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Guide for shelter staff and professionals  
who work with women and children exposed to domestic violence

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## Introduction

Violence against women and children is a global problem and one of the most serious violations of basic human rights. Worldwide, more than one woman in three is subjected to physical or sexual abuse by her partner, and even more women are exposed to repeated psychological violence. In the countries with which Danner collaborates, the numbers are far higher.

Women and children exposed to abuse are under extreme physical and mental strain, and they need qualified help on their way to lives without violence. Danner has more than thirty-five years of experience of working with women and children exposed to violence. We receive about 2500 inquiries a year from such women, their relatives and fellow professionals, and we give refuge to between fifty and sixty women and their children at our shelter in Copenhagen every year.

This guide was originally written for shelter staff in Greenland but its contents will be valuable to other professionals who work with women and children exposed to domestic violence.

The guide is a concise introduction to useful theories and methods and suggests ways of applying these in practice. It may be used as a supplement to Danner's handbook, 'How we work – Methods and Practices at a women's shelter', which describes the theories and methods in depth.

We hope that this guide will improve the capacities of other shelters, provide a basis for sharing experience, and serve as a manual for training shelter staff. We also hope that the guide will help to strengthen the shelter movement globally by promoting a common approach for professionals who work with the victims of violence.

Danner has been working internationally since 2007. In cooperation with shelters in the Middle East, Greenland and Afghanistan, we pass on and share methods of working with women and children who have been abused. We do so through training shelter staff and helping to build professional networks enabling shelters and other practitioners to work using the same theoretical and methodological foundations. Our goal is to strengthen efforts to help women and children exposed to violence so that they can break the cycle of violence and recover from its effects.

We hope this guide will inspire the development of new methods and promote debate, with the goal of continuously improving and developing the services we provide for women and children exposed to domestic violence.

The translation of the guide into English was made possible by the Augustinus Foundation.

Happy reading!

Lisbeth Jessen

CEO, Danner

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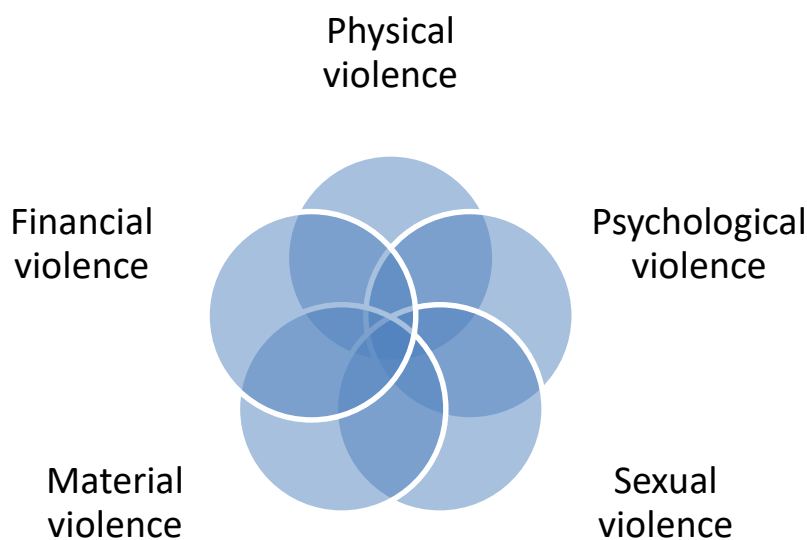
## Materials

- Bibliography
- Filmography

## What is violence?

“Violence is any action directed at another person that harms, torments, frightens or abuses, and causes the other person to do something against her will or not to do something that she would like to.” (Per Isdal, ATV – Alternative to Violence, Norway).

## FORMS OF VIOLENCE



**Physical violence:** Being shaken, struck, kicked, slapped; attempted strangling or stabbing

**Financial violence:** Not having control of your own finances, being forced to sign loan.

**Material violence:** Destruction or deprivation of personal property such as clothing, heirlooms, etc.

**Sexual violence:** Rape or other forms of non-consensual sexual activity.

**Psychological violence:** Being ridiculed, humiliated, threatened with physical violence, having your phone or emails spied on.

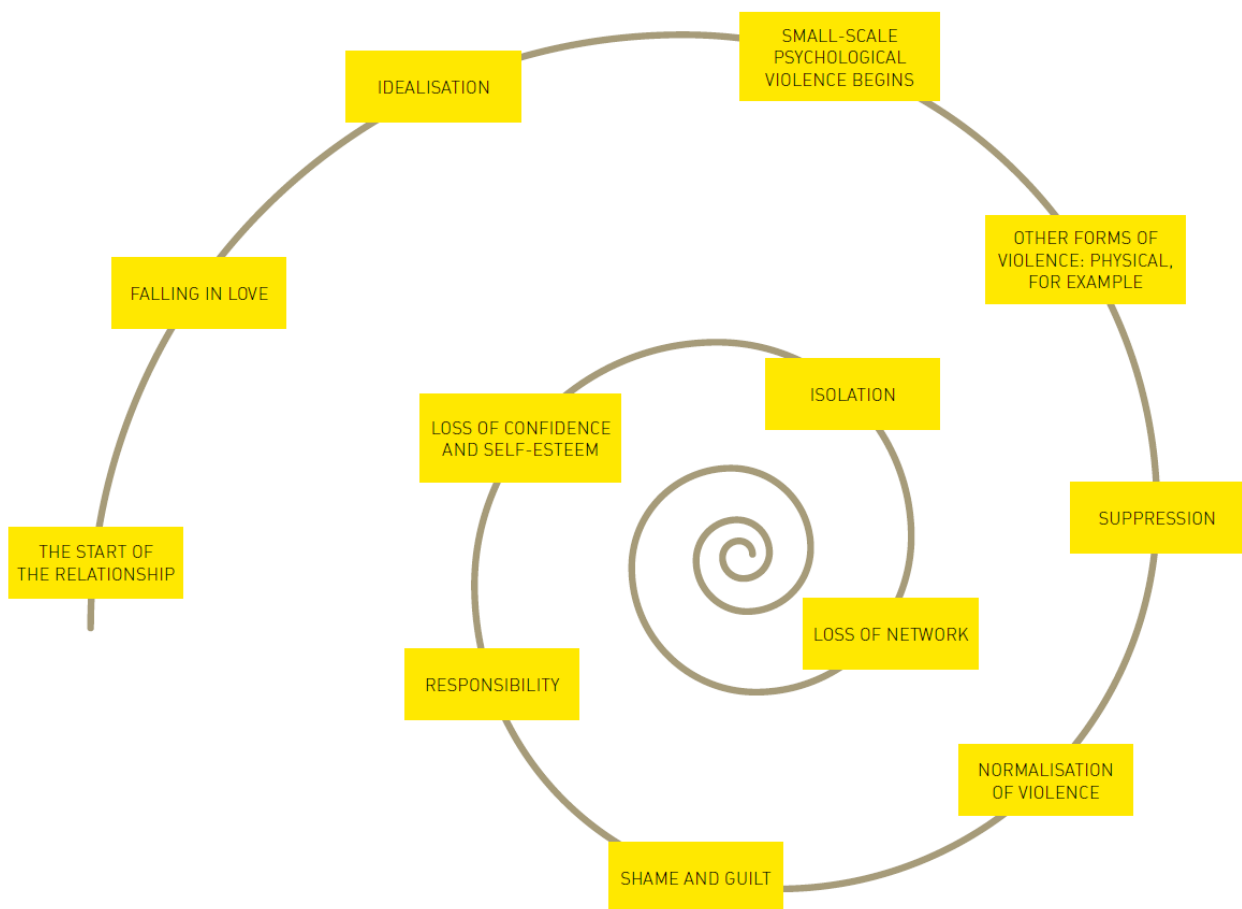
## THE MECHANISMS OF VIOLENCE

A woman is exposed to violence if one or more of these forms of violence are present in her relationship. It is important to note the following about the mechanisms of domestic violence:

- Different forms of violence often occur at the same time
- Violence comes in many forms and it varies in intensity and frequency
- It is never the woman’s fault if her partner decides to use violence
- Violence occurs in all kinds of families, not only the socially deprived
- Substance abuse, such as heavy drinking, is never the cause of violence but can cause the violence to escalate.

## THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The model (Spiral of violence) shows how violence affects the woman over time, and how both victim and perpetrator may normalise and trivialise it as it slowly becomes part of their everyday lives. The cycle takes the shape of a spiral and can be used by professionals to help them to understand the dynamics of domestic violence but also by the victims. Professionals should realise that to a woman who feels trapped in the cycle of violence, to escape from the spiral may take as long as the journey into it.



### Using the cycle of violence

Ways of using the model in our work:

- In training shelter professionals and volunteers to understand how the violence affects the woman and why it is so hard to break out of a violent relationship.
- When working with the woman to understand and assess her current position in the spiral and how the violence is affecting her.

- During courses of conversations with a woman or a group of women: focus on each point on the spiral in turn. This will help them to appreciate what is required and what they can do in order to counter the negative effects the violence has had on them.

## THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE

When a woman approaches the shelter, the professional may start by determining the nature of the violence to which she has been subjected, as this may influence the kind of intervention the woman and child require, and the degree of risk.

### Violence may be divided into three categories

In some cases the violence may take the form of isolated incidents during arguments, for example; in others, both partners may display violent behaviour (situational couple violence). Violence may be part of a fundamental pattern of intimate terrorism whereby the perpetrator wishes to exert power and control over the woman, and where the violence increases in severity and intensity (power and control). Violence as power and control is highly destructive emotionally and physically, and women who live with perpetrators like these are in greater danger, both in the relationship and even more so if they try to leave him. Professionals should also be aware of the possibility of violent resistance, as this may occur as a reaction to the violence of power and control. (For more on this subject, see Michael P. Johnson: *A typology of domestic violence*).

### Intimate terrorism

General need for power and control of the woman

Violence used as a means to achieve power and control

Severe and frequent psychological and physical violence

### Situational couple violence

The violence occurs in conflict situations and is often spontaneous

The violence is infrequent and seldom life-threatening

Both partners may be violent

### Violent resistance

Violence used in self-defence against a man who exerts intimate terrorism

This kind of violence usually occurs when the woman is trying to protect herself or her children from violence on the part of the perpetrator

## HOW THE VIOLENCE AFFECTS THE WOMAN

- Acute crisis symptoms
- Post-traumatic stress
- Depression
- Angst
- Low self-esteem
- Isolation
- Suicidal
- Substance abuse
- Self-harming behaviours

## HOW THE VIOLENCE AFFECTS THE CHILD

Children may be exposed to violence directly or indirectly.

**Direct** violence occurs when the child itself is subjected to violence physically or psychologically by way of humiliation or threats. **Indirect** violence occurs when the child witnesses the violence inflicted on the mother, and the angst and unpredictability it experiences in the home.

The symptoms of violence in children may be hard to pin down as they are often similar to symptoms of other conditions such as attention deficit disorder.

Examples of physical symptoms	Examples of psychological symptoms
<p><b>Headaches</b>  <b>Stomach pains</b>  <b>Sleep problems</b>  <b>Nightmares</b></p>	<p><b>Worrying</b>      <b>Grieving</b>  <b>Angst</b>          <b>Low self-esteem</b>  <b>Anger</b>          <b>Loneliness</b>  <b>Guilt and shame</b>      <b>Longing</b></p>

To help the child we must help the mother

Violence towards the mother is violence towards the child

**Examples of child behaviour as a reaction to domestic violence:**

- *Externalised:*  
Agitated, unruly, “ill-bred”. Concentration difficulties. Often gets into fights.
- *Internalised:*  
Quiet, diligent, almost “invisible”.

**HOW THE VIOLENCE AFFECTS THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP**

- Physical violence may harm the foetus.
- The mother’s capacity to care for and protect her child may be limited.
- The mother’s trauma symptoms may affect the mother-child relationship and the child may become overprotected or too autonomous in relation to its mother.





## The initial approach

### TELEPHONE GUIDE: THE WOMAN MAKES CONTACT

#### Be prepared before you answer the call:

- How will you start? “Hello, you are talking to Mary at the XX shelter”

#### The conversation:

- What does the woman need help with?  
“How can I help you?”
- Is the woman exposed to violence?  
“What has happened to you? Have you been battered/threatened/pushed around/etc.?”
- Assess the risk  
“Has he hurt you outside your home? Is he stalking you?”  
(There is more on the next page about risk assessment)

#### Concluding the call

- Summarise the conversation. Repeat what you have heard to the woman.
- Agree on the next step (no step is too small). Should she come to the shelter or make use of its other counselling services?
- Agree on the next contact.



#### Three tips for the call

1. Ask one (brief) question at a time
2. Wait for an answer – listen – don't be afraid to ask for more details about what has happened
3. Don't forget: this may be the first time the woman has told anyone her story

Look for the woman's  
opportunities and resources  
rather than her limitations

## RISK ASSESSMENT

A shelter is primarily a safe-house for women at risk.

To determine the best way to help the woman it is important to assess the degree of risk to the woman and any children she may have. A risk assessment is an assessment of the danger to the woman and children posed by the perpetrator at any given time.

It addresses questions such as:

- What is the woman's own view of the risk she is facing?
- Is the perpetrator stalking her? By phone or in person?
- Has the perpetrator threatened to kill the woman or her children? Is he armed?
- Has the perpetrator a history of violence in public towards the woman?
- Has the perpetrator got a criminal record involving violence?
- Is the perpetrator known to the police and can you obtain their assessment?
- Assess the nature of the violence:  
If it is in the form of *intimate terrorism (power and control)* the greatest risk to the woman of abuse or homicide is when she seeks help or leaves the perpetrator.



### What to do if the violence is in the form of intimate terrorism:

- Tell the woman about the danger she is in.
- Encourage her to avoid any contact with the perpetrator.
- Draw up a safety strategy with her so that she is prepared if she encounters him.

## THE WOMAN'S NEEDS WHEN SHE IS ADMITTED TO THE SHELTER

At this stage the woman is often severely depressed.

The safety of the shelter and our conversations with her slowly help with her peace of mind. At first her needs are often very basic: Safety, sleep, food and care.



### Staff can help to meet these needs as follows:

- By telling her that she is safe now “You can let down your guard here, and your partner will not be admitted to the shelter”.
- By welcoming her children and reassuring them that they are safe now.
- By telling the woman that other families may arrive during the night so that she doesn't become alarmed.
- By not providing too much information when she arrives. Sleep and nourishment are more important.
- By making sure she has the food and refreshments she needs for the first 24 hours.

### How to break the ice:

- Be calm, optimistic, receptive and responsive.
- Be aware that information may have to be repeated many times.
- Even if the woman has been to the shelter many times previously, you must welcome her with the same appreciation, receptiveness and care as on her first admission.
- It can take many attempts to break out of a violent partnership.
- Give the woman the shelter welcome folder if there is one.

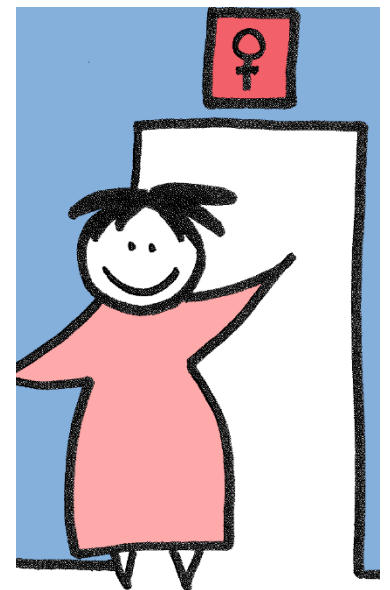
## THE CHILD'S NEEDS WHEN IT IS ADMITTED TO THE SHELTER

A child that has been exposed to domestic violence needs security and predictability. You can help by:

- Welcoming the child and telling it about the shelter:  
"It's good to see you. My name is XX. It is a good thing that you and your mum have arrived. This is somewhere mums and their kids can stay when they can't stay at home. You'll be here for a few days, I expect."
- Tell the child it's safe:  
"You and your mum will be safe here. We'll look after you."
- Tell the child you are aware of what has been going on at home:  
*"I know you and your mum have come here because your mum and dad had a terrible row and your dad hit your mum. It was no longer safe for you at home."*
- Tell the child what it can expect over the next couple of hours or days.
- Show care for the child by wrapping it in a blanket, for example, or giving it a snack or something nice to drink.

### Establishing a relationship with the child on admission

- Take the lead in making contact and initiating conversation with the child.
- Talk to the child about what has happened and what it can expect over the next few days.
- Bring up the subject of the violence the child has experienced and reassure the child that violence is never the child's fault:  
*"Lots of children have stayed with us who thought that it was their fault when dad hit mum. But it's never the child's fault, and hitting people is never okay".*



## ADMISSION CHECKLIST

Date of admission: \_\_\_\_\_

The family: names, ages and mobile phone no. if any:

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The family's network: names, relationship, phone numbers and addresses:

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Reason(s) for admission:

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	Date	Checked	By whom
<b>On admission:</b>			
General details (work, address, day care)			
Risk assessment completed			
Conversation to map the woman's needs (food, finances, etc)			
Introduction to shelter rules			
Welcoming children and telling them they are safe			
<b>During residence:</b>			
Conversation with the woman about the violence she has experienced			
Introduction to Cycle of Violence			
Conversation with the child about the violence (NB obtain the mother's consent first)			
Exhibit care for the child. Play with the child.			
<b>At exit time:</b>			
Conversation with the woman about safety plans			
Conversation with the child about safety plans			
Draw up a safety chart for the woman and child			

## Counselling and shelter residence

When working with women and children at the shelter, it is important to focus on:

- **Mapping the hopes, intentions, wishes and values that the woman feels she needs for a good life. They are often lacking in the lives of women subjected to domestic violence.**

Violence is traumatizing because the perpetrator destroys the victim's value set and her ability to act and feel for herself. Her self-narrative is often negatively affected by her violent experiences, and life with violence may gradually cause the woman to lose her personal integrity. The woman can often feel helpless and unable to escape.

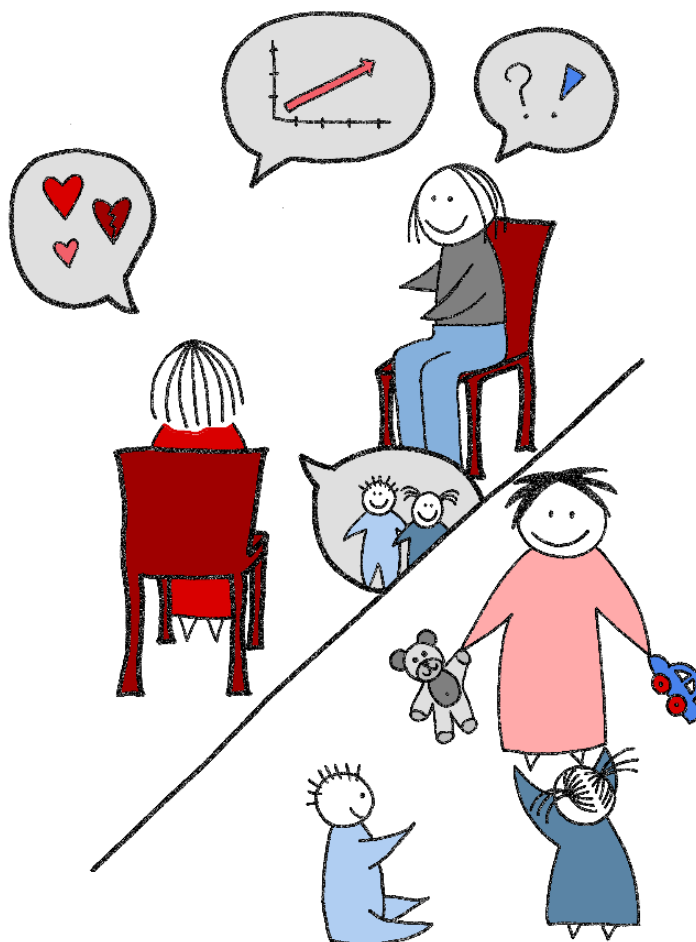
The narratives we have about our own lives are important to who we are as human beings. We have dominant narratives and alternative narratives. Often, negative self-perception is the dominant narrative for women subjected to domestic violence. Our job is to challenge the woman and ask her questions in such a way that her answers will give her a more favourable, nuanced image of herself. This way you bring out her agency and empower her to build on it.

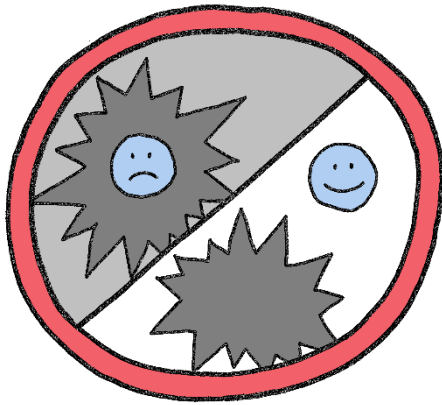
- **The fact that for every act of violence there is a reaction.**

Anybody subjected to violence will react in whatever way his or her situation allows. For example:

- By fleeing
- By fighting
- By tears
- By playing dead
- By hitting back
- By silence
- By thinking ill of the perpetrator
- By disassociating body from mind

Talking to the woman about how she tried to cope sometimes helps as it may give her back some of her sense of empowerment: she showed she was capable of action.



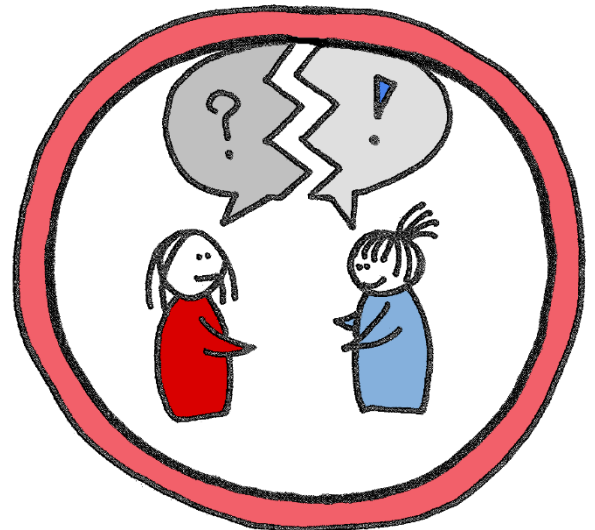


- **That the problem is the problem and not the person.**

It is important to externalise the problem, i.e. detach it from the woman. This turns the problem into an object she can relate to and do something about: this helps her to build a new narrative identity (There is more on narrative theory in Danner's handbook, 'How we work – Methods and Practice at a women's shelter, pp. 25-28).

## TALKING TO THE WOMAN ABOUT VIOLENCE

It's important to know how the violence may have affected the woman; otherwise the professional may misunderstand her reactions or fail to register them as serious. Reactions to living with violence for an extended period of time include appearing incoherent, over-talkative, emotionally unstable, aggressive or devoid of emotion, and trivialising or denying the violence and its impact.



### The conversation

**Ensure/create a pleasant setting for the conversation. Find somewhere you can talk undisturbed.**

- Tell the woman who you are and how much time you have together
- Tell her that she may talk in confidence but that you also have a statutory duty to report certain things
- Listen to what she tells you

**Ask about the violence. Don't be afraid to probe.**

- What kinds of violence has she been subjected to?
- Are she and her children in immediate danger?
- What matters to her, since she is now seeking help?  
*"I want a better future for my children"*  
*"If I stay I will lose my freedom"*  
*"If I stay, I'll lose my life."*

### Tell her about violence and reactions to violence

- *"I have talked to many women who say they began to wonder if they were to blame. But violence can never be excused and my experience tells me that whatever the woman had done to avoid it, it happened anyway."*

### Rounding off the conversation

- Repeat what she has told you
- Praise her for seeking help
- Ask her how she feels now you've talked
- Tell her when your next conversation will take place or when she will see you again.

### Tips for talking to the woman about violence

- Talk in private and ask directly. Don't wait for 'permission to ask'
- Question her to find out what she did to cope?
- Express your concern and put the violence into words
- Accept love and ambivalence: for her to love and loathe her partner is quite normal..
- Focus on the actions, not on the perpetrator:  
*"Violence is never OK" or "He is responsible for the violence he commits" – but DON'T say: "He sounds like an awful man" or "Your partner must evil, doing stuff like that to you".*
- Emphasise that many women are subjected to violence every year and that help is available.
- Be careful not to judge the woman or her actions: accept her as she is.
- Show her you care; be thoughtful.
- Always ask her about her children, if she has any.
- Tell her that in your experience mothers always do their best to protect their children but that the children almost always experience the violence anyway. Asking for help shows that she is a responsible mother.
- Tell her about the effects on the children of experiencing violence.
- If she refuses your help, be aware that you will have made her think. Say goodbye and tell her that she is always welcome to come again



## TALKING TO THE CHILD ABOUT VIOLENCE

When you talk to children who have been subjected to violence or exposed to it, the child needs to know that grown-ups express their experiences verbally. Break the silence surrounding violence!

Talk to the child about the child's own worries and questions, too.

### The conversation

**Ensure / create a pleasant setting for the conversation. Find somewhere you can talk undisturbed. Ask mum to join you. Have crayons, building bricks or other toys on the table for the child to play with while you are talking.**

- Tell the child who you are and how much time you have together.
- Tell the child what you know about what's been going on at home.
- Talk to the child about what the child did when the violence took place.
- Ask if the child has any questions for you or its mother.
- Talk about other children you've talked to and how they felt in similar situations.
- If the child is mute try to describe the child's situation and accept the child's silence.

### Questions and ways of putting the violence into words

- *"I know that you and your mum have come here today because mum and dad have had a fight and your dad kept hitting your mum, so you had to leave."*
- *"It wasn't your fault that dad lost his temper with mum."*
- *"Mum needs a break so you're going to stay here for a few days."*
- *"When you go home what can you do if dad hits mum again?"* (Help the child to come up with options, such as calling the police, going next door to ask for help, getting younger siblings out of the home).
- *"Other children tell me they hid under the bedclothes and covered their ears. Maybe that's what you did, too?"*

### Rounding off the conversation

- Repeat what the child has told you.
- Praise the child for what it did to protect itself or others.
- Say it aloud: violence is never the child's fault.
- Tell the child when you are going to talk again or when the child will see you again.
- Talk to the child about what is going to happen today and tomorrow.

### Tips for talking to the child about violence

- Take the lead and ensure that the conversation goes as planned.
- Listen to the child.
- Repeat what the child says and observe how the child carries on its story.  
*“... and you got scared, yes...” “...and then you ran into your bedroom.”*
- A lengthy conversation is not always necessary: fifteen minutes is often enough.
- Don't just talk about the difficult stuff; talk about commonplace things too, such as the toys on the table.
- Talk about other children who've been in the same situation.
- Praise the child for its resourcefulness and other positive traits that you observe during your conversation.
- Have mum witness the conversation.
- Help to give the child an overview. Use a blackboard or draw pictures.
- Avoid YES/NO questions.
- REMEMBER:  
The child will not be upset by talking about difficult subjects. The child is already upset and needs an adult to share with.

## The child's needs while in residence

### The child needs *predictability*

- Tell the child what is going to happen over the next couple of hours or days.
- Help the mother to establish regular routines for the child.
- Tell the child what you know about what's been going on at home.
- Speak clearly and simply to the mother when the child is present.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.

### The child needs *care and attention*

- Help the mother to give the child care. If she is in a state to do so, encourage her to show the child physical affection: sit close together, wrap herself and the child in the same blanket.
- Do stuff the child enjoys.
- Read to the child.

### The child needs to experience *fun and games*

- Play with the child.
- Show you are enjoying yourself in its company.
- Get a group of children together to play, watch videos, or sing songs.
- Make sure there are toys so the child feels welcome.

### The child needs to feel it is *part of a greater whole*

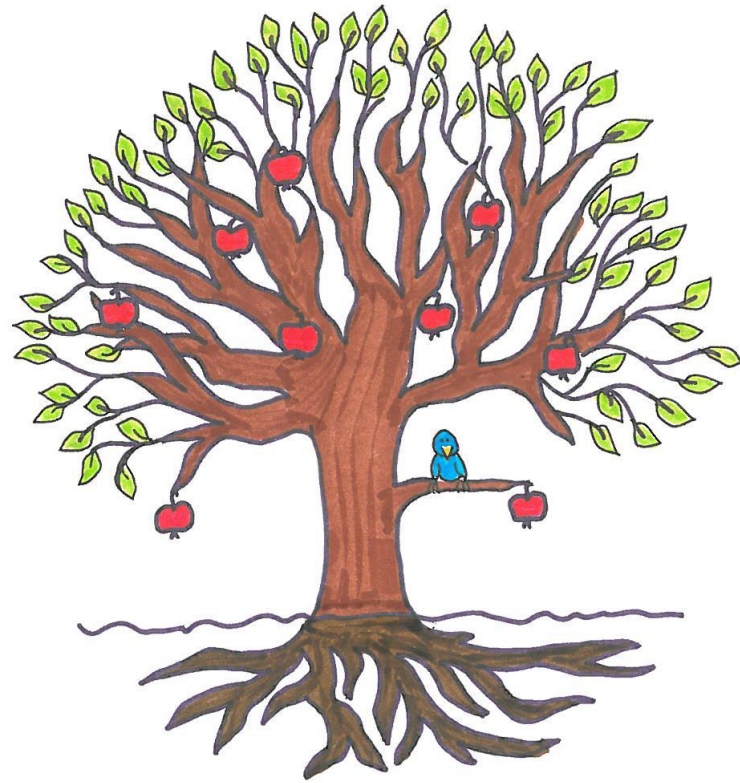
- Draw a family tree or a network map with the child: get the child to describe important people in its life.
- Help the child to maintain important relationships.
- Keep up with spare time activities and school if possible.
- Show that you are interested in what the child enjoys and take part in some of its

## THE TREE OF LIFE

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The Tree of life is a useful tool when you are working with adults and children but it is particularly suitable for those from five to twenty years of age. To complete the whole programme takes several conversations, so it is an approach best suited to shelters where whole courses of conversations can be held with a child or an adult. It can be used with several children at once or in individual conversations.

**The Tree of Life** is an image of the child's story, strengths, hopes and dreams. The child draws its own tree but receives guidance from professionals about the elements the child draws for its tree, the people who matter to it most, the stories the child remembers from its life, and the hopes and dreams the child has for its future. You start by helping the child to explore the strengths and good things in its life. Then you talk about things the child perceives as threats and what the child can do when such threats arise.



**The tree of life:**

- The roots (Where the child comes from)
- The trunk (What the child is good at)
- The branches (Hopes and dreams)
- Leaves (People who matter to the child)
- Stormy weather (Problems and dangers the child sees as a threat)

**The roots** - Invite the child to tell you where it comes from:

- Who does its family consist of?
- Which town or village does the child come from?
- Does the child have a favourite spot at home?
- Is there a special song or dance that means a lot?

**The trunk** - Invite the child to tell you about skills and competencies:

- What is it good at?
- Does it have special talents or abilities?
- What do other people say the child is good at?

*"I am good at reading and doing my homework. Mum says I am good at looking after my little sisters."*

**The branches**

- What are the children's hopes for itself?
- What are the child's hopes for its nearest and dearest?
- What are its dreams for the future?

*"I hope to join the police so I can help other children who are having a hard time at home."*

**The leaves** - Invite the child to talk about other people who really matter:

- Mum, dad, siblings.
- A teacher.
- A girlfriend's mum whom the child gets on with really well.
- A playmate the child has fun with.
- A granny who has passed away

**The fruit** - Invite the child to tell you about something it's been given by someone else

- *"Help and support from my mum when I was really having a hard time."*
- *"My uncle paid for a trip to Denmark in the holidays."*
- *"My sister looked after me when things were hard at home."*

**Stormy weather** - Invite the child to talk about problems or dangers that may threaten the tree

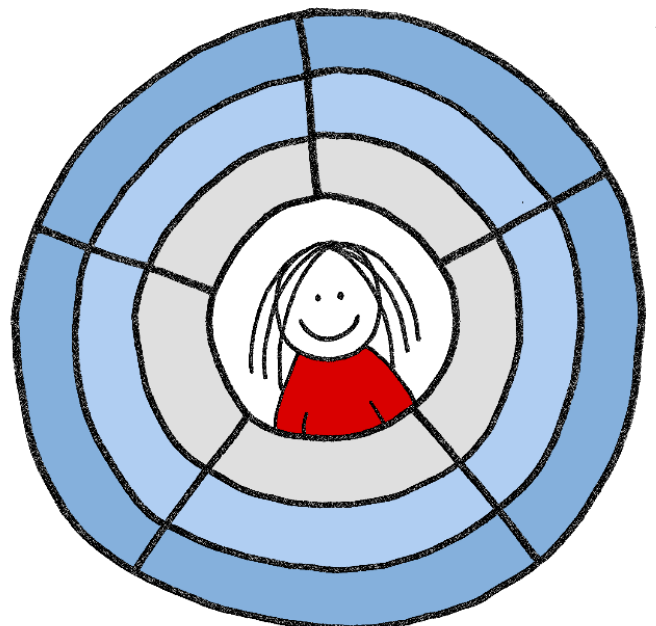
- Help the child to identify potential threats (insects, gales, etc).
- How does stormy weather affect the tree?

**In the eye of the storm** - Invite the child to talk about what it can do when the storm is raging:

- *"We've made a lovely picture of your life in the shape of a beautiful tree. Like trees, children's lives also have their storms"*
- *"What do you think the animals of the forest do when the storm is raging?"*
- *"What do you think children do when storms affect their lives? Is there anything you can do?"*

## **NETWORK MAPS AND RESTORING CONTACTS WITH THE WOMAN'S NETWORK**

Women who have lived with violence may have lost contact with their friends or relatives and may need help to restore contact with their network. The network can provide help and support for the recovery and coping process. Work with the woman to map the network around her and talk about ways of using it. Help her to draw a map of the network. The people in the rings closest to the centre are the people closest to her. You can talk about who she would like to be closer still, and who she wants to keep further away. Discuss how she can reconnect to those she has lost contact with.



## GAMES AND ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN

The time a child spends at a shelter with its mother may be associated with great seriousness and concern. It is therefore important to facilitate opportunities for the child to spend time with its mother and others when the emphasis is on playing and having fun. Taking part in enjoyable activities with other people fosters the child's development regardless of age, and helps it to cope with the challenges facing it. You can initiate a range of activities with the children, and you can help and encourage the mothers to play with their children. Choose games suitable for the child so that the child does not find them too difficult. Five to ten minutes of play is often enough.



### SUGGESTIONS FOR GAMES

- **Weather Forecast:** The child presents its back to the grown-up. The grown-up draws a weather forecast for the day on the child's back. Slide a hand gently across the child's back from East to West to portray the sun rising; rain drops are a pitter-pattering of the fingertips; wind is a hand brushed firmly back and forth across the child's back. Describe the weather to the child as you act it out on the child's back.
- **Balloons:** The balloon must not touch the floor. Count how many times you can pat the balloon back and forth before it finally floats to the floor.
- **"You're Perfect":** See if your child has remembered to bring all its fingers along by holding its hand up and touching each finger as you say: "You have brought your little finger along today and you have also brought your middle finger ... " until you've been through all five fingers and you're able to announce that the child's hand is absolutely perfect.
- **Backrub:** Give each other a backrub. The grown-up starts. Respect the child's limits and ensure that the child is enjoying it. Afterwards, the child can give the grown-up a backrub.
- **Balloon dance:** Wedge a balloon between your tummies. The grown-up leads the child around the dance floor without letting the balloon escape from between you.
- **Stop dance:** Put music on and let children and grown-ups dance together. When the music stops, keep silent until music starts again.
- **Soap bubbles:** Blow soap bubbles and let the child burst the bubbles. The child can also burst the bubbles with a stick or ball to make the game more difficult.
- **Clapping game:** face each other. The grown-up chooses a simple sequence to be repeated. Use an existing clapping rhyme or make up one of your own.
- **Stacking hands:** Face each other. The grown-up puts one hand on the table. The child puts a hand on top. The grown up puts her other hand on top of the child's. The child does likewise. The grown-up puts her lower hand on top of the child's second hand. And so on.
- **Cotton wool football:** Sit opposite each other at a table with a small ball of cotton wool between you. Blow the ball towards each other, trying to force it off the table to score a goal. See who can score ten goals first.



## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AT THE SHELTER

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the child's right to be heard in matters concerning the child. However, the Convention also problematizes areas where the child should be protected from involvement. We regard the child as a competent and unique individual with its own perception and understanding of the world, but good contact is required before it will talk to us about itself and its experiences.

There may be contexts in which the child is not yet able to understand, comprehend and explain. If we only understand the child from its own perspective, we risk giving the child the wrong kind of support. We need to strike a balance whereby we listen to the child while drawing on our own specialist knowledge and utilizing this knowledge according to the child in question.

Use the poster on children's rights at the shelter to emphasise the right of children to be heard and involved in the decisions that concern them.



## SHOWING THE WAY

To make the woman and child feel safe and secure while they are at the shelter you will need to be the guide who takes care of the woman and her situation. Professionals can do so by:

- Calming things down and ensuring that she feels she is somewhere safe
- Supporting the woman and her child during their stay
- Helping the woman to assume responsibility for her own life and make her own decisions
- Helping her to take the steps that may help her to break away from a life of violence

## Moving on from the violence and residence



### SAYING GOODBYE THE RIGHT WAY

Leaving the shelter may provoke a new crisis.

#### Focus:

- Family finances and practical assistance.
- Putting continued support into place (a contact person).
- Safety for the woman and child when they leave.
- Helping the woman to express her concerns and issues in connection with leaving the shelter.

### The child's safety following violence in the family

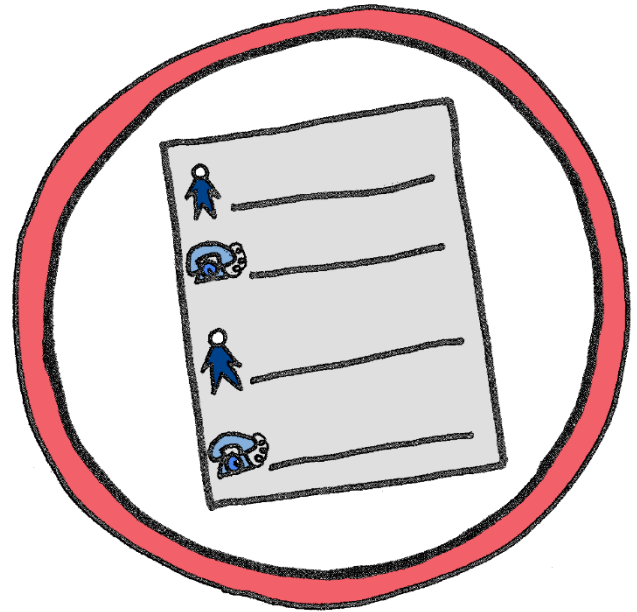
Protection for the child includes:

- The child's grown-ups assuming responsibility for protecting the child from violence.
- Making sure the child knows that help is available in case of renewed violence .
- Drawing up a safety plan with the mother and child based on the child's own worries. These might include physical safety; sources of affection; whom the child can turn to (in addition to its mother) if it feels scared or upset.



## SAFETY CARD

When a child leaves the shelter, the child may need to know whom to turn to if it feels threatened, scared or in need of someone to talk to. Complete a safety card together with the help of the child's mother. Note the phone numbers of grown-ups the child can contact (mum, grandma, a family friend, a teacher, etc.) Give the card to the child to keep in its purse, on the notice board or downloaded to its mobile phone.

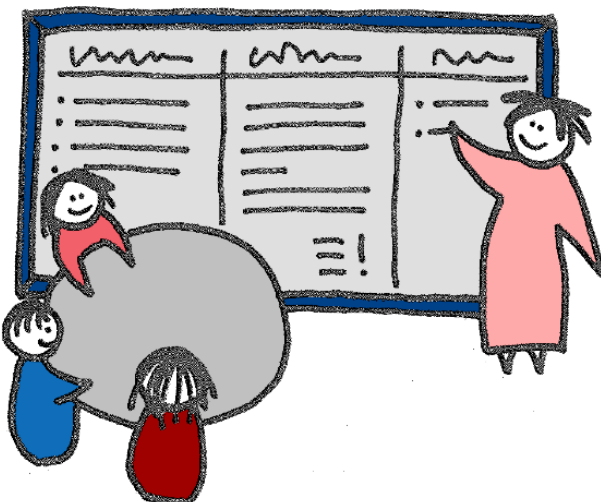


## Professional practice

### THE CONFERENCE MODEL

The conference model provides opportunities to discuss a current issue or particular family if you need help from your co-workers. It also allows for thorough, systematic reviews of individual cases and it is a useful tool for keeping professional deliberations on track. It consists of several phases, which are undertaken chronologically. The first step is to formulate your need for help. Issues you might address include:

- How to conduct a risk assessment for a particular family.
- How to understand a child and identify its needs.
- How to approach a difficult conversation.
- What is the most pressing issue to be addressed in this family's case?



#### **Turn the title of the conference into a question.**

Then proceed through a presentation of the known facts of the case, reflections based on your experiences or professional knowledge, and finally a discussion on the actions to be taken on the basis of the advice you have received from your co-workers.

## A conference

**Conference question:** How can we make life easier for Ahmed?

### Facts

- Ahmed is nine
- Ahmed is staying at the shelter with his mother and younger brother
- He plays football twice a week
- Ahmed never wants to leave the shelter
- When it's time to go he complains of tummy ache and head ache
- Ahmed is unruly.
- Ahmed finds it difficult to concentrate at school
- Ahmed has heard his father making threats many times but refuses to talk about them

### Reflection

- Ahmed seems lonely
- He relies on his mother and brother to meet his need for play and social relations
- Ahmed has trouble reading other children and finds group games a challenge
- Ahmed finds the company of other people easier if activities are structured, as they are at football training
- Ahmed benefits from physical activity as it helps to reduce his feeling of restlessness

### The next steps

1. The social worker applies for extra time to accompany Ahmed on trips outside the shelter
2. The child specialist identifies playgroups for Ahmed to join
3. The staff help Ahmed's mother to encourage the boy to be more physically active

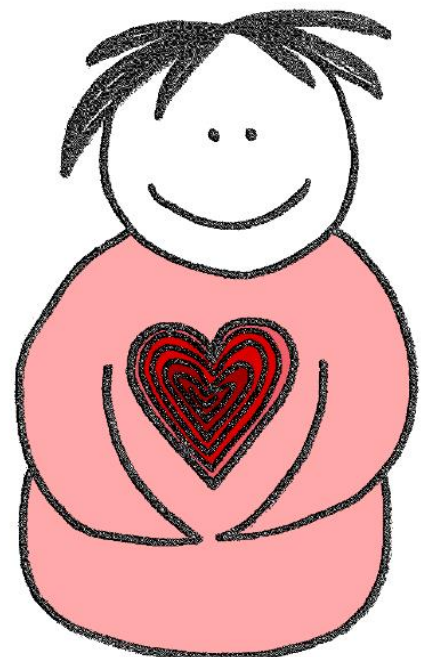
## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL

When you work with trauma you are at risk of "being infected by the trauma". You may experience the anger, frustration and pain of the women and children at the shelter as if they were your own feelings.

You take on their sense of hopelessness and helplessness, losing hope and belief in the possibility of change.

### Signs of stress at work:

- Working with other people often involves disagreements, and you may find that you may seriously disagree with a co-worker about a family and the best ways of helping it.
- You may find that you do not want to share your difficult cases with co-workers.
- You may relive traumas from your own life and find it hard to separate your own problems from those of the families.
- Your own family may begin to irritate and annoy you.



**Good advice to counteract stress at work:**

- Be aware of how you feel. Are you particularly affected by a current case or one in the past? Do you have work worries that make it hard to relax once you get home?
- Learn how you react when you have energy to spare and when you feel down.
- We need opportunities to discuss our difficult cases, either through supervision or with our co-workers.
- Focus on spare time activities that you enjoy and that help you to recharge your batteries.
- Everyone makes mistakes in their work, or feels that they could have done something differently or better. It's something we just have to live with.

## Useful resources

### USEFUL LINKS

#### LAW

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 entry into force 3 September 1981, in accordance with article 27(1). <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>



**Convention on the Rights of the Child**, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

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## FILMS AND VIDEOS

- **Take care of yourself as a professional** (three videos about secondary trauma / and how professionals can take care of themselves when working in the field of domestic violence). Arabic. <https://danner.dk/nyt/s-dan-h-ndterer-fagfolk-psykisk-belastning-3-metodefilm-p-arabisk>
- **Sinna Mann** (Norwegian film about domestic violence from the child's point of view). Available from NRK. In Norwegian.
- **Let's change the story: Violence against women in Australia – about equal rights and violence** (4:32). English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b62CU28ArPo>
- **TedEx Leslie Morgan Steiner 'Why domestic violence victims don't leave'** (Crazy Love). English: [https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie\\_morgan\\_steiner\\_why\\_domestic\\_violence\\_victims\\_don\\_t\\_leave](https://www.ted.com/talks/leslie_morgan_steiner_why_domestic_violence_victims_don_t_leave)
- **Consent – it's as simple as tea** (2:50). English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8>
- **Dear Daddy** (5:00) – sexism from a little girl's point of view. English <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP7OXDWof30>