

# Ending Violence in Our World: The Key is You

by Licia Rando, M.Ed.

## Introduction

The mission of SAIV, the Spiritual Alliance to end Intimate Violence, is to end intimate violence by affecting a shift from traditions of domination and violence toward partnership.

Much of the suffering throughout the world is due to an unquestioned belief in the dominator model of structuring everything from families to national governments. Much of the health and joy in life comes when families, communities, and nations practice a partnership model of interaction. When we work together to solve problems or cooperate to help in times of tragedy then we are witness to the beauty of partnership.

## The Dominator Model

A dominator model works by ranking some people or groups above others. It uses fear and violence or the threat of fear and violence as the method to enforce the rules and wishes of those at the highest level.

Domination is accepted as the only way because it is taught from birth in many homes in the day to day course of family operations. Father or mother has rule over all decisions made...or else. And when children experience or observe violence in their families, they often grow up to view using violence to impose one's will on others as normal, even moral.

Children raised in a dominator household often grow up to either submit to those who force their wills upon them or force others into doing their will. The dominator mindset can govern behavior in school, the work place, the community, and even government, national and international policies.

If we were to analyze our thinking and resulting behaviors we would see that the dominator model silences many viewpoints, makes us less than whole and causes a great deal of suffering. If we opened our thinking to those instances when we worked together to solve problems, when we allowed ourselves to feel what others might be feeling we see the benefits; we see partnership at work.

## The Partnership Model

Listening, mutual respect, compassion and cooperation connect us to others in families and in international politics. It is a mode of operation that results in policies, behaviors and actions that are more whole, more inclusive and more representative of the world's people. Less violence and war in our homes, streets, and in the world relieves us of the burdens we carry, continually being on the defensive or looking for an opening to take power ourselves. Less time spent on destruction leaves more time to invest in construction, life giving, life sharing and creating.

When partnership is modeled and taught in homes, children learn empathy and respect for others. They learn that problems can be solved peacefully and that violence is neither normal nor

moral. They can then take this worldview into their adult lives and build partnership families, schools, communities and governments.

### **SAIV's Mission**

SAIV works to expose situations of domination that are resulting in human suffering in the world through educational materials and resources and through the voices of the world's trusted spiritual leaders. SAIV's council members are respected individuals such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Depak Chopra and Jane Goodall among many others.

SAIV shows the connection between intimate and international violence, and how caring, non-violent, mutually respectful gender and childhood relations are foundational to a more just and peaceful world for us all.

SAIV provides grant money to small grassroots efforts in many countries to aid in the shift away from dominator policies toward wholeness. For example, a grant has been awarded to aid the work of Molly Melching in Senegal with her successful Tostan program to end female genital mutilation. Another grant was awarded to assist a national march in India to bring awareness to and end female infanticide in that country.

### **The Grass Roots Guide**

This grass roots guide helps assembled groups analyze their current thinking and resulting behaviors. Ideas are offered and encouraged for further work to end the domination mindset and substitute a partnership model, beginning with the most essential family structures through the structures of community, school, workplace, etc. The ultimate goal is to influence government policies, nationally and internationally with a partnership perspective. If we can introduce our young children at home, in the schools and in the community to the world with a partnership perspective then the potential for change is immeasurable.

Group action is encouraged. The goal of this guide is for people to work toward partnership in their own lives, and also within the larger community. Group Action ideas are suggested beginning with Session 2. The aim is to assemble groups of people who are willing to take on some community work, thereby connecting the partnership model to the larger world which affects the next generation.

*Think, Practice, Do; Create a better world.*

## Facilitator Directions

Please read the session material for each meeting in advance. Some meetings require easily obtained materials and/or copying to be done ahead of the meeting.

For example Session 1 asks you to distribute one journal and one pencil or pen for each participant. These journals can take the form of papers stapled together or simple notebooks. These will go home and return with the participants each week to record personal thoughts and ideas generated for group action. Session 1 also requires some copying (the article 'Abuse, Neglect and the Brain" and score sheets and cards) and cutting beforehand. Sessions 1 and 2 require the most preparation.

### Room Layout

Most weeks you will need to assemble chairs in small groups (4-6) or have the participants move into small groups if this is easily done in your space. You will also need a place to record ideas (black board, white board, paper, etc.) that will be visible to the entire group.

You do not need to make copies of all sessions for the group, though you may want to send home select pages for review. You may want to make a few extra copies on hand to share the reading during the meeting. This may be done at your discretion.

The facilitator's main job is to set the tone for the groups to work together in small groups and then to come together as a large group and share. You are working to form community so get these people to talk and to build trust. Adding snack breaks, occasional potlucks, whatever works for you and your community are fine.

### Facilitator Check List:

1. Read through the session. As you read jot down a list of items you will need or tasks you will need to do in preparation for the meeting.
2. Before the meeting set the room up for small group discussions or have an idea of a layout for the participants to move into to form small groups (no more than 6)
- 3. Action Groups-** Set up an action group or two or three. Help them to organize themselves. At the end of Session 2 invite participants to start an Action Group to take action within their community to decrease dominator influence and increase partnership influence. Encourage participants to stay to brainstorm a list for the journal assignment at the end of Session 2 together. Have them choose one of these ideas and plan to carry it out. Future meeting time(s) for this group should be set at the end of this meeting.

There are two guidelines for forming Action Groups:

- a) The action activity should be chosen by the group of participants to ensure that they believe in it and can buy in.
- b) An activity should be chosen that will most likely meet with success. (Research has shown that when groups meet with success they will be spurred on by group confidence to tackle more challenging problems.)

(These action groups can meet without you as facilitator or you can meet with them to organize their thoughts and goal plans.)

4. Time should be left at the end of each session for reports concerning the work being done by the action groups within the community.
5. Always remind participants to use their journals to do the assignments at home and to bring these journals with them to the next session. And also to continue discussions at home and with friends. Change happens through challenging assumptions and beliefs and then realigning oneself.
6. Please submit feedback regarding these sessions to help us in our revisions and amendments. Also, you can submit for sharing any additional ideas that worked specific to your region. Submit to the SAIV website and join the partnership effort as we work for world peace together. <http://www.saiv.net>

## Session 1 Partnership or Domination

### Opener: We're All in this Together

Over the next weeks or months we will gather to do the work of examining our current ways of being together and work toward building more cooperative and caring selves, homes, communities, schools, workplaces, countries and the world. Together, we will explore these areas in relation to the concepts of domination and partnership. How do we build a better world? By acknowledging our present modes of action and working to change them to more partnership ways of being.

*Facilitator: YAWN, a great big drawn out yawn.*

*Ask:* How many people fought the impulse to yawn when I yawned? Even the word yawn can start a lot of us yawning. Malcolm Gladwell, author of The Tipping Point, tells us that blind people will hear a yawn and respond as well. This is powerful.

In his book, Gladwell explains the concepts contagious and epidemic. If some behavior/idea starts, then gets adopted by more people and then gets talked about by "connectors," people who know a lot of people, others in the majority will follow until the behavior or idea spreads to reach a tipping point in which more people are practicing than not.

Imagine the changes that could occur if good parenting, cooperation for the common good, love and mutual respect were the concepts and ideas that spread contagiously like a yawn.

The possibilities for human health and happiness are infinite.

### Cooperation vs. Competition, May the Best Concept Win

Everyone thinks about competition as a survival strategy, but humans use cooperation as well and with better results. Imagine a group of primitive hunters tracking a dangerous animal. Hunting all alone would very often be disastrous; people had to learn to work together and to pool their resources to survive. In our day to day living we often form cooperative groups from community service groups, PTAs, crime watch groups to church groups in order to help each other and in so doing help ourselves. When we cooperate for the good we enter into a win-win situation.

### The Berry Picking Game

*Facilitator:*

***Divide people into groups of three. Distribute game cards and a score sheet to each group of three. Tell each group to assign one person as berry lover, one person as neighbor and one as score keeper. Then read the following.***

You are going raspberry picking at dusk with your neighbor. As you pick, you both agree to shout to the other person to inform her or him when you find a good stash of berries.

You might be tempted to cheat, however, and keep quiet about finding a good stash. This will

give you the chance to pick berries without competition, to hide them and to come back for them later. Your neighbor may have the same temptation. BUT, if either of you cheat in this way, only one person will be picking the best berry patches. With limited time, this will result in less berries being picked overall. The possible outcomes are as follows.

- If you both cooperate, you both get 3 pails of berries each.
- If you cheat and your neighbor cooperates, you get 4 pails of berries (hiding some) and your neighbor gets 1.
- If your neighbor cheats and you cooperate, your neighbor gets 4 pails and you get 1.
- If you both cheat, you both get 2 pails of berries.

At the score keeper's call of "Berries!" simultaneously throw down your cooperate/cheat card face up. Then have the score keeper record your cards and berry take on the score sheet. Play this for ten rounds. Then switch roles by having the score keeper go up against the berry lover and then the neighbor. The player not involved in the game becomes the scorekeeper.

***Facilitator:***

***If you find that there is little or no cheating going on due to the nature of the group gathered, fix it! Pull aside a few people from different groups who have not had their turn and quietly instruct them to behave as cheaters, by throwing down the cheat card, more often than not during the game.***

***After a fair number of groups have completed the three cycles, call all attention to you at the front. Ask the entire group to respond to your questions and record significant observations.***

***Ask:***

What have you observed playing this game? What did trust have to do with the results?

If you were to form a berry brigade in the future how many of you would invite the known cheaters to come along?

What does this tell you about people who cheat within a community?

If there were a disaster and a member who cooperated in the past was incapacitated and could no longer pick would you share your berries with his/her family? Why or why not?

***Facilitator:***

***Review the following with the group.:***

By cooperating together you share 6 pails, but by both cheating, you share only 4. By working together you create more pails of berries. This is true of many of the things humans endeavor to do. (Remember barn raisings from our historical past, the community built the barn which formed a network of farms.)

But also note that you are always better off as an individual *not* cooperating. No matter what the other person does, you get more berries by *not* cooperating. If your neighbor cooperates, you get 3 pails by cooperating and 4 by cheating. If your neighbor cheats and you cooperate, you get 1 pail. If you both cheat, you get 2.

*But* if we played this game all the time, we would have 50% more berries by learning to trust one another and cooperating than if we cheated all the time.

And if we have trust we are more willing to help one another out in hard times, because we trust that if the situation were reversed they might help us. We form a bond of trust and partnership, a caring community.

Please note that individuals can cooperate to the benefit of each other, but to the harm of others, such as when people work together to rob a bank, or terrorists cooperate to cause death and destruction. With cooperation and competition there comes a responsibility to cooperate with good in mind. This type of cooperation affects more universal systems for the good of all, present and future.

***Facilitator:***

*Choose one of the two explanations below to read as your study Session 1. If you feel the evolutionary viewpoint on human behavior would be best understood by the group assembled then choose the “Evolutionary Perspective” to read. If you feel the spiritual explanation of human behavior would be best to use then choose the “Spiritual Perspective” to read.*

**Spiritual Perspective**

All people have a selfish side to them. Young babies and children will cry for attention for themselves regardless of another’s situation. If you offer a child a piece of pie or cake she/he will often take the largest piece for herself/himself, regardless of the other children.

But all people have the capacity to love and to cooperate with one another. When we cooperate (with good in mind), we help each other; we build bonds that help to ensure that we get by when things get tough. These bonds extend from the intimate partner bonds, parent to child, to family, to neighborhood, to city, state, national and international. When there is cooperation and partnership we can all pull together to ensure that our basic needs will be met in hard times due to the bonds we have created.

Working in partnership leads to emotions that are healthful for our lives and development. When there is partnership in our communities we develop feelings of trust. Feelings of mistrust lead to isolation, and fear. With fear come all the resulting stress-related biological effects that harm our brains and bodies. Trust and partnership lead to feelings of happiness.

**How do we achieve partnership?**

Many people think we need to work within a dominator context in order to survive and they often look to scriptures to justify this approach. Men must rule over women and children, and violence is a necessity. From management of work places to management of some countries, fear and intimidation are thought to be the only tools that function. But there is evidence to the contrary. Many practices illustrate this point from placing rules in classrooms that student input helped to generate to asking for employees’ input, all the while assigning value and respect to these people and their work.

The truth is that partnership works. Careful review of the scriptures can show us this. Our greatest religious traditions thrived not because they set us against each other in a power struggle, but because they taught us to work together, to care for one another.

**[end spiritual perspective]**

## **The Evolutionary Perspective**

The study of evolution has contributed the concept of survival of the fittest to our common experience. All organisms have a vested interest in their own survival. This is easily viewed when watching young children interested in meeting their own needs, feeding their own probability of survival. Young babies and children will cry for attention for themselves regardless of another's situations. If you offer a child a piece of pie or cake she/he will often take the largest piece for herself/himself, regardless of the other children.

A lesser known concept from the study of evolution is the concept of cooperation. This is an equally important mechanism for survival of the individual. When groups cooperate they help each other, they build bonds that ensure survival when things get tough. These bonds extend from the intimate partner bonds, parent to child, to family, to neighborhood, to town/city, state, national and international. When there is cooperation and partnership we can all pull together to ensure that our basic needs will be met in hard times due to the bonds we have created.

### **How did we get this way?**

Reptiles and amphibians sit and watch as their children get devoured without blinking an eye. Mammals however have a more developed brain. In addition to the reptilian brain, mammalian brains have advanced to develop a limbic area which controls emotions. For example, seals, as mammals, care for their young and mourn their death, just as we do.

Working in partnership leads to emotions that are healthy for our lives and development. When there is partnership in our communities we develop feelings of trust. Feelings of mistrust lead to isolation, and fear. With fear come all the resulting stress related biological effects that harm our brains and bodies. Trust and partnership lead to feelings of happiness.

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The truth is that partnership works. Democracies thrive not because we have a great and powerful king but because power flows up from the people. And most of the problems people have in democracies are the result of this system not functioning as it was intended.

### **[end evolutionary perspective]**

The most difficult part of working within a partnership system vs. working in a dominator system will be retraining our viewpoints, attitudes and actions.

When moving from a dominator model to one of partnership one finds:

...a very different type of culture. In the partnership model, you find a democratic and egalitarian social structure, equal partnership between women and men, and less socially accepted violence in all relations-from intimate to international-because violence is not needed to maintain rigid rankings of domination. You also find beliefs

about human nature that support empathic and mutually respectful relations. And you see that qualities denigrated as “feminine” in the domination model, such as caring and nonviolence, are valued in men and women, and guide social policy.”<sup>1</sup>

We must value caring work in our homes and in our society. We must treat each other with mutual respect and listen to one another. Because we can only change ourselves we must insist on being treated in a partnership way by (1) modeling the partnership approach in our own dealings with others and (2) gently correcting others that try to dominate us and (3) if possible, withdrawing from interaction with those that refuse to treat us with respect.

**Facilitator:**

***In small groups form a list of areas where you see domination demonstrated. These can be examples from any part of life from family situations to current events. Discuss these with your small group.***

***Facilitator calls for examples of domination from the larger group to list at the front of the room.***

***Ask if anyone sees a partnership approach as an alternative to any of the dominator policies written on the board.***

In the weeks ahead we will study domination and partnership in our everyday relationships, from our relationship with ourselves, our families, our workplace and other communities, and also in our national and international relations.

Change is possible if we are mindful. If we start to examine our thinking and change our ways of interacting with others we can shift things to a cooperative community of care orientation. The more people who do this and teach it to the next generation the more success we will have. So, don't miss opportunities to discuss the shift to partnership, mutual respect and caring. Dialogue with others, let them experience your new way of thinking and you'll have had a hand in creating a more peaceful earth.

## **Assignment for Session 1**

***Facilitator: Distribute journals and copies of the article “Abuse, Neglect and the Brain.”***

This week participants will observe instances of domination and partnership in their day to day lives. List and record the effects in their journals. Tell participants that journals need to be brought to each session, but nothing from them will be shared unless the participants desire to.

Also, read the article, “Abuse, Neglect and the Brain.” Record any thoughts you have concerning the article.

## **Further Reading:**

for more on domination vs. partnership:

Eisler, Riane. The Chalice and the Blade. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988

a fun book on affecting change:

Gladwell, Malcolm. The Tipping Point. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2000

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1 Riane Eisler, The Power of Partnership (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2002) 5.



# How to Fill Out the Score Sheet

	Name		Name	
Game 1	Berry Picker	Bob	Neighbor	Sue
Game 2	Berry Picker	Sue	Neighbor	Carol
Game 3	Berry Picker	Bob	Neighbor	Carol

	Berry Picker	Neighbor	Berry Picker	Neighbor	Berry Picker	Neighbor	Berry Picker	Neighbor	Berry Picker Total	Neighbor Total
<b>Action</b>	Cooperate	Cooperate	Cooperate	Cheat	Cheat	Cooperate	Cheat	Cheat		
<b>Pails</b>	3	3	1	4	4	1	2	2		
<b>Round</b>	<b>Game 1</b>									
1	3	3								
2			1	4						
3					4	1				
4							2	2		
5	3	3								
6	3	3								
7	3	3								
8					4	1				
9							2	2		
10	3	3								
<b>TOTAL</b>	15	15	1	4	8	2	4	4	28	25

## Explanation:

In round 1, both Bob (the Berry Picker) and Sue (the Neighbor) cooperated. Therefore, each got 3 points. In round 2, Bob cooperated but Sue cheated. In this case, Bob got 1 and Sue got 4, etc.

At the end of the 10 rounds, add each column of numbers and put the total on the TOTAL row. The numbers in the shaded boxes are pails that the Berry Picker took home, the numbers in the unshaded boxes are the pails the Neighbor took home.

Finally, add all of the shaded boxes together and put that number in the shaded box in the Berry Picker Total column and do the same for the Neighbor.

*Cooperate*

*Cheat*

*Cooperate*

*Cheat*

*Cooperate*

*Cheat*

*Cooperate*

*Cheat*

*Cooperate*

*Cheat*



# Abuse, Neglect and the Brain

Licia Rando, M.Ed.

Many people are unaware of the lasting effects child abuse and neglect can have on children. Young infants, toddlers and children spend their developmental years and energies adapting their thinking and actions in order to survive in hostile or negligent environments. This investment in survival robs the body of its investment in healthful growth and emotional well-being and can manifest itself in psychological and physical changes. The latest studies in neurobiology show that the brain itself can be altered in structure and function.

The Scientific American article "Scars that Won't Heal: The Neurobiology of Child Abuse," reports that in the United States alone "over 3 million allegations of childhood abuse and neglect are received each year. Sufficient evidence is collected to substantiate more than a million instances."

Research links abuse and neglect in childhood with a greatly increased risk for the development of many problems both physical and psychological (depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, post traumatic stress, aggression, impulsiveness, delinquency, substance abuse, borderline personality disorder, etc.) that affect adult life and subsequently the development of the next generation of children. In addition Widom, et al. January 2007, found that the onset of depression for many of these children began in childhood.

Children raised in violent homes live inside prison walls with no escape route from pain. Most learn to be on guard at all times as a matter of survival. Some are in a perpetual state of fight or flight while others may disconnect from outward experiences and turn inward. Dr. Bruce Perry in "Understanding Traumatized and Maltreated Children," points out that though this state of arousal may be necessary in a violent home it is maladaptive once the child is in another environment, school for example. Stress hormones that trigger quick action at times of threat are continually circulating throughout the child's body over her/his lifetime causing many physical responses. And both Dr. Perry's article and the Scientific American article report that this chronic activation can cause actual changes in brain function and structure. "A child's interactions with the outside environment causes connections to form between brain cells," Martin Teicher MD, PhD, of McLean hospital explains in Cerebrum. "Then these connections are pruned during puberty and adulthood. So whatever a child experiences, for good or bad, helps determine how his brain is wired."

The McLean research team, with Dr. Teicher, identified abnormalities that can be caused by abuse and neglect. There is evidence that abuse may cause disturbances in the amygdala and hippocampus which influence memory and emotion and the cerebellar vermis, all areas that respond to stress hormones. There were also changes in the left hemisphere and the corpus collosum responsible for integration between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. "These changes are permanent," says Teicher. "This is not something people can just get over and get on with their lives."

Adults damaged by abuse or neglect as children often produce children of their own and whether the cycle of violence perpetuates or the parent is emotionally absent due to depression, etc. the children of the next generation may grow up in much the same way as the parent. The cycle of violence and suffering often continues.

Dr. Bruce Perry of the Child Trauma organization states:

If 20 million people were infected by a virus that caused anxiety, impulsivity, aggression, sleep problems, depression, respiratory and heart problems, vulnerability

to substance abuse, antisocial and criminal behavior, retardation and school failure, we would consider it an urgent public health crisis.

Yet, in the United States alone, there are more than 20 million abused, neglected, and traumatized children vulnerable to these problems. Our society has yet to recognize this epidemic, let alone develop an immunization strategy.

We as a society need to put more of our resources into ensuring that children are given basic rights. We must protect those who cannot speak for or protect themselves. We require education for driving a car; we need to require education to raise a young child. We need mandatory education for parenting on child development and the impact of neglect and trauma on children.

Dr. Perry offers a list of core strengths children need to develop in order to become healthy, caring and non-violent. These include developing the ability to form healthy emotional relationships, to self-regulate, to join and contribute to a group, and to be aware, tolerant, and respectful of her/himself and others. A history of child abuse and/or neglect can damage a child's ability to develop these strengths thus undermining a healthy adulthood and in turn influencing the next generation.

(Dr. Bruce Perry offers free classes on his website [www.ChildTraumaAcademy.com](http://www.ChildTraumaAcademy.com) These easy to understand classes will teach you about the brain and its function and how abuse and neglect affect the abused child's brain.)

#### Information Sources:

Teicher, Martin H. "Scars that Won't Heal: The Neurobiology of Child Abuse." *Scientific American*. Vol. 286, Number 3, pages 68-75; March 2002.

Teicher, Martin H. M.D., PhD., "Wounds that Time Won't Heal: The Neurobiology of Child Abuse." *Cerebrum*. Dana Press. Vol. 2, Number 4, pages 1-16; Fall 2000.

McLean Researchers Document Press Release. "Brain Damage Linked to Child Abuse and Neglect." December 14, 2000, Belmont, MA

Perry, Bruce, M.D., PhD., [http://www.childtrauma.org/ourImpact/our\\_impact.asp](http://www.childtrauma.org/ourImpact/our_impact.asp) (viewed January 9, 2007).

Perry, Bruce, M.D., PhD., "Understanding Traumatized and Maltreated Children." [http://www.lfcc.on.ca/Perry\\_Core\\_Concepts\\_Violence\\_and\\_Childhood.pdf](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/Perry_Core_Concepts_Violence_and_Childhood.pdf) (viewed January 9, 2007).

Widom, Cathy Spatz, PhD; Dumont, Kimberly, PhD; Czaja, Sally J., PhD, "A Prospective Investigation of Major Depressive Disorder and Comorbidity in Abused and Neglected Children Grown Up." *Archives of General Psychiatry*. Vol. 64, Number 1, pages 49-56; January 2007.

## Session 2     You, It's All About You

### Opener: Important Things in Life

**Materials:**

- Empty mayonnaise type jar labeled 'your life' on one side.
- Golf balls or small rubber balls
- Pebbles or cereal
- Sand or similar substance smaller and finer than cereal or pebbles.

**Facilitator:**

*(Place the items you are going to use out of sight, but within reach.)*

*Show the jar, label AWAY from the audience, filled with balls.*

**Say:** A teacher asked her class, "Would you say this jar is full?" (Have group of gathered people answer as well.) Her students replied that it was.

*Next add pebbles or cereal and shake to mix in.*

She then asked, "Would you say the jar is full, now?" And they replied that it was.

*Pour in the sand.*

The teacher then told her class that the jar, **turn label out**, represents your life. The golf balls represent the most important things: your family and friends, your health, and your spiritual beliefs and most important passions. If everything else was lost and only these remained your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter: your job, your house and your car. The sand is everything else, the small stuff.

If we were to fill the jar with sand first there would be no room for the pebbles (cereal) or the golf balls. The same goes for our lives. If we spend all of our time and energy on the small stuff we will never have room for the things that are important to us.<sup>1</sup>

### Know Thyself

**Facilitator:**

**Read slowly to give time for images and thoughts to form.** Picture yourself at the end of your life. Maybe you are in a hospital bed or maybe you are home in a hospice situation. What do you hope people will say about you when you are gone? How do you hope you will be described in general? What will be remembered about you in your role as a parent, a partner, a worker, a boss, a member of your community, and as a member of this world?<sup>2</sup>

Life can be long or it can be short. Are you, in your everyday life working to achieve the truly important goals of your life?

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1     adapted from anonymous email sources

2     This reflective practice has many sources including Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, and the teaching of the Sisters of Notre Dame, Dorchester, MA

***Facilitator:***

***Have participants take out a pen and their journals.***

***Instruct:*** In your journal analyze the past three days of your life. Briefly record how you have spent those hours. Are any of these hours spent working toward your personal goals? What are you spending the most time doing? Is there something you could give up, television for instance, that would buy you more time to allow you to achieve your life's goals? Answer carefully.

***Have participants discuss results in their small groups.***

***Ask for volunteers to contribute to the larger group discussion.***

**"Be the Change you want to see in the world"**

In order to bring about change you must work in the sphere where you have the most influence and that sphere is you. You cannot change other people; you can only change yourself.

In this session we will learn to look at ourselves and to evaluate how our behaviors and actions are like a ripple that spreads out to affect the rest of the world. Is the ripple we begin respectful and in line with partnership or does it begin a series of harmful movements that are negative, violent or dominating.

**How Did You Get Here?**

If you take a look at yourself, you will probably find ways that your own relationship with yourself has been affected by domination. When societies buy into the domination model, families teach their children habits of domination and submission from birth. Most of us were taught some of these habits. And, unfortunately, all over the world today children are being raised under this model, which not only causes enormous pain and suffering for them, but also perpetuates the system that continues to cause pain and suffering across the globe.

***Facilitator:***

Have participants give 3 examples of being praised and 3 examples of being punished by their parents/guardian during their earliest childhood years.

***Ask them to share these memories with their small group, and comment upon how these actions made them feel as a child. What do they think of these actions now as adults?***

***Call for volunteers to offer their thoughts and feelings for the larger group discussion. Obtain joyful as well as painful examples and ask how these instances made the person feel. Ask for comments on the article "Abuse, Neglect and the Brain" assigned for reading at the conclusion of Session 1.***

Our personal memories of being praised or punished stay with us through time. These instances help to shape us. If we as children are given opportunities and challenges and then not ridiculed for our attempts the experience helps to ready us for the next challenge. If we are told we have worth and value we learn to take risks and to continue to see ourselves in this light. Conversely,

if we are continually told that we are bad and that we can't do anything right we learn guilt and shame for whom we are. This leads to negative self-image and pessimistic attitudes.

The discipline used by our parents affects us. If we grow up to have children these same techniques may in turn affect our children. Parents tend to parent in the same ways that they experienced parenting. Most people think parenting is a natural inborn ability, like the ability of a bird to build a nest. To grow up healthy in our society demands many things that do not necessarily come naturally to parents.

But we do have choices. We can choose to understand why we parent the way we do and change if it is unhealthy. If needed we should seek professional help. We need to remember that we affect our children and our grown children's children; we affect the future. These don't necessarily have to be our own children, any children we come into contact with can be affected by our words or actions or those of the children we raise.

### **It's a Boy! It's a Girl!**

Another lesson children learn in dominator families is to suppress parts of themselves to conform to society's ideas of what men and women should be. This lesson not only molds girls' and boys' minds and bodies to fit rigid gender stereotypes, it typically teaches them that men should dominate and that women should be dominated.

#### ***Facilitator:***

*Ask participants to think back to their childhood, especially adolescence.*

***Instruct:*** In your journal write six rules of behavior you learned concerning your sex. (In Gone With the Wind Scarlett O'Hara learned that girls should eat like birds at picnics, even if they are starving. Though the corset probably helped to curb her appetite.)

Look at each answer. Do you think that these rules you learned free you as a human being or restrict you? Write an "R" for restrict or "F" for free next to each answer.

*Encourage the small groups to discuss their findings.*

Have them discuss if they think these rules help our relationships with one another as human beings in partnership or do they actually hurt us? How?

*Have volunteers share their thoughts with the larger group.*

### **More to Consider**

- Think about how gender stereotypes affect how you feel about yourself and how your body should look.
- What kind of messages do you send to others, children, etc.? What words do you use to greet a young boy, or a young girl? (Do you comment on brawn, brains or looks? Experiment-Try switching your greetings to see the response you get.)

Though women and men do differ in some ways due to genetic differences, some of these differences that we believe exist are reinforced and amplified through our culture and the society in which we live. We hear these rules and expectations so much that we come to believe them ourselves. We need to develop a questioning mind. We need to evaluate these beliefs and rid ourselves of any that are unjust and harmful to us as human beings.

A woman's worth in society can be determined by her perceived attractiveness, her ability to bear children or her ability to bear children of a specific sex. Many cultures use gossip, punishment or the threat of punishment, or even female genital mutilation to control the behaviors of women to ensure that the children being born belong to the male in charge. "Typically, proper sex roles for men include being dominant, or "manly"; for women, being modest, chaste, and above all, a 'good mother.'" <sup>3</sup>

Young girls learn through the modeling of the women in their daily lives. When they see the pains that women will go through to achieve beauty they learn that this is what is important to being a woman. Magazines and movies provide images that few (if any) girls can ever achieve. We need to value women for what they can do and be, not for what they can look like.

Boys learn to be independent at all cost. They are not allowed to play with dolls, to cry or to express their feelings. They are allowed to be tough, to compete, to fight and to die for their country. Pressures are mounting to conform to magazine images for how they should look. A look at the evolution of the popular G.I. Joe doll from muscular to fantastical-muscular best illustrates the image message being sent to young boys.

## Assignments for Session 2

*You are like a drop of life giving water that starts the ripple that moves out into the world.*

### a) Personal Recordings

In you journal continue to record your days and analyze how your time is spent. Assess whether you are meeting your goals and if not schedule time for your priorities.

Look for ways to redirect this life energy. In your journal set personal goals, evaluate them each night. Change takes time. If you keep your priorities and plans in mind, change will happen.

*\*Remind participants to bring their journals to the next session and to continue discussing these topics at home and with friends.*

### b) Affecting the Next Generation

James Garbarino, PH.D. of Cornell University says that social and cultural toxins hurt the emotional lives of children. "A socially toxic environment contains widespread threats to the development of identity, competence, moral reasoning, trust, hope and other features...that makes for success in school, family, work and the community."<sup>4</sup>

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3 Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, Mother Nature. Pantheon Books (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999) 259.

3 James Garbarino, Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995)

Observations Today children are bombarded by media images that teach them how they should behave as females and males. Over the next week(s) observe these roles given to us in the media. Record this information in your journal. Rate these roles as either consistent with partnership or dominator approaches.

### c) Group Action - The Ripple That Moves Out Into The World

In your journal record some ways you might help people, particularly children, become more savvy at analyzing messages from TV, music, and video games. Help them to look for gender and race stereotyping, etc., as well as instances of domination and violence.

Also, list some ways you or a group might influence and change the messages being sent to children, our future.

#### *Facilitator:*

*Form Action Group(s). Invite interested participants to stay to brainstorm assignment c together. Use the group generated ideas to plan and take the next step toward change-action.*

#### **Further Reading:**

For more study on self evaluation and change,

Covey, Stephen R. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change. New York: Fireside, 1989

Eisler, Riane. The Power of Partnership. California: New World Library, 2002

Seligman, Martin, P.h.D. Authentic Happiness. New York: Free Press, 2002

Burns, David D., M.D. Feeling Good. New York: Avon Books, 1980 (good for depression, anger)

For Abuse Victims,

Sanford, Linda T. Strong at the Broken Places: Overcoming the Trauma of Childhood Abuse. New York: Avon Books, 1992

For Media influence and Parenting,

Kilbourne, Jean. Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel. New York: Free Press, 2000

Garbarino, James, P.h.D. Parents Under Siege. New York: Touchstone, 2001

Garbarino, James, P.h.D. Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995

Seligman, Martin, Ph.D. The Optimistic Child. New York: HarperPerrenial, 1995

## Session 3 Intimate Relationships

### The Heart of the Matter: Your Intimate Relations

*Facilitator: Hand out copies of Session 3 to participants to use at home and to share.*

We learn about ourselves through our interactions and relationships with others. Our first relationships are with our primary caregivers. In these relationships we learn how to interact with others. These relationships are our initiation into the social world. We then use the rules and behaviors we learn in our first relationships and apply them to later relationships with our partners and with our own children.

### Remembering

*Facilitator*

*Ask participants to think back to the way their families interacted while they were growing up:*

1. How were decisions generally made? Who had the authority in the household or was it shared?
2. At dinner who controlled conversations or did everyone have an equal say? Did each person listen to the other and answer with mutual respect? Who was waited on and who served?
3. Were roles clearly defined according to gender or was there a partnership way of getting chores and tasks done? Were the jobs that were done given equal value or were some considered worth less?
4. How were disagreements handled or not handled?
5. Were praise and appreciation verbalized or only complaints and criticisms?
6. Was affection displayed? Was the affection shown physically, with words or both?

Parents tend to parent the way they were parented. Unless you make conscious decisions and efforts to change this, these are the behavior patterns we slip into when we begin parenting. They are the hardest to analyze because we have lived them and the lessons have been with us from the moment of birth.

Now answer the same questions as above, but this time evaluate according to your current relationships as an adult. Answer in terms of what happens in your family and your relationship with your partner now.

*Facilitator:*

*Ask participants to get into their small groups to compare and discuss their answers.*

***Call for volunteers to share their answers with the larger group.***

What is needed to form healthy relationships? Healthy relationships require trust, respect, equality and communication.

All people deserve to be treated with respect regardless of age or gender. What are some ways partners or families can show mutual respect for each other ? (Think about conversations at meals, during arguments, etc.)

## **Families**

According to The National Criminal Justice Reference Service resource, "In the Spotlight: Family Violence" Dr. Stephen Bavolek writes, "Contemporary social scientists agree that the continued maltreatment of children today is primarily the result of poorly trained adults who, in their roles as parents and caretakers, attempt to instill discipline and educate children within the context of the violence they themselves experienced as children."

Children who are victims of or witnesses to abuse often become violent offenders themselves, a phenomenon called "the cycle of violence."

Some parents use harsh punishment to try to make their kids be "good," which actually has the opposite effect. Researchers find that "chronic bad behavior in children is most likely to arise in the early years of life when parents use harsh, inconsistent punishment practices instead of clear, firm, but warm responses when the child exhibits unacceptable behavior."<sup>1</sup>

Neglect is more common than abuse. A parent who withdraws from a child and is not available to that child as he/she grows can also cause severe harm to that child's healthy development. Even if children don't grow up to be violent themselves, the abuse or neglect manifests itself in other ways such as low self esteem, pessimism, self-destructive behaviors, depression, and bodily problems such as headaches, stomachaches, etc.

As you have read in "Abuse, Neglect and the Brain" early maltreatment or neglect of children actually results in physical changes in the brain. These adjustments are made within the brain in order for the child to survive a harsh environment.

If we weren't raised in a home where mutual respect was modeled we probably need to work harder than others at our relationships. A good way to change habits is to be mindful. Carefully examine your daily interactions. Each night before bed reflect on the day by writing in your journal.

***Facilitator hand out copies of questions. (or have participants write questions in their journals)***

Ask yourself:

Was I present (in body and mind) for my partner or child? Did I have a two way dialogue in which I listened to my partner and/or child? Do I know how they feel?

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1 James Garbarino, "How Early Vulnerability Becomes Bad Behavior: Hurt Little Boys Become Aggressive Big Boys," *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 2002) 442

Was I respectful to my partner or child(ren) at all times? (and was I treated with respect as well?) Did I allow my partner or child to have full human dignity? (and was I allowed dignity as well?) Did I really listen, (listen to understand)? Would I like to be treated the same way I treated my family or partner by a colleague, friend, boss or another person? What was my partner or child's reaction to my actions?

## Plan to Change

If after evaluating your interactions with your partner or child, you find your behavior to have been harmful or less than optimal, plan the action you should have taken. Remind yourself of this new action/reaction each day until you face that situation or a similar one again. When you find yourself in the situation again, this time **Stop, Think and Substitute** your new response.

That night before bed evaluate the difference between your old patterns of reaction and your new ones. Compare how your partner/child felt in each of these instances. How did you feel? Habits take a long time to break. If you slip into old patterns, evaluate, and make a new plan. Don't forget to use reminders around the house, on the mirror, etc., any symbol will do as long as it helps you to remember.

*FORGIVE yourself and try again.*

Your actions will pay off. If you do not dominate and do not let yourself be dominated, but instead seek a partnership way of being you will see a difference. Love should be returned with love. Respect and caring should be returned with respect and caring. You can become the partner or parent you can respect. In turn your intimate partner and children will feel better about themselves and this is how you influence the world, the future.

Two key ways to improve any relationship are to give respect (mutually) to the other person and to listen. Stephen Covey in his book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, says that we all want to speak and to be understood. But not many of us know how to truly listen. To improve any of your relationships try his tips for listening.

## Listening

1. Stephen Covey's advice for listening is, "**Seek first to understand.**"

In a conflict or conversation let the other person speak *FIRST*. You will then listen; this does not mean planning what you will say next. Empty your mind, look at your partner, or your child and listen. Listen with your heart; listen with your heart to their soul.

2. Next, *REPHRASE* the content of what you heard the person say and *REFLECT THE FEELING* you think they are experiencing, frustration, hurt, etc.

In this way you build trust as you allow the other person to work through their feelings and thoughts. (While you seek to understand.)

3. Then you can calmly speak; state your feelings, concerns, etc.

*\*\*\*But when you hear emotion rising in the other person, return to the rephrasing and reflecting steps of listening.*

4. With your sincere desire to understand you can begin together to find a creative solution to your conflict or problem.

Stephen Covey warns that this listening must be a sincere desire to understand as people can feel manipulated. For a full explanation of Stephen Covey's approach read more on empathic listening in Covey's book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

Listening is the best way to say "I care", or "I respect you" to another person. Remember that children and adults who are hurting need someone to listen to them. Be emotionally present to your children to give them a chance to grow in health.

***Facilitator:***

***Have participants work with a partner. Give each pair a copy of "Listening Situations" to practice Covey's steps of empathic listening.***

***Ask for comments or observations from all for the larger group.***

## **Discipline**

Many problems in parenting arise from not understanding or knowing the developmental stages of your child. Think of your baby as a kangaroo. Yes, the physical birth did take place, but there is still so much more development to come. Kangaroo babies crawl into their mother's pocket to continue the growth process. Human babies are born because the birth canal has to allow for the size of the human head. But there are years of development to come, much more brain development and skull growth.

Some biologists argue that a newborn child is a fetus for the first few months of life. Also keep in mind that the frontal lobe of the brain which is responsible for making judgments is not fully developed until a person is well into their twenties. All of this crucial development needed to survive in this world as a human is done outside of the womb.

Since punishments are given to change behavior they will not work until the child's mind has developed enough to understand. For very young children distraction or substituting a safe object is all that is needed to avoid disaster. The first rule of parenting is **Know what your child is capable of understanding.** Read about your child's development, take a class or interact with professionals in playgroups and workshops. When you can see and appreciate the tremendous growth your child's brain is undergoing you may find yourself laughing with amusement instead of turning red with anger. And when you see how crucial you are to the learner-teacher interaction you can value the work you do.

When we learn child development we can value children as the amazing learning machines they are and see ourselves in the role of dedicated teachers. Your child's healthy development depends on those interactions between learner and teacher.

As teacher you can impart lessons that will lead to healthy relationships instead of abusive ones. From the beginning teach your children, "No hitting, no hurting" as a primary rule. Teach them mutual respect and listening skills, especially through your own actions. Teach them to take responsibility for their actions. Teach them to strive for equality in relationships. The gender role teaching and modeling you do should show that no gender is superior or should dominate the other.

A great way to check in with your family is during the family meal. Research has shown that children from families that eat together are less likely to use drugs or alcohol, get better grades, eat better and exhibit less stress.

When we parent with loving intent we are leaving a legacy of healthy relations and respect for our children and in turn for their children. And since no one lives in isolation, these descendants we affect will in turn affect their corner of the world. As people who care for children we affect the future.

When we treat all of our relationships with mutual respect and we listen we set on a path of true understanding and happiness.

### **Assignment Session 3**

In your journals:

Take an inventory of who does what work around the house. Is each (your partner's and your's) person's work given equal value or is one deemed inferior?

Place bright colored index cards at key places where you spend time with your partner/ children in your home. (For outdoor interactions carry a card in your pocket.) Label two columns, "Praise" and "Criticism." Use tally marks for each day and evaluate to see your personal pattern of interacting with your family/partner. Choose to change your habit if it is unhealthy. Then observe the response your changes get from your family members/partners. Record your thoughts.

(For behavior problems with children: This same technique can be used to evaluate your interactions with each of your children. The two columns will be marked as "negative attention" and "positive attention." Children will do anything to get your attention, even if it comes in the form of scolding or screaming. These columns will help you identify what tactics your child is using to get your attention. To change this cycle catch your child being good and praise the good behavior. Make sure to spend time interacting and truly listening to your child each day.)

Observe and record household disagreements or differences of opinion. How do you and other family members handle these situations? In order to break bad habits we have to pay attention to our actions. Evaluate, then come up with some respectful ideas for change. Have one idea memorized to try out the next time. Try and try again. The more we try the more we develop *new* habits and the easier it will become. If you find you need more help seek professional help. Do not give up, giving up results in a continuance of harmful behavior or neglect.

Review listening skills and practice. Record and evaluate your conversations using this method.

*\*Before closing ask for a brief report concerning any group action that is taking place.*

*Remind participants to bring their journals to the next session and to continue discussions at home relating to these topics.*

### **Group Action**

Having read the article, "Abuse, Neglect and the Brain" we can see the effect that child abuse has on an individual, the next generations and also on society. Some of the following activities

address these issues. Choose one of the following activities or one of your own design to pursue with your action group.

- Target education and awareness campaigns to young people. Get your local schools and churches to educate young people about healthy relationships. Ask your local schools if they provide education about child development and parenting to their high school students. (See resource list for healthy relationship curriculum)
- Educate the congregation. Routinely include instructional information in monthly newsletters, on bulletin boards, and in marriage preparation classes concerning healthy relationships (gender equity, mutual respect and listening skills) and child development. Sponsor educational seminars on violence against women and children.
- Form small groups to meet regularly based on the topics of intimate relationships such as parenting, partnerships and/or marriages. These groups can meet to study techniques to better relationships, to dialogue, to learn, to brainstorm and to provide support.

Marcia Marra, a parent in Ridgewood, N.J., has tried to do her part to promote family meals, helping to start the annual family night in Ridgewood in 2002. She worked with school officials and community leaders to suspend baseball practices, book clubs and Girl Scout meetings to allow a night of downtime and dinner together. The effort has since spread to a half-dozen other communities in Bergen County.

After the first night in 2002, and a deluge of news media attention, Ms. Marra received inquiries from towns across the country. She created a web site, [readysetrete.org](http://readysetrete.org), and, with a grant from Hasbro, put together free information kits. She has sent out 350 kits to communities from Kentucky to Oregon. <sup>2</sup>

- Is there something your group could do to promote family meals (in which everyone shares responsibility during preparation and clean up) and family dialogue within your community?

### **Further Reading:**

Covey, Stephen R. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change. New York: Fireside, 1989

Lawrence- Lightfoot, Sara. Respect. Massachusetts:Perseus Books, 2000

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition (phone 402-476-6806, 825 M. Street, Suite 404, Lincoln NE 68508, Unit 4 of the curriculum concerns healthy relationships) Reaching and Teaching Teens to Stop Violence. Nebraska, 2002

Child development books,

Reichlin, Gail and Winkler, Caroline. The Pocket Parent. New York:Workman Publishing,2001 (quick reference for situations relating to your 2-to-5-year-old.)

Leach, Penelope. Your Baby and Child. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989

Faber, Adele and Maslish, Elaine. How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk. 1980

Garbarino, James, P.h.D. Parents Under Siege. New York:Touchstone, 2001

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2 Lisa W. Foderaro, "Families with Full Plates Sitting Down to Dinner," New York Times 4/5/06

Seligman, Martin, Ph.D. The Optimistic Child. New York: HarperPerrenial, 1995

Pipher, Mary, Ph.D., The Shelter of Each Other. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996

Canter, Lee, Assertive Discipline for Parents. Harper and Row, 1982

#### Marriage and Relationship:

Gottman, John, PhD.and Silver, Nan. The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999

Gottman, John, PhD., Why Marriages Succeed or Fail. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1994

## Listening Situations: Session 3

### Situation 1

Person 1- Dad

Person 2- teenage son (You are failing English and you are ashamed.)

Situation: Your son storms into the room and screams, "I hate school and I'm going to quit!"

### Situation 2

Person 1- Partner #1

Person 2- Partner #2

Situation: Partner # 2 is nice and comfy sitting, reading the paper with his/her feet up on the sofa.

Partner #1 storms into the room and announces,

"I am so sick of cleaning up after you. You think you're better than me and can treat me as your slave!"

### Situation 3

Person 1- teenage daughter (You are being ostracized and ignored by the cliques at your school.)

Person 2- mother

Situation: The daughter enters the kitchen after school and slams her backpack down on the kitchen table then says, "I get my license in the summer and next year I am going to a different school."

## Session 4 Community is the Care that Flows Between Us

### Opener: Count Your Blessings

#### *Facilitator:*

*Assemble people into small groups. Instruct each person to fold a paper in half. Spend the next 5-10 minutes filling out each of the four sections, front and back.*

Section 1- List all the skills and talents you have.

Section 2- List the experience you have (cared for elderly parent for 5 years, garden, built a fort, taught boy scouts how to ...)

Section 3- Name organizations, and associations in the community in which you are a member. (include institutions, i.e. student at community college)

Section 4- Choose and list the strongest 3 skills or talents you have from the skills list in section 1 and the top 2 experiences that taught you the most from your experience list in section 2.

*Ask the participants in their small groups to discuss each person's entries in section 4.*

*Call for volunteers to share with the larger group and record their answers.* Ask for a sampling of the many different skills and experiences recorded. Label these as "group capabilities." Draw attention to the fact that together we have a variety of skills and experience to teach and to share.

Ask the large group to name some of their memberships and the organizations that they belong to in the community. Facilitator explain that these, along with some of the local institutions' offerings, from places such as schools, libraries, banks, community colleges, and hospitals are all assets available to the community.<sup>1</sup>

To change things, to make our community healthier and to help it to operate in more of a partnership way we need to connect all of these offerings. We need to take into account all available talents and skills, from caring to business savvy. It is crucial that all voices be valued and heard for what they have to offer, youth, elderly, women, and men. When we link these people, places and skills to form relationships between them we create powerful partnerships.

Below are some examples of partnerships formed to improve communities:

- A local police station offered a conflict mediation program in schools and trained youth how to respond to threatening situations in nonviolent ways.
- Local hospitals and community colleges have provided teen dating violence awareness classes, and parenting classes that taught child development.
- In Compton California, an area known for its connection to gangster rap and gangsters, a high percentage of teens from disadvantaged situations were giving up hope due to the community's poverty and violence. Despite the lack of funds or a stage for performance two teachers at Dominguez High organized students and produced the first play in Compton in

1 This activity and some examples are based on the work done in John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, Building Communities from the Inside Out: a path toward finding and mobilizing community assets (Chicago: ACTA Publication, 1993)

over twenty years. After much struggle and hard work the students' performance was a huge success and the annual play continues to sell out in advance to this day. In turn the performance offers the entire area hope. Their struggle has been recorded in a moving documentary available on DVD, OT: Our Town.

## **When You Are a Worm in Horseradish, the Whole World is Horseradish**

When people gather for a common goal or due to a common situation they form communities. Communities exist within neighborhoods, towns, schools, the work place, and churches. People have a need to form community, to be part of something bigger than themselves and to connect with others. Forming communities and using cooperation is a strategy for survival.

Trust and belonging are basic needs necessary for healthful development. When children do not have healthy communities to belong to they look for substitutes. They can look to gangs to provide the security, camaraderie and sense of belonging they so urgently desire. If there is nothing available to fill this need people can become detached and suffer many negative consequences.

Living within diseased communities can hurt us by teaching us violence or fear and raising stress levels which affect our health and well-being. All of this hurts our children as they develop. Communities, like parents and teachers also serve as models for our children. Healthy communities give children one more positive example to learn from. Unhealthy communities offer yet another stressor, and if a child has multiple stressors this can have devastating effects upon their health and well being.

James Garbarino, Ph.D. known for his work with young men and violence states:

When a troubled boy lives in a safe and peaceful social environment, there is a cushion for him. ...Context is critical. It is because of the dangerous larger social environment many boys find themselves in today that we are so concerned that early 'childish' bad behavior and aggression will turn into lethal behavior in adolescence and young adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

A normal part of a boy's development is a need to prove that he is strong. A community or family that models only violence as a way to be strong or abusive or promiscuous sexuality in order to "be a man" can lead to many problems for that child, for gender relationships and for society. Males (and females) in the community who model ways to be strong in other ways than using violence or abusive or irresponsible sexuality are critical to our future health.

## **We Need Heroes and Role Models**

### ***Facilitator:***

***Have the participants gather in small groups to form a group list*** of people in the community that model respect, fair play, using partnership practices, respectful (mutual) parenting styles, or work toward peace, or practice caring, etc.

**Record the names volunteers offer to the large group.** Ask the group to brainstorm ideas for how to

2 James Garbarino, "How Early Vulnerability Becomes Bad Behavior," The Jossey Bass Reader on Gender in Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass) p. 455

highlight these people as role models for the community in opposition to some of the unhealthy role models available through sports heroes or music stars.

*Ask* the large group to name people whose names are used as role models within their community on public buildings, parks, street signs, and in statues and paintings. Discuss the image they portray in terms of role models for gender equity, peace, community responsibility, etc.

### **Trust is Necessary in Communities**

Studies concerning happiness show that trusting the members of one's community is necessary to achieving a healthy community. Trust within a community can be built by investing in activities that bring people together. In Chicago a city library was built on the border of a disadvantaged area to service people from both a disadvantaged and an advantaged area of Chicago. The library reached out to both sectors of the population by marketing itself in the schools and around the city, by providing services both sectors would need, and by encouraging interaction between people centered on computers and books.

The library successfully broke through class barriers and built trust amongst the people. One resident from the less advantaged area said, "Putting this library here was more than just adding a building. It was about changing a perception. Before, I thought no one cared about people around Cabrini. And so we didn't care. Now I feel like someone is watching, trying to make things better. So I am trying to better myself and my children."<sup>3</sup> The library, through its care, respect, and reflective strategizing activated a partnership between itself and the people and in so doing allowed others to form community, build trust and create streets that people were not afraid to walk down as they had been years before.

#### ***Facilitator:***

*Have participants record ideas for the following in their journals.* A local bank sponsored a local arts association to give city children art lessons in the park during the summer. These skills were then used to paint a mural on the bank wall. (This mural could portray a community or family that models respect and works together.) In your journal jot down ideas that could link people and places to promote partnership. This list can be brought to the group action meeting for possible action.

*Tell participants to list* some activities (i.e. family week) that your community could sponsor that would promote trust through community wide involvement. Robert Putnam's book Better Together lists community activities such as farmer's markets, community farming and concerts as strong community builders.

*\*Before dismissal ask for reports from the Action Groups concerning any new developments or problems.*

*Remind participants to discuss these sessions with family and friends. Also, remind them to bring their journals to the next session.*

### **Group Action**

*Facilitator: Distribute copies of page 4-4 for a list of Group Action ideas.*

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3 Robert Putnam, Better Together (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003) p. 37.

With your action group choose an idea that you could best execute from those listed in your journals. Other possible ideas for group action are listed below.

- Start a community wide activity to encourage trust and promote friendship.
- Start a play group, or family group and invite professionals to speak to the group about child development and discuss discipline problems, etc. Encourage participants to connect to support one another.
- Promote after-school activities that are run by your respected citizens, males and females, to serve as role models for boys and girls. Provide opportunities for youth to engage in community service and opportunities for recreational activities that challenge and foster achievement. A study from the Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University found that bullies face more forceful parental discipline, spend less time with adults and have fewer positive adult role models or positive peer influences.<sup>4</sup>
- Speak out! Children need adults to demonstrate and guide them to higher level moral development. Also, choose young leaders who will set the moral tone for their peers. Research shows that teens who believe that community members will notice and do something about their actions are less likely to be engaged in negative behavior, including using drugs. Form groups of adults who will walk along and interact with youth on the streets.
- Use your group to find out if hospitals and doctors screen for signs of abuse. Check to see if the police are trained to deal with domestic and sexual abuse victims. If not, write letters to change these practices and check on their progress.
- Get qualified pediatricians, social workers, psychologists or teachers to start weekly columns on parenting, listening skills, abuse awareness and conflict resolution for local papers or newsletters. Host community events with these people as speakers through the library, churches, hospitals and schools. Other topics for experts to comment upon would include holiday toys that promote violence, video games that promote gender violence, etc.
- Ask librarians to publish a book list of titles to read together during holidays, seasonal changes, and family celebrations. Request themes that develop character and encourage respect, love, etc.
- Start a welcome parents organization. Welcome new parents and offer your support, give lists of web sites and book titles for parenting, etc.
- Get your local paper to run a "Local Heroes and Heroines" column or give an award at a community gathering. These heroes are individuals who demonstrate strength by the way they care and share their time with others in the community.
- A study from Happiness: Lessons from a New Science by Richard Layard lists TV as one of the reasons for the decline of community life. Start a town wide, "TV Off , Community ON" campaign through advertising, button wearing, etc. Give ideas for alternative activities oriented toward families, and/or community. Publicize the events through schools, local papers, and church bulletins.
- Spiritual communities, examine your traditions, language, and texts for the promotion of gender inequity. Meet with your religious education directors, ministers, etc. to discuss changes.

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4 Seppa, N., 'Bullies Spend Less Time with Adults' (APA Monitor, 24(10) 1996) 41. Nan Stein, "Bullying as Sexual Harassment in Elementary Schools," The Jossey-Bass Reader on Gender in Education (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002) p. 417.

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