

# BREAKING THE CYCLE

## FATHERING AFTER VIOLENCE

REDEFINE MEN'S ROLES / IDENTIFY BEHAVIORS / DEVELOP

ZE THE DANGERS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FOR CHILDREN

/ DEVELOP SUPPORT FOR PARTNER'S PARENTING / ADDRESS

ERSTAND WHY / LEARN ALTERNATIVE NON-ABUSIVE BEHAVI

DREN / BECOME A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL / BREAK THE CYC

HAS ON CHILDREN / DEVELOP EMPATHY / INCREASE CAPAC

INE MEN'S ROLES / BUILD CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

'S AWARESS OF THE EFFECTS ABUSE HAS ON CHILDREN /

HILDREN / ENGAGE MEN IN PREVENTION / UNDERSTAND WI

REPAIR A DAMAGED RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CHILDREN /

Produced by the FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND

Made possible with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

REAK THE CYCLE / POSITIVE MODELING / REDEFINE MEN'S

**CURRICULUM  
GUIDELINES  
AND TOOLS  
FOR BATTERER  
INTERVENTION  
PROGRAMS**

# **BREAKING THE CYCLE**

## **Fathering After Violence: Curriculum Guidelines and Tools for Batterer Intervention Programs**

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**Family Violence Prevention Fund**

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Made possible with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

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**Breaking the Cycle  
Fathering After Violence:  
Curriculum Guidelines and Tools for Batterer Intervention Programs**

The contents of this publication may be adapted and reprinted with the following acknowledgement:

“This material was adapted from the  
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Breaking the Cycle  
Fathering After Violence:  
Curriculum Guidelines and Tools for Batterer Intervention Programs.”

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In November 2002, the FVPF convened a national advisory committee to critique the framework, review the curriculum and identify gaps in the project. This vastly-talented group of leaders and experts is listed in Appendix I.

Technical development and assistance were provided by Luis Alvarenga and Steve Gousby. We would like to extend a special thanks to the Men's Collective for Equal Relations (CORIAC) in Mexico for permission to use in the pilot project and then reproduce in the guidelines artwork by children as tools for Batterers Intervention Programs (BIPs) in the United States.

Parallel to the development work, the FVPF turned to Mercedes Tompkins, Executive Director of the Boston-based Dorchester Community Roundtable (DCRT), to partner with us in order to further develop and implement a pilot test of the ideas and materials for BIPs. Monthly meetings with staff at DCRT, as well as with Mitch Rothenberg from Common Purpose, Inc., David Adams from Emerge, Inc., and Wayne Williams from the Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center, were fundamental to a thoughtful learning process. Ann Fleck-Henderson, our primary evaluator, worked with David Robinson and Nelson Ochoa from the Simmons College School of Social Work to evaluate the impact of the project at the three BIPs. We are extremely grateful to the group facilitators and staff of the BIPs, who took the extra time to learn new material, make outreach calls to women partners, and participate so fully in the evaluation process.

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Lonna Davis  
Project Director  
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## Bilingual Curriculum Tools (in pocket)

CD (*in English and Spanish*)

Exercises on Empathy, Modeling and the Reparative Framework (*in English*)

Exercises on Empathy, Modeling and the Reparative Framework (*in Spanish*)

Children's Drawings

Script for Michael's Story (*in English*)

Script for Michael's Story (*in Spanish*)



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## Introduction: Engaging Men in Prevention

The Batterer Intervention Program curriculum guidelines and tools presented in this document are part of a larger effort to engage all men – both non-violent men and those who have used violence – in domestic violence prevention initiatives. These materials were developed as part of the Fathering After Violence Project that the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) initiated in 2002 with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

All men have important roles and influence in the lives of children. Whether from a father, uncle, mentor, coach, teacher or neighbor, children learn from what they see and hear, from what men do. Interrupting the cycle of domestic violence means that all men must take an active role in supporting the healthy, non-violent development of children.

Men who have used violence and are fathers or father figures have a particular challenge. In order to break the cycle of intergenerational violence and support the life-long health of their children, these men must first stop their violence and understand what their children need from them. Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) provide a unique and promising setting in which to start this conversation with men.

Upon completion of a BIP, some men may be appropriate for and motivated to seek more intensive work on repairing relationships with the children in their lives. Possible settings for long-term work include specialized groups or aftercare programs operated by BIPs, as well as responsible fatherhood programs, visitation centers or other venues that focus on fatherhood and men who have used violence.

### Guiding Principles For Fathering After Violence

Helping men renounce their violence, acknowledge the damage to their children and, when appropriate, transform rela-

tionships requires partnering with survivors and collaborating with other programs and systems in the community that are working with families experiencing domestic violence.

Before collaboration begins, each entity must examine how it supports or *doesn't support* the following guiding principles of the Fathering After Violence Project:

1. The safety of the victim and the children should always be the first priority of any intervention or policy regarding men who have used violence.
2. All interventions involving children who have witnessed or experienced violence should be guided by the voices of the non-abusive parents.
3. Violence against women is harmful to children in multiple ways, including their safety, development, and relationships with both their violent fathers and non-offending mothers.
4. Fathers (and father figures) are important to children and children are profoundly affected by their fathers, for better or worse.
5. It is possible for some violent men to renounce violence.
6. Interventions with fathers who have used violence must be implemented with awareness of the cultural context in which parenting happens.
7. Relationships damaged by violence are sometimes repairable, and some men can be helped to achieve constructive and healing relationships with their children.
8. Contact between the offenders and their children or parenting partners should only occur when it is safe and appropriate (e.g., contact does not compromise the physical and emotional safety of mothers and children, or undermine mothers' parenting, etc.).



## Overview and Purpose of Curriculum Guidelines

Over the last 25 years, Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) have developed around the country to help men stop their violence in intimate relationships. BIPs vary widely, with most curricula taking a psycho-educational approach that focuses on beliefs and assumptions participants hold about women and relationships with women. The primary goal is to help participants examine their beliefs that support violent behavior, stop the violence, and learn alternative, non-abusive behaviors. Curricula have not, traditionally or systematically, addressed men's relationships with their children. However, more recently, a few programs, recognizing the danger of domestic violence for children, have included attention to parenting.

This workbook presents new curriculum guidelines and tools on children and domestic violence for fathers who have been violent. These materials address men in their roles as fathers or father figures to children, and are designed to increase men's:

- ▶ awareness of the effects on children of domestic violence,
- ▶ motivation to stop abusive behavior,
- ▶ capacity for healing and having constructive relationships with their children, and
- ▶ support of their partner's parenting.

The curriculum guidelines and tools in this workbook are designed to help BIPs begin conversations about fatherhood so that as men initiate a process of renouncing violence, they can understand and take responsibility for the harm caused to their children, and, when appropriate, consider what it takes to repair and transform relationships. These materials:

- ▶ provide a rationale for working with men on fathering issues, and discuss the benefits and challenges of using BIPs as the vehicle;
- ▶ provide background information on the cultural and parenting contexts of the work;
- ▶ present organizational readiness considerations;



*Drawn by a 14-year-old-boy; text in drawing reads "on the the inside" (left) and "on the outside" (right)*

- ▶ propose staff training activities;
- ▶ present evaluation findings from the pilot groups; and
- ▶ identify areas for further learning and inquiry.

Drawings by children in Mexico City depicting their feelings about their fathers appear throughout the text. An organizational self-assessment appears in the appendix to help programs create mechanisms for monitoring and learning from experience, along with a directory of additional resources.

Bilingual (Spanish-English) curriculum tools can be found in the workbook pockets. These include:

- ▶ three exercises on empathy, modeling and the reparative process in English and Spanish;
- ▶ a compact disc containing the real-life story of a man named Michael, told in Spanish and English, who both witnessed and perpetrated domestic violence;
- ▶ the English language script for Michael’s Story;
- ▶ the Spanish language script for Michael’s Story; and
- ▶ the Mexican children’s drawings.

The curriculum guidelines center around three parenting exercises that are meant to be implemented over a four- to six-week period, but we recognize that four to six sessions is only a beginning. Men will bring to these sessions varied attitudes and openness to change, and not all men will renounce violence. The exercises encourage men to consider children’s perspectives and their own behaviors as fathers and father figures, and introduce the concepts for repairing damaged relationships with children.

Programs that implement the curriculum guidelines should consider potential next steps for men who renounce violence, and who are invested in improving relationships with their children and supporting their partner’s parenting. Such steps might include fathers’ groups for men who have renounced violence; parenting groups under the auspices of a BIP, a supervised visitation center, or elsewhere in the community; or services at a family agency. In such groups or services, men could be supported – and at the same time held accountable

**“There may be well-founded anxiety about men who are identified as batterers being supported in their roles as fathers.”**

– as they begin the hard work of actually repairing damaged relationships with children.

There may be well-founded anxiety about men who are identified as batterers being supported in their role as fathers. This material is not an endorsement of contact between violent fathers and their children. Courts and others must assess whether it is safe for the children and the mother for a father to have ongoing contact with their children, and the nature of that contact (Salcido Carter, p. 2). When decisions about safe contact have been made, these tools should be used within the constraints of those decisions.

### **Curriculum Exercises and their Incorporation**

The three parenting exercises, developed in English and Spanish, focus on: (1) creating empathy for children’s experience of domestic violence; (2) identifying behaviors that constitute positive modeling by fathers for their children, while supporting the mother’s parenting; and (3) understanding men’s roles in the process of repairing a damaged relationship with their children.

In 2003, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) partnered with the Dorchester Community Roundtable and three BIPs – Common Purpose, Emerge, and Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Services – to pilot test the exercises

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in Boston, Massachusetts. About 60 men in six groups participated.

Two years of planning preceded the piloting of the exercises, which were based on learning from victim service agencies, BIP staff, literature, focus groups with battered women, including specific sessions with women of color, and focus groups with men in BIPs and fatherhood programs. Program directors of the three pilot sites – Mitch Rothenberg, David Adams and Wayne Williams – met with the project staff monthly for more than a year and contributed significantly to the development of the exercises, implementation planning, and evaluation measures.

The exercises do not instruct men in BIPs to have direct contact (or assume or encourage contact) with their children

nor to engage their children in work with them on the topics covered. Men without children or without any contact with their children could participate and potentially increase empathic capacities, identify and work on new behaviors, and begin to understand what is involved in repairing relationships damaged by their violence. The exercises are designed to support men's motivation to renounce violence, to develop their abilities to envision the experiences and perspectives of the children in their lives, and to create behavioral goals for themselves. Nonetheless, BIPs may decide that for some men the materials are not appropriate because of the implication of future, if not ongoing, relationships with their children. This is a question that requires more understanding and continued reflection. Safety for partners and children must always remain the first priority.

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## Cultural Context

The battered women's movement has been grounded in a feminist analysis of domestic violence, an analysis that emphasizes sexism and patriarchy as important explanatory concepts. Despite the involvement of women of color in the movement, its programs and approaches have historically neglected attention to race and ethnicity. Like the larger battered women's movement, BIPs were created, designed, and run by individuals whose primary focus was gender oppression. As the movement has matured, it is clear that for families of color, domestic violence must be viewed within the intersection of racism and sexism.

Since the first BIPs in the 1970s, legal sanctions have increased, police and prosecution practices have become more effective, and abusive men are more likely to receive court-ordered treatment. The demand for BIPs has grown dramatically. Today, there are estimated to be at least 1,500 programs in the United States. Many BIP participants are men of color; many are poor; many are marginally employed or unemployed. The work of batterer intervention occurs within larger socio-political and cultural contexts, which should inform the programs. Central to those contexts are issues of oppression.

Despite the demographic profile of BIP participants, programs have been hesitant to include an analysis of cultural context and oppression. This may be in part a function of the dominant analysis of sexism. In addition, programs have feared that men will use their culture and racial victimization as a way to justify their violence. This fear is not totally unfounded because men who batter often seek justifications for their behavior. However, it is believed that skilled and well-

trained BIP facilitators can affirm culture and acknowledge oppression while at the same time keep participants accountable for their abusive behavior. Fear should not be an excuse for avoiding these issues.

In the last few years, a number of people of color who work in BIPs have pointed out that if culture and oppression are ignored, these elements will work against the intervention.<sup>1</sup> These experts agree that to stop violence in a given cultural group, the intervention has to be based on values generated by that community, rather than the dominant culture. If participants perceive that the intervention is being imposed from outside their cultural framework, they might interpret it as one more way in which the dominant culture seeks to oppress them. There is the risk that participants will see family violence as a "white" issue and, therefore, dismiss the relevance of stopping their violence.

Talking about fathering in BIPs provides an opportunity for programs to start exploring issues of culture and oppression. Oppression and domination have been systematic efforts to dehumanize the target populations. One of the strategies of oppression has been to deprive men of their ability to provide and protect. This strategy has been utilized consistently in different manifestations of dominant behavior from the most extreme (genocide, slavery) to the more accepted (colonization, marginalization, racism, discrimination, poverty and so on). The progressive, on-going mutation of this strategy has profoundly impacted the communities and the psyches of men of color and affected their ways of parenting. BIPs have to make a concerted effort to create a context worthy of the participants' trust. This necessarily involves recognition of and respect for their cultures and the structural barriers they face in establishing a constructive family life.

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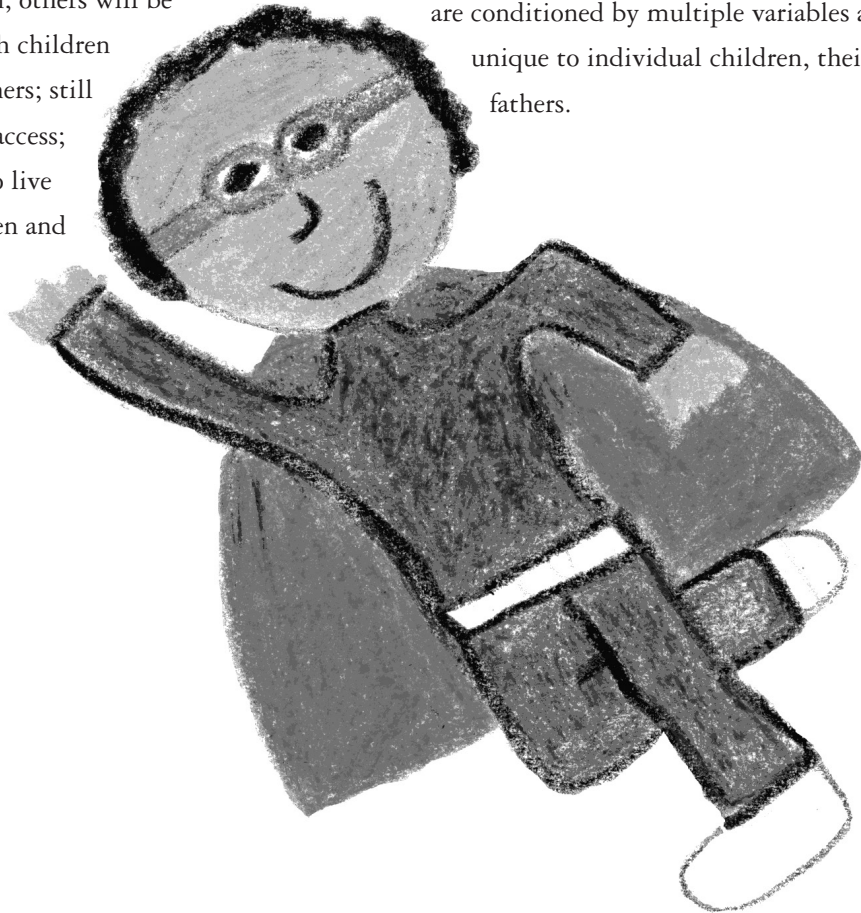
<sup>1</sup> We want to acknowledge the work of Fernando Mederos, Ricardo Carrillo, Jerry Tello, Julia Perilla, Oliver Williams, *Mending the Sacred Hoop*, Benjamin R. Tong, Lee Mun Wah, *the Men's Resource Center of Northern New Mexico and others*.

## Parenting Context

Men in BIPs may have dual identities. As sons, they may have few models in their own lives of consistent, nurturing parenting by men. As fathers and father figures, BIP participants may have some form of parental relationship not only with biological children, but with other (non-biological) children of former partners and future partners, as well as various young kin. Men may be biological fathers, adoptive fathers, step-fathers, uncles, or mothers' boyfriends. For a child, they may be temporary, new, or life-long male figures.

Given the history of violence men in BIPs share, their ability to parent is shaped not only by cultural and personal factors, but also by interpersonal and legal ones. The safety of the children and the children's mother is always the primary concern. Some men will be prohibited legally from contact with either mothers or children; others will be allowed supervised contact with children and no contact with their mothers; still others may have unsupervised access; and many men will continue to live in the same homes with children and the children's mother.

"Parenting" necessarily will take different forms and can be envisioned on a continuum. Co-parenting connotes full access and equal participation in child-rearing with varying divisions of labor. Collaborative or cooperative parenting suggests a helpful participatory role, not necessarily with full access, under the direction of the primary parent. Some men will be parenting at a distance, without any direct contact. Others will be absent from their children's lives and have no contact at all, at least for the time being. In this curriculum, we emphasize the connection between responsible fathering and respect for and support of the children's mother. Demonstrating respect and support for the children and their mother may require that fathers have no contact. For some men, contact with children should not resume until the children reach adulthood and decide to initiate communication. For other men, contact with their children can resume after the men have completed reparative work. Decisions regarding contact are conditioned by multiple variables and realities that are unique to individual children, their mothers and their fathers.



*Drawn by an 11-year-old-girl*



## Rationale For Parenting Work With Men Who Abused Partners

The parenting exercises were created fundamentally for their value for children: children in the homes and families of men who have been violent and the future children of those children. Many men who have been violent continue to have daily contact with their children, as part of the same household with the children and their mother. Some women stay with or return to men who have been abusive. In other situations, where a couple has separated, children have varying degrees of contact. Sometimes this contact is only through supervised visitation; often there is ongoing unsupervised contact. In general, relationships with children tend to be enduring, even if the intimate relationships that produced the children have ended. Men who cease contact with their children still live on in the children's minds.

Research in the last two decades has made unarguably clear the damaging effects of exposure to domestic violence on children. Partner abuse harms children even if the children are not abused, and men who are abusive to their partners are at high risk of being abusive to their children. Abusive men have difficulty supporting their partner's parenting. In addition, limited research suggests that men who are abusive to their partners are also often controlling and egocentric in relation to their children. Many have a sense of entitlement, almost ownership, with regard to their children that affects how they respond to their children's behavior (Francis, Scott, Crooks & Kelly, 2002, cited in Salcido Carter, p. 3).

A growing body of literature suggests the importance to children's development of positive involvement by a father figure. We also know that high conflict between divorcing parents is a consistent and reliable correlate of poor outcomes for children (Kelly, 2000, cited in Salcido Carter, p. 4). Children will benefit if abusive men, as they renounce their violence, can learn to better support the children's mother psychologically, practically, and financially.

Many men appear to be more capable of developing empathy, acknowledging damage, and accepting responsibility for violence in relation to their children than in relation to

**“In general, relationships with children tend to be enduring, even if the intimate relationships that produced the children have ended.”**

their partners. If the men in BIPs come to understand the damaging effects of their violence on children, even if the children are not abused, this can be a powerful motivator for renouncing violent behavior. Content on parenting may be an effective path toward attitudinal and behavioral change for the men, reducing the chances of their children's continued or subsequent exposure to violence, as well as their partner's experience of violence.

Men who are violent in their intimate relationships are more likely than other men to have grown up in homes in which there was domestic violence (Heise, 1998). Domestic violence in their parental home is, therefore, a risk factor for boys becoming violent. This pattern of intergenerational transmission is not inevitable. A father's acknowledgment of responsibility, modeling of non-violent behavior, and attempt to repair damaged relationships are likely protective factors, reducing the risk of another generation of domestic violence.

Although the prevention of domestic violence would suggest the importance of helping men toward safe and healthy relationships with their children, it is a viable strategy only if the women, who are partners of the men and mothers of the children, support it. First of all, the women are in the strongest position to assess the safety of children's contact with their

fathers. Secondly, the children will be better served if the messages about contact with their father are consistent.

The process of developing exercises on *Fathering After Violence* included conducting a series of focus groups with mothers of color who had survived domestic violence. The women's opinions and desires about their formerly abusive partners' involvement with their children informed this project. Most women said that although they were not in a relationship with their children's fathers, they would like the fathers to "be there" for their children (Atchison, et al., p.9). Among the recommendations from the four focus groups were the following:

- ▶ Formerly abusive fathers who have taken responsibility for their violence could, for the sake of their children, seek to establish emotionally supportive relationships with them.
- ▶ Formerly abusive men who have renounced violence against women and children could serve as powerful anti-violence spokespersons that effectively discourage boys and young men from adopting abusive behaviors.
- ▶ Service providers and activists should help parents who have been victims or perpetrators of abuse talk to their children in order to reduce the effects of violence on them (Family Violence Prevention Fund, p.5).

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community also convened focus groups, in this case with 20 women who had experienced domestic violence and were involved with the child welfare system. Their findings revealed that women wanted fathers to be safely involved with their children.

- ▶ Focus group participants explained their primary co-parenting goal was to facilitate a healthy relationship between their children and the father while decreasing

the probability that abuse would be directed toward the child.

- ▶ These women's concerns suggest that certain measures be enacted to ensure that children would not be kidnapped or physically and/or emotionally endangered.
- ▶ Some women did not share these concerns. They were convinced that their former abuser would not abuse their children. For them, a violent partner did not equate to an abusive father (Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, p. 2).

Additional steps were taken to ensure the *Fathering After Violence* Project was grounded in the needs and desires of mothers who survived domestic violence. Project principals attempted to reach by telephone the partners of all men participating in the six Batterer Intervention Groups piloting the new exercises. Half of the partners were reached prior to the new curriculum sessions in the Boston pilot study. Of those partners who were contacted, almost all were very positive about including material on relationships with children in BIP curricula. About two thirds were positive about their partner's involvement with the children; the other third expressed some concerns about their partner's parenting, but still supported his involvement. This kind of contact with survivors can inform whether it is appropriate to use this curriculum with particular men. It also opens up new avenues for dialogue with survivors about their worries for their children.

The focus groups and partner contacts include too small a number of women to support confident generalizations. Nonetheless, it appears from these data that many women who have survived domestic abuse want their partners or ex-partners to "be there" for their children. They hope for their partners to understand the effects of violence on their children, and they also want their partners to work to improve relationships with their children.

## Benefits and Challenges of Working Through Batterer Intervention Programs

Batterer Intervention Programs constitute already existing psycho-educational programs for men who have been violent to their partners. Therefore, the target population for this work is particularly accessible through these programs. There are other benefits to reaching violent fathers through BIPs. These programs typically work with men within the context of a commitment to the safety of their partners. Many have policies and procedures for partner contact in place, and the emphasis on accountability and responsibility is consistent with the approach of these materials.

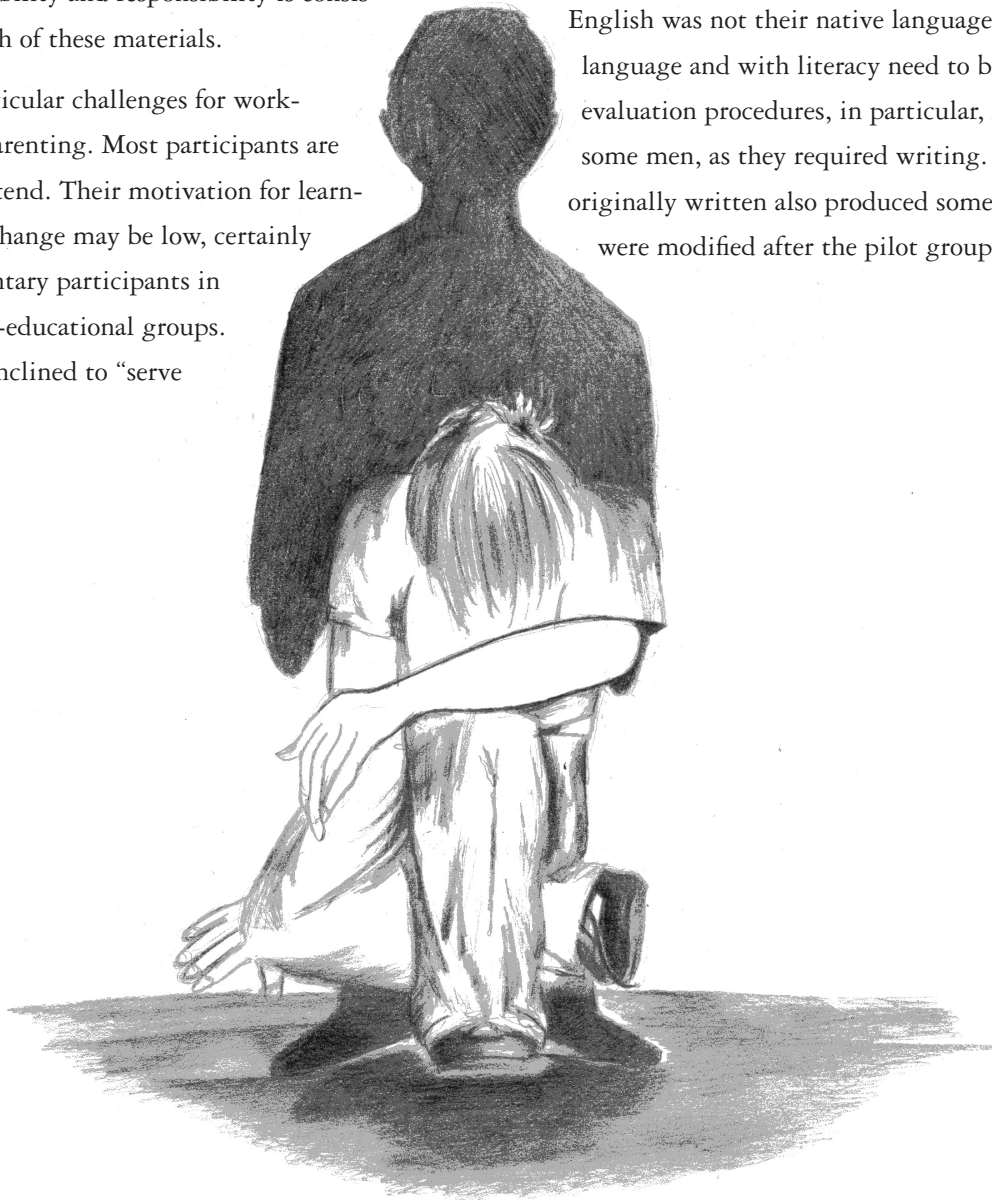
BIPs also present particular challenges for working with fathers on parenting. Most participants are court-mandated to attend. Their motivation for learning and for personal change may be low, certainly less than that of voluntary participants in other kinds of psycho-educational groups. Participants may be inclined to “serve

their time” or actively resist new learning. The challenge is to engage their interest, curiosity and emotional investment in the material.

Men in BIPs are only a small subgroup of men who have been abusive in their intimate relationships. The subgroup over-represents men of low socio-economic status and men of color. This skewed proportion reflects biases and discrimination in both our police and court practices. Many men, and especially those of higher socio-economic status, will not be reached through these programs.

The pilot programs included a Spanish speaking group, but the English speaking groups also included men for whom

English was not their native language. Difficulties with language and with literacy need to be respected. Our evaluation procedures, in particular, were difficult for some men, as they required writing. The exercises as originally written also produced some difficulties and were modified after the pilot groups.



*Drawn by a 13-year-old-boy*



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## Organizational Readiness

Batterer Intervention Programs vary greatly in the following ways, all of which are important for implementing parenting materials, and all of which must be considered in preparation.

- ▶ **State oversight and certification.** Many states certify BIPs, applying standards and oversight. Some states do not. In Massachusetts, BIPs are overseen by the Department of Public Health, the approval of which was needed to pilot the materials. It is important to know the certification requirements (if any) of your state. Where there is an oversight agency, that agency needs to be part of the planning process both to inform the development of new standards and to ensure that the parenting curriculum does not compromise current standards.
- ▶ **Length of program.** BIPs vary in length, with an average minimum of 24 to 26 sessions (Adams, 2003). Massachusetts mandates 40-week programs, which is the context in which these materials were piloted. As currently developed, the three exercises require four to six group sessions. Adding this material to a program necessarily involves subtracting other material. These are difficult decisions, and more difficult in a shorter program. The pilot program indicates that these materials are only a beginning toward helping men who have been violent understand the full impact of their violence on their relationship with their children. Programs may also use this material in aftercare groups or in voluntary fatherhood groups, subsequent to the basic Batterer Intervention Groups.
- ▶ **Organizational infrastructure: policies and forms.** Forms should be reviewed for their attention to children's and fatherhood issues. Inquiries on fatherhood convey to participants that the program values their roles as fathers and father figures, and takes seriously the impact of violence in the lives of children. Intake interviews should include questions about men's relationships with children, biological and non-biological. At present, many programs collect data on children only in relation to CPS involvement.

- ▶ **Relationships with agencies, organizations and others who are child- and family- focused.** BIPs should not do this work without collaboration and consultation with local agencies. New relationships and referrals with child-focused organizations will help BIPs be informed about community resources for children and their families.

As we begin to raise the bar for BIPs to think more deliberately about children and fathering, programs need to be organizationally ready to respond to new issues regarding the care and safety of children. A list of possible resources for women, children and men should be developed for staff to use when appropriate. These lists should include community-based programs, such as the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, children's mental health programs, and youth development organizations, as well as the child protection agency.

- ▶ **Knowledge and procedures concerning child protection.** When relationships with children become a focus of attention, the chances of learning about child maltreatment may increase. Staff need specific training on the legal and clinical issues of child abuse and neglect, including mandated reporter laws. Staff from BIPs should explore the current practices and policies regarding the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse. Domestic violence and sexual assault state coalitions and local domestic violence programs can be particularly helpful in uncovering this information since most have been working to improve the child protection response to domestic violence. Partners, when contacted, must receive information about exceptions to confidentiality, such as mandated reporting and duty to warn.
  - ▶ **Pre-implementation curriculum review.** Before implementation, BIP directors should become familiar with the materials and their theoretical justification in order to consider the fit with their own programs and possible modifications. Successful implementation includes sensitivity and responsiveness to local practices and cultures. Thus, program directors should go beyond training to shape the curriculum to their specific situations.
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- ▶ **Training and supervision requirements for BIPs.** Attention to fathering should be integrated into supervision and in-service training. Training, addressed more fully in a subsequent section of this document, should involve not only group facilitators, but also program directors and staff who contact partners. Pre-implementation training of group facilitators is critical. Effectiveness depends on the facilitators' understanding of and enthusiasm for the parenting exercises. At all three pilot sites facilitators were pleased to be given well-developed curriculum materials and were positive about the intent. In the pilot program, the trainer was also a primary developer of the curriculum materials. Training of group facilitators and partner contact staff was done at each site in one three-hour session. In addition, supervision and debriefing during and after implementation of the exercises are fundamental to good programming.
- ▶ **Policy about and consistency of partner contacts.** To maximize safety for women and children, it is important that the partners of men in the groups using the new parenting exercises be aware of this project. The intent in the pilot groups was to contact each woman by telephone, invite her to keep in touch with the program, and inform her about resources. In the pilot project, we also wanted women's opinions about introducing materials on parenting and their thoughts about their partners as parents. BIPs in Massachusetts are required to make contact with the partners of men in their groups. Therefore, the programs piloting the exercises already had procedures in place to inform partners about the new parenting content. New procedures may be necessary for programs that do not routinely contact partners. Some localities prohibit contact with partners and in those cases, the issue of informing partners must be considered within local constraints.
- ▶ **Cultural identities of participants and of facilitators.** Material on parenting, including issues of discipline and self-care, may carry different meanings in different cultural groups. Also, the cultural congruence of participants and facilitators may affect group process. As

**“To maximize safety for women and children, it is important that the partners of men in the groups using the new parenting exercises be aware of this project.”**

programs review and adapt the exercises, these cultural variations are critical to consider. Some of the Massachusetts groups were culturally specific – one for African American men and one for Latino men – with facilitators from the same communities. Others were culturally and racially mixed. Most participants were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as is typical for BIPs. In Massachusetts, Batterer Intervention Groups are co-facilitated by a man and a woman. Each program has to consider the implications of participants' cultural/racial identities as well as the effects of the gender and cultural/racial identities of facilitators.

- ▶ **Supportive follow-up for men in the groups.** Group facilitators need to be alert to the possibility that participating men may raise issues which need special attention in or outside the group meeting. These may be issues about their children, such as overzealousness about repairing relationships, or issues about their own emotional stability or mental health, which may be triggered by the materials on parenting.

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- ▶ **Continued support and follow-up for men who complete the program.** Programs should consider what might constitute next steps for those men *who renounce violence*, and who are invested in improving their relationships with their children and supporting their partner's parenting.
  - ▶ **A cautionary note about community perceptions.** It is important that community agencies and courts under-

stand that these exercises do not constitute a parenting program. If successful, they help men get to the point where a parenting program may be useful. Completing a program that includes these materials does not imply that a man is a more competent parent, nor does it even imply motivation to be a more competent parent, as most men are not voluntary participants.

## Staff Training

When the Family Violence Prevention Fund piloted the three exercises in Boston, we found that the BIPs that received the most comprehensive staff training had the best evaluation outcomes. This confirmed our common sense belief that staff training is essential for the successful use of these tools. This training should not be limited to facilitators, but ought to include personnel in charge of partner contact, as well as program directors and other program administrators.

The primary goals of the staff training are to:

1. Introduce the Fathering After Violence exercises to all program staff and prepare group facilitators for the implementation of these exercises;
2. Present the theoretical framework and rationale behind each exercise;

3. Understand the cultural context in which fathering takes place;
4. Bring the voices and needs of children who have witnessed or experienced family violence to the consciousness of program staff;
5. Allow staff to express their apprehensions, hopes and ideas about the subject matter; and
6. Invite staff to be an integral part of the implementation process.

We recommend a minimum of three hours of pre-implementation staff training and at least two hours of post-implementation supervision and debriefing.



*Drawn by an 8-year-old-boy*

## Training Activity # 1: Project Overview and Brainstorm of Potential Benefits and Challenges

During the Boston pilot, we found it useful to start the training by giving a brief overview of the project followed by a staff brainstorm that was recorded on a blackboard or newsprint. The brainstorm provided the opportunity for the staff to name their fears and worries about the project, as well as to identify the possible opportunities and benefits. Staff members were asked first to talk about their concerns, which were listed. The same process was used to identify the possible positive outcomes of the project. In all pilot staff trainings there was a good balance between the two lists, and staff always acknowledged the importance of putting victim's and children's safety first. By the end of the training, program staff welcomed tools for dealing with men's parenting issues.

If, during this activity, the following teaching points do not arise spontaneously, the trainer should make sure they are covered:

- ▶ The safety of the victim and the children are always the program's first priority.
- ▶ Implementing these exercises should not be an endorsement or encouragement of any contact between the offenders and their children or co-parents. This is especially true when there are any legal restrictions limiting contact or when the custodial parent refuses contact for safety reasons.
- ▶ Most programs and groups are already dealing with issues of parenting, often without systematic and consistent tools.
- ▶ Fathers who batter often have legal and illegal contact with their children.
- ▶ As providers, we sometimes choose not to implement interventions because we fear for the safety of the victims. However, similar safety concerns may exist whether or not we intervene.



*Drawn by a 13-year-old-boy*



## Training Activity # 2: Understanding the Cultural Context of Fathering

As mentioned earlier in this guide, fathering happens within a cultural context. We believe that understanding this context is essential for the optimal implementation of the exercises. The trainer starts this activity by asking staff members what characteristics they think make someone a good father. The trainer writes the answers on a board or newsprint and should make sure that some version of the following attributes or roles is included: protecting, nurturing, providing, loving, guiding, and affirming.

The trainer continues by asking the group if they can think of instances in which men might want to be like the father on the list, but are prevented from doing so by external circumstances. The trainer again makes a list of such circumstances. These might include illness, physical or mental incapacitation, death, warfare, poverty and the man's own family history (including lack of positive modeling and witnessing or experiencing violence). If the participants don't bring up oppression, the trainer should ask probing questions, such as:

- ▶ What about oppression?
- ▶ Could this constitute an obstacle for someone to become a good father?
- ▶ How so?

The trainer then moderates a discussion about the effects of oppression in fathering. She or he should bring up this nation's enslavement of African peoples and/or Spain's enslavement of the Americas' native peoples as examples, go back to the list of positive attributes and ask whether an enslaved person had control over these actions. The trainer should help the group come to the conclusion that attributes like pro-

**“The point of this discussion is to help participants understand the duress under which men of color operate as fathers.”**

tecting and providing would be impossible to control for an enslaved person. Others, like nurturing and guiding, could be possible, but very difficult, under the extreme stress and brutal circumstances of slavery.

The trainer then explains that slavery was an extreme way in which men and women were systematically denied their right to be good parents, but that there are other ways in which this continues to happen, including racism, colonization, discrimination and poverty.

The trainer continues by asking staff members to talk about the feelings they think a man would have if he were denied the right to assume the roles included among the characteristics of a good father. The point of this discussion is to help participants understand the duress under which men of color operate as fathers (and as human beings in general). This information should help facilitators understand that men, especially men of color, need to be supported in their efforts to renounce their violence. The trainer, however, must clearly explain that oppression should never be used as an excuse to justify any abusive behavior or irresponsible parenting.

## Training Activity # 3: Presenting the Reparative Framework

After allowing ample time for the previous discussion, it is important that the trainer present the Reparative Framework as a theoretical aide for understanding the parenting exercises. We recommend that the trainer introduce the topic by conducting an activity included in the Reparative Framework Exercise. This activity involves playing the “Michael’s Story” CD and conducting two brainstorms. First, the trainer explains that the CD is the true story of a man who was interviewed for this project and whose name has been changed to protect his confidentiality. Although the story is real, the CD was recorded by a professional actor. The trainer then proceeds to play the first track of the CD.

After listening to the first track, in which Michael describes how he witnessed his father’s violence, the trainer facilitates and records two staff brainstorms. The first one highlights the mistakes that Michael’s father made when Michael tried to restore their relationship. The second one centers on alternatives to the father’s negative behavior. In other words, what could the father have done differently?

These discussions are designed to provide a transition to a presentation of the Reparative Framework. The trainer explains that the FVPF conducted qualitative research with 36 individuals in Massachusetts. These included in-depth interviews with six former BIP participants who had renounced their violence and were committed to healing their relationships with their children. Based on these men’s experiences, the FVPF developed a theoretical framework for understanding healing in relationships. This is a work-in-progress representing our best understanding to date of the reparative process between fathers and their children, but will certainly continue to evolve. All six interviewees followed each of the steps of the framework. Furthermore, all of them completed BIPs and sought additional intervention and support after they had finished their respective programs.

The trainer continues by presenting newsprint or a slide with the steps of the Reparative Framework spelled out:

**“Based on these men’s experiences, the FVPF developed a theoretical framework for understanding healing in relationships.”**

1. Changing abusive behavior
2. Modeling constructive behavior
3. Stopping denial, blaming and justification
4. Accepting all consequences for one’s behavior
5. Acknowledging damage
6. Not forcing the process or trying to “turn the page”
7. Listening and validating
8. Supporting and respecting the mother’s parenting

The trainer then goes over each step, using the following descriptions as a guide:

**Changing abusive behavior** – It is essential that fathers stop all kinds of abuse immediately. This is one of the fundamental goals of BIPs and, of course, a prerequisite to starting any reparation. This change, however, will not automatically rebuild trust and caring in the family. Men need to understand that this is a slow and difficult process. Some programs have found that explaining the effects of violence on children can be a powerful motivator for men to start changing.

**Modeling constructive behavior** – It is well known that children learn by example. Fathers need to know that as they stop modeling destructive behaviors, they have to make a

concerted effort to model positive ones. A key teaching concept in this project is that a father cannot be a good model for his children if he is abusive, disrespectful or hateful to their mother.

**Stopping denial, blaming and justification** – Most BIPs work towards having men take full responsibility for their abusive behavior. In the context of this framework, programs should teach fathers about the negative effects that denial, blaming and justification can have on children.

**Accepting all consequences for one's behavior** – Violence prevention activists often think of consequences primarily from the criminal justice perspective. Fathers involved in a reparative process need to understand that facing the consequences of their behavior may also include accepting rejection and the loss of trust, love and even contact with their children. Accepting consequences may also mean adopting a secondary parenting role, in support of the mother's authority.

**Acknowledging damage** – It is important that fathers realize the amount of damage they have inflicted and let their children know that they understand specifically how they have hurt them.

**Supporting and respecting the mother's parenting** – Men who are abusive often undermine the authority of the other parent. This usually continues to happen or increases after the parents are separated and divorced. In order to repair their relationships with their children, fathers need to restore the sense of respect for the mother's authority and decision making and fully support her parenting, especially if the father finds himself in a secondary parenting role.

**Listening and validating** – Fathers need to be prepared for and willing to receive anger, hurt, sadness, fear and rejection from their children. It is essential that they understand that this is part of the healing process and not a way for the children to manipulate the situation.

**Not forcing the process or trying to "turn the page"** – Except for the steps that involve personal change work, every stage in this framework has to take place on the children's own terms and timing. Fathers have to learn to be patient and not push healing or contact with their children. Fathers

should be open to talking about the past as many times as the children need to do it.

Additionally, the following teaching points taken from the Reparative Framework Exercise should be included in this activity:

- ▶ A common occurrence for men who have stopped their abusive behavior is that their children will start feeling safe with them in a new way. These men would like their families to congratulate and encourage them, but what they often get instead is more hostility and anger than before. For the first time, their children feel safe to express their true feelings about the years of abuse. This is a very hard situation for the men. They should be reminded that facing the anger from their children is an important part of the process and that it is a sign

**“Fathers involved in a reparative process need to understand that facing the consequences of their behavior may also include accepting rejection and the loss of trust, love and even contact with their children.”**



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of progress. Men should never use this situation against their children.

- ▶ Once they feel safe, children often want to talk about the past repeatedly. This is particularly true for older children. Men have to understand that this is part of the healing process and not a way for survivors to be manipulative by “bringing back the past.” Men need to be open to revisiting the past as often as children need to and on their own terms and timing, as painful as it might be.
- ▶ Survivors of abuse need to have their pain witnessed and validated. This is, of course, a difficult process. Men have to be willing to sit down with their children and listen (many times) to the ways in which they were abusive and hurtful. Men have to be able to own and reflect back this reality to their family members.
- ▶ The issue of forgiveness might come up. This is a complex subject. Perhaps the most useful thing is to question

why fathers want to ask for forgiveness. Are they doing it for themselves, to feel better? Or are they doing it for their children and the children’s mother? Hopefully, men will want to apologize for the sake of their families and in that case, the process is much more involved than a simple “I’m sorry.” It is up to the children to forgive their fathers. If men really want to start healing, they need to embark on the long and arduous process of reparation, most of which will happen after participants have left their BIPs.

The trainer should conclude this activity by playing the second track of “Michael’s Story,” in which he describes his struggles overcoming his own violence and repairing the relationship with his own son. If there is time, the trainer may allow for a brief discussion among participants.

## Training Activity # 4: Presenting the Exercises to BIPs

Although we chose not to have a pre-imposed order for the Fathering After Violence exercises, all three pilot programs in Boston decided collectively to do the Empathy Exercise first and the Reparative Framework Exercise last. Other programs should feel free to find the order that best suits them, but for staff training purposes, it is recommended that the trainer first present the Reparative Framework Exercise since it is closely related to the previous activity. Before starting the presentation, the trainer should make sure that everyone has a copy of the actual exercises.

### Reparative Framework Exercise

The trainer should start the presentation of each exercise by reading aloud its goal and rationale. She or he then explains that the Reparative Framework Exercise is a simplified version of the previous activity. Its main goal is to introduce group participants to the Reparative Framework and, specifically, to help them understand that it is a difficult and slow process.

The trainer informs the staff that the first part of the exercise is identical to what they just did and walks them through the steps:

1. Explain the origins of “Michael’s Story”
2. Play the first track of the CD
3. Facilitate two brainstorms about Michael’s father’s mistakes and alternatives
4. Play the second track of the CD
5. Discuss the process of healing between Michael and his son

The main difference between the BIP exercise and the staff training activity is that the eight-step Reparative Framework is not formally presented to the BIP group. However, the facilitators have to make sure that certain points are covered during the exercise. After playing the first track of the CD, group leaders need to emphasize that:

**“Victims and witnesses of family violence need to be listened to and validated for a long period of time, often over many years.”**

- ▶ In order to start healing a relationship, the offender has to stop the abuse and begin modeling positive behaviors.
- ▶ Denial and minimization can be very damaging to children.
- ▶ Accepting the consequences for one’s behavior means more than doing time in jail or on probation. Men have to face the consequences of their behavior in their families and communities.

Upon playing the second track of the recording, facilitators will moderate a discussion that should lead to the following points:

- ▶ Healing the relationship between an abusive parent and his children is a very slow and difficult process.
- ▶ The process has to take place on the children’s terms and timing. The offender should not and cannot force the pace of the process.
- ▶ Victims and witnesses of family violence need to be listened to and validated for a long period of time, often over many years. The offender should not attempt to quickly “turn the page.”

### Empathy Exercise

The trainer starts by reading the goal and the rationale of the exercise. He or she then explains that this is a non-traditional

**“It is likely that some group members might not have known their biological father. In those instances, they should think about father figures...”**

exercise in which group members are asked to look at children’s pictures and then do their own drawing with crayons. Some staff might express skepticism about the willingness of men in BIPs to participate. The trainer might want to mention that during the Boston pilot, this was the most successful and best-received exercise.

The trainer proceeds by explaining that the first part of the exercise consists of showing participants a series of drawings that children in Mexico created when they were asked the question: “How do you see your father?” She or he then shows each of the drawings to the staff. This activity should be conducted in the same way that the actual exercise is implemented. The trainer reads the age and narrative that go with each drawing and allows for staff to make comments and express their reactions.

After showing the drawings, the trainer explains that the second part of the exercise consists of asking group members to do their own drawings, using crayons, to help them take on the perspective of one of their children. They should ask themselves: “How does my child see me as a father?” They need to be reminded of their history of violence and encouraged to draw from that perspective, given the focus of the BIP. If programs have enough time, they can implement an alternative in which participants are asked to execute two

drawings, one from a positive perspective and one from a negative one (e.g., informed by an incident of family violence).

Participants who don’t have children should use the perspective of another child, such as a stepchild, a niece or nephew, a mentee or even a neighbor or friend. The exercise closes by having men explain their drawings to the rest of the group and mention one way in which they think they have damaged their children.

### Modeling Exercise

After sharing the goal and rationale, the trainer explains that this exercise might look simple on paper, but may be difficult to implement. It involves remembering how group members were fathered, which can evoke intense feelings among participants. Facilitators need to pay special attention to the level of distress of group members and, if necessary, offer time to debrief after the group and/or provide referrals for psychological support outside of the program.

This exercise also asks for a commitment from the men to take actions outside the group and report about them. Some participants might be resistant to make such a commitment. The facilitators will have to use their persuasive skills to make sure everyone participates.

The trainer explains that the exercise starts by asking group members to remember their fathers’ behavior toward their mothers. They are asked to share with the group one example in which their fathers showed respect for their mothers and one in which they were not respectful. Even if there is resistance, facilitators should insist that the men think of both positive and negative examples, no matter how small.

It is likely that some group members might not have known their biological fathers. In those instances, they should think about father figures, such as stepfathers, godfathers, grandfathers, uncles, mentors or teachers. This discussion might be especially distressful for these particular men.

The second activity is identical to the first, except that this time group members have to look at their own behaviors in front of their children and provide examples of how they have modeled respect and disrespect for their co-parents. Facilitators

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tors should be equally persistent so that every man participates and provides both positive and negative examples. As in other exercises, if group members have no biological children, they can instead think about other children in their lives.

The exercise closes by asking men to think about one way in which they could better model respect for their co-parents in front of their children. Facilitators should make it clear to participants that they will have to make a commitment to execute whatever actions they choose. Their progress will be checked in subsequent sessions.

The trainer should make sure that the facilitators understand that this activity in no way endorses or encourages contact with the children's mother or children if such contact is illegal, dangerous or inappropriate in any way. The trainer should read and discuss in detail the following paragraph, taken from the Modeling Exercise:

It is imperative that the facilitators be aware of each participant's legal status with respect to their children and their children's mother. They should remind individual group members of their restrictions and make sure that

the actions they choose are consistent with them. The fact that men might have limited or no access to their children or their children's mother doesn't necessarily mean that they cannot do the exercise. They could certainly find ways to model a more respectful relationship with their children's mother, such as speaking more respectfully about her, even if a restraining order prohibits contact.

The trainer finishes this segment by explaining that if more sessions can be devoted to this exercise, it may be repeated using other kinds of modeling behaviors. One variation that yielded positive results during the pilot was using self-care as an example. Another possibility would be one in which BIP participants model support and respect for their children.

### **Closing**

The training should end, at the very least, with a brief check-out with all trainees. The trainer might ask whether any of their fears or hopes about the project have changed. If there is enough time, the trainer may want to lead a final brainstorm and document any changes of attitude among participants.

## Evaluation of Effectiveness

Engagement is a prerequisite for learning. Engaging the interest and emotional involvement of the men in Batterer Intervention Groups is potentially a challenge, as noted earlier. Most men are not participating by choice; they may have little intrinsic motivation to change; and they are likely to be angry at their partners and/or criminal justice intervention that has mandated them to the program. In Boston, it was encouraging to find that the new exercises were, in fact, intellectually and emotionally compelling for many participants.

In the pilot groups, co-facilitators filled out feedback forms after each session using the new exercises, and the men participating in the groups completed very brief reaction papers after each session. These evaluation materials indicated that engagement was high for the new exercises. Facilitators reported almost all men participated in the discussions. Participants themselves indicated their interest and sometimes emotional responses to the materials.

The feedback forms from group facilitators, reaction papers from participants and debriefing sessions with facilitators after the implementation were our sources for estimating the learning that resulted from the sessions using these materials.

The evaluator's summary indicates:

- ▶ The Empathy Exercise worked well, and at the time of the exercise participants showed increased awareness of hurting children.
- ▶ The Modeling Exercise in its original form, which has since been modified, took more than one meeting and was too complicated. Nonetheless, a majority of the men did accomplish a new action to which they had committed.
- ▶ The Reparative Framework Exercise engaged the participants' interest. Many participants gained a new awareness of their role in the intergenerational nature of domestic violence, and some indicated an understanding of aspects of the Reparative Framework.
- ▶ It is important to note that written feedback was a challenge for many of the men (Fleck-Henderson, 2003).

To get a more robust idea of the impact of the curriculum on both men and their partners, one man and his partner from each of the three participating programs agreed to be interviewed at the beginning of the program before introduction of the parenting exercises, and again at the end of the program after implementation of the new materials. Only two couples completed both interviews because one couple broke up. Each individual was interviewed alone. The interviews did not focus on particular exercises, but rather on the respondents' relationships with their children. A few excerpts from the two men who were interviewed at both time periods follow. They are illustrative of the small, but potentially significant, shifts in men's attitudes after the incorporation of the new curriculum materials. The question from the interviewer is indicated by "Q." "A time 1" indicates the response before the parenting materials. "A time 2" indicates the response to the same question after the parenting materials were introduced.

(From interviewee 1)

Q: Do you think the violence affected your kids?

A time 1: Yes, my son hits other kids. My daughter, I don't know.

A time 2: Yeah...my son...he may start crying. Definitely. Not just that. I don't want him or my daughter growing up thinking that's the way it's supposed to be, cause that's not the way it's supposed to be....[They may think] Daddy's being... (struggles). They may think of Daddy as a bad person. Or they may think of Mommy as a bad person. I don't want them to."

(From interviewee 2)

Q: What about your relationship with the children is difficult?

A time 1: Sometimes when I talk with them, they don't listen.... If I could listen to them, why can't they listen to me?"

A time 2: On occasion I have to tell them what they did wrong, and they don't like that. So when I tell them,

or scold them, I'd like to change the way I do it when I point it out to them."

Q: How can BIP help with your relationships with your children?

A time 1: I am beginning to see progress related also to children, not only domestic violence. ...I've learned a lot of good things and put them into practice. Domestic violence is a thing of the past."

A time 2: Specifically, what has helped is some studies they brought. In those sessions participants were asked to talk about their own fathers. That was very emotional. When those school children were talking about their own fathers, that really moved me a lot. One thing that stands in my mind, this story about a child who said 'My father is an excellent father. However, he has a bad temper.' That impacted me a lot. How can one be an excellent father and at the same time get so mad so quickly? I don't think that person could be an excellent father."

Personal change is always slow, and participants will be at different stages in their readiness to change behaviors. Nonetheless, the evidence so far suggests that the Fathering After Violence exercises helped many of the participating men begin to understand some of the impact of their behavior, to be more reflective about their behavior, and to change some behaviors. The high engagement with the new exercises as well as men's written reactions indicate that many of the men care deeply about their children and their role as fathers. However, they have difficulty taking another person's perspective and tend to see relationships in terms of their own needs. The mo-

**"Personal change is always slow, and participants will be at different stages in their readiness to change behaviors."**

tivation is there to do better in their role as fathers, but they need help.

The curriculum materials have been demonstrated to be effective in engaging men in BIPs and promoting, for some of the men, increased empathy with their children, increased clarity about the damaging effects of violence on children, and new or clearer ideas about how to support their children's mother and think about repairing relationships with their children. The curriculum does not and cannot claim to teach parenting skills. While it is critical to work with fathers to decrease the likelihood of future child maltreatment and harm from exposure to violence, the legal limits on a participant's contact with his partner, former partner and/or children must be known and respected. The materials do not constitute an invitation to, or permission for, prohibited contact.

## Looking Ahead and Areas For Further Learning

Given that men who have been abusive remain active in their children's lives, it seems critically important to work with them to be better fathers. The responses of the men in the pilot groups indicate that many men in BIPs are concerned about their relationships with their children and motivated to improve their abilities to parent. The partners of the men in the pilot groups, insofar as we were able to reach them, were supportive of working with the men to improve their abilities to parent.

It is our hope that other programs working with men who have been abusive to their partners will join in this work. We invite them to become part of the "learning community" on this issue and share their experiences. The work has begun, but we are far from having all the answers.

The exercises presented here were developed during a lengthy period of research and discussion. The background research involved review of the literature and conversations with participants from different parts of this country. The exercises were designed with extensive consultation and influence from the directors of the programs in which they were piloted.

This collaborative process, while potentially shorter for programs adapting these materials, would still be important. The particulars of any program will contribute to the shaping of the exercises. We need to learn from others about the modifications recommended and found to be useful for different groups and circumstances, and why these modifications make sense.

The research done in preparing for this project suggests that mothers who have been in abusive relationships support this work *if* the men who are fathers of their children have renounced violence. Men in BIPs have not necessarily renounced violence. The exercises have been carefully designed, and should always be interpreted, to require no actual contact with children. They do, however, imply the possibility of future contact, even in the situation where there is no current contact. Therefore, it is possible that some men should not be in the groups using these exercises. We did not have the ex-

**"The partners of the men in the pilot groups, insofar as we were able to reach them, were supportive of working with the men to improve their abilities to parent."**

perience of a woman objecting to her partner's participation, but that could happen. It is important to gain further understanding of this question: How do we identify men for whom these exercises are not appropriate, and whose participation could lead to negative consequences?

The exercises presented here are only a beginning toward the ultimate purpose of helping men to have constructive and healing relationships with their children. Actual work on repairing relationships with children does imply contact. That work can only be done in a subsequent group context, limited to men who have renounced violence and have legal access to their children. A next step is to work on developing such groups, including consideration of criteria for participants and procedures to ensure partner collaboration and safety.

The question of the importance of partner contacts, and best methods to accomplish partner contacts, is still open. If women are the primary parents of their children, they must be included in the process that addresses their abusive partner's role as father. Yet, completing partner contacts, in the current form of telephone calls to the house, proves dif-



difficult, even in situations where agency policy requires them. In the pilot programs, calls were attempted in all cases. However, only about half were completed, mostly due to no answers. In agencies and localities that do not support partner contacts, the difficulties are obviously even greater. If prior contact with partners is, indeed, considered important for the safety of women and children, more and varied efforts will be needed to complete the contacts. This is another area calling for creative new approaches.

To do this work, BIPs must establish relationships with organizations concerned with families and children. This becomes critically important when BIPs more explicitly address fathering. Training in and familiarity with child protection procedures and issues is one aspect of this. Connections for consultation, collaboration, and referral with community agencies is another. These connections and collaborations will take differing forms and yield new learning about useful structures and processes.

The pilot groups had a complex evaluation component including feedback from facilitators, from the men themselves, and from partners. While other programs adapting these materials might not need such a large evaluation component, there should be some feedback mechanisms in place. This is a new venture, and it will be important to track, as well as we can, how it works, and particularly if there are unintended negative consequences. The challenges and creative innovations of other programs will be critical parts of our collective

**“This is a new venture and it will be important to track, as well as we can, how it works, and particularly if there are unintended negative consequences.”**

learning about the process of helping men renounce violence, and ultimately establish constructive and healing relationships with their children.

Research will be needed to assess the effects of addressing parenting issues in BIPs. Ultimately, we want to ascertain the effects on children’s exposure to violence, the effects on men’s relationships with their children, and the effects on men’s abilities to support the parenting of the children’s mother.



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# Appendix I - National Advisory Committee

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## Appendix II – Organizational Self-Assessment

As you consider implementing materials on parenting, please take some time as an organization to reflect on these questions:

1. Who are your community partners that can help you deepen your understanding of: (1) the effects of domestic violence on children, (2) the unforeseen complications for men's partners, and (3) the supplemental resources for families (fathers, mothers, and children)?
2. What are the demographics of your current population and what do you need in order to integrate a cultural framework into your work?
3. What are your biggest fears and hopes about implementing new materials on parenting?
4. To whom are you accountable (state, county certification/standards, etc.) and how will you ensure your shifts in programming are not contra-indicated?
5. Given the time limits of your program, what sections of your current curriculum are you willing to forego in order to make room for the new materials?
6. What are the implications for other aspects of your infrastructure (e.g., intake forms, supervision, training, etc.)?
7. What do you need in order to develop an informed policy for child abuse and neglect reporting?
8. What mechanisms are currently in place to reach out to partners? Are they adequate? How will your organization ensure survivor input into a new focus on parenting?
9. How will you set aside time for the staff discussion and training that must precede implementation of the new materials?
10. How will you provide follow-up to men who reveal information that raises concerns about, among other issues, their mental health needs, their relationships with their children, and their attempts to use information to undermine their children's mothers?
11. How will you communicate your programming to the community and particularly the courts in order to avoid false hopes and perceptions about abusive men and their children?
12. Who in your community could do ongoing work with men once your program has ended?
13. How will you contribute to the knowledge base of the Fathering After Violence Project?

## **Appendix III – Additional Resources**

**Caring Dads Program**

[www.caringdadsprogram.com](http://www.caringdadsprogram.com)

**Center for Family Policy and Practice**

[www.cffpp.org](http://www.cffpp.org)

**Center for Urban Families**

[www.cfuf.org](http://www.cfuf.org)

**Domestic Abuse Project**

[www.domesticabuseproject.org](http://www.domesticabuseproject.org)

**EVOLVE Program**

Contact Dr. Derrick Gordon - [derrick.gordon@yale.edu](mailto:derrick.gordon@yale.edu)

**Hombres por la Equidad**

[www.hombresporlaequidad.org.mx](http://www.hombresporlaequidad.org.mx)

**House of Ruth**

[www.hruth.org](http://www.hruth.org)

**Institute for Safe Families**

[www.instituteforsafefamilies.org](http://www.instituteforsafefamilies.org)

**Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community**

[www.dvinstitute.org](http://www.dvinstitute.org)

**Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse**

[www.mincava.umn.edu](http://www.mincava.umn.edu)

**National Compadres Network**

[www.nationalcompadresnetwork.com](http://www.nationalcompadresnetwork.com)

**National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence**

[www.dvalianza.org](http://www.dvalianza.org)

**National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute**

[www.nlffi.org](http://www.nlffi.org)

**Non-Violence Alliance**

[www.endingviolence.com](http://www.endingviolence.com)

For more than two decades, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) has worked to end violence against women and children around the world, because everyone has the right to live free of violence. Instrumental in developing the landmark Violence Against Women Act passed by Congress in 1994, the FVPPF has continued to break new ground by reaching new audiences including men and youth, promoting leadership within communities to ensure that violence prevention efforts become self-sustaining, and transforming the way health care providers, police, judges, employers and others respond to violence.

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