

**Getting Her From
'Going' to 'Gone'...
For Her Sake and Her Kids**

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**Domestic Violence is the leading
cause of injury to women**

- One in four women will be physically assaulted by a partner.
- One in three teens will be physically assaulted by a boyfriend.
- Every 12 seconds a woman is battered in this country.

**Women are more likely to be
injured from domestic
violence than by car wrecks,
muggings, and rapes
combined.**

**Leaving a violent relationship
is the most dangerous time**

She has a 75% greater chance of getting killed after
she's left the relationship

**Abusive people are
master manipulators**

They manipulate everyone.
The same confusion SHE feels,
Professionals, friends, and co-workers also feel...is HE
abusive, or does SHE have the problem?

**Domestic Violence has
long been proven to be:**

Pervasive
Deadly
Intergenerational
Horrible for women to live through
Impossible for children to survive and thrive in

**With that in mind, it is NOT
enough to simply tell her to
leave.**

Your job is NOT done at that point.

**How many times have you
heard it takes an average of 7
times to leave a violent
relationship**

Is that with intervention or without?

Transtheoretical Model of Change

- Precontemplative
- Contemplative
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance

• James Prochaska, University of Rhode Island. *The Transtheoretical Approach: Crossing Traditional Boundaries of Psychotherapy.*

Precontemplation

- She is **not aware** that she is being abused and is **not interested in change**
- She will use **denial, minimization, and rationalization** when approached about this issue

This victim **MAY** push your buttons

- You will have a tendency to ask “when are you going to learn?”
- You wonder if she **LIKES** the abuse....because she's not leaving....she must be getting **SOMETHING** out of being hurt
- You roll your eyes at her for **NOT** being proactive
- The question is: Will any of **THAT** response help?

How you got involved and what to know:

- You see something suspicious but she is not naming the abuse yet
- She may deny and/or minimize everything
- You are still helping her by opening the possibility. She will think about your conversation for weeks or months

**Your Response to
Precontemplation:**
(Keep it general and loose)

- I wanted to touch base with you...
 - She will deny anything, but you must keep on...
- I know that many people are affected by family violence
- Go over stats (1 in 4; 1 in 3 emotional abuse)
- Your relationship reminds me of those characteristics
- I'm available to talk privately
- If you are afraid in your relationship, that is a sign

**The pros of changing must
increase for people to
progress from
precontemplation**

Contemplation
(There is hope for the future)

- Knows she is being abused
- Is weighing the pros and cons of change
- She will be open to talking with someone
- May be interested in information on abuse or resources
- She can finally name the problem

How You Got Involved and Tips to Help Her

- She brought it up to you...I have a problem, but don't know what to do.
- She may retreat or deny if she realizes it requires huge changes
- Go slow!
- Be supportive
- Convince her there is light at the end of the tunnel

There is Light at the End of the Tunnel

- Don't move too quickly into an action plan.
- Give her hope for a violence free future
- Convey to her that you BELIEVE her...she's testing the waters
- She may retreat or deny it later....don't take this personally. You have planted an important seed.

Responses to Contemplation

- Hear her, believe her, help her
- Name it: what you are talking about sounds like abuse
- It's not your fault...you are taking responsibility for his behavior...what is HIS responsibility for this marriage
- Empower her: Have you thought about how YOU would solve your problem?
- Create HOPE...if YOU believe the obstacles, she will too. See the future, and she will be able to see that picture eventually too.

The cons of changing must decrease for people to progress from contemplation to action.

Preparation (*Let's Get Real*)

- She knows she is being abused and is planning to make some changes to end the abuse
- She needs to hear the plan...she may not implement it yet, but this is her information gathering stage.
- Be patient, but real with her.

How You Got Involved:

- Simple question: She came to you with a simple question...I need help getting a divorce lawyer; can you help me?
- She came to you in crisis: Last night was the last straw...I won't live like this anymore.

Keep in Mind:

- This is the fun stage!
- Give her information about lawyers, counseling, financial information, protective orders.
- At this point, she'll follow up with phone calls to experts. Okay to encourage her to **SHELVE** actually leaving until best plans can be developed.
- Support her choices and give her **REAL** answers to how this situation will impact her spiritually/emotionally/socially. She can handle it now.
- Remind her that change is hard, but living with an abuser is **HARDER**. She can do it!

Responses:

- You look stronger than I have seen you in a long time.
- I have watched you build up your courage in this difficult time.
- You are not alone.
- You are thinking about a really courageous thing.
- You know safety for yourself and your child is **EVERYTHING**.
- You don't owe me anything (explanation, timeline)...I know this will be hard

The pros and cons must 'cross over' for people to be prepared to take action.

But focus should be on building up the pros of leaving.
Stop focusing (and help her stop focusing)
on the cons of leaving.

Action Phase
(Cheerleader: I am so proud of you!)

- She is determined to be free of abuse
- She knows a different life is possible, and that it requires action.
- She is ready to take action

Keep in Mind:

- She's building her support system now
- She may back slide after taking steps forward—that's okay!

Responses:

- Support her but don't pressure her.
- Remind her you don't have an agenda in this....it's okay if the plan changes, you know she's working on doing the best thing for her family.
- Cheerlead: I am proud of you. You are courageous. You are an inspiration. I will support you.
- Long-haul: It takes longer to recover from this type of experience than you would hope for. I am here for the long-haul.

Maintenance Phase *(You did it!)*

- Her abusive relationship is over
- She may still be dealing with him—he continues to harass her, stalk her, take her to court, send her confusing messages.....the ONLY thing that is different is that it no longer rattles her—it does not have control over her any more.
- She will spend up to a year (or longer!) working through resentment, grief and loss
- She will have to develop her own identity—identity in the house is the identity of the abuser.

Keep in Mind:

- She demonstrated great courage in the face of great adversity
- She had to make choices she never dreamed she would make
- She had to make sacrifices and is now realistic about what the compromise was
- The experience won't go away. She may want to continue to talk about the impact that it had on her life.
- Know that he will continue to stalk, harass, and threaten her, especially if they have children together.

In light of that, how many of your clients haven't left the relationship because you used the wrong intervention: you pushed her toward action and she was in precontemplation

Is it HER fault if she goes back or is it OURS?

So what is YOUR job in the Stages of Change?

You FACILITATE the change

**Too often we ask:
Why Does She Stay?**

We should ask instead: What will make her leave?
How can I facilitate that?

Consider it a marathon...

- And leaving is Mile 5
- Is your role to help her get ready to run?
 - Is it to help her run that first mile
 - Is it to coach her to push past mile 5
 - Or are you her distance coach?

The very skills that allowed her to survive the relationship are different than the skills needed to leave the relationship

Our job is to help her develop a different skill set. She's got the fortitude; we simply must equip her with a different skill set to move her through the stages of change

It's important to know the world we live in:

Going underground is no longer an option

Her goal has to be to turn the system on her side

And stay safe in the meantime.

Increase Support System

- She should begin to tell people about her situation
- She should talk to a few select people about being able to call on a moment's notice, or having her kids call them at a moment's notice for help
- She should tell someone in her neighborhood about her situation

Talk openly to her children

- About the violence.
- She doesn't need to turn them against dad, but she does need to begin to talk openly about the reality of their home
- Many families live in one reality and talk about their home/values/experiences as if they live in a totally different reality.
- She should begin to have discussions with the kids about the 'true reality' at home

Begin to prioritize SAFETY

- Shift the goal from GET OUT to GET SAFE.
- Help her begin to recognize the pattern—pattern of behavior vs. isolated incident
- Help her begin to understand the game—capitulation is key to survival, but it is a killer to her soul.
- She needs to stay safe in the moment—one skill set—and plan to get safe in the long-run—an entirely different skill set.

Help her Widen the Lens

- What do you know about the **PATTERN** of abuse?
- What can you do to help her understand about that pattern? Are you getting caught up in the blow-by-blow? or do you ask questions like:

Understand the Pattern of Abuse

- Tell me about the first assault
- Were you ever afraid before then?
- What have you tried to do to get safe?
- What is your gut feeling about his treatment of the children?
- What happens when you make a mistake? What things are categorized as "mistakes" in your house?

Peddle Hope

- Hope is the 'wonder drug' for change. If **YOU** do not have it, she **CANNOT** have it.
- Consider two types of hope: Agency-related hope and pathways-related hope
 - Agency-related = global hope....I can do this. It is **WORTH** it to do it. (vision)
 - Pathways-related hope = Here's **HOW** I can do it. (process)
- Are you peddling **BOTH** types of hope—do you see her as capable of leaving and as having the steps/skills necessary to leave

**Psychological safety planning
is as important**

You should teach her how to:

- Predict (her response)
- Prepare (for anything)
- Prevent (getting hooked)
- Wrong-footing her is his MO. She must stop imagining HIS response and start planning her own

Must know her worldview:

Two types of people get stuck in violent relationships.

Must understand which one you are dealing with to know how best to help.

Staying Away means she must learn to control herself—not predict his behavior:

She's got to know he'll try multiple tactics to get his way.

She's got to figure out what her "hook" is.

His being nice is the most basic thing for her to be prepared for.

She thinks he hates her, that he will be happier without her around.

She should prepare for tactics like:

- Him being a victim
- Anger
- Sadness
- Promises of change
- Threats
- Persistence

Promises of Change:
Can she figure out what stage of change he is in:

- Precontemplative--does he acknowledge the abusive tactics at all? (Emotional and Physical)
- Contemplative--does he recognize why he does it? (What excuses does he use to rationalize behavior) (Can he tolerate a conversation without rationalization)

- Preparation—what steps is he willing to do to create change?
- Action—will he take those steps?
- Maintenance—will he work at it for an extended period? Can he tolerate taking action without immediate results?

Over time, is she willing to:

- Take fewer of his phone calls
- Not 'bite' when he says something provocative
- Not respond to emails
- Stop defending herself
- Stop explaining herself
- Accept that he may not like her or agree with her decisions/rationale for things....it's okay!
- Call the police when she's scared or he breaks the law.

Sometimes in order to be able to do this, she has to imagine what he will take from her

What is the most important thing to her and has he threatened it or demonstrated that he will fight her for that very thing?

If she can't fight him alone (she can't!!)...who can she get on her side? She should begin preparations for that TEAM long before she engages in the fight

Our job is help her know the long-term impact of her decisions and help her prepare for the ways he might try to hurt her down the road.

Remember those two women...we are working to move her toward the middle:

Capable of being safe
Capable of taking control
But not falsely believing all are safe
Not falsely believing that she must solve this alone

Keep the focus on Safety and Support Systems

Keeping your message focused on these create more opportunities for her to begin to evaluate his behavior through the lens of a parent and a healthy person

Focus on improving her relationship with her child

- Do you believe that abusers are good parents?
- Do you believe that she is capable of providing for her child?

What is your role in keeping the family safe?

- The impact of violence on kids is profound.
- It is not enough to tell mom to leave.
- It is not enough to say mom is not protective.
- We **MUST** work together to get mom safe so that she can protect her children

Some Statistics

- Children are 1500% more likely to be abused in homes where domestic violence occurs
- 70% of men who batter their wives, also batter their children
- The number one predictor of child abuse is woman abuse
- One in three teens will be physically abused in a dating relationship

Children who grow up in violent homes:

- Are 6 times more likely to commit suicide
- 24 times more likely to commit sexual assault crimes
- 74 times more likely to commit crimes against people
- 50 times more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol

Myth: Children are Resilient

- Truth: They simply don't have the words to describe how their trusted adults are hurting them.
- Their hurt is manifested in their adult relationships and behaviors. (80% of men in Texas prisons grew up with family violence; 50% of girls, 40% of boys repeat cycle.

When a child is exposed to stress:

- Respond with increased hormones and activating different brain circuits to cope
- Essential response: fight, flight or freeze
- When it is over, the physical response decreases and disappears

Chronic exposure to stress = Never turn off stress response

Live in constant state of fight, flight, or freeze

Three Categories of Stress

- Positive stress--moderate, short-lived response to normal situations
 - Especially if occur against backdrop of safety, children learn to control and manage reactions to events with support
 - Develop a sense of mastery (first day of school, meeting new people, experiencing frustration)

Tolerable Stress

- Responses that affect brain architecture, but are:
 - Time-limited
 - Allow for brain to recover and reverse harmful effects
 - Supportive adult to help cope is critical to success
 - (Divorce, frightening accident)

Toxic Stress

- Traumatic or complex stress
- Strong, frequent, prolonged activation of body's stress management system
- Chronic, uncontrollable and/or experienced without access to support from caring adults

Toxic Stress

- Adverse impact on brain architecture
- Can mean development of smaller brain
- Intervention is necessary to prevent/reduce negative impact
- Has implications on emotional, social, behavioral and academic development of child

Make no mistake...

- Living with abuse creates toxic stress
- A home where a child is terrified...
- And having ONE parent who is **TERRIFIED** and ONE parent who is **TERRIFYING** creates a long term toxic stress response that needs expert intervention to help recover from.

America's Children have PTSD

- For every one soldier returning home from Afghanistan with PTSD, there are 10 children living with PTSD caused by witnessing violence in the home.

We must work to promote their resiliency.

But we can't bank on it happening without expert services and a competent, safe primary caregiver committed to fostering attachment.

Integrated View of Self

- Before a child (or an adult) can learn to self-regulate—get out of that toxic stress response—they must regulate in relationships
- Must see that relationships are predictable, safe, stable, balancing expectations with reason and with unconditional love...

Needs are Met + Caregiver Responds = Can Self-Regulate

- Treat the child in this manner (provide safety, stability, nurture),
- Treat the mom in this manner (model safety, stability, nurture, information, expectations),
- Teach the mom HOW to treat the child in this manner

Fear, Powerlessness, Rage

- Imagine these three feelings being primary feelings in the home. The child who experiences these regularly has two normal but destructive ways to deal with them: Internal and external acting out behaviors.

All stress is best managed with:

- Understanding that the brain is elastic, but that new behaviors take time to develop
- Early intervention is best
- Supportive adult is critical

This means....

- It is up to YOU and YOUR department to create a top-rate response to TOXIC stress
- YOUR interventions must help FACILITATE safety in the home so that the child can recover.
- It is not enough to say that your intervention was to TELL mom to leave. That won't work.

Factors that promote resiliency

- Number one factor in promotion of resiliency: relationship with mom
- We must foster this relationship in our work
- Staff must hold mom accountable (it's always an adult's responsibility to keep a child safe) and foster relationship between mom and child. Mom may have two roles: victim and parent.

Self-Regulation

- Basic understanding of the brain
- Basic understanding of how to self-regulate
- Teach mom how to self-regulate
- Help mom practice calming her child down.

Making Sense

- A mom and a child will not be able to walk into your office and turn back the clock...the trauma has occurred, the relationships have caused pain
- But, if you can facilitate HOW the family makes sense of what happened...WHAT steps they can take to change their lives for the better, they will be DIFFERENT
- They will break the cycle of violence
- It will take extra effort on your part...but it will be one of the biggest factors in promoting resiliency and creating change.

Case Scenarios

- A client walks in and reports abuse the first time. She's been beat up. What do you do?
- A client says she's fed up and ready to go. What do you do?
- A client says she has left 5 times, but this time is different. What do you ask to find out if that's true?

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