



The Allies in Change Model of Abuse Intervention

The abuse we are seeking to address is **on-going patterned coercive, reactive, and/or neglectful behavior that is causing significant emotional or psychological damage within an interpersonal relationship.**

We believe that most on-going abusive behavior stems from certain traditional masculine qualities unmitigated by certain traditional feminine qualities. This is why the vast majority of all abusive behavior is done by men and a disproportionate number of those embracing nonviolence are women. The key to being prone to being abusive, though, is not one's gender, but one's narrow embracing of traditional masculine qualities and values without also embracing certain traditional feminine qualities.

Disconnection

We believe that the key theme behind traditional masculine values is a distrust of and disconnection from relationships, other people, and one's self. The message given is that you can't trust relationships to be collaborative, you can't trust the experiences of other people, and you can't even trust your own experience. There is a focus on survival that requires not embracing any of these relationships, for to be connected with self, others, or relationships makes one more vulnerable to pain, suffering, and exploitation. As a result there is an active disconnecting/distancing from oneself, from others, and from relationships with others. Disconnection/neglect within any of these realms significantly increases the risk of ongoing abusive behavior.

Disconnection from/distrust of relationships

There is an automatic suspicion and mistrust that a relationship is a true partnership. There is a quickness to view the other as the enemy or a competitor. There is a presumption of scarcity in which there must be a power struggle to get one's way or to submit to the other so they may get their way. Being controlling of and hostile/defensive towards the other follows naturally. This is described as "power over" and is typically the view of relationship of those who have "power and control" issues.

Disconnection from/distrust of other people

There tends to be a disconnection from others. There is limited empathy, compassion, and understanding. It becomes easy to be self-absorbed and assume that one's own world view is shared by all. This is described as narcissism or egotism. It's a consequence of not adequately considering the wants or needs or views of others. This process is accelerated by a lack of emotional self-awareness. This leads to a neglect and non-acknowledgement of the other. Other's differences become invisible, unconsidered, and neglected.

Disconnection from/distrust of oneself

There is also a disconnection from oneself. There is a limited awareness of one's sensual experiences and, as a result, one's emotional state. There is an active, but often subconscious, avoidance of emotional awareness and expression. As a consequence, emotions, particularly intense ones, are not effectively managed and may be expressed in impulsive, thoughtless, and ill-conceived ways. This is referred to as acting out emotions or externalizing them.

Creating trust and connection to relationships, others, and oneself

In our program we strive to help individuals to connect with themselves, with others, and with relationships. We teach them new beliefs and skills to facilitate this work. We focus on beliefs and behaviors in each of the three realms--with self, with other, and with the relationship.

Connection with self

We help clients embrace/reconnect with themselves in two ways. First, to become more self-aware and self-acknowledging of their bodies, their minds, and their hearts. Second, to then learn to more effectively manage and sooth themselves--physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

Connection with the other

We help clients move past their egotism to be more aware of others around them. We help them become more effective at noticing the presence of others and, in particular, notice and acknowledge the differences in the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and needs of others. In part, this includes teaching them how to listen more informationally. Second, we support and encourage them to acknowledge and respond to others in a manner that does not compromise either person's integrity.

Connection with the relationship

We help clients to view relationships as inherently collaborative and cooperative, until there is compelling evidence to indicate otherwise. We encourage dialectical thinking where they view differences as both/and rather than either/or. We describe this as "looking for the win-win". We teach them how to accept the influence of the other and how to effectively negotiate and work with others.