

Dating Violence Action Planning Activity

Recommended Age: 14+

Goal

- To teach practical examples of what people can do to get help.

Have Ready

- Write: “What can you do if your partner is abusive?” “How can you help a friend who is being abused?” “What can you do if you are abusing your partner?” on three flipcharts or a white board.
- Markers and tape.

Instructions

- Provide a disclaimer, mentioning these issues can be hard to talk about and that it is okay for them to draw, ‘zone out’, etc.
- Divide the youth into 3 groups and give each group a flipchart and markers. Give each group a flipchart with one of the following sample flipchart headings below. Facilitate within the small groups and get them to brainstorm the answers. Rotate the groups through the flipcharts ‘speed dating’ style, if time allows. Have one person/some people volunteer to read the list to the whole room and then debrief as a whole group.
- Remind them that the key things to think about are: safety, changing behaviour, and how and where to get support.
- When they are done with the flipcharts, post them and go through them as a large group so extra answers can be added from the other groups and information can be shared.
- If you are not breaking into groups or if time is short, you can have the youth brainstorm as a large group and write the answers on a flipchart. Three key overarching messages, if short on time, are:
 - Talk to someone you trust about it
 - End the relationship, if possible

- Know it isn't your fault if you are being abused/Accept responsibility if you are abusing your partner

Sample Flipcharts and Debrief

What can you do if your partner is being abusive? (1st flipchart)

- **Tell someone you trust and/or a counsellor about what is going on.** You can call the Klinik Crisis Line (204.786.8686) or even go talk to someone you trust.
- **Know it is not your fault.**
- **End the relationship if you can.** Make a safety plan: try to do it in a public place or somewhere that you feel safe. This could also be through text/email/phone.
- **If you're not ending the relationship, make a safety plan for what you will do if you are in an emergency.** Think about how you will manage if you decide to stay in the relationship.
- Check in with your family, friends, and people you trust regularly.
- Remember, you deserve to be safe at all times, in any situation.
- Talk to your partner, but recognize that they may not change their behaviour.
- **Try to find and spend time focusing on things that give you strength.**
- Look for activities that help you connect to yourself. This could be connecting to your culture, practicing your religion (if you have one), or anything that makes you feel good or learn about yourself.
- **We know not everyone ends abusive relationships. There can be many reasons why it might be hard to leave an abusive relationship.** They could also still like, love, or care for their partner, even though they are being abusive. Their partner could also threaten to hurt them, their friends/family, themselves, or even threaten suicide.
- **If a partner threatens suicide when you talk about breaking up with them, it is emotional abuse. This is a form of control.** We are not responsible for another person's life and are not helping them or ourselves if we stay in a relationship for fear they may harm themselves. **Ultimately, any person thinking of**

suicide needs help and support from more than just one person. We cannot be their sole means of support, but we can let an adult we trust know what's going on.

What can you do if you are abusing your partner? (2nd flipchart)

- Take responsibility for your own behaviour/admit you have a problem. If you are feeling bad about the way you have reacted or treated someone, that might actually be a good thing. It means that you are learning about yourself and you can work to change your behaviour.
- End the relationship.
- Talk to someone about it, like a counsellor, crisis line, family member, or friend. Remember that abuse is behaviour, not a personality trait, and can be changed.
- Ask for help, get some support, find ways of coping and healing.
- Recognize when you are getting angry or feeling controlling. Learn your warning signs (feel hot/flushed, clenched fists/jaw, can't concentrate, etc.).
- Learn ways to calm yourself (take a deep breath, count to ten, go for a run/bike ride, call or talk to a friend, make a 'cool down' playlist, meditate, etc.). When thinking of ways to calm down, it's important to ask yourself, **"Does this activity turn my volume up or down?" If it turns your volume up, try something else.**
- Try to learn different ways of communicating and expressing your feelings (mindfulness, positive self-talk, etc.).
- Drop-in counselling.
- Join support groups to help deal with your feelings.
- Men's Resource Centre (16 years old and up in Winnipeg).
- EVOLVE at Klinik (for men over 18 years of age in Winnipeg).
- Note: For male identified facilitator, if comfortable doing so, use the following: The abuse that happens to girls and women and non-binary people is most often caused by boys/men. That makes it a 'guys' issue. One of the most important things that guys can do is to treat everyone with respect all of the time, even when it's 'just the guys.' We're not saying that all guys hurt others, but it is everyone's, including boys'/men's, responsibility to stop it. See

Healthy Relationship for Guys under the toolkit for more activities.

Abuse is complex. In some relationships, one person is clearly hurting the other, but there can also be relationships where both people use and experience abuse. Two wrongs don't make a right. **Neither person deserves to be abused, and each person is still responsible for their own actions.** Either one or both people can choose to not use abuse, to get help, and to end the relationship while they do the work of healing.

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Helping a friend (3rd flipchart)

- If you are helping a friend, can they use all the same resources we've just talked about? Of course.

If a friend is being abused:

- Listen without blaming. It is okay to state your concern for your friend, because they may not realize how alarming their situation is. However, if you try to make decisions for your friend, you are trying to control them, which is similar to what their partner is doing. Criticism and judgment are unhelpful. Criticism can also add to the silence, making it harder for your friend to get help and for you to provide support.
- Tell an adult you trust.
- Let them know it is not their fault.
- Spend time together, have fun.
- You can call the Klinik Crisis Line (204.786.8686) or talk to someone you trust.
- Be supportive by helping them create a safety plan and checking in with them as often as you can.
- Talk to a counsellor.

- Call a crisis line.
- It might seem obvious to people on the outside that an abusive relationship needs to end, but for all these reasons and more, it might be more complicated for the person dealing with the abuse. **The bottom line is that a person can't leave the relationship until they decide they are ready. If we want to be supportive, we need to be understanding of their choices.**

A friend is abusing their partner:

- Approach your friend and ask them how they are feeling about the situation. Let them know it's okay to feel upset, but let them know that their behaviour is not okay.
- Help them find resources.
- Go with them to get help.
- If you're worried about the safety of their partner, tell someone.
- It is also important to get support for ourselves when we are supporting other people so we can stay mentally well and deal with any feelings that come up.

If you see abuse happening: (verbal)

- Scenario: You are in the hallway. You see a couple arguing, then you see a person push their partner into a locker and call them names.
- Pay attention to your feelings.
- Do something to show that you have witnessed the behaviour and are not okay with it.
- Say something ("that's not cool").
- Create a distraction (be loud, drop your gear).
- Ask either person if they are okay or need help.
- Let the person who is hurt know they "didn't deserve that."
- Tell an adult.
- Find someone you trust to talk to about your feelings and what you've witnessed.

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Qualities of a Healthy Relationship Brainstorm
- Fun and Single Relay Race