

SCREENING TOOL for the detection of Domestic Violence, as a victim, perpetrator, or both

COUNSELOR GUIDE

Few people open up by themselves about domestic violence. Most people are however open to answer direct questions on that subject when they feel that they are in a welcoming, non-judgemental, understanding environment. Due to the diversity of violence dynamics, the focus should not be about looking for « an aggressor » and « a victim ». Instead, behaviours of violence and control, both inflicted by and subjected to, should be identified. The needs of the person can then be properly evaluated based on the answers. It is important to refrain from assuming a person's role in the violence dynamics based on their gender, age, sexual orientation, income, cultural background, etc.

SCREENING

If there are reasons to suspect some level of domestic violence (indications of fear, resentment, anger, lack of empathy, etc.), the interactions within the couple should be explored:

« In any relationships, conflicts can happen; how are conflicts handled in your current relationship? »

« Could you tell me about a specific recent conflict that you found especially hard or painful to go through? »

DETECTION

If a client discloses any aggression or control behaviours (as an aggressor or as a victim), the counsellor should ask if they could spend a moment to explore the extent and risks of this violence. Using the attached tool, the counsellor can explore the frequencies and types of violence, their dangerousness, and their impacts.

When a client discloses incidents of violence, several interventions can be beneficial:

Raise Awareness

« Is this the first time you discuss this situation? »

« Were you aware of the domestic violence you are subjected to – and/or you subject your partner to? »

Normalize What Victims Go Through

« Anyone can become a victim of violence or control in a relationship. »

Discuss Safety Plans

« What can you put in place to avoid being hurt? »

« What can you put in place to avoid hurting your partner? »

Inform the Client of their Rights

« Physical violence, sexual violence, death threats, harassment, or sequestration are criminal offenses. Exposition children to domestic violence is a form of psychological abuse that could require legal actions to protect the children. »

Take a Stand

« No one deserves to be subjected to violence. I strongly believe that violence is not a healthy way to deal with relationship or family problems. »

Encourage

« There are ways out of violence. Professional help can be extremely useful in achieving so. It can help you assess your situation, and find ways to feel better, safer, more confident, and achieve a better self-esteem. »

REFER

Inform the client of resources that could help them, and encourage the person to contact them. Ask the client if they would agree to talk to someone about their issues. Offer to call the resource with them today.

Respect the Pace of the Person

Domestic violence can create a lot of confusion and concerns. Those in turn can prevent making the best decisions. It is essential to be open and respect the pace of the client. Many factors influence why a relationship involving domestic violence perpetuates: trouble identifying and recognizing violence, attachment, fear of harming the partner, fear of others' reactions, wish to protect family integrity, need to protect children, lack of financial resources, scarcity of support resources, fear of judgement, etc.

EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES

If a risk of death or major injury is imminent, or if children safety is compromised, the client will be informed of exceptional measures being taken and the case will be followed-up with the appropriate resources.

FOLLOW UP WITH THE CLIENT

« Thank you for trusting me with that information. I would like us to meet again to discuss how your situation is progressing. »

SOS violence conjugale

1 800 363-9010

Information about resources to help with domestic violence

À cœur d'homme – Male support network for a society without violence

<https://www.acoeurdhomme.com/besoin-daide>

Contact information for resources helping people displaying violent behaviours in their couple,