

# Prevention Pathways

## Online Courses

### FACT SHEET

## Where Men Can Go for Help

Until recently, men who were abusive or violent had a hard time finding help for their problem. In the 1980s, however, lawyers, judges, and mental health workers began supporting the idea of “batterer intervention” programs. These programs educate men about nonviolent options and teach them ways to control their anger.

Batterer intervention programs also help men learn the consequences of their violence. They can learn to understand the connection between their thoughts and their behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Most often, men in batterer intervention programs take part in group therapy. Similar to women who have been abused, men who are violent improve the most when they participate in counselor-led support groups of other male abusers.

### Treatment for Violence

#### *Support Groups*

Most support groups for violent men help them:

- **Identify their “unhealthy” beliefs.** A man may believe that only he can make decisions for the household or that he must rule over all others.
- **Understand why their beliefs are unhealthy.** Each man learns to see that the beliefs are harmful when taken to the extreme.
- **Account for their actions.** Each man is held accountable for his violent actions (including physical, sexual, or verbal assaults).
- **Examine how their thoughts directly affect their behavior.** In an abusive family, a man’s feelings of jealousy can lead to false accusations of cheating, which lead to anger and, eventually, violence. Changing behavior by examining the connection to thoughts is called the cognitive-behavioral approach.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Approaches to Treatment*

Most treatment programs stress one or all of the following:

- **The effects of society and culture on the man.** How beliefs support or allow the men to use violence against women.
- **The effects of the family.** Abusive families are isolated from others in the community and generally lack effective communication skills.
- **The impact of the individual.** What is the abuser’s mental state and history? Does he have other emotional problems? Does he have a mental illness, such as severe depression or another disorder that would effect treatment?

Although most communities have a number of 12-step programs that can help a man remain sober, there are not many programs that can help abusive men stay violence-free. Most men who attend batterers treatment programs have been ordered to do so. After a man finishes a court-mandated number of sessions, there are not many other treatment options available.

### Treatment for Substance Abuse or Addiction

Men with addictions have some of the same options for help as women. There are both inpatient and outpatient care options, depending upon how severe the addiction is. All programs involve individual and group therapy.

Most programs ask the man to attend 12-step meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA). These meetings may be held at a clinic, a facility that offers treatment, or at other locations. In general, 12-step programs emphasize the importance of believing in a higher power that recognizes that each man has no control over his addiction. It teaches men to think hour-to-hour or day-to-day, which makes the goal of remaining sober less overwhelming.

## **Treatment for Both Violence and Substance Abuse or Addiction**

Men who have an alcohol or drug addiction *and* a problem with violence need treatment for both issues. Even if a man becomes sober, the violence will not automatically stop. Likewise, if a man learns to control his violence, he still may abuse alcohol or drugs. For treatment to work best, programs that address violence should be tied to substance abuse treatment programs.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, this is not often the case. The programs in most cities are located in different buildings or areas of the city; therefore, the man will have to work with two separate programs, one to address the violence, and one to address the substance abuse or addiction.

## **How to Help an Abusive Man**

Most men who abuse their partners dislike their violent side. They feel guilty and apologize after the abuse.

If you suspect that someone you know is abusive, have a male friend talk to him. Make it clear that his female partner did not request the friend to intervene. (If the abuser feels betrayed, it could cause further violence.)

The best time to address abuse is when you see or hear it. Speak up if a man calls a woman names or treats her poorly in front of you. If you need advice, call the local domestic violence center. Call the police if you fear for the woman's life. There is no easy way to intervene. Showing that you care enough to try to prevent violence and that violence cannot be tolerated will benefit everyone.

For more information, go to [www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways](http://www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways) and click on "courses" to find Module 10 of the online course, "It Won't Happen to Me: *Substance Abuse and Violence Against Women*." [prevention@samhsa.gov](mailto:prevention@samhsa.gov).

## **References**

---

<sup>1</sup> EMERGE. (1999). Batterer intervention program. Cambridge, MA: Author. Available at <http://emergedv.com>.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2000). Male batterers [electronic fact sheet]. Washington, D.C.: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/malebat.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/malebat.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, K.J., (1997). When violence begins at home: A comprehensive guide to understanding and ending domestic violence. Utah: Publishers Press.