

DISCUSSION GUIDE: *Domestic Violence: Make it your business, because it is*

Definition of Domestic Violence (DV): A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse that adolescents and adults use against their intimate partners to maintain power and control. The perpetrator and victim may be married, divorced, cohabiting, dating, or previously dating. DV encompasses violence against both women and men and includes violence in gay and lesbian relationships.

I Understanding the Topic: Domestic Violence

In the video, Mayor Dave Bartholomay says “Domestic violence is an issue facing every community across America.” He goes on to say “DV threatens the health, safety, and the future of our children. How will this end?” The video shares statistics that suggest each one of us probably knows someone in a domestic violent situation. Understanding the dynamics of domestic violence is critical to developing a community response.

1. Why do you think the title ‘Domestic Violence: Make it your business’ was chosen?
2. How did the video influence your understanding of domestic violence?

II Digesting the Information

Sometimes people are surprised that domestic violence is happening in their neighborhood or community. Responses to an event after the fact often include: “That doesn’t happen here” and “I never suspected anything was going on.”

1. Why do you think people may not “see” domestic violence in their family, neighborhood, and community?
2. What are some barriers in our society that may contribute to the perception that domestic violence is “none of my business”?

III Applying the Information

It’s repeatedly cited in the video that domestic violence is a complex issue. Not one of society’s institutions can solve it alone. Each person has unique issues that affect her/his choices. We may not be able to “fix” the problem, however we can offer support and choices. Domestic Violence leaders support addressing domestic violence from an individual, organizational, and community level. Each of us can make a difference on all three levels.

1. Do you feel comfortable reaching out to someone you suspect is a victim of domestic violence?
 - a. If so, explain what you would do.
 - b. If not, why not?
2. Discuss with the group ways you see yourself employing your “circle of influence” to prevent domestic violence on an individual, organizational and community level.

Domestic Violence Council members may be available to facilitate community groups in this discussion. Call 763-422-7047 for more information.

This Discussion Guide was developed by the Domestic Violence Council of Anoka County, MN

FACILITATOR GUIDE: *Domestic Violence: Make it your business, because it is*

Before the session

Facilitator preview video, review definition of domestic violence (DV), & note key thoughts and impressions that might help discussion. This guide is to assist the facilitator in prompting key discussion points.

Session timing

A suggested length of time for the session is 1½ hours.

If time allowed is different from the above, implement the following timeline:

- Video: 31 minutes
- Group discussion: Point I: 25% of remaining time. Point II 25%. Point III, 50%

Discussion points

I Understanding the topic: Domestic Violence

- Domestic violence is not seen to be a community problem.
- Domestic violence is not seen to be a public health issue.
- People are unaware of the significant cost domestic violence has on society.

II Digesting information from the video

- People don't "see" it because:
 - Denial or don't recognize the signs/indicators.
 - Don't view emotional and sexual abuse as part of domestic violence.
 - Tend to view it as "normal" behavior if it is part of your family dynamic.
- Some barriers include:
 - Lack of understanding as to why victims don't leave: fear, shame, finances, children, mental health issues, low self-esteem, childhood experiences normalize violence in the home, think it will get better.
 - Not knowing what to say or do, how to help.
 - Belief it is a private matter to be kept in the family, not our business, "sanctity of the home".
 - Myths: it doesn't happen in our neighborhood, children aren't affected, it only happens to people of color, poor people, not in our church, doesn't happen or if so, "not a big deal" in teen relationships
 - DV is often seen as a "women's" issue. Since statistics show that most perpetrators are men it is very much a men's issue: men can play the role of positive role model and hold other men accountable. (The perpetrator issues are beyond the scope of this discussion.)

III Applying the information

- How to respond to a person who may or you suspect may be in a violent situation:
 - Be a good listener with affirming, nonjudgmental, caring responses.
 - Don't tell the person what to do, provide support and resource information/Alexandra House: 763-780-2332 State hotline: 1-866-223-1111 (free confidential, 24-hour availability)
 - Ask if the person is afraid; encourage them to speak with advocacy services at numbers noted above.
- Prevention Strategies for 3 levels:
 - Individual: educate self on DV, get men involved, model and expect respectful behaviors, become a mentor, and speak to others in your circle of influence as to why DV is a community issue.
 - Organizational: bring classes and awareness into workplace, church, schools, civic groups (see education options below and also include conflict resolution, bully prevention and bystander action trainings.)
 - Community: get involved in activities such as Coaching Boys into Men or action teams dedicated to preventing interpersonal violence (Donna McDonald, 763-422-7047).
- Free Education
 - Alexandra House, Amy Highness (763-795-5452)
 - Effects of DV on Children: Donna McDonald (763-422-7047)
 - Sexual assault: Karine Zakroczymski (763-236-4172)
 - Domestic violence and the Faith Community: Lyla Pagels (763-236-4342)

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