

# Section 2. Some Basics Everyone Should Know

## 2.0. Introduction

**Section 2: *The Basics Everyone Should Know*** has some basic information that it is important to know as you think about what you want to do about violence and consider using this Toolkit.

No matter what your familiarity is with the topic of interpersonal violence, including domestic violence or sexual assault, you may find it useful to read through the Basics section. The information we present here is different from the kind of basic domestic violence or sexual assault information offered in other books, websites and community education materials.

This Section includes:

- ***2.1. What Is the Community-Based Intervention to Interpersonal Violence?*** This explains in more detail the approach used in this Toolkit that is introduced in Section 1: *Introduction & FAQ*.
- ***2.2. Interpersonal Violence: Some Basics Everyone Should Know.*** Our society continues to feed us misinformation about interpersonal violence. This section gives an overview of some important things that you and others should know about interpersonal violence in order to better understand its dynamics and to create a more effective response to it.
- ***2.3. Violence Intervention: Some Important Lessons.*** In this section, we offer some basic lessons that Creative Interventions learned about violence intervention over the 3 years of our project. It also builds upon the many lessons shared among other groups who have been creating similar responses to violence, many of which are listed in the *Preface* and *Acknowledgements: A Community Effort*.

## 2.1. What Is the Community-Based Intervention to Interpersonal Violence?

### Brief Definition

In brief, the CI definition of *community-based interventions to interpersonal violence* is:

- An attempt to address, end, reduce, or prevent interpersonal violence (or what we call *intervention*)
- Using community resources rather than relying on the criminal legal system or social services
- That directly involve friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, or community members (what we mean by *community*)
- With the possibility of directly dealing with (or engaging) the person or people doing harm

### Making It Through Confusing Language

You may also see language that refers more generally to *community-based responses* or a *community-based approach*.

We sometimes say *community accountability* because this is language commonly used by others.

Many of our partner organizations have found the term *transformative justice* useful to refer to many of these same ideas. We do not use this language or refer to “justice” generally speaking. And we find that many people using the term *restorative justice* still look at types of interventions that involve the police or criminal justice system, so we do not use this language either. (For a good explanation of transformative justice, see Generation Five’s *Toward Transformative Justice: A Liberatory Approach to Child Sexual Abuse and other forms of Intimate and Community Violence* downloadable at [http://www.generationfive.org/downloads/G5\\_Toward\\_Transformative\\_Justice.pdf](http://www.generationfive.org/downloads/G5_Toward_Transformative_Justice.pdf))

In this section, we will try to clarify what CI means (and does not mean) by these sometimes confusing terms.

## What Do We Mean by Interpersonal Violence?

As Section 1: *Introduction & FAQ* mentions, by *interpersonal violence*, we mean:

- *Domestic violence or intimate partner violence* that takes place within an intimate relationship such as marriage, domestic partnership, dating relationship, former relationship.
- *Family violence* that can include domestic violence but can also extend to children, parents, grandchildren, grandparents, other family members and others who may be very close to family like family friends, guardians or caretakers.
- *Sexual violence* that includes unwanted sexual attitudes, touch or actions such as *sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, molestation, child sexual abuse*.
- *Child abuse* that is any kind of abuse against children.
- *Elder abuse* that is any kind of abuse against elderly people.

While CI focuses on the types of violence just listed above, this Toolkit may also be useful for those experiencing violence in other settings such as within neighborhoods, schools, organizations, workplaces, other employment situations and so on – these forms of violence can also be considered interpersonal

The violence may be physical, emotional, sexual, economic, or may take some other form.

See Section 2.2. *Interpersonal Violence: Some Basics Everyone Should Know* for more important information.

## What Do We Mean by Community?

CI supports approaches to interpersonal violence based in the community. By community, we mean the networks of people with whom we may live, play, work, learn, organize, worship and connect to each other as community.

Since interpersonal violence generally happens in these community spaces and sometimes directly involves our fellow community members, CI believes that the answer to violence also lies in these same places, with these same people. These are the people most affected by violence, who know the most about the people involved in violence, who understand the culture and resources of the community, and who ultimately have the most to lose from violence and the most to gain from ending it.

By involving community, we can:

- Address violence where it happens.
- Take action to confront violence when and where it first shows up.
- Help people in communities gather together to address, reduce, end – and ultimately – prevent violence (violence intervention).
- Make violence intervention an everyday skill – rather than something that waits and waits until it’s too late.

We also know that survivors or victims of violence usually first turn to people they know – and not crisis lines, advocates or police. Family and friends are usually the “first responders.”

The problem is that they turn to us, but we do not always know what to do. And the violence “experts” tell us that we need to turn to professionals and the police to solve the problem of violence. The purpose of this Toolkit is to bring knowledge and skills back to communities – and assist communities to effectively intervene in violence.

What we DO NOT MEAN by community is: police – even if it is called “community policing,” the child welfare system, the government, or even organizations that might be called “community-based” unless those organizations are directly involving everyday people in communities as the primary actors in ending violence. We also do not necessarily mean domestic violence and sexual assault agencies in the community because they currently tend to disagree with the basic assumption that everyday community members are the best people to intervene in violence.

While this Toolkit results from the collaborative work of domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, particularly those serving communities of color including immigrant and queer communities, we also recognize the gap between the model described in the Toolkit and what our own organizations generally support.

We invite domestic violence and sexual assault organizations and other service providers, counselors and others to see how to support this type of community-based approach to violence intervention. Some organizations that have been bridging the divide between traditional approaches and a community-based approach are among the organizations that we name in *Preface and Acknowledgements: A Community Effort*.

## [What Is Community Accountability?](#)

The term, *community accountability*, can be thought of as a more specific form of a *community-based response* or *approach to interpersonal violence*. The word, “community” acknowledges that it is not only individuals but also

communities that are affected by violence. Interpersonal violence is not only an individual problem, but a community problem. The word, *accountability*, points to the idea of *responsibility*.

In brief, accountability is the ability to *recognize, end and take responsibility* for violence. We usually think of the person doing harm as the one to be *accountable* for violence. Community accountability also means that communities are accountable for sometimes ignoring, minimizing or even encouraging violence. Communities must also *recognize, end and take responsibility for violence* – by becoming more knowledgeable, skillful and willing to take action to intervene in violence and to support social norms and conditions that prevent violence from happening in the first place.

#### FOLLOWING IN BOX

Accountability is the ability to *recognize, end and take responsibility* for violence. We usually think of the person doing harm as the one to be *accountable* for violence. Community accountability also means that communities are accountable for sometimes ignoring, minimizing or even encouraging violence. Communities must also *recognize, end and take responsibility* for violence – by becoming more knowledgeable, skillful and willing to take action to intervene in violence and to support social norms and conditions that prevent violence from happening in the first place.

#### END OF BOX

This Toolkit provides more information about accountability in Section 4.E.  
*Taking Accountability*

Finally, communities are places of meaning, connection and resources for survivors or victims of violence and persons doing harm. Communities hold great potential in their ability to challenge violence and also for using meaning, connection and resources as part of the solution to violence. *Community accountability* can be used towards supporting the compassionate repair of harm for survivors of violence and all of those affected by violence; supporting people doing harm to take accountability for violence (that is, recognize, end and take responsibility), and changing community norms so that violence does not continue.

### [What Do We Mean by Intervention?](#)

Intervention expands beyond thinking and talking about what to do about violence – and moves into actions that can actually interrupt violence.

In this Toolkit, *interventions* to violence are:

- Actions to *address, reduce, end* or *prevent* violence.

While we would ideally like all forms of violence to end and never happen again, we also know that our interventions cannot always achieve this end.

We also understand that interventions are rarely one-time events. They are usually processes – involving the steps that we describe in this Toolkit's Section 4: *Tools to Mix and Match* such as Getting Clear, Staying Safe, Setting Goals, Mapping Allies and Barriers, Taking Accountability, Working Together, and Keeping on Track.

### [Putting Community and Interventions Together: Community-Based Interventions to Interpersonal Violence](#)

Breaking it down, community-based interventions to interpersonal violence are:

- ***Collective***: The intervention involves the coordinated efforts of a group of people rather than just one individual.
- ***Action-Oriented***: A community takes action to address, reduce, end or prevent interpersonal violence.
- ***Community-Based***: The intervention is organized and carried out by friends, family, neighbors, co-workers or community members rather than social services, the police, child welfare or governmental institutions.
- ***Coordinated***. The intervention links people and actions together to work together in a way that is coordinated towards the same goals – and that makes sure that our individual actions work towards a common purpose. It sees us as a team rather than individual, isolated individuals working as lone heroes or rescuers – or as separated parts, not knowing about or considering what actions others may be taking.
- ***Holistic***. The intervention considers the good of everyone involved in the situation of violence – including those harmed (survivors or victims of violence), those who have caused harm, and community members affected by violence. It also builds an approach that can include anyone involved in a situation of violence as a participant in the solution to violence – even the person or people who have caused harm if this is possible.
- ***Centers on Those Most Affected by Violence to Create Change***. The intervention centers those most affected by violence. It provides ways for those affected by violence and causing violence to develop new skills, insights and ways to put together a solution to violence – or to form a

system that not only addresses violence but reduces the chances that violence will continue.

- ***Supports the sometimes complex pathway to change and transformation.*** Changing violence, repairing from violence, and creating new ways of being free from violence can take time.

***For the survivor/victim,*** the intervention relies upon consideration of the best ways to support survivors or victims of harm by sharing the responsibility for addressing, reducing, ending, or preventing violence (**breaking isolation** and **taking accountability**), without blaming the survivor/victim for their choices (without **victim blaming**), and by offering support towards what they define as their own needs and wants (supporting **self-determination**).

***For the person doing harm,*** the intervention relies upon consideration of the best ways to support people doing harm to recognize, end and be responsible for their violence (what we also call **accountability**), without giving them excuses (without **colluding**), and without denying their humanity (without **demonizing**).

- ***Facilitated.*** The intervention works well if someone in our communities can act as a *facilitator*, someone who can act as an anchor for the process of intervention, or someone who can help us to walk through different parts of this Toolkit. Therefore, we call this a *facilitated* model. The facilitator role can be taken on by more than one person or it can rotate among group members as the process continues. The facilitator does not have to be a professional or someone who is an expert on violence intervention. It simply needs to be someone who can be clear-headed, act within the values and guidelines of the group, and who has some distance from the center of violence to be clear of the chaos and confusion that is often a part of a violent situation. See more about the facilitator role in Section 4.C. *Mapping Allies and Barriers*. If one cannot find a facilitator, then at the very least, this Toolkit and the many people whose experiences it represents may help to guide us through the process of violence intervention.

## [How is the community-based intervention approach different?](#)

CI offers a community-based approach which is an alternative to most commonly available responses to violence intervention. Most commonly available resources include domestic violence or battered women's centers, shelters, sexual assault or rape crisis centers, legal assistance clinics, counseling centers, victim-witness programs, and Family Justice Centers.

### ***Usual Violence Intervention Approach***

While the usual resources can be and have been helpful to many people, especially women experiencing violence, they also tend to recommend solutions that:

1. Assume that survivors or victims want to separate from the people doing harm.
2. Tells survivors or victims that calling the police or 911 is the safest way to end violence.
3. Requires a report to child protective services if resource providers think that a child is being harmed.
4. Works primarily with only the survivor or victims of violence rather than also working together with friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and community members.
5. Deals with people doing harm through the police or criminal justice system. (Batterer intervention programs often go through the police first, rather than the community first.)

### ***The Need for an Alternative: How Is the Community-Based Response Unique?***

CI found that many people seeking an intervention to violence did not feel safe or comfortable with these approaches, but they did not have other options.

In response, CI sought a *community-based approach* that:

1. Explores options that may allow survivors or victims to stay together with the people doing harm or at least support co-existence in the same community.
2. Does not rely upon the police or systems to address, reduce, end and prevent violence (violence intervention) but rather on friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and community members (community allies).

3. Brings intervention and prevention skills and knowledge to victims or survivors, friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and community members rather than relying solely on “experts”.
4. Envisions change of the person or people doing harm through connection with what is important and meaningful rather than simply through force, punishment and shaming.
5. Considers the person or people doing harm as potential allies in ending violence.
6. Changes the language of violence intervention from criminal justice terminology such as “perpetrators,” “perps,” “predators,” and “offenders” to the language of “people doing harm”, or “people who caused harm.”

### What if You Are Using Services or Systems?

Some people who want to use a community-based approach to violence may already be involved in the criminal justice system, receive social services or are involved in more traditional violence intervention programs. As mentioned before, the model promoted in this Toolkit may actually be in conflict with these systems. For example, this Toolkit’s approach allows survivors or victims of violence to consider the possibility of dealing directly with the person doing harm while taking into account one’s goals and safety concerns. If someone is in a shelter, contact with the person doing harm may break shelter rules, even if the contact is made through a third party. If someone has a restraining order, this contact may violate that order. These are examples of how this model can violate the rules and assumptions of the usual types of intervention available.

This Toolkit also encourages actively working together with other people in one’s family, friendship network or community. While this might not be counter to the rules of service providers or the criminal justice system, conventional or mainstream systems assume that the person is making decisions on one’s own or with an advocate or professional and not with other community members. The decision-making process might conflict with the ways in which these systems expect that people will make decisions. People working in conventional or mainstream systems may even consider a group process to be strange or wrong. They may think that survivors or victims that seek a process involving more people means that they are weak or dependent, rather than finding strength through their communities. The value of collectivity is one that is different from the way that most individually-focused systems work.

People wanting to use this Toolkit should be aware of these possible conflicts in values and approaches. At the same time, it is possible to use this community-based approach with more traditional services and systems by being aware of the differences. You may want to use this Toolkit or parts of it to better define and

Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence

[www.creative-interventions.org](http://www.creative-interventions.org) • [info@creative-interventions.org](mailto:info@creative-interventions.org)

This pre-release version (06.2012) is available for public use – Final version is forthcoming

**reach your goals. If you are already involved with systems or services, this Toolkit may be used along with these systems. This Toolkit may even be helpful in managing or counteracting the harms that can result from the use of other systems.**

## Creative Interventions Community-Based Intervention Values

Creative Interventions developed this version of the community-based intervention approach not only to end violence, but to lead to healthier ways of being in community with each other.

We developed this list to guide us in our own work. These values underlie our vision and practice and are reflected throughout this Toolkit.

The following is a long version of the CI values. A brief version is included in Section 3.3 *Guiding Your Intervention with Values*.

### **Creative Interventions Values (Long Version):**

1. *Creativity*. Solutions to violence can emerge out of a creative process.
2. *Collectivity or Community Responsibility*. We believe that violence is not an individual problem and that solutions also cannot be individual. It takes all of us to end violence. The actions of a group (if done well) can be much wiser, healthier, effective and long-lasting than those carried out by an individual.
3. *Holism*. Solutions to violence can involve consideration for the health and wellbeing of everyone involved in and affected by violence – this includes the survivors or victims of violence; people doing harm; and friends, family and community. We also want our solutions to keep communities whole. This does not mean that abusive relationships or families necessarily need to stay together, but this does mean that they may be able co-exist peacefully in the same community.
4. *Safety*. We are interested in creating safety in all of its forms (physical, emotional, sexual, economic, spiritual and so on).
5. *Risk-Taking*. While we prioritize safety, we also believe that it sometimes takes risks to create more safety in the long-run. Safety may require action which has the potential to increase short-term risk or danger in order to reach long-term goals.
6. *Accountability*. All of us have our own role and responsibility to take in ending violence. Community-based solutions to violence require that we all step up and think about the ways we may have contributed to violence, the ways we may need acknowledge and make amends for our contribution to violence, and the ways we can take action to make sure that violence does not continue and that healthy alternatives can take its place.
7. *Transformation*. We believe that everyone involved in violence can go through positive change. What is needed is a model for taking action which believes that healthy change is possible for all – and can also take

realistic and sometimes difficult steps to create an environment in which long-term change can be supported.

8. *Flexibility.* Situations of violence are often complicated and so are the steps towards long-term change. We try to remain flexible so that we can make changes and create new strategies when needed.
9. *Patience.* Violence is built over time and so the solution to violence takes time. We ask people to step out of expectations of quick results and take the time to create thoughtful solutions to violence, solutions which will hold in the long run.
10. *Building on What We Know (Organic).* We believe that we all as individuals, families, friendship networks, communities and cultures have a history of creative and community-based ways to resolve violence. We want to remember, honor and build upon the positive things we have known and done throughout history.
11. *Sustainability.* We need to support each other to create change in ways that can last over the time it takes to successfully intervene in violence. We encourage that solutions to violence are built to last over the course of the intervention, over our lifetimes, and throughout future generations.
12. *Regeneration.* We can all contribute to expanding opportunities to challenge violence and contribute to liberation. Although any of us may be thinking of our own unique situation of violence when creating a community-based response to violence, our successes lead to new changes and transformations for everyone involved. And our stories can be passed on to others so they can learn from our experiences. We ask you to consider sharing your intervention stories and lessons learned through the website ([www.creative-interventions.org](http://www.creative-interventions.org)), the StoryTelling & Organizing Project (STOP) ([www.stopviolenceeveryday.org](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org)) and through other community spaces.

## 2.2. Interpersonal Violence: Some Basics Everyone Should Know

Interpersonal violence is very commonly a way to gain power and control over another person. It often takes advantage of unequal power relations. This is why interpersonal forms of violence, especially domestic violence and sexual assault, are so often committed by men against women and girls, boys against girls, male-identified over female-identified, adults over youth and children, able-bodied over people with disabilities, citizens over immigrants, legal immigrants over undocumented immigrants, people with high status over people with lower status, rich over poor or those who financially depend on them, and so on.

Because we are talking about interpersonal violence, this violence can be committed by people within the same race, ethnicity, income class, family, household, neighborhood, organization, and so on. This is not always the case and sometimes these differences become important factors in the imbalance of power.

Sometimes, people who are in a less powerful position in society use their feelings of powerlessness to justify the use of violence in their interpersonal relationships – as an excuse for their violence or a way to “make up” for the powerlessness they feel in other places in their lives.

Because we are talking about interpersonal violence, the survivor or victim and the person doing harm may also love and care about each other or move back and forth between powerful feelings of love and hate.

There are many reasons that a consideration of interpersonal violence and the end to violence are important:

1. Our interpersonal relationships (families, intimate relationships, close friendships) are often the first place we learn about violence and relationships. Those experiences can have a life-long Impact. The value of transforming lessons about violence, helplessness, and powerlessness to love, respect and shared power is immeasurable.
2. Disconnecting ideas about intimacy, families and closeness from violence and abuse can stop us from growing up and repeating relationships that find love through violence and abuse – and that repeat the cycle of violence generation after generation.
3. Learning to love and respect those within our families and communities, especially if we are from communities at the bottom of society, can strengthen

and unite us to tackle larger abuses in our society – the bigger enemies of poverty, racism, homophobia, anti-immigrant discrimination and so on.

4. Changing ourselves from victims and abusers to companions, supporters and friends can release us from hate, fear and violence towards powerful positive forces for building healthy lives, relationships and communities.

In this section, we take time to share some of the basic knowledge about interpersonal violence we have gained through years of practice.

Although people hear more about domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of interpersonal violence in our culture, interpersonal violence is still very much misunderstood including among very educated people. This lack of information leads us to blame victims, excuse people causing harm, or sometimes just turn the other way.

The following presents 10 basics about interpersonal violence that everyone should know.

[Basic One. Interpersonal violence usually takes place between people who know each other – sometimes making violence more complicated and confusing.](#)

***Interpersonal violence is violence that occurs between:***

- People in an intimate relationship (dating, marriage, live-in, domestic partner, former partner, parents of same child, etc.) – *domestic violence* or *intimate partner violence*
- People in a family or family-like social network – *family violence*
- Friends
- Household Members
- Neighbors
- Co-Workers
- Members of the same organization (e.g., church, community organization, etc.)
- Acquaintances

Because these relationships of violence may also include relationships of love, companionship, friendship, loyalty and also dependence and even survival, this

Creative Interventions Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Stop Interpersonal Violence

[www.creative-interventions.org](http://www.creative-interventions.org) • [info@creative-interventions.org](mailto:info@creative-interventions.org)

This pre-release version (06.2012) is available for public use – Final version is forthcoming

**can make it more confusing to understand dynamics of violence and also to change them.**

## Basic Two. Interpersonal violence can look many different ways and take many different forms

We look at interpersonal violence as any form of abuse, harm, violence, or violation taking place between two or more individuals. It can include forms of violence used to harm someone, keep someone under one's control, or get someone to do whatever one wants them to do. Examples include the following:

- **Physical Violence or Threats** – Includes using intimidating body language; pushing; slapping; hitting; beating; kicking; strangling; pulling hair; holding down; locking into a room or space; driving dangerously; keeping someone up at night – not letting them sleep; leaving someone in a dangerous location; or using a weapon.
- **Verbal and Emotional Violence** – Includes yelling; name-calling; put-downs; humiliating behavior; always being right; or making someone feel crazy.
- **Isolation** – Includes making it difficult for someone to make friends; keep up relationships; see one's family; remain connected to one's community; go to work; go to school; go outside of the home; talk to other people; look at other people; make phone calls.
- **Sexual Violence** – Includes making someone participate in sexual activities of any kind against their will; making someone do sexual acts that they do not want to do; making someone watch pornography or see pornographic images against their will; or making sexual remarks, looks, or gestures against their will; sending unwanted sexual text messages (sexting), calls or emails; threatening to or publicly revealing sexually revealing photographs of the abused person. ***With regard to children***, sexual violence includes any form of sexual activity with a child, any exposure to sexual content, any sexual remarks or looks.
- **Economic or Financial Abuse**– Includes withholding financial information from an intimate partner; controlling income against the will of one's partner or other family member; gambling or abusive use of credit cards; leaving too little money for financial survival; coming around during the time that someone's work check or government check comes in and taking control of that money.
- **Controlling Property and Pets** – Includes destroying property, especially property that is emotionally or financially valuable to that person; controlling someone's important documents and papers such as identification, passport, immigration papers; controlling car keys and other means to get to transportation; threatening or harming pets.

- **Stalking** – Includes sending text-messages, emails or calling repeatedly; following someone at their home, workplace, school or other places where they might be; monitoring someone’s emails or text-messages; taking someone’s identity and getting into their bank accounts, email accounts or other private spaces; or leaving notes and messages repeatedly or in a harassing manner.
- **Using someone’s vulnerability (due to prejudice/discrimination/oppression) against them** – Includes using vulnerability and forms of prejudice/discrimination/oppression to justify one’s control and violence as a form of abuse (such as calling people names, using put-downs, treating someone with abuse based upon this form of prejudice/discrimination/oppression); taking advantage of society’s prejudice/discrimination/oppression to control someone even more or prevent the abused person from getting help (such as threatening to call immigration authorities on someone who is an immigrant or who is undocumented) (See Figure 3: *The Relationship between Prejudice/Privilege/Oppression and Interpersonal Violence*).
- **Using one’s own vulnerability (due to discrimination) to manipulate or control someone, or to excuse one’s own use of violence** – Includes making one’s lack of power in society a justification for using power and control over others at home, in the relationship, or in the workplace; includes making it one person’s personal responsibility to “make up for” all social barriers or discrimination one faces; creating a contest over who is more oppressed than the other; using the excuse of “I’m more oppressed than you” to justify abuse and violence over the other person; using one’s disadvantage or abuse during childhood as an excuse for violence.
- **Using things or people someone values against them** – Includes “outing” (making public) someone who is lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer; making trouble at someone’s workplace; damaging someone’s reputation; harming or threatening to harm someone’s friends, family, or pets; or threatening to take someone’s children or to get custody just to harm someone.

These forms of interpersonal violence are also known by other names: domestic violence or intimate partner violence; sexual assault or abuse; sexual harassment; family violence; child abuse including child sexual abuse; elder abuse; violence within friendship network or organization; and, in some cases, self-harm.

**Figure 2. Common Forms of Interpersonal Violence**

TERM	WORKING DEFINITION	CAN INCLUDE
<p>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</p> <p>– or –</p> <p>INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE</p>	<p>Acts of abuse or harm or pattern of power and control exercised by one person over another within an intimate relationship (dating, living together, married, domestic partner, former relationship, parents of same children; heterosexual or same-gender)</p>	<p>Physical abuse including threats and threats to harm others or self                      Verbal abuse/put-downs                      Emotional abuse                      Intimidation                      Isolation                      Sexual abuse/assault                      Economic/financial abuse                      Threats or use of other systems of oppression to gain power/control such as immigration enforcement (ICE, formerly known as INS), queer outing, etc.                      Stalking</p>
<p>SEXUAL HARASSMENT</p>	<p>Unwanted sexual/affectionate attention or creation of an unwanted sexualized environment</p>	<p>Sexual looks/gestures                      Sexual comments                      Sexual jokes                      Unwanted request for dates, sexual relations                      Subjecting to pornography or environment demeaning to women/girls/queer people                      Threats to demote, fire, harm (emotionally or physically) if sexual or dating requests are not met or if victim/survivor tells other people</p>
<p>SEXUAL ABUSE/ASSAULT</p>	<p>Coerced or otherwise unwanted sexual contact (for a child, this can be any sexual exposure, behavior or contact)</p>	<p>Sexual touching                      Fondling, molesting                      Exposure to sexual parts/genitals of the offending person                      Oral, vaginal, anal touching or penetration by the offending person’s body or object                      Threats to harm (emotionally or physically), demote, fire if sexual contact is not met or if victim/survivor tells other people</p>
<p>CHILD ABUSE including CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE</p>	<p>Acts of abuse or harm against children by adults or others in a relationship of power to a child</p>	<p>Physical abuse including threats                      Physical violence including use of physical discipline                      Verbal abuse – put-downs                      Emotional abuse                      Intimidation                      Neglect – not providing adequate food, shelter, clothing, heat, sleep, adult supervision</p>

		Allowing others to abuse a child Any type of sexual exposure, behavior or contact with a child
ELDER ABUSE	Acts of abuse or harm against an elderly person by another adult	Physical abuse including threats and threats to harm others or self Verbal abuse – put-downs Emotional abuse Intimidation Isolation Sexual abuse/assault/harassment Economic/financial abuse including taking social security money or other income, abusing power-of-attorney relationship
VIOLENCE WITHIN FRIENDSHIP, NETWORK OR ORGANIZATION	Acts of abuse or harm between members of a social network, community, organization	Physical abuse including threats and threats to harm others or self Verbal abuse – put-downs Emotional abuse Sexual abuse/assault/harassment Abuse of power in hierarchical relationship Creating a threatening or intimidating environment

**NOTE:** These definitions and categories are simplified for the purpose of these tables. They intentionally avoid overly legalistic terms which can be used to dismiss abuse or violence or distract from the facts of abuse. Adapted from Incite! Women of Color Against Violence. *Gender Oppression, Abuse, Violence: Community Accountability in the People of Color Progressive Movement*. Author, 2005 and downloadable at [http://www.incite-national.org/media/docs/2406\\_cmtty-acc-poc.pdf](http://www.incite-national.org/media/docs/2406_cmtty-acc-poc.pdf).

### **2.a. What about self-harm? Can this be a form of violence?**

What is self-harm? Some forms of self-harm include:

- Cutting or other forms of self-injury
- Use or overdose of drugs
- Driving recklessly
- Taking reckless or dangerous action likely to cause harm or death
- Attempts to kill oneself
- Threatening suicide

What could be called **aggressive self-harm**? We consider these acts or threats to be forms of harm to others **if they are primarily meant to manipulate or control** others in the ways described above. Some ways that aggressive self-harm can be used are:

- To coerce someone to come back into a relationship.
- To pressure someone to maintain contact or communication.
- To get someone to take actions that someone would otherwise not want to take and that may hurt them.
- To distract people from looking at the abuse or violence one has taken against others.

**Caution.** We do not automatically consider self-harm as a form of abuse and ask for caution in the inclusion of self-harm. For example, survivors or victims of violence can also feel a desire to harm themselves or others as a defensive measure or as a sign of hopelessness and despair. Even though there may be elements of this with someone who is using self-harm aggressively, we ask that you consider what appears to be the underlying or primary motivations and intended consequences of these actions.

Basic Three. Interpersonal violence is often about using a pattern of power and control rather than anger, passion or loss of control

Although violence comes in many forms and in many situations, violence is often used as a way for one person or one group to have power and control over another. We may think that violence is about anger, passion or loss-of-control. But, we find that interpersonal violence is often:

- **One-sided** – One person or group has a pattern of harming another person or group; one person or group is more afraid of the other person or group. Even if harm is committed on both sides, there is often a one-sided pattern of who is more harmful and who gets most harmed.
- **Attempts to control others or get one's own way** – Interpersonal violence is often used to try to get someone else to do what one wants – against the will or the best interests of the other. Although violence may fail to get what one wants or may seem to bring about more negative consequences, it is often used to attempt to gain power and control over another.
- **Takes advantage of vulnerability** – People who use violence often take advantage of or even seek out people who are vulnerable or who are in a situation where they do not have as much power or as much protection.
- **Continues in a pattern** – Interpersonal violence often does not take place in one act of violence but in a pattern of many subtle acts of violence in many areas.
- **May be calculated and planned even if it does not look like it** – Even if interpersonal violence often looks as if one is completely out of control, we often find that violence is planned and calculated. For example, some people doing harm tend to hurt those who will not tell others or who may not be believed; some people injure others in places that do not show such as hitting someone on the head or injuring someone where wounds are covered by clothes; some people wait until others are not around to see the violence occur; some people hide their violence and only show calm or respectable behavior in front of others.
- **May follow a cycle** – Some people experience a “cycle of violence” – 1) build up of tension; leading to 2) a violent act, outburst or series of violent acts; leading to 3) a period of relative calm which could look like apologies and remorse or perhaps just a period in which violence does not occur. The cycle can follow hours, days, months or years. Apologies and remorse

This pre-release version (06.2012) is available for public use – Final version is forthcoming  
can be used as a way to continue the cycle of violence rather than as a sincere sign that violence will end.

- ***May increase over time*** – Once someone uses one form of violence, it often leads to an increase in the seriousness of violence and/or the frequency of violence.

### **3.a. What can make someone more vulnerable to violence?**

Violence is related to power. People who have less power can be more vulnerable to violence because they are an easier target, because they are less likely to be protected or are more likely to be blamed. They may have less places to go to get help.

People can be more vulnerable to violence depending upon:

- *Gender/sex* (especially if they are female, female-identified, transgender, or gender non-conforming)
- *Race* (especially if they are people of color or a discriminated-against race or ethnicity)
- *Class or income level* (especially if they are poor or low income)
- *Level of education* (especially if they have less formal education)
- *Immigration status* (especially if they are immigrant non-citizen or are undocumented)
- *Sexual orientation* (especially if they are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or questioning)
- *Age* (especially if they are very young or elderly)
- *Physical or mental ability* (especially if they have some form of disability)
- *Physical appearance* (especially if they are considered unattractive in some way)
- *What country or region they're from* (especially if they are from a disfavored country or region)
- *Religion* (especially if they are from a disfavored religion)
- *Political affiliation* (especially if they are from a disfavored political affiliation)
- *Vulnerability to the criminal justice system and immigration authorities* (especially if they are from a race, class, religion, neighborhood, immigration status, choice of occupation, country of origin, gender identity, or with criminal justice history that makes them particularly targeted by or vulnerable to law enforcement, immigration authorities and/or child protective services)

- *Emotionally, financially or otherwise dependent on others for survival*

**Figure 3. The Relationship between Prejudice/Privilege/Oppression and Interpersonal Violence**

How does your status as:

- A woman, girl or female-identified person
- A person of color
- A person with a physical disability
- A person with a mental disability
- An immigrant
- An undocumented immigrant
- A person who doesn't speak English or who has limited English
- A person from a religion that is disfavored or subject to discrimination
- A person who cannot read or write
- A lesbian/gay/bi-sexual person
- A transgender person
- A poor person
- A person whose job or source of income makes them vulnerable to prejudice or possibly arrest
- A person without income
- A person without a home
- A person considered unattractive
- A person without connection to family, friends or community
- A person with a felony
- A person with political beliefs that are disfavored
- An elderly person
- A young person
- And any combination of the above

...become used as part of the abuse?

...prevent you from knowing where to get help?

...make survival difficult or impossible if you leave the person abusing you?

...subject you to more abuse by those who are supposed to help you?

**NOTE: This is adapted from Asian Women's Shelter's  
Prejudice/Privilege/Oppression and Domestic Violence**

[Basic Four. Using violence as self-defense is not the same as using violence to gain or maintain power and control.](#)

We may see situations in which it is difficult to tell who is committing violence against whom – who is the primary survivor and who is the primary person doing harm. There may be some cases in which violence is somewhat equal (mutual) or at least seems that way at first. However, it is more common in interpersonal violence that one person is holding power and control over another in a pattern, not two people being engaged in mutual violent fighting.

While no one outside of a relationship (whether intimate, community-based or work-place based, etc.) can know *exactly* what the dynamics are inside of the relationship, there are important observations and experiences that you as friends, family, and community members can draw upon as you assess situations, and then try to imagine how to intervene and support change.

**4.a. Questions to ask when it's hard to tell who is violent**

If it is hard to tell who is doing the harm, it can be helpful to ask yourself (and other allies) these questions. The answers can help to unpack a complicated situation of interpersonal violence.

**Caution.** This is a guide. It is not a test with absolutely right or wrong answers. Use with caution.

See if these questions are helpful.

- Who is more afraid?
- Who starts the violence?
- Who ends up getting harmed?
- Who is changing and adapting to meet another's needs or moods?
- Who is more vulnerable?
- Who is using violence for power and control (abusive violence)? Who is using violence to try to maintain safety or integrity in an already violent situation (self-defense)?
- Who always has to win?

## Basic Five. Interpersonal violence is serious and common

Interpersonal violence seriously and deeply damages individuals, communities, and societies. Bruises may disappear. Broken bones may heal. Cruel words may make invisible wounds. But the direct and ripple effects of violence including emotionally abusive and controlling behavior can be devastating.

In the U.S., one out of four women have been physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, partner, or dating partner in their lifetime. Look around you in any crowd, and you can take a good guess that one out of four women has experienced or will experience physical violence from an intimate partner.

(Source: Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, 2000. U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 181867, Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence,. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/181867.htm>)

On average more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends.

(Source: Catalano, Shannon. 2007. Intimate Partner Violence in the United States. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdog.gov/bjs/intimate/ipv.htm>)

Look at our children. We can expect that an average of one out of four girls and one out of six boys will experience sexual assault by the time they reach age 18.

(Source: Filkelhor, David, et al. "Sexual Abuse in a Survey of Adult Men and Women: Prevalence, Characteristics and Risk Factors)

In eight out of ten rape cases, the survivor/victim knows the perpetrator. These are mostly not rapes by strangers as we see in the media. These are committed by loved ones, people in our communities and acquaintances.

(Source: Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, U.S. Dep't of Just., NCJ 183781, Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey, at iv (2000), available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/183781.htm>.)

These are just some of the statistics to remind us of how common interpersonal violence is. This means that we are all impacted in some way by violence in our lives.

## Basic Six. Interpersonal violence hurts all of us – in different ways

Interpersonal violence harms in so many ways. Below are special considerations about the ways in which interpersonal violence affects certain people involved in it or close to it.

### ***6.a. How violence can hurt survivors/victims***

For those who are being harmed (survivors/victims), violence can cause:

- Physical injury including death
- Physical disease, unwanted pregnancy, chronic conditions due to prolonged injury, abuse, and emotional stress
- Emotional damage – which some describe as deeper and more hurtful than physical harm
- Loss of self-respect, self-esteem, belief in oneself
- Feelings of shame and guilt
- Loss of sense of identity or meaning
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair
- Inability to trust
- Guilty feelings that we are disappointing our family, friends, our community and others
- Fear that we are also bring danger to others – our children, other family members, our co-workers and so on
- Loss of income, home, and financial security
- Loss of one's ability and energy to determine one's own life; take care of others; do effective work; be happy and healthy; contribute to the community; or live a healthy spiritual life
- Inability to think clearly, plan for the future, fully protect the safety of oneself and one's children or other loved ones
- Loss of love or good feelings for the person who is harming us

### **6.b. How violence can hurt people doing harm**

In some cases violence seems to bring benefits to the person doing harm such as getting their own way or a heightened sense of power and control, but it can also cause:

- Others to fear and hate us
- Inability to be close to people and have close meaningful relationships
- Inability to trust and be trusted
- Fear that others will find out
- Fear that loved ones will leave us
- Fear that we will be alone
- Fear that we are becoming like others who were violent against us or our loved ones
- Guilt or shame for harming others
- Loss of self-respect, self-esteem, belief in oneself
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair

### **6.c. How violence can hurt children**

Children are deeply harmed by witnessing/experiencing interpersonal violence especially if their parents or other family members or caretakers are involved. For children, violence can cause:

- Direct physical harm including death if they are also being harmed or if they try to intervene and stop the harm
- Direct emotional harm if they are also being harmed
- Direct sexual harm if they are also being harmed
- Physical, emotional and other developmental damage because caretakers are unable to pay attention to their needs
- Physical disease caused by prolonged stress and worry
- Emotional damage caused by seeing people they love and depend on being harmed or harming others
- Emotional damage caused by constant feelings of danger and worry
- Emotional damage caused by confusing feelings of fear and love for those *doing harm*
- Emotional damage caused by confusing feelings of love for, disappointment in, or disrespect for those who are *being harmed*
- Unfair expectation or need to overly identify with the person doing harm or the person who is harmed.
- Unfair burden to comfort and protect others – siblings, parents, or others – from harm
- Increased vulnerability to community harms including sexual abuse, community violence, substance abuse due to lack of protection
- Increased vulnerability to self-harm including cutting or other self-injury, and substance abuse
- Increased likelihood to harm others including other children and pets/animals
- Lasting lessons about family and home as an unsafe and dangerous place
- Lasting lessons about love being confused with violence and harm

- Lasting lessons about other family members or community doing nothing to stop violence
- Lasting lessons about how using violence gets you what you want
- Lasting lessons about what bad things can happen if one is vulnerable to violence or lacking in power
- Fear that they are going to lose their parents, their home, or people close to them
- Difficulty doing well in school because of their constant worry about violence
- Difficulty having healthy relationships with friends because of learning a model of violence or other feelings of guilt, shame, or depression
- Burden of secrecy about their situation because they don't want people to find out
- Guilt about feeling like they are somehow causing the violence or that they should be able to stop the violence
- Feeling that something is wrong with them

#### **6.d. How violence can hurt close friends, family and community**

For people close to the violence or people in the community, violence can cause:

- An environment taken over by the fear of violence; the fear of people involved in violence; the physical, emotional, sexual, economic and spiritual harm caused by violence
- The acceptance of violence as a community and/or family norm
- Stress and worry about the people involved in violence
- Shame about being close to or involved in violence or having friends or family members involved in violence
- Fractions and divisions in communities as conflicting loyalties and opinions about what should be done arise
- Physical danger if we are being threatened by harm either directly or indirectly
- Threat to income, security or well-being if we rely upon people involved in violence
- Guilt about not being able to do more to stop violence
- Loss of the full potential of those around us who are involved in violence including their ability to be good friends or family members, healthy members of our communities and organizations, productive co-workers, good neighbors, church members, colleagues, comrades and so on
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair

## Basic Seven. Interpersonal violence is often hidden, denied or ignored.

Many times, we do not recognize interpersonal violence because:

### *Survivors don't want to talk about it*

- We as a society still consider it shameful to be a survivor/victim of interpersonal violence, and interpersonal violence is often intimate and deeply complex and painful
- People doing harm often threaten further harm if the survivor/victim tells anyone
- Survivors may not talk because they (and others) think they did something to cause it or deserve it (blaming the victim)

### *Community members would rather not see or challenge the violence.*

- We may think that violence is acceptable or okay in certain situations
- We may hope that if we ignore violence, it might go away
- We are afraid that we might ourselves get harmed if we try to intervene or challenge violence
- We may consider interpersonal violence as private business – we do not want to get involved
- We question and criticize survivors' behavior to make sense of the violence or justify doing nothing about it

### *Society doesn't want to recognize it*

- We are unaware of violence and, therefore, do not see it
- We as a society normalize, glorify, and romanticize violence and often do not recognize it as harm
- We may see it as something that someone deserves
- We may not think that violence can be stopped or prevented
- We may think that violence is just a part of life

Basic Eight. Our personal biases and experiences can influence how we understand a situation of violence – in good ways and bad.

We all come to our understanding of violence and interventions with our own perspectives and biases – influenced by our personal experiences, histories, and the ways in which situations of interpersonal violence can play out in our communities and social networks.

This can lead to confusing feelings.

Think about your own experiences about violence . . . how could they influence you, in good and bad ways?

- Do you have a personal experience of violence?
- Did you experience or witness violence as a child?
- Are you angry at yourself for being a victim? Being someone who caused harm? Standing by when someone else was getting hurt?
- Are you angry at others for being a victim?
- Did your experiences of harm end well? End badly?
- What lessons did you learn about violence? How might they influence you now?

Take the time and reflect about your experiences and beliefs about violence and how they might positively or negatively influence you now.

How can your experiences or beliefs make you especially useful or knowledgeable?

How can your experiences or beliefs make certain roles difficult for you to take?

### **8.a. Common confusing questions**

- What if I find the survivor or victim annoying or unsympathetic?
- What if I like the person doing harm better than the survivor or victim?
- What if I get angry at the survivor? What if I get angrier at the survivor than at the person doing harm?
- What if I start to feel uncomfortable that we are putting pressure or demands on the person doing harm?
- What if I wish everyone would just forgive and forget?

There may be situations in which we do not personally like the survivor of violence and find the person doing harm more appealing or sympathetic. Sometimes this is because our friendships or alliances are just that way. For example, we may be supportive of our friends or family no matter what they do. We may have less compassion for the “other side” no matter what they do.

Other times we find that the situation of violence has contributed to the survivor becoming increasingly isolated and negatively viewed while the person doing harm maintains positive standing in the community.

Survivors may “act” or “appear” negative as they get worn down by a pattern of violence. They may become tired, depressed, hopeless, nervous, anxious, jumpy, resentful or short-tempered because of violence. These characteristics are often viewed negatively by society and may lead us to blame survivors.

Survivors often feel doubt about decisions to leave someone harming them or take action to change it. Fear, guilt, self-doubt, love, and pressures from other people can easily cause survivors to change their minds back and forth about how they feel about the violence, how they view the person doing harm, or what they want to do about it. These back and forth changes are a very normal response to violence and to fears about change. And it is also understandable that these changes can be viewed with frustration by others especially if they are trying to help.

Still other times, we may feel uncomfortable about any confrontation or conflict. Our discomfort with conflict can make us feel more empathy for the person doing harm than the survivor of the harm. We may begin to feel bad for the person doing harm as they are being called out for their violence, rather than for the survivor’s experience of violence and abuse.

**Caution.** These feelings are common, but our biases can lead to community interventions that may even support violence, rather than reduce it.

**8.b. Get real about your biases: Questions to ask yourself**

***General Questions***

- Do I find one individual more appealing to me as a person?
- Is one person a member of my group of friends, family, neighborhood, group, organization, church, etc. while another person is not?
- Do I relate to one person because of our similarities or something that I admire about one person over the other?
- Do I find that one person has certain qualities that make them less or more sympathetic than the other?
- Do I depend on or get benefits from one person over the other? Does that make me fear that taking action will work against me? Do I fear that I have something to lose?
- Do I have biases, big or small, obvious or subtle, against or for anyone because of any of the following qualities?
  - Gender/sex
  - Race
  - Class or income level
  - Level of education
  - Immigration status
  - Sexual orientation
  - Age
  - Physical or mental ability
  - Physical appearance or attractiveness
  - What country or region they're from
  - Religion
  - Political affiliation
  - Emotional, financial or other dependence on others for survival

### ***Questions Related to the Survivor or Victim***

- Is the survivor or victim acting with anger, meekness, manipulation or some other behavior because of repeated exposure to violence in a way that I don't like?
- Have I been hearing biased stories about the survivor or victim (this can be part of the way in which violence was/is being used against them)?
- Do I think that the survivor or victim is so unappealing that I would also want to be violent against them or can understand why someone else would?
- Does the survivor or victim remind me of someone in my past such that I feel that they deserve some sort of violence?

### ***Questions Related to the Person Doing Harm***

- Has the person doing harm been able to use some abilities to charm and influence people to excuse or cover up their violence?
- Does the person doing harm have a story of their own victimization that makes them sympathetic (or not)?
- Have I been hearing more or biased stories about the person doing harm such that I feel closer or more sympathetic to the person doing harm?
- Does the person doing harm appear in public more positively or completely differently than the way they are in private?
- Is the person doing harm so appealing to me that I want to dismiss their violence or any other bad behavior?
- Does the person doing harm remind me of someone I like so that I want to believe that they must not have committed the violence or that they had a good reason?
- Do I depend on the person doing harm in some way? Could I be harmed or compromised if I did not "take their side?"

### ***How did it go? What did you learn?***

We remind you that violence and the harm caused by it is wrong regardless of who we personally like or do not like. Ending violence even if it means stopping and confronting the person we care about can be the best way to show that we care, and that we are by their side in a meaningful way.

[Basic Nine. We can all take steps to address, end or prevent interpersonal violence.](#)

***Change views – help stop interpersonal violence by:***

- Becoming aware of common and damaging reactions to violence

***Identify denial when you notice yourself or others:***

- Not noticing that violence is happening right around them
- Blocking out the fact that violence is happening
- Thinking about violence as something other than violence (for example, thinking that domestic violence is just a bad relationship or fighting, thinking that sexual assault is just about someone getting carried away in a moment of passion)
- Not believing or disregarding someone who tells you about violence
- Forgetting that violence is happening

***Challenge the tendency to minimize the violence when you notice yourself or others:***

- Acting like or thinking that violence is not serious
- Comparing the level of violence to other things that seem more serious, thereby making the violence seem unimportant (for example, thinking that racism is more important than sexism, therefore, violence against women is not an important issue)
- Never doing anything to acknowledge the violence or not doing anything about it
- Acting like or thinking that violence will just go away if left alone
- Thinking that violence is just something we have to accept or is part of our culture

***Catch “victim blaming” when you notice yourself or others:***

- Thinking that the survivor or victim of violence must have done something to cause it
- Thinking that it is the responsibility of the survivor or victim to stop violence or get out of its way

- **Thinking that the survivor or victim needs to take responsibility for asking for help**
- **Thinking that the survivor or victim of violence does not deserve any help**
- **Thinking that the survivor or victim of violence contributes just as much to the situation as the person using violence to threaten and control**
- **Believing stories or gossip that blame the survivor or victim**

Basic Ten. It is important to share information about interpersonal violence. Many people do not know and can benefit from being more aware.

- Give this to other people who need to know – this includes survivors/victims of violence, people doing harm, friends and family, anyone who may get involved in helping to end violence.
- Think of who you might have a special connection to: for example, specific members of your family, friendship or community; organizations you belong to – and introduce them to this information.
- If this is difficult to read, if people speak/read a different language, if they do not read, or if they are too much in emotional crisis to take in this information, then consider reading this to them or finding other creative ways to share this information. Other ways can include translating this into other languages or to more accessible language, video, youtube, drama, story telling, drawing pictures and explaining this information through pictures or other visuals.
- If you create new ways to present this material, please share this with others through the website [www.creative-interventions.org](http://www.creative-interventions.org) or [www.stopviolenceeveryday.org](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org) or through other public forums.

## 2.3. Violence Intervention: Some Important Lessons

At Creative Interventions, we discovered some important lessons as we supported and witnessed many different interventions to violence. While there are undoubtedly, many more lessons to learn, we wanted to share some basic common lessons.

### [Lesson One: Keep survivors at the center of concern.](#)

Violence interventions can start and move ahead in very different ways. Often a survivor or victim of violence comes forward to begin an intervention. Other times, people will learn about violence and try to start an intervention in order to protect the survivor or victim of violence without necessarily having the survivor or victim actually start or even be involved in the intervention.

We have seen a variety of situations over time. One concern of ours is that as interventions move forward, we can become more involved in dealing with the person who did harm than in the survivor or victim. This can lead to the survivor or victim becoming separated from the process and losing the support and care of people as everyone gets involved in other tasks. We can sometimes make survivors or victims invisible when we attempt to protect them from what is happening. We must guard against increasing survivors' sense and experience of isolation

#### ***Lesson One: What can we do about it?***

- Understand that the survivor's perspective is unique. They are likely to understand the violence and its dynamics better than everyone else – even if they are in denial and are minimizing violence;
- Keep survivors in the loop of what is happening. Even if the survivor decides to not be actively involved in an intervention or cannot be for whatever reason, figure out ways that feel okay for them to keep informed. This can happen on a regular basis or at key events;
- Make sure that survivors are connected to friends, family or community – and not just to therapists or professionals. While having the help of therapists and professionals can be important and helpful, contact with loved ones is also important and can be healing;
- Do not make survivors always ask for help. Anticipate what they need. In this world of “do-it-yourself,” people may blame survivors for not asking for every need. Survivors often already feel burdened by their experience of violence and can feel ashamed to ask for help and be reluctant to burden others. Make it easy for them to ask for what they need. Offer your help and keep it up. Get others involved to share responsibilities.

- Read Section 4.E. *Supporting Survivors or Victims* for more specific information.

## Lesson Two: Most of us struggle with accountability. We need to create responses which take this struggle into account.

All of us have occasions when we have needed to be accountable. Even if we apologize and are accountable at first, we often want to slip out of full accountability by using a series of tactics:

- Leaving the community, relationship, organization to avoid accountability;
- Hoping people forget;
- Hoping people feel sorry for us so they leave us alone or blame others;
- Making people scared of us or scared of our anger;
- Making people depend on us so they feel too guilty or scared to challenge us;
- Creating delaying tactics;
- Creating distractions;
- Blaming others;
- Blaming our past;
- Blaming the survivor or victim;
- Blaming those who are trying to hold us accountable;
- Making the accountability process be the problem, not our own harmful attitudes, behaviors and frameworks for thinking and acting;
- Wanting our own version of accountability to be the right one – controlling the accountability process.

### **Lesson Two: What can we do about it?**

- Create systems **flexible enough** to allow for the expected process of dodging and delaying accountability and **strong enough** to withstand and diminish these tactics over time.
- Help to identify appropriate people and processes which can support people doing harm through the process of dodging and delaying while challenging these tactics.
- Read Section 4.F. *Taking Accountability* for much more information.

[Lesson Three: Most of us are either uncomfortable with conflict or are too comfortable with conflict. We need better tools and opportunities for practice so that we can address conflict in a constructive manner.](#)

We as a society have not learned to deal well with conflict. We do not have good tools for understanding conflict or for resolving it. We frequently resort to our own familiar styles to deal with conflict – and these are often inadequate.

**Lesson Three: What can we do about it?**

- Reflect on your experience dealing with conflict and be honest about your biases – do you enjoy or thrive on conflict? Do you often cause conflict? Do you minimize conflict or pretend it isn't there? Do you run away from conflict?
- Share your conflict style with the group you are working with. Let them know so people can be aware of how to work with you better and you can work with them better.
- Think about how you can change your relationship to conflict if it is unhealthy. Think about how your pattern of dealing with conflict can help situations of violence intervention or make them more of a problem.
- Use the Toolkit to find ways to use your skills in dealing with conflict or avoid your conflict problems by following some of the tools and guidelines provided.
- Be real about your conflict style and your capacity to change. You may need to find roles that take advantage of your way of dealing with conflict and avoid roles in which your conflict style may simply be too difficult.

[Lesson Four: If we know the people involved in a situation of violence or conflict, we have our own feelings and our own agenda. Knowing the people involved can be helpful. It can also get in the way.](#)

Unlike many other forms of violence, interpersonal violence is often committed by and against people we know. They may even be the people we care about most. They may also be our family members, our close friends, our co-workers, our religious leaders, our community leaders, our colleagues and so on. Even if we are not directly involved in violence, it is confusing to know what to do when we share other relationships with people.

**Lesson Four: What can we do about it?**

- Consider how to use your unique knowledge and care for people involved in violence to take a positive role in ending violence.

This pre-release version (06.2012) is available for public use – Final version is forthcoming

- Sometimes it is helpful to take a step back from confusing relationships with people involved in violence – and think about solutions which have the possibility of maintaining relationships while also challenging violence.
- Work together with others in order to see solutions not as an individual burden but rather a shared responsibility and opportunity to create a better, healthier community.

### Lesson Five: Building teams to work together and coordinating our efforts often requires time shared in person, conversation, and group decision-making.

Our society does not offer us strong values, knowledge and skills about collective action and collective decision-making. Society teaches us that we are on our own and should do it alone, that we are to blame for violence ourselves, or that we should get all of our help from experts or from the criminal justice system.

This Toolkit reminds us that challenging violence within our communities requires that we rebuild common goals and strengthen the ways in which we communicate and cooperate.

#### **Lesson Five: What can we do about it?**

- Take the time to discuss, share opinions, uncover differences, and discover commonalities with those involved in the intervention.
- Make sure that important items like goals, bottom lines, communication agreements, and safety plans are shared and agreed upon with everyone involved in the intervention.
- See Section 4.G: *Working Together* and Section 4.H: *Keeping on Track* for tools to help move forward.

### Lesson Six: Because interpersonal violence is often about power and control, danger can increase when someone is about to seek safety or help.

We may find that the person doing harm (someone who uses abuse or violence) becomes even more violent when they feel like they might lose power and control. This can happen when the survivor or victim begins to seek help, when an intervention is underway, or when a survivor or victim tries to free herself or himself from the violent situation.

People who have only used threats or mild forms of violence in the past can increase their threats and potential for violence throughout various stages of an intervention.

### **Lesson Six: What can we do about it?**

- See this as an opportunity for thoughtful and coordinated preparation and action – not as a reason to freeze, minimize the violence or step back from doing anything;
- Seek realistic information from those who know and understand the situation and the person doing harm to imagine different scenarios of what dangers could take place and possible steps to prevent them;
- Plan for extreme, even unimaginable situations while hoping for outcomes which are more positive;
- See Section 4.B: *Staying Safe*

### Lesson Seven: Change is difficult. Transformation from violence takes time.

Everybody wants a quick fix, but we have found that change is not speedy. Change often takes time, goes through cycles, moves forward and backward, and can often lead situations to get worse before they get better.

People usually learn their particular patterns of violence over time – sometimes over a lifetime. We may be responding to one violent act, but this is often something that has built up over time or that has been repeated many times.

Change takes time, patience and firmness. We often want to stop trying to make change if we are discouraged in any way. On the other hand, we may want to stop working towards change if one thing seemed to work. Change often happens in those grey areas over the course of time.

### **Lesson Seven: What can we do about it?**

- Create systems **flexible enough** to allow for the expected process of dodging and delaying accountability and **strong enough** to withstand and diminish these tactics over time;
- Create ways to build in support (people to talk to, time to vent, time to grieve, time to play, to share good food, and so on) for everyone involved in the intervention: the survivor/victim, everyone affected by violence, the person doing harm, and those working to intervene in violence – we call this “creating sustainability”;
- Celebrate successes while also taking into account things which went wrong or can be improved;
- It is easy and normal to become frustrated and impatient. Support compassion for everyone.

## [Lesson Eight: Change is difficult. Little steps can be important.](#)

Overall, change takes time, but small actions and responses can make a big difference. Think about a time when someone confronted you with a remark, a gesture, a note or letter, a phone call, or a conversation which made a difference in your life. Sometimes it's an honest confrontation or a helpful insight made by a friend or family member, a kind stranger or even someone we do not like which can get us to think differently about our own attitudes and behavior. It may even get us to change that attitude or behavior in a significant way.

We often fear taking a chance to say something which makes a difference. Saying something that speaks to violence may be scary. We might fear making someone embarrassed or angry. We may fear making things worse. Even saying something kind and heartfelt can be difficult for some of us.

### ***Lesson Eight: What Can We Do About It?***

We say that “safety can take risk-taking.” Simply letting someone know how we honestly feel and what we know can feel like a big risk towards moving to constructive and transformative action. These messages can include some of the following:

- We know what is happening – or we have a sense that something is wrong.
- We care.
- We are concerned.
- We may feel powerless or confused.
- We may have been responsible for creating the situation or for making it worse.
- We know this can be difficult and confusing.
- This person is not alone – we are there to offer our support.
- This person's behavior is not acceptable – we will support them to change.
- We need help.

## [Lesson Nine: Mental illness and/or substance abuse makes violence intervention difficult but not impossible.](#)

### ***Mental Illness***

***Mental illness is common.*** Many people suffer from mental illness of many different forms and levels of seriousness. It may be obvious to other people or may be more hidden. Some forms can be easily managed with treatment or medication. Others are more difficult to manage.

### ***Mental illness can also be linked to violent behavior***

Some forms of mental illness can either seriously increase levels of violence or make it difficult or impossible for people to either receive support or to engage in a process of accountability. This does not mean that community-based interventions to violence are necessarily inappropriate for people with mental illness. It may mean that expectations about reasonable goals or about abilities to be accountable for one's actions may be limited depending upon the form of, phase of and seriousness of mental illness.

People with serious mental illness may have a higher vulnerability to committing violence. Some individuals are more prone to committing violence when in a particular phase of mental illness. For those people who do commit violence, individuals with mental illness may do so during times when they are less in control of their thoughts and behaviors. Of course, there are also many individuals with serious mental illness who are not at all violent. Unfortunately, many programs for violence are separate from those that work with mental illness. It is difficult to find help that understands all of these dimensions.

Another way in which mental illness can make community-based interventions difficult is that it can impair people's ability to be in close relationships with others and, therefore, may make their actions and consequences more difficult to link. Accountability strategies can be challenging.

### ***Mental illness can also be linked to vulnerability to victimization***

People with serious mental illness may have a higher vulnerability to victimization by violence. They may be targeted by people who are violent or can be more easily placed in situations of high violence. Depending upon the form of mental illness, they may also find it difficult to ask for support. They may require a higher level of support than people in their community feel like they can provide. They may ask for and reject support in an inconsistent way, depending upon the situation of mental illness. They may feel shame about their mental illness or be in denial, making requests for support more difficult or inconsistent.

### ***Substance Use or Abuse***

***Substance use and abuse is common.*** Many people use substances including legal and illegal drugs and alcohol.

### ***Substance use and abuse can also be linked to violent behavior***

Creative Interventions does not have a position against drug or alcohol use of any form. However, for some people, the use and abuse of substances including drugs and alcohol can increase levels of violence. It can also make it difficult or impossible for people to either receive support or to engage in a process of accountability. This does not mean that community-based interventions to violence are necessarily inappropriate for people using or abusing substances. It may mean that expectations about reasonable goals or about abilities to be

accountable for one's actions may be limited especially during periods of active substance use or abuse. Of course, there are also many individuals who use and abuse substances who are not at all violent.

For those people who do commit violence, individuals who use or abuse substances may do so during times when they are less in control of their thoughts and behaviors. Domestic violence and sexual assault advocates have long said that drugs and alcohol do not lead to violence, believing that people often use drugs and alcohol as an excuse to commit violence or to say that they were not responsible for violence. These advocates also recognize that people who quit abusive use of drugs and alcohol are often still violent.

While this may be true, there is also some link between drug and alcohol use and violence. Unfortunately, many programs for violence are separate from those that work with substance abuse. It is difficult to find help that understands all of these dimensions.

Another way in which substance use or abuse makes community-based interventions difficult is that it can impair people's ability to be in close relationships with others and, therefore, may make their actions and consequences more difficult to link. Accountability strategies can be challenging.

### ***Mental Illness and Substance Use or Abuse***

Mental illness and substance use or abuse can often go together. These connections can be complicated and cannot be generalized. For example, some people with mental illness will use or abuse substances as a form of medication for their mental illness. On the other hand, substances including alcohol can contribute to more serious levels of mental illness. Together, these may contribute to violence and/or victimization in some of the ways already discussed above. These combined issues may also make it more challenging to address violence and accountability.

### ***Lesson Nine: What can we do about it?***

- People who are supporting survivors with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues should receive basic education regarding the particular issues affecting the survivor of violence. It may be particularly useful for a group of people to be well-coordinated, keeping track of what is going on and offering each other support in what can be a particularly stressful situation. You may be able to make use of other resources that help with mental illness and/or substance abuse and may even be open to the values and approach in this Toolkit. In particular, resources with a “harm reduction” philosophy may already practice some of these techniques.
- Likewise, people who are supporting people doing harm with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues should receive basic education regarding the particular issues regarding mental illness and/or substance abuse, violence and people's ability to take responsibility for their actions.

Again, resources with a “harm reduction” philosophy may be particularly helpful.

- For people doing harm who also suffer from mental illness and/or substance use or abuse, accountability can involve self-care and support for the person doing harm to get help not only for violence but also for mental illness and/or substance abuse. This approach may lead to better possible results than threats of or actual police interventions that can aggravate violence. This approach may also be better than interventions that focus on shaming and punishment, which can trigger worsening conditions of mental illness and/or substance abuse, and are generally unhelpful in reaching the desired goals of reduced violence or increased accountability.

[Lesson Ten: There is often nothing we can do to “make up” for the original harm. Interventions can bring about positive change but cannot make the original harm disappear.](#)

We often demand accountability hoping that will make the original harm and the damage caused disappear.

Accountability cannot make the original harm go away. It cannot do the impossible, but achieving accountability can lead to healing, repair and positive change. Think about whether you feel that the only way that accountability can be reached is if the original harm never occurred. If so, no amount of accountability or responsibility will ever feel like enough.

#### ***Lesson Ten: What Can We Do About It?***

Think about how to accept that harm has occurred and to use accountability to acknowledge that harm and to move towards repair and change which makes sure that this harm is not repeated.

**Caution.** A note about forgiveness. Accountability does NOT mean that forgiveness is necessary. Forgiveness is something that is left up to an individual and community to feel in a solid and sincere way. We encourage that people explore what forgiveness means for them and what it might bring as a benefit.

We also encourage people to think about how the pressure to forgive can be another form of power and control. All steps of accountability are possible without forgiveness ever being a goal.