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Understanding how Domestic Violence Affects Behavior in High School Students

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Abstract

This paper will serve as a summary of the Power Point Presentation titled, Understanding How Domestic Violence Affects Behavior in High School Students. The presentation is designed to provide the reader with a working definition of domestic violence, the rate of occurrence and its effects on high school students. Additionally the paper will summarize the negative effects of being exposed to domestic violence and what can be done to increase the mental health and well being of the high school student.

Understanding how Domestic Violence Affects Behavior in High School Students

Domestic Violence (DV) or the exposure to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) can have lifelong effects on the mental and physical well being of high school students.

Domestic Violence can be defined as a pattern of physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological abuse designed to intimidate, control, terrorize, manipulate, blame, wound or injure an intimate partner. More over it should be noted that perpetrators of DV desire to dominate and maintain control over their partner (NDVH 2010).

Domestic Violence is a national problem and affects both the affluent and the poor, although incidents of reporting appear to be higher among those who are of lower socioeconomic status. This phenomenon is said to be caused by under reporting of incidents among those of higher socioeconomic backgrounds in fear of embarrassment and loss of social status (Hussain 2008).

William (2007) notes that most incidents of domestic violence occur because both the perpetrator and the victim are broken spiritually, mentally and emotionally and they desire to become whole by either controlling or being controlled by their partner. Both individuals are lacking something within their own persona and thus are driven to find a partner that will complete them. Undoubtedly they are looking to fulfill the void in themselves with love and attention from the other individual. Although this in and of itself is not a problem, the problem arises when two broken individuals join and desire to become whole (Loxton 2008). The result of the union is not two complete people, but rather two dependent people. The next section of the paper will address the statistical data presented in the power point presentation.

Section II

Statistical Data

DV has become very prevalent in the United States and it cuts across, national, cultural and socioeconomic boundaries and has become an issue of global proportion (Yoshihama, 2007). In a recent study conducted in Japan among 1371 women ages 18-49 in Yokohama, Japan , 14.3% of the women studied reported that they had been victims of IPV before the age of thirty (Yoshihama, 2007).

The United States Department of Justice Bureau of Statistics (BJS) reports that women age 16-24 are three times more vulnerable to DV than any other age group. Every fifteen seconds a woman is beaten to death. On average, more than three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the US every day. In the year 2001, more than half a million American women (588,490 women) were victims of nonfatal violence committed by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence is primarily a crime against women. In 2001, women accounted for 85% of the victims of intimate partner violence (588,490 total) and men accounted for approximately 15 % of the victims (103,220 total).

The previously aforementioned statistics are true and staggering and the research suggests that both men and women are victims and perpetrators domestic violence and that most batterers come from abusive backgrounds themselves. In fact it is this paper's position that DV is a learned behavior, and recent studies have suggested that more than half the men who abuse women come from households in which they were either abused or witnessed abuse. Additionally, research suggests that children who are exposed to domestic violence are not only victims, but they are twice as likely to behave in an aggressive manner, victimize others and engage in abusive behavior. The next section of

the paper will address what effects witnessing domestic violence as a child has on the students.

Section III

Effects on High School Students

Children often live in fear and terror and become victims when they intervene on behalf of their mothers. If they are able to survive without being physically abused their mental health is severely compromised and their performance in school usually suffers, either academically or socially. This population usually engages in destructive behaviors, invades the personal boundaries of others, has poor coping skills, is anxious, aggressive or manipulative and seeks to control and dominate in all of their intimate relationships.

Additionally based on the research of Dr. McKenzie, children who are repeatedly exposed to domestic violence at the early age of three learn that violating the rights of others in an effort to subjugate, humiliate and control others is socially acceptable (McKenzie p. 52, 1995). Children who grow up in abusive households learn that they are entitled to control their partner and that their partner has a duty to comply with their requests despite their own needs and wants. The batter in this case wants to dominate and control their partner at all costs. They also believe that they are permitted to violate the rights of others and in doing so they can reap the benefits without impunity. Equally as important is the fact that this learned behavior finds a stage in the school setting.

Psychologists Nancy Chodorow and Carl Gilligan concur with Robert Stroller's study that suggested that gender identity and the basic core of ones personality is almost irreversibly unchangeable after the age of three so it is of the utmost importance that

children are not exposed to such life scarring violence. The fourth and final section of the paper will address the treatment.

Section IV

Treatment of the Problem

Berkowitz (2001) states that a prevention program is only as good as the paper it was written on if clinicians are not willing to help the client change their negative and faulty belief systems. Berkowitz further stated that in order for programs to be effective they must be comprehensive and intense, as well as age and culturally specific for certain communities.

The psycho education aspect of prevention should focus on making each and everyone responsible for their own behaviors and thoughts. The format could be a onetime event, educational workshops, conference or through multiple individual sessions designed specifically to meet the needs of that individual. The goal of the program would be to reduce if not all together eliminate acts of aggression in school caused by witnessing of domestic violence in the home (Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2004).

In order to affect a change in the student's faulty belief system or thinking one must conduct a through history to determine where the root problem or faulty belief system started (Beeman 1997). Ellis states that it is not the actual event that causes the problem per se, but rather the exaggerated, illogical or otherwise flawed interpretation that causes havoc and leads to a negative view of oneself (Corey 2005). Yet another fundamental way to combat DV is reauthoring a client's core belief system or schema. The faulty beliefs that one holds of one self, regardless of its validity are experienced and

thus perceived as “truths” by the client and it is this writer's belief that the therapist treating the client must help the client to reauthor reframe and or reconstruct more accurate schemas. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy helps people to break these negative patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving and to develop healthier alternatives to replace them (Westermeyer 2007). Furthermore they are actively engaged in changing their faulty belief systems which will in turn help them to make positive behavior changes and end the cycle of violence. Additionally it should be noted that high schools should employ a school based social worker to not only assess the child's maladaptive and aggressive behaviors, but also to act as a support mechanism for students and to make necessary referrals to outside social service agencies; thus removing the burden from the teachers and administrators whose function is to insure that students are being taught the necessary skills to become successful in high school and beyond while school social workers, therapists and resource specialists educate students about the danger signs of domestic violence in addition to teaching healthy coping skills and conflict techniques. Although domestic violence is an issue related to power and control it is very important for students to identify what their triggers are and resolve conflicts through conflict resolution as opposed to intimidation, violence, and power and control which is the underlying root of domestic violence.

Section V

Conflict Resolution Models

The Circle of Conflict Model attempts to have the student identify what his or her natural triggers are to conflict. Once the triggers have been identified, students are

encouraged through cognitive behavior therapy to use positive self-talk to develop coping skills that protect them from engaging in argumentative and maladaptive behaviors.

The Boundary Model attempts to look at how young people define their personal space and boundaries. This model teaches healthy boundaries and what can be done when one feels that their personal space or boundary has been violated and or invaded.

The Moving Beyond Model looks at the emotional process students go through when trying to let go of past and present conflicts. Students are encouraged to examine themselves introspectively to determine why past conflicts go un resolved and what can be done to process through reoccurring conflicts.

The Interest, Rights and Power Model attempts to identify at which level the conflict begins, what the precipitating factors are, in addition to identifying what process and or systems can be employed to identify deal with and diffuse the issue before the issue or conflict becomes deep rooted (Furlong 2005).

Importance of Teaching Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution or the ability to cope with conflict whether real or imagined and communicate ones thoughts and ideas without violating the rights of others is truly a priceless skill that needs to be taught both at home and in the school setting; however students who live in household where there is domestic violence very rarely get this opportunity as such it is crucial that conflict resolution be taught at school and where possible at home. The average high school student spends about seven hours in school learning new material, making friends and engaging in activities with others in which they do not see “eye to eye”. As such it is important that parents teach their children the

basics of conflict resolution before they get to school so that they can effectively navigate the public school system.

Conflict resolution is a process by which individuals are able to express their sometimes varying ideas in an open and systematic manner without fear of reprisal. Furthermore it requires individuals to think beyond their own needs and engage in active listening as each party attempts to be heard and understood. Often times the first place that a student is exposed to peer mediation or conflict resolution is in school; however research notes that it is important for children to understand the basics of conflict management before they attend school (Feldman 2006). Additionally research suggests that students who grow up in conflictual environments tend to have less coping skills and engage in behaviors that do not support the peaceful resolution of their conflicts. As such it is important for educators to teach conflict resolution to students.

Despite students growing up in environments that are conflicted and not being adequately prepared to read, write and resolve conflicts, teachers can affect a change in the classroom by setting up class rules that incorporate conflict resolution strategies into the day to day management of the classroom. Furthermore administrators, deans and climate control officers can create a school climate that models and teaches peaceful conflict resolution by educating students about the process (Feldman 2006).

VI

Conclusion

Based on the research it is clear high school students that are exposed to domestic violence are not only victims themselves but they have a tendency to grow up to be abusers. As such it is important that school social services be implemented so that

students can get the necessary resources. Additionally by having school based social services the administrators and educators can get back to fulfilling their mandates, while school social workers and resource specialists are trained to deal with the victim victimizing others. Conflict resolution is an integral part of any school system and the most effective model is the one that the student can readily recall when their ability to reason is diminished. Furthermore the conflict resolution models that tend to work the best are the ones that address boundaries, trust, emotion, power, control and fear; all of which are key in domestic violence issues,

Conflict resolution is one of the single most important skills that parents can teach their children prior to starting school. Students who are exposed to conflict resolution models are said to be more resilient and much more likely to be able to adapt to stressful situations by utilizing their conflict management and coping skills. Additionally they are less likely to try and dominate and or control by committing acts of domestic violence. Moreover these young people are more likely to engage in more altruistic behaviors which in and of itself would lead to less conflict as they begin to understand the and empathize with others.

In conclusion it is this writer's belief that through early intervention, psycho education and the implementation of school based social services, high school students will be less likely to engage in acts of aggression as a result of being victims of domestic violence.

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