

You wanna feel safe

Notes for trainers



Background

This resource was developed for use in VicHealth's Preventing violence against women Short Course. Due to popular demand VicHealth has chosen to make this resource available to other organisations and individuals who are working to build capacity around the primary prevention of violence against women.

The DVD and training exercise is based on the work of US violence prevention expert Jackson Katz (2006). As a means to illustrate the impact of gender on people's lives, the exercise is designed to demonstrate the different impact that the threat of sexual violence has on men's and women's lives and social freedoms.

Snapshot

The DVD has four chapters:

- **Chapter 1 *What men think*** features a range of men responding to the question "What do you do on a daily basis to manage your fear of being sexually assaulted?"
- **Chapter 2 *What women think*** features a range of women responding to the same question, "What do you do on a daily basis to manage your fear of being sexually assaulted?"
- **Chapter 3 *Change*** shows both men and women talking about what needs to change for women to feel safe in the world.
- **Chapter 4 *Pass on the wisdom*** shows men and women talking about what they would like young people to know.

Recommended use

It is recommended that the DVD and exercise be utilised within a broader program of education around violence against women and its prevention, by trainers with expert knowledge of these subjects.

This activity can be conducted in workplace settings, local government, community and professional development forums and workshops. It will assist in building workforce capacity and highlight the important link between gender equity and the prevention of violence against women, and raise awareness in communities where prevention initiatives are being introduced and implemented.

Who should use this resource?

It is recommended that trainers who deliver this exercise have:

- a thorough understanding of the gendered nature of violence and the social construction of gender
- knowledge of the impact, incidence and definition of family violence and sexual assault
- the ability to deal constructively with resistance to the key messages of the activity.

It is important that trainers present this exercise with confidence and have a clear understanding of its purpose.

NOTE: The trainer needs to be clear that **most of the violence experienced by women happens at home and that the fear of violence that women experience in public spaces is socially constructed.**

How to use this resource

The question, "What do you do on a daily basis to manage your fear of being sexually assaulted?" is likely to result in few responses from males, whereas for women it generates multiple responses and often responses that are shared.

For the exercise to be effective it is important not to get side tracked or involved in a debate with participants about violence that men may experience. If males respond, the trainer should quickly clarify whether the response is in fact related to their fear of being sexually assaulted or whether it relates to avoiding or limiting violence from other men. It is likely to be the latter.

Acknowledge that violence against men is not OK but that violence against women warrants specific attention due to its hidden nature. While men are most likely to experience violence at the hands of a stranger, women are most likely to experience violence from someone they know. Furthermore violence against women with the associated fear, lack of control/power and violation within intimate relationships has severe and persistent effects on women's physical, social and mental health with significant economic and health costs.

Purpose

The exercise vividly illustrates how our social conditioning creates inequality for women. It aims to assist participants to develop a greater appreciation of the extent to which women and men enjoy very different access to social freedoms e.g. how men and women participate in public space, how women are discouraged from exercising at night, walking down the street, or going out at night. The notion of gender inequity is highlighted using participants' own experiences, creating a moment of insight.

Participants should leave this exercise with a clear understanding that men and women enjoy different freedoms because of their gender.

Participants should also understand that despite their fear of violence in public spaces, women are more likely to experience violence in their home.

How to structure the session

1. Indicate that we are now going to do an exercise that has been used widely in a range of groups and organisations to consider the different experiences of women and men in relation to violence and safety. Divide the board in half and put the word 'men' at the top on one side and 'women' on the other.
2. Ask the men to share the things they do in everyday life to manage their fear of sexual assault. Record responses on the whiteboard. When men respond, the trainer should quickly clarify whether the response is in fact related to their fear of being sexually assaulted or whether it relates to avoiding or limiting violence from other men. Allow 5 minutes for this.

Don't give participants too long to think, it's important to get their immediate response to the question.

3. Now ask women participants to respond to the same question: **What do you do every day to manage your fear of sexual assault?** Record their responses on the other half of the board. Allow 5 minutes for this. Then ask participants "What do you notice about these two lists?"
4. Play chapters 1 and 2 of the DVD to see how other men and women responded to the question.

If the group is made up of mostly women or mostly men chapter 1 or 2 of the DVD can be used to present a wider range of responses.

5. Ask participants to discuss the questions below with a partner, and then to share their responses with another group. Allow 15 minutes. If there are no substantial differences in the response from men and women in the group, acknowledge this and ask them to reflect on the responses people gave in the DVD.

Discussion questions

- What are the differences between men's and women's responses?
- How do these differences impact the way men and women live their lives?
- How are women and men harmed by this?
- What do you think the purpose of this exercise was?

6. Inform participants that according to statistics (see below), **women are more likely to experience violence in their own home from someone they know than in public from a stranger.** Ask participants **"Why is it then that women are so fearful of violence in public spaces?"** Possible responses might be: public violence against women is more routinely reported in the paper and shown on television, women are told from a young age to think about safety by well-meaning family and friends, violence in the home is hidden by nature and a taboo subject.
7. Invite participants to share one or two key thoughts with the larger group and ask them **what would need to change for women to feel safe in their day to day lives.** Play chapters 3 and 4 of the DVD.

Other points

In the course of running this exercise a number of points may arise about the nature of violence against women:

- The threat of sexual violence is a powerful social control on women's behaviour and their access to public space.
- The emphasis on women being responsible for their own safety can subtly and not so subtly shift the blame for sexual assault from perpetrator to victim.
- When one woman is sexually assaulted in a particular suburb or park, many women feel afraid.
- Women are hyper-vigilant at certain times of day or night.

- Women's fear of sexual assault also has impacts for men; they have to live with being seen as threatening merely because of their gender. When a man walks behind a woman in the street she is often going to wonder if he is following her especially if she is on her own, there is no one else around or it is dark.
- Some women are aware of this and make a conscious decision not to restrict their behaviour due to fears of sexual violence when in public spaces. However these women are still managing their fear of sexual assault by rationalising it away.
- The kind of violence that is most often reported in the media (kidnapping, rape or assault perpetrated by strangers) is not the kind most often experienced by women.

Statistics

Statistics can provide useful evidence to support our understanding of violence against women. However it is important to remember that they present a limited picture of violence as they do not reflect the context in which the violence occurred or its impact on the people involved.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistic's *Personal Safety Survey* (2006):

The most frequent perpetrators of violence against women were:	
Male current or previous partners	31%
Male family members or friends	28%
Male strangers	15%

Violence against women most often occurred in the home (74%).

The most frequent perpetrators of violence against men were:	
Male strangers	65%
Male other known person	19%
Male family member or friend	10%

Violence against men most often occurred in the open (35%) or at licensed premises (31.4%).

Further reading

VicHealth – www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Visit the *preventing violence against women* section of the *publications* page for research summaries and reports.

Love: the good, the bad and the ugly – www.lovegoodbadugly.com

A relationships website for young people produced by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault – www.casa.org.au

Links to information on sexual assault and services for victim/survivors across Victoria.

White Ribbon Foundation – www.whiteribbon.org.au

A campaign to engage men in preventing violence against women.

AFL Victoria – Fair Game Respect Matters

www.respectmatters.com/webcontent

Good resources for preventing violence against women in a sports setting.

Crisis services

Please preface your training with a reminder that this training exercise is not the place for participants to disclose their own experiences or use of violence. However given the statistics it is highly likely that there will be members of the group that have personally experienced violence.

Should anyone disclose an experience of violence and need further support they can be referred to the following services:

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (Victoria) – 1800 015 188

Men's Referral Service (Victoria) – 1800 065 973

State-wide Sexual Assault Crisis Line (Victoria) – 1800 806 292

If you are not located in Victoria we recommend finding contact numbers for the appropriate services in your area before you deliver this activity.



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