References

- ❖ Bland, P.; Edmund, D. Substance Use/Abuse in the Context of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Trauma. National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health 2014.
- ❖ <http://www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/>

Contact Information

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Florida Domestic Violence Legal Hotline, ext. 3

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Florida Relay 711

Website: www.fcadv.org



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