

Section Two:

Deepening Understanding of Domestic Violence

Session 2.1 Domestic Violence: An Overview (2 hours)

Session 2.2 The Experience of Domestic Violence (2 hours)

Session 2.3 Our Own Stories (1 hour 30 min)

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Session 2.5 Consequences for Women and their Families (1 hour 30 min)

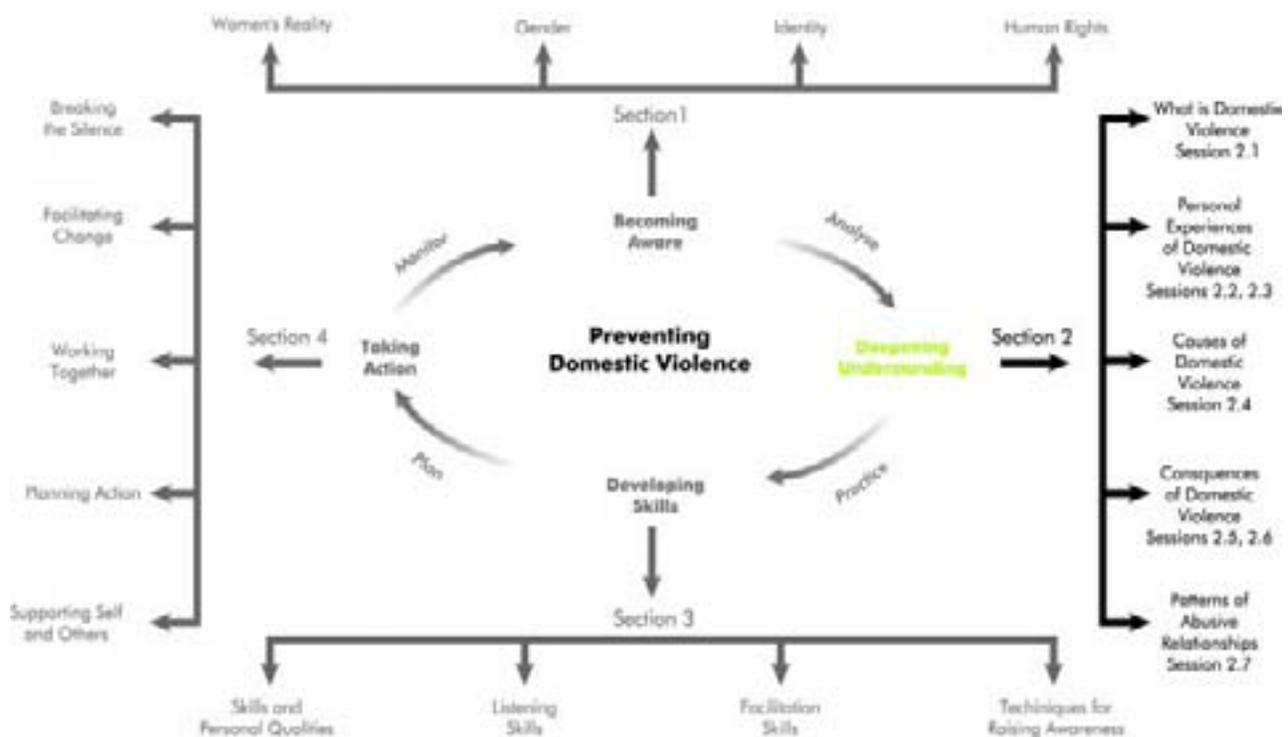
Session 2.6 Consequences for the Community (1 hour)

Session 2.7 Cycle of Violence (2 hours)

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Section Two: Deepening Understanding of Domestic Violence

Although clear analysis is important for action to be possible, it is not enough by itself. For action to be possible, the community must also *deeply understand* the problem to be addressed in detail and *relate it to their personal experiences*. They must be able to see the connection between the discussion of ideas and their day-to-day experience. The activities in this section will help you explore, with your group, how they understand domestic violence, what their experience has been and what some of the consequences have been for their community. It is an opportunity to help participants reflect on their personal experiences and come to a deeper understanding of why action is necessary.



In this section the group will discuss and learn about:

- Domestic violence and different types of domestic violence prevalent in your community.
- Participants' experience of domestic violence.
- The causes of domestic violence.
- The consequences of domestic violence.
- Patterns of abusive relationships.

Session 2.1 Domestic Violence: An Overview (2 hours)

Objectives

- Clarify what is meant by the term 'domestic violence'.
- Examine different types of domestic violence.
- Strengthen participants' understanding of domestic violence.



Preparations

- Read through the Domestic Violence Info Sheet in the appendix and make copies for the participants if possible.



Steps

Part A — Group Discussion (15 min)

1. Ask participants to think about the term 'domestic violence'. What does it mean to them?
2. After two or three minutes, ask participants to share their ideas. Record their contributions on a flipchart.

Part B — Small Group Definitions (1 hour)

1. Divide participants into four small groups. Give each group a flipchart and a marker pen and ask them to discuss their ideas and create a simple definition of 'domestic violence'.
2. After about twenty minutes, ask the groups to come back and present their definitions to the other participants.
3. When each group presents, do not worry too much about which group's definition is 'right'. Instead, highlight common ideas and key concepts about domestic violence. For example, domestic violence:
 - Happens between intimate partners
 - Causes pain that can be emotional as well as physical
 - Violates the person's dignity
 - Is about power and control and not just poor management of anger



Part C — Large Group Definition (20 min)

1. From the common ideas and key concepts discussed, guide the group in creating one working definition of domestic violence that they can use. The definition can be a list of the key concepts, one of the definitions already presented, or a formal definition created as a group.



Tip

Writing a formal definition can be challenging to facilitate. If you choose to do this, ask open questions to assist participants in creating the definition. Also, remember that the exact wording is less important than making sure the key ideas are included.

2. Discuss the key concepts about domestic violence to ensure everyone understands them.



Part D — Does It Really Happen in Our Community? (20 min)

1. Facilitate an informal discussion based on the ideas that emerged in the previous activity. Begin by asking, 'does domestic violence really happen in our community?'
2. Invite participants to talk informally about their overall perception. Do they see it happening in their neighbourhood? Why is it that people keep quiet about it?
3. The aim is to begin an informal discussion to gauge how people feel about the issue and whether they notice it in their community or not.
4. When people have had an opportunity to talk about their perception, wrap up the discussion by emphasising that whether we talk about it or not, domestic violence exists and that it has a very real impact on women, men, children and their community. In the next few sessions the group will explore the issue in depth.

Part E — Summary (5 min)

1. Summarise the work done during this activity.
2. Review the following key concepts:
 - Domestic violence exists and happens in our community.
 - It causes emotional as well as physical pain.
 - It is about power and control, and not just poor management of anger.

Session 2.2 The Experience of Domestic Violence (2 hours)

Objectives

- Examine different types of domestic violence.
- Facilitate personal reflection on feelings provoked by domestic violence.



Preparations

- Prepare index cards or pieces of paper (about 80) for Part A.
- Review information in appendix 2.

Steps

Part A— Four Categories of Domestic Violence (45 min)

1. Introduce the idea that acts of violence can be divided into four categories:
 - Physical (hurts the body)
 - Emotional (hurts feelings)
 - Sexual (controls sexuality)
 - Economic (controls access to money, property, or resources)
2. Ensure that the participants understand the four categories by elaborating and giving examples.
3. Divide participants into four small groups and assign one category of domestic violence to each group (physical, emotional, sexual or economic).
4. Give each group a stack of index cards (or a stack of papers 15cm x 10cm) and ask them to take 15 minutes to brainstorm all the different acts of violence within that category. Using markers, participants should write each act on a different index card.
5. When the participants are finished, ask each group to present their ideas to the other participants.
6. Ask them to hang their cards on the wall under the matching category heading.
7. After each group presents, invite the other participants to ask questions or add any acts that were left out.
8. After a group discussion on each of the four types of violence, ask participants to look around the room at all the different kinds of violence perpetrated against women and connect with what that means to them. Pause for a few minutes for reflection.



Part B—Personal Reflection* (1 hour 15 min)



1. Ask participants to choose one act from the cards stuck on the wall that either happened to them personally or to someone they know. Give participants a few minutes to think about the event in detail. Guide them with some questions: When did it happen? What were the circumstances? What was the day like? What were they wearing? What time of day did it occur? Ask participants to think about the person who perpetrated the violence, to try to picture them at that moment. What did they look like? Invite participants to imagine the event as if they are watching it from above and to recall the experience in detail. Ask the participants to think about how they or the person being abused felt in that situation.
2. Allow a few minutes of silence for participants to continue reflecting.
3. Ask participants to work in pairs with the person on their right. Explain that one will be a sculptor and the other will be the sculpture/statue that the sculptor will make. The sculptor must turn the other person into a sculpture that represents the feelings that arise from violence. They can do this by shaping their body posture, position, and facial expression to demonstrate how they felt in that situation. The pair should not talk.
4. When the first set of participants feel satisfied with their sculpture, bring the group back together and ask them to share the sculpture with the rest of the group. After each sculpture is shown, brainstorm the feelings that the sculpture represents. List these feelings on a flipchart.



Tip

You may not have time to discuss every sculpture in detail. Ask for people who want to volunteer to demonstrate their sculpture. Ask the pairs, if appropriate to meet after the session and finish their discussions.

5. If time allows repeat the exercise so that the participants can reverse roles.
6. Conduct a group discussion about the feelings that arise from violence.

* Be aware that this exercise may be too powerful for some participants. Do not pressure anyone to participate unless they want to. If a participant needs support, be prepared to listen after the activity.

Session 2.3 Our Own Stories (1 hour 30 min)

Objectives

- Provide an opportunity for sharing personal experiences.
- Promote trust and mutual support between participants.
- Encourage a creative and committed spirit for advocating against domestic violence.



Tip

Emphasise that the activity is optional and that, even if participants choose to attend, sharing personal information is not required. Use your judgement to decide if this session is appropriate for your group. You may decide to conduct it in single sex groups if you feel it will affect the level of safety in the group. This activity works particularly well if conducted in the evening in a relaxed, informal environment.



Preparations

- If possible, collect one candle for each of the participants if you are doing this in the evening.

Steps

Part A — Creating a Safe Space (10 min)

1. Gather in an informal place where people can sit comfortably in a circle.
2. If you were able to get candles, switch off the lights and have one lit candle in the middle of the circle. Then give one candle to each of the participants.
3. Tell participants that this will be a chance for people to share true stories about domestic violence that have affected them and shaped their outlook on life. The stories do not have to be recent. They can be personal experiences or stories about family members, neighbours, friends, or even strangers. They may even choose to talk about how violence has affected them throughout their life instead of just talking about one incident.
4. Explain that sharing an experience can sometimes help us cope with our feelings about that experience, help us understand what that experience meant to us, and clarify any action we want to take in response to that experience.
5. In a gentle manner, explain how the group can create a safe space for sharing:
 - Keep all information confidential.
 - Do not pressure anyone to reveal anything they are not ready to share.



- Listen attentively.
- When a person finishes speaking, there will be a short silence for reflection while the participant lights his/her candle.
- Do not comment or give advice about somebody's story.
- Limit your story to 5 minutes so that many people get a chance to share.



Part B—Voluntary Sharing (1 hour 15 min)

1. Begin by sharing your own story. Guide the participants by your example. Speak with a clear, personal voice as if you are sharing a personal story with a friend. Keep your story focused and short (maximum. 5 minutes).
2. At the end of your story, light your candle from the central candle and put it in front of you.
3. Invite participants to share their stories. Encourage them to discuss how their stories affected them personally.
4. Give each participant the choice and opportunity to speak.

Part C—Closure (5 min)

1. Close the activity by emphasizing the following:
 - Violence affects everyone.
 - Violence often affects us in ways that we do not immediately understand.
 - We can become more empathetic and committed advocates for prevention of violence when we become aware of the violence that we have experienced or witnessed and how that violence has affected our lives and the lives of those we know and love.
2. Thank all the participants for sharing and listening.



Session 2.4 Roots of Domestic Violence (2 hours)

Objective

- Identify root causes that lead to domestic violence.

Steps

Part A — Preparation of Roleplays (45 min)

1. Divide the participants into two groups. Ask each group to create a roleplay that shows a situation where a woman is experiencing domestic violence from her partner. Ask participants to create the story using their own experiences or what they have seen in their own community.



2. Ask the first group to create a roleplay from a woman's perspective, addressing the following types of questions:
 - What is her history?
 - What do her parents say about the abuse?
 - What did people say to her when she was experiencing violence?
 - How does she cope with the abuse?
3. Ask the other group to create a roleplay from the man's perspective, addressing the following types of questions:
 - What was his life like, beyond the incidence of violence?
 - What did people say to him when he was being violent?
 - How did he treat other people?
 - How did he feel when he was being violent?
4. It is important to emphasise the difference in perspectives from which the two groups are approaching the roleplays. *Ask each group to truly imagine the perspective they are trying to portray.* For example, the group roleplaying the male perspective has to imagine what is going on inside the man they are portraying, not what they *think* he should do.
5. Encourage both groups to think of real people they know or have seen experiencing violence. Give the groups time to discuss, create and practice their roleplay before coming back into the main group.

Part B — Roleplay 1 (20 min)

1. Ask the first group, portraying the female perspective, to act out their roleplay.
2. Ask the audience to identify factors that made the woman vulnerable to violence from her partner. The participants may suggest the following:

- The woman's community said nothing
 - Her parents told her it was to be expected
 - She was dependent on her husband for money
3. Emphasise that, ultimately, the woman was vulnerable because the community assigned a low status to her and her worth as a human being. Emphasise also that the woman is not responsible for the violence committed against her.

Part C — Roleplay 2 (20 min)

1. Ask the second group, portraying the male perspective, to act out their roleplay.
2. Ask the audience to identify factors that contributed to the man being violent. The participants may suggest that:
 - He felt entitled to do whatever he wanted to her
 - He wanted to assert his authority where he could (i.e., over her)
 - He was angry and took it out on his wife
 - Nobody stopped him
 - He was drunk
3. Explain that all of these ideas stem from the fact that he wanted to feel powerful and was attempting to feel this at the expense of someone he saw as less powerful than him. Emphasise that despite other factors that may be contributing to the man's frustration, ultimately he is responsible for his behaviour. Emphasise that men, like women, choose how to respond in different situations and that, no matter what, a violent response is never acceptable. No one can 'make' another person be violent.

Part D — Summary (5 min)



1. Summarise the work by explaining the following:
 - Domestic violence occurs because men feel entitlement over women and because the community does not value women equally to men. Men are socialised to feel entitled to have control over women and many feel justified in demonstrating their power over women through violence.
 - The difference in status between women and men is the root cause of domestic violence.
 - Poverty, alcohol, unemployment (and other such factors) may be the context of violence, but the difference in status between women and men is the root cause of domestic violence.
2. Ensure that all participants understand these concepts. Explain that the work of preventing domestic violence is to influence the nature of relationships between women and men by working to elevate women's status in the family and the community and by changing the perception that men's violence toward women is acceptable. The aim is to create equality between women and men, not to have one sex dominate.

Session 2.5 Consequences for Women and their Families (2 hours)

Objective

- Enhance understanding of the consequences of domestic violence on women and their families.



Preparations

- Read through the story below and modify where necessary.
- Prepare flipcharts with guiding questions for Part B for each group.

Steps

Part A— Consequences for a Woman (45 min)

1. Read the story below. Ask the participants if it is realistic and if similar things happen to women in their community. Modify (change names to ones that are common in your community) or add things to the story if the participants have suggestions, without changing John's violence against Anna.



John and Anna: A Story About Domestic Violence

(Modify this story to make it appropriate for your community.)

Anna lived with her husband, John, and her three children in a small house near the market. When they got married, John paid dowry/bride price to her family and, from the beginning, expected Anna to work hard to make up for it. He would often tell her that he had paid a good price for her so she better work and be a good wife, or else he would send her back and demand the money back from her family.

Anna worked from early in the morning until late in the evening selling vegetables in the market. When she got home, she would be tired, but she had to cook dinner, fetch water, wash clothes, and look after her young children as well.

John would often take the money that Anna had earned at the market and go out in the evening. He would not come home until late, and often, he would be drunk and start shouting at Anna. He would beat her in front of the children. Sometimes he would make her sleep outside to punish her if the food was cold or not cooked to his liking and to show the neighbours that he was the boss in his house. Many of their neighbours were afraid of John and ignored Anna. Anna was too ashamed to talk with her friends or neighbours about John. Although they would often see her with bruises on her face, they just kept quiet.



2. On a flipchart, write the title, 'Consequences of Domestic Violence'. Ask the group to suggest some consequences of domestic violence for Anna. Ask questions that help participants think about how violence affects Anna.
 - What are the short-term consequences for Anna living in this kind of relationship?
 - What are the long-term consequences for Anna?
 - How did it make Anna feel about herself?
 - How did it make her feel about John and their relationship?
 - How did it make Anna feel about her relationships with other people around her (i.e., friends and neighbours)?



Part B — Consequences for Families (1 hour 15 min)

1. Divide the participants into two groups.
2. Ask one group to discuss the consequences of violence on John (30 min).
 - What are the short-term consequences for John living in this kind of relationship?
 - What are the negative consequences for John?
 - How does it make him feel about himself?
 - How does it make him feel about Anna?
 - How does it affect their relationship?
 - How does it affect his relationship with his children?
 - How does it make him feel about his relationships with other people?
3. Ask the other group to discuss how the children feel as a result of the violence against Anna.
 - What are the short-term consequences for the children?
 - What are the long-term consequences for them?
 - What do children learn about relationships from watching their parents?
 - How does it affect how they feel about their mother?
 - How does it affect how they feel about their father?
 - How does it affect children's relationships with others?
 - How does it affect how children feel in their home?
4. Ask each group to record their discussion on a flipchart. Bring the group back together and ask participants from each group to share their thoughts. Emphasise that domestic violence has serious consequences on women, men, and children and significantly damages family relationships.

Session 2.6 Consequences for the Community (2 hours)

Objectives

- Explore how domestic violence affects everyone in the community.
- Deepen understanding of the impact of domestic violence on the community.



Preparations

Read through Anna and John's story from Session 2.5.



Steps

Part A—Brainstorming Consequences for the Community (30 min)

1. Remind the group of Anna's story.
2. Ask the participants: "What are the consequences of domestic violence for the community?" Write on flipchart the points that emerge from the discussion. Ask open-ended questions, such as:
 - How does the violence experienced by Anna affect the community?
 - What kind of relationship did Anna have with her neighbours?
 - What did it mean for the contribution and participation of Anna and her children in community life?
 - What impact did it have on community resources such as, health services social welfare services or the police?
 - What did Anna's lack of access to her money mean for her business?
3. Emphasise that domestic violence affects everyone in the community.

Part B—Preparing Mock Election Speeches (30 min)



1. Divide the participants into three groups.
2. Ask them to imagine that there is an election coming up in their local community and that domestic violence is a big issue. Ask participants to work in their groups to develop a short speech (5 min) that explains to their audience that domestic violence is a problem and that it affects the entire community. The audience will be critical of what is being said, so each group has to work hard to convince their audience that domestic violence really does affect the community and why something needs to be done about it.



Part C — Presenting and Discussing Speeches (1 hour)

1. Ask each group to present their speech. A volunteer may present the speech, but everyone has to answer questions from the 'audience' of participants. Join in and ask questions that may help the thinking process. Be willing to help the speaker if s/he is struggling.
2. Record on a flipchart the main points of the arguments produced by the different groups.
3. Discuss the issues that came up in the presentations.
4. If time allows invite one group to present their speech again incorporating the feedback provided by the audience.



Session 2.7 The Cycle of Violence (2 hours)

Objective

- Understand the pattern of abusive relationships.



Tip

The participants may often ask why women choose to remain in abusive relationships. Even those who are sympathetic to women may often struggle with why many women, despite apparent offers of help, remain in violent relationships for years. Some counsellors or activists may feel 'betrayed' when they go out of their way to assist a woman experiencing domestic violence and yet the woman returns to the abusive partner once the crisis has subsided. This can be demoralising to activists who don't understand the pattern of an abusive relationship and may even be used by some to argue for keeping domestic violence within the home and not a public issue. The following activity may assist in deepening understanding of the patterns of abusive relationships.



Preparations

- Draw the Cycle of Violence diagram (next page) on a flipchart.



Steps

Part A— Reflecting on Patterns of Violence (45 min)

1. Begin the activity by asking the participants to think of someone that they know or have heard of who is experiencing domestic violence. Ask the participants to think about the pattern of that relationship. Has it changed over a period of time? Does it go through identifiable stages?
2. Divide the participants into three smaller groups. Ask each group to discuss common patterns they observe in abusive relationships. Do same things happen again and again over a period of time? Ask the participants to think about why the woman may continue to remain in an abusive relationship and to try to answer the following questions as they discuss the pattern:
 - Has the violence been happening for a long time?
 - Does it happen everyday or in episodes (i.e., once in a while)?
 - If you know the woman, how does she describe her relationship?
 - If you know the abuser, how does he describe his behaviour?
3. Ask each group to present a summary of their discussion to the main group.



Part B — Introducing Cycle of Violence (30 min)

1. Identify common themes in all the presentations. These may include
 - Women may remain a long time in an abusive relationship
 - The physical violence often happens in episodes (i.e., crisis, a period of calm, and then the violence flares up again)
 - This pattern is circular (i.e., keeps repeating itself)
 - Sometimes women want to escape, but when it is calmer they may change their mind
 - Both or one of the partners in the abusive relationship may claim that it is not a serious problem or is only due to temporary stress in the relationship
2. Display the flipchart of the following diagram:



*Adapted from Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman*, New York: Harper and Row 1979.

3. Explain that most abusive relationships settle into this circular pattern. Give an initial overview of the cycle and include the following points:
 - The pattern begins with a violent episode which could be one event or sustained violence over some time.
 - After the violence, there is a calm stage during which both or one of the partners may genuinely believe that things are going to change.
 - During the calm stage, the abuser may apologise, buy gifts, or

make special effort to create an atmosphere of love and peace in the family.

- Over a period of time, tension begins to build again and the woman and others in the family feel anxious and fearful that violence will again occur. During this time, the woman usually tries hard to pacify the man and maintain normalcy in the family.
 - Eventually, the tension is broken with a violent episode. This pattern keeps repeating itself unless it is broken.
 - These are aspects of a well-defined and well-researched cycle of violence.
 - In a long-term abusive relationship, the timeframe of the cycle may become shorter so that the couple may go through the entire cycle within a day.
4. Ask the participants to name some of the behaviours of the victim and the abuser during each of the stages in the cycle of violence.
 5. Explain the significance of each of the stages. Understanding this cycle will enable advocates to be more effective and help women and men break the pattern.
 - During the 'Violence' stage, many women seek assistance.
 - During the 'Calm' stage, women 'forgive' the abuser and may return to the relationship. This is the stage when women may hope that the abuser loves them and will change. They may believe the promises that the abuser makes, and the abuser may be sincere about his promises.
 - During the 'Tension' stage, the woman may think about how to stay safe and may consider taking action. However, *unless the cycle is broken, the pattern will keep repeating itself.*

Part C — Breaking the Cycle of Violence (45 min)

1. Divide the participants into two groups. Ask one group to discuss how the man could break the cycle and ask the other group to discuss how the woman could break the cycle.

Examples for the Man:

- He could begin by recognising that his violence is a problem for the relationship.
- He could stop denying his behaviour or blaming the woman for his violence.
- He could learn techniques to manage anger and emotions.
- He could avoid things that 'trigger' the violent act.
- He could avoid alcohol or friends who impair his goal of remaining violence-free.
- He could agree to seek help from people he trusts.
- He could make a public commitment (in front of a friend or other



family members) that he will not use violence as a means of resolving a conflict.

- He could talk to his partner about other frustrations in his life that contribute to his behaviour.

Examples for the Woman:

- She could make a safety plan for the next time the cycle begins to reach the 'Violence' stage.
 - She could acknowledge the pattern of the relationship to the abuser and then draw a clear limit that any transgression will have consequences.
 - She could develop skills with the help of a counsellor on how to assert her needs.
 - She could develop a plan (suited to her reality) about choices available to her.
 - She could enlist help of community leaders or other respected members of the community to talk to her partner.
 - She could become aware of legal action she could take to prevent violence against her and her children.
2. Emphasise with participants the following:
 - It is important that those supporting the victim of domestic violence do not blame her for staying in the relationship.
 - It is also important that counsellors or friends don't force her to take actions she is not ready to take.
 - Whatever support you choose to offer the woman living with the abuse, bear in mind where she is in the cycle of violence and whether she is ready to break the cycle or not.
 3. If time allows, you could discuss how children who witness violence between their parents learn that violence is an acceptable way of resolving conflict. Many men who are abusers in their current relationship are likely to have witnessed violence as children in their homes. This is sometimes called 'intergenerational cycle of violence'.