

Emerge: A Group Education Model for Abusers

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History

Until Emerge's founding in 1977 as the nation's first batterer intervention program, notions of men taking responsibility for their violence remained untested. The initial emphasis of the battered women's movement had been on calling attention to domestic violence, redefining it as a crime against women, and promoting safety and justice for women. (Schechter, 1982) But many victim advocates argued that men must join women in this effort, not only to communicate the message that violence against women was a human rights issue of equal importance to men, but also to play a unique role in educating and confronting men who abuse women. Emerge was established at the behest of women who had founded the first battered women's programs in Boston. Hotline staff at Transition House and Respond were receiving an increasing number of calls from batterers; some requesting information about their partner's whereabouts and others requesting help for themselves. Since it was not their mission to work with men, staff from these programs publicized a request for men to establish a program for batterers. Nearly all the ten men who attended the first planning sessions of Emerge were friends or relatives of workers at Transition House and Respond. While most of the founders were social workers or counselors, the others included a teacher, a community organizer, a lawyer and a cab driver.

The founding members of Emerge committed their first 6-12 months to studying the issue of domestic violence as a first step in formulating an intervention program. A review of the literature revealed that very little had been written about domestic violence. While several books and articles had been published which specifically addressed men who batter, nearly all of these put forth theories which mitigated men's responsibility for violence. In "The Wifebeater's Wife: A Study of Family Interaction", published in 1964, the authors concluded that the majority of the 37 battering men they interviewed were "provoked" or otherwise incited to become violent by "manipulative", "domineering", "Irritating" or "sexually frigid" wives. (Snell, Rosenwald & Robey, 1964) Three separate articles about batterers, published in 1977, all advanced the notion that batterers were not fully responsible for their violence. Faulk (1977) found that the most prevalent type of batterer was a "dependent, passive type", who "characteristically gave a good deal of concern and time trying to please and pacify his wife, who tended to be querulous and

demanding”. Geller and Walsh (1977) concluded that battering will not stop “unless both partners are involved in counseling”. Shainess (1977) asserted that men “lash out from frustration” and typically exhibit “poor ability to tolerate frustration”.

By 1979 however, several published articles set forth a different view of batterers; one held that men’s violence toward women was not provoked or irrational behavior, but was behavior which served as an instrument of control. (Warrior, 1976; Martin, 1976) In studying actual cases of domestic violence, Dobash and Dobash (1979) concluded that the use of violence against wives is “an attempt to bring about a desired state of affairs.... When a husband attacks his wife he is either chastising her for challenging his authority or for failing to live up to his expectations or attempting to discourage future unacceptable behavior.”

While these latter writings were helpful, the most critical sources of information for the founders of Emerge were battered women themselves. Staff from the three existing battered women’s programs in Boston encouraged battered women to share their experiences with Emerge – and dozens did so. From this testimony arose an understanding of battering as pattern of coercive behavior that included physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse. Just as compelling as the actual abuse was the “re-victimization” that these women had experienced at the hands of police, courts, medical centers, and social service agencies. It became apparent that by minimizing domestic violence and by discouraging or blaming women who sought help, mainstream institutions often colluded with batterers to avoid accountability.

Philosophy

The Emerge philosophy about battering behavior can be summarized as follows:

- Battering is not merely physical violence but a range of coercive behaviors that often consists of physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse. These behaviors serve to undermine the victim’s self-esteem and independence.
- Battering is purposeful behavior. Rather than being impulsive, spontaneous, or irrational, battering is intentional behavior that serves to gain and maintain control in relationships and other social interactions. The individual batterer need not be fully conscious that he uses violence to gain control; in fact he may believe that he is not in control and that others are controlling him. Whatever his stated intentions, violence is always an attempt to force the other person to do, or not do, something. (Adams, 1989) Except in cases of self-defense or insanity,

violence is always a choice made by the person committing the violence.

- Battering is learned behavior. According to social learning theory, behavior is learned in two ways; through modeling and positive reinforcement. (Bandura,1977) Men's behavior, attitudes, and expectations concerning women are most often originally influenced by how their fathers (or other male caretakers) treated their mothers. These behaviors and attitudes are additionally shaped by male peer pressure as well as by societal messages concerning gender roles and the legitimacy of violence as a means of resolving differences. (Adams,1988) Violence can also be 'positively reinforced' when it enables a person to establish control and dominance in his intimate relationships. While violence also leads to negative outcomes, such as the loss of closeness, some men come to prioritize control over closeness.

- Domestic violence occurs within a social context of male dominance over women in social, familial, institutional and economic spheres. In male-female interpersonal relations, male dominance is shaped by traditional sex roles in which men come to expect subservience and deference from women.

Sexism does not exist by itself, however, but intermeshes with other forms of oppression such as racism, classism, ageism and heterosexism. All of these forms of oppression serve to reinforce hierarchical divisions and to devalue categories of people. Another integral aspect to the social context to domestic violence is the social acceptance of violence as a means to achieve ends. The widespread use of violence in international relations, workplaces, popular media, and in families (eg. use of physical discipline), make violence and coercion seem normal, natural, and in the case of popular media portrayals, even glamorous.

Ability and Motivation for Change

We believe that batterers can change, that they all have the ability, and with some, the desire to change their behavior and attitudes toward those they abuse. We believe that batterers know how to be non-abusive in most situations, yet choose to be abusive toward their partners and children in situations that benefit themselves in the short term. For the majority of batterers, most of their abuse is focused on their intimate partner and/or children rather than a generalized violent response to everyone in their life. We believe that batterers intervention programs work best for participants whose violence is primarily intimate partner violence. Many batterers conduct some, if not most, of their nonfamilial relationships in a respectful manner, which indicates that they already know how to practice respectful treatment of others when they *decide* to. We believe

that batterers decide that it is socially acceptable to use abuse and control with their partner and/or children in order to get what they want in the immediate situation. They believe that the short-term gain is more important than the long-term losses they might experience because of the abuse. Batterer intervention programs should therefore challenge batterers' belief systems and offer alternatives to their destructive beliefs. Non-abusive responses are based on the beliefs that abuse of a partner and child are not acceptable, that respect is not predicated on the responses of others, and that the long term costs of abuse are high to both the abuser and the abused.

While we recognize that most of our clients are externally motivated to seek our services, particularly in the beginning stages, we believe that ultimately each client must develop internal motivation to make any *lasting* changes. We recognize that people are motivated by different factors. Some of these include anxiety, excitement, pleasure and the anticipation of positive experiences, and the memory of a positive or negative experience. Some people believe that pain and negative memories or anticipation are more effective motivators of behavior, and some studies of operant conditioning in laboratory animals seem to bear this out. (McMahon & McMahon, 1982) Many motivational speakers believe that people will do much more to avoid pain than to gain pleasure, if both factors are equally balanced. (Robbins, 1991) In contrast, some authors believe that internal motivation comes from methods that are based more on treating people with respect, rather than conditioning them to respond based on fear or pleasure. (McGregor, 1960; Perlmutter & Monty, 1977) In his book, *Punished by Rewards* (1993), Alfie Kohn suggests a new approach to thinking about internally motivated change, since the cultural dialogue has been dominated by the carrot/stick dichotomy.

Kohn suggests that "authentic motivation" occurs in a context of "the *collaboration* that defines the context of work, the *content* of the tasks, and the extent to which people have some *choice* about what they do and how they do it. (Kohn, 1993) Emerge's philosophy fits within Kohn's motivational framework since we believe that the alternative to collaborative group work is authoritarian leadership that teaches more abuse. We further believe that the educational content of the groups must resonate with the group members, and be representative of their life challenges, whether or not they choose to act and make positive changes. Until abusive men are presented with the reality that *they* choose their behavior, they will invariably abdicate their responsibility, blame others, and think of themselves as victims.

Batterers who continue to be non-abusive (or in some cases, less abusive) after they leave a program will do so on an ongoing basis because of internal motivation. In other words, they have gone beyond changing because they *have* to, to changing because they *want* to. Anyone who is

not being abusive only because they are responding to external controls is in danger of re-abusing. They often do not work on changing the negative thinking or ‘self-talk’ that perpetuates their belief system that they have the right to be abusive. They are merely tolerating behavior that makes them want to abuse until such time that they can once again get away with it. This time will inevitably occur, so to prevent this, we believe that batterers must work on changing their belief system which tells them that they are entitled to abuse someone, given the right set of circumstances.

We agree with Kohn’s argument that carrot approaches to change, even so-called positive approaches, ultimately demean the individual because they assume that a reward actually appeals to the same selfish desire to have others make decisions about how one should act. Kohn sees reward and punishment as opposite sides of the same coin, which ultimately assumes the worst of people and appeals only to their own sense of self-interest, rather than also to their ability to respect others.

We recognize that we cannot change batterers but can only provide information and documentation in a manner that does not jeopardize the safety of victims. By teaching about the effects of abuse, stressing personal responsibility, and helping to identify the elements and benefits of respectful behavior, we can help batterers to *choose* nonviolence, but it will always remain their choice.

A unique aspect of the Emerge model is that it provides opportunities for each group member to practice accountability by discussing his own abusive and controlling behaviors and by receiving feedback from others. Emerge clients are expected to recognize and to critically examine their own patterns of abuse and control. This contrasts with other approaches that only require clients to identify various kinds of abusive behavior in general. When abusive men are merely required to recognize and analyze abusive behavior in *others*, or in the abstract, it does not necessarily lead to recognizing or confronting their *own* abusive behavior. In fact, some simply become better at judging other peoples’ behavior, while continuing to justify or rationalize their own.

In our view, the effectiveness of any approach that promotes personal responsibility and accountability depends on men giving detailed reports of their ongoing interactions with partners and children. It also depends upon their receiving meaningful and constructive feedback about this behavior from fellow group members. Both of these things have to be actively promoted in groups, since abusive men often do not give helpful self-reports or feedback. Without active prompting and/or coaching from group leaders, abusive men tend to give superficial or highly

skewed reports of their interactions with their partners. Superficial reports such as “things were fine; we had no problems this past week” or “we had a few conflicts but nothing serious”; do not give enough information to allow for meaningful feedback from others. Skewed reports such as “She was on my case all week” or “She yelled at me for no reason” are designed to put oneself in the best possible light and one’s partner in the worst possible light.

Program Approach

Clients are asked to attend Emerge for a minimum of 40 group sessions. The program is divided into two phases: an eight-session First Stage, followed by a Second Stage which clients are expected to attend for at least 32 additional sessions. Group sessions are weekly and of two hours duration. Approximately 75% of Emerge’s clients are court-referred and it is a condition of their probation that they attend the minimum 40 sessions and satisfy all other conditions for completion of the program. The remaining 25% of Emerge clients are referred by the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and other agencies, or are self-referred. Voluntary clients are also asked to attend a minimum of 40 sessions. Those voluntary clients who state that they don’t wish to attend 40 sessions are asked to attend the eight-session First Stage in order to sample the program and make a more informed decision about whether they would benefit from additional time in the program. All clients are told that they must attend at least 40 sessions to be eligible to complete the program, however.

Groups at Emerge are co-facilitated by a male and a female group leader. One advantage of this approach is that abusive men are more likely to exhibit their negative attitudes toward women in the presence of a female group leader. Particularly in the beginning stages of the program, they are more apt to interrupt, challenge or ignore their female group leaders. Previously, when Emerge groups were co-facilitated by men only, it was more difficult to identify their abusive or disrespectful behavior toward women since they less frequently exhibited these behaviors or attitudes toward male leaders and often came across as friendly and eager to learn. Abusive men’s more negative responses to female group leaders are helpful since we can call attention to them as they are happening in group. These group behaviors can then be likened to the men’s negative actions and attitudes toward their partners. Another advantage of male-female co-facilitation is that it offers a model for male-female cooperation and sharing of leadership. We believe this modeling to be of equal importance to the content of our educational curriculum in terms of what we are teaching our clients. Ideally, this modeling enables clients to observe how men can listen to, share power, solve problems, negotiate time, and communicate with women. Emerge therefore devotes considerable attention, in staff meetings and supervision sessions, to

helping group leaders consider how well they are modeling male-female co-leadership. (Cayouette, 1996)

Group leaders at Emerge are not required to have professional degrees, since we believe that this condition would limit the pool of otherwise qualified and effective group leaders. All group leaders are required to meet the Massachusetts Certification Standards of having received 24 hours of initial training on batterer interventions, as well as an additional 12 hours of group observation and debriefings. Group leaders must have been free of violence in their personal lives for a minimum of three years. (Massachusetts, 1995) Those who have been violent, must also have completed a certified batterer intervention program.

To assess abusiveness in the personal lives of job applicants, Emerge requires their consent for checking their criminal record, and asks them to do a self-inventory of abusive and controlling behaviors in their intimate relationships. We do not expect prospective group leaders to have been free of all controlling behaviors but to be aware of these behaviors, take responsibility for them, and be committed to a process of self-examination concerning this. For a personal reference, Emerge also requires group leaders to include their partner, or most recent partner.

Collaboration and Contact with Battered Women's Programs

Emerge participates in numerous collaborations and special projects with local battered women's programs. These include preventive education projects aimed at young people, joint trainings of criminal justice, social service and health care workers, special initiatives aimed at organizing religious leaders and congregations, and community outreach and education efforts. The following is a brief summary of some of these collaborations:

- Emerge and the Waltham Support Committee for Battered Women (WSCBW) jointly facilitate five-session information groups for parents of teen boys who attend our adolescent perpetrator groups. WSCBW and Emerge also provide joint supervision for supervisors of the perpetrator groups.
- Respond provides guest speakers and organizes a panel for Emerge's Counseling Abusers Course. Together, Emerge and Respond are also designing and implementing a special curriculum on assessing dangerousness for training of domestic violence teams in various states.
- Transition House and Emerge co-founded the Dating Violence Intervention Project in 1987; a project which provides preventive education and peer leadership training on teen dating violence. Emerge and Transition House have provided joint trainings to the Cambridge Police Department, the Community Health Centers, and to targeted under-served communities in Cambridge.
- The Asian Task Force on Domestic Violence and Emerge have jointly planned and participated in many

community organizing and education initiatives aimed at the Vietnamese and Cambodian communities of Greater Boston.

- Emerge has worked closely with Jane Doe, Inc., the coalition of battered women's and sexual assault centers in Massachusetts, on public education and public policy, through the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, Employers Against Domestic Violence, and many other forums.

- * The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center and Emerge have jointly provided many classroom presentations about sexual assault and dating violence to college students and have also collaborated on a community education and mentoring project for adults and youth in Chelsea.

Since 1985, Emerge has contracted with local battered women's programs to observe its groups and to provide written feedback, particularly in terms of our potential impact on victims. The state of Massachusetts now requires all certified batterer intervention programs to contract with their local battered women's programs for this kind of group observation and feedback.

Intake and Assessment Procedures

Each client first attends a one-session Program Orientation where Emerge staff explain the program, answer his questions, have him complete intake forms, including a Program Agreement, and assign him to an eight-session First Stage Group. The Program Agreement includes an informed consent that Emerge will be in contact with his victim(s) to gain her perspective about his abusive behavior and to inform her about his status in the program. When the victim is an ex-partner and he is in a new relationship, Emerge requires having contact with both the former and the current partner. Men who refuse permission for Emerge to speak to their victims and partner(s) are not allowed to enroll in the program. The Program Agreement also includes a Release of Information for Emerge to share information about the client with the other agencies and service providers that are identified.

The Emerge Intake Form includes questions that relate to potential lethality. Clients are asked about their access to weapons, whether they have attempted or made threats to kill their partner or themselves, whether they have stalked or spied upon their partner, and how much alcohol and drugs they use. New clients are also asked to describe their most serious and most recent acts of abuse, as well as their violence to any past partners.

Batterers are evaluated in the First Stage of the program that provides basic education to men about domestic violence. This enables men to make more informed decisions about whether they are abusive and whether they would benefit from a batterer intervention program. Exposing men to the first stage of our program also enables Emerge to assess each client's level of abusiveness

and dangerousness, as well as his willingness to disclose abuse and to take the first steps towards confronting it. Observation of each man's response to the curriculum, along with recording his self-reports about violence and use of substances, also provides an opportunity for Emerge to assess whether there are additional problems, such as substance abuse, mental health problems, learning impairments, or other problems which warrant referral for other services. Whenever a client is involved with another service provider, Emerge requires the client's permission to speak to the other providers. Group leaders maintain regular contact with other service providers to maximize the possibility that goals and services for the client are complementary.

First Stage Groups

First Stage Groups at Emerge are designed to help men define domestic abuse, identify its various forms (eg. physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse), understand how it affects adult victims as well as to child witnesses, recognize that violence is a choice, and identify respectful ways of communicating. During this phase, each man is required (at least two times) to describe his most recent and his most serious acts of abuse, as well as any additional acts of abuse he has committed. He is additionally required to give a weekly report (called a short check-in) that includes whether he has had any abusive or controlling behaviors toward his partner or ex-partner during the past week, whether he has used alcohol and drugs (and how much), and whether he has had any access to weapons. Emerge has found that men are more willing to recognize and disclose past and ongoing abuse when asked within a structured educational context. Following an educational exercise in which abuse and related issues are discussed in a more general way, group leaders ask men to describe their own abusive behavior. Typically, some men spontaneously disclose their abusive behavior during these educational exercises, and this makes it less threatening for the more reticent men to follow suit.

There is revolving admission to Emerge First Stage groups; clients can join at any point. Since the following eight topics are repeated in sequence, it does not matter when the client begins, since he will ultimately be exposed to each lesson.

1) What counts as violence?

(identification of the various forms of physical abuse and intimidation)

2) Negative versus positive self-talk

(identification of the cognitive cues to violence, eg. anger-arousing thoughts that precede an incident of abuse)

- 3) Effects of abuse on women
(identification of how violence affects the victim and the relationship)
- 4) Quick fixes versus long term solutions
(identification of what actions and attitudes are needed to repair the damage caused by battering)
- 5) Psychological, sexual and economic abuse
(identification of various forms of psychological, sexual and economic abuse as tactics of control)
- 6) Abusive versus respectful communication: part I
(identification of the differences between abusive and respectful ways of communicating with one's partner)
- 7) Abusive versus respectful communication, part II
- 8) Effects of partner abuse on children
(identification of how exposure of partner abuse affects children at various ages)

Communication with Courts and Child Protective Agencies

Within eight weeks of each man's entry in the program, Emerge provides a narrative written report, with recommendations, to courts and other referral sources. This report includes:

- summary of his attendance and level of participation in the group
- his accounts of domestic abuse, as well as evidence from other sources such as police reports and court records
- flagging of other problems such as substance abuse, child abuse or neglect, learning impairments, past and current legal, mental health, and employment problems
- documentation of any risk indicators for lethality
- whether the client has met the conditions for completion of the First Stage
- whether the client needs evaluation and/or treatment for other problems while attending Emerge

This letter informs the court whether the man has completed his First Stage Group, must repeat particular sessions in the First Stage, or is being terminated. In cases when the client exhibits disruptive behavior or noncompliance with attendance or participation requirements prior to the eight week point, his probation officer is contacted immediately, and the client may be terminated.

Following the initial narrative report, Emerge provides a monthly written report to probation concerning the client's attendance, self-reports of abuse, participation and progress. These reports also identify any problems or deficiencies in the client's level of participation or cooperation with program requirements. Problems might include poor attendance or tardiness,

not paying the program fee, being disruptive or under-participating in group, not completing assignments, or violating a program policy, such as the alcohol/drug use policy or the requirement to promptly report any new acts of abuse. In some cases, clients are placed on program probation for a period of 4-8 weeks, during which time they must make improvements in the area of concern in order to remain in the program. Probation officers are informed of this program probation status whenever it is in effect. For all clients who are court-referred, Emerge requests copies of their criminal record and police reports from the client's probation officer.

Emerge provides the same level and frequency of reporting about client progress to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS), the state's child protective agency, for those clients who are referred by, or involved with, DSS. Typically, clients become involved with DSS following a report of child abuse or neglect. During the child abuse investigation, DSS may also identify or suspect partner abuse on the part of the father or stepfather, and refer these men to Emerge for assessment or treatment. From DSS, Emerge requests a copy of the client's service plan. Emerge staff regularly speak to the DSS caseworkers by phone to improve case coordination. Emerge receives reimbursement for services to some DSS-referred clients. In these cases, Emerge staff attend a six week client review meeting with other service providers. The client is invited to attend this meeting.

Contact with victims

An additional element of Emerge's assessment of each client's violence and dangerousness is our initial and ongoing contact with his partner/ex-partner. Within one week of each client's entry in Emerge, we assign a partner contact staff person (usually someone who currently or formerly worked as a battered women's advocate) to contact his victim, and if applicable, his current partner. This initial contact is done over the telephone and typically lasts 1-2 hours. Before the interview begins, partners/ex-partners are told that the information they provide will be kept confidential except in cases when they disclose child or elder abuse, make a direct threat to imminently harm someone, or if the court orders disclosure of the information. In completing the seven-page partner contact form, we ask women to describe the man's most recent and most serious acts of violence, as well as any other forms of abuse that have occurred. The partner contact form includes questions which relate to heightened potential for dangerousness, such as whether he has attempted or threatened to kill her or himself, frequently abused substances, engaged in any surveillance or stalking of her, or shown signs of extreme jealousy. Each partner is also asked how frequently, if at all, and under what conditions, she wished to have contact with the abuser, and whether he is respecting her wishes about this.

The partner is also asked about what steps she has taken to seek help or increase her own and her children's safety. The partner contact staff provides resource information and makes referrals for victim support and legal advocacy services. We consider this to be critically importance since we've found that the majority of partners that we contact have not previously called a battered women's program. While we will provide some support and validation to victims, we do not want her to view us as her sole source of support and information about safety options.

Following this initial contact, Emerge group leaders initiate follow-up telephone contact, approximately every 8 weeks, with each partner who is willing to have such contact. The purpose of this follow-up contact is to inquire about any ongoing abuse, get her input about his progress, and further assess her safety. Often, victims raise new concerns that were not raised during our initial contact with them. For instance, partners often raise concerns about the abuser's contact with the children. This input from partners serves to guide Emerge's interventions by helping us to design goals and strategies that are specific to each man. Information obtained from partners is not disclosed to Emerge clients.

Emerge has found partner contacts to be helpful for most victims. A 1995 survey of 20 partners/ex-partners of former Emerge clients, who had either completed or been terminated from the program at least two years previously, revealed that nearly all the women felt that they had benefited from their contact with Emerge. The most commonly cited benefits were that the contact:

- helped them feel more safe and more able to recognize danger
- validated their perceptions of abuse and helped to lessen their feelings of self-blame
- provided referrals that helped them and their children
- improved their ability to recognize their rights within the relationship (for women who stayed in the relationship)
- helped them become more aware of continued abuse of themselves and/or the children and to feel more empowered to take steps to end the relationship (for women who ended the relationship)

Some women who had ended their relationships with their abusive partners said that they benefited from receiving copies of our letters to the court concerning the client's progress, or lack of progress. Emerge's documentation of clients' ongoing abuse, poor program participation, and/or program termination proved to be useful to women who were involved in court actions with their ex-partners related to divorce, child custody, or child visitation.

Second Stage Groups

To attend a Second Stage Group, a client must attend all eight sessions of the First Stage, admit that he has been abusive, show that he is willing to discuss his abusive behavior, and be up-to-date on program fees. Program fees range from \$20-60 per session, based on the client's income. Scholarships are available for indigent clients who cannot afford the minimum fee of \$20. Indigent clients may also perform community service in lieu of their fee.

While clients must admit that they have been abusive to some degree, it is not a condition for entry into a Second Stage Group that they stop minimizing or making excuses for their abusive behavior. We believe it is unrealistic to expect clients to accept responsibility for their violence within eight weeks. The Second Stage Group is designed to help men recognize all their forms of abuse, take responsibility for these behaviors, and practice more respectful ways of relating to their partners and children. Only clients who refuse to admit *any* violence are excluded from Second Stage Groups. Men who refuse to admit violence of any kind are terminated and referred back to the court for re-sentencing.

The Second Stage of the Emerge Program differs from the First Stage in the following ways:

- groups are smaller (limited to 12 members, compared to 15 in the First Stage)
- group membership is more stable since there are fewer arrivals and departures. New members are added to replace those completing or being terminated from the program.
- the agenda is less didactic and more interactive. Group members are expected to actively participate by reporting their own ongoing interactions with partners and children and by giving feedback to other group members.
- groups are structured to establish individualized goals and feedback for each member
- there is more emphasis on group member's attitudes and expectations concerning their partners
- there is an expectation that group members identify all abusive behaviors and recognize alternative behaviors
- group leaders actively give feedback to group members about the quality of their participation.
- probation officers and other referrals sources receive monthly reports of each client's progress

The curriculum of Second Stage Groups at Emerge consists of educational exercises which are relevant to all members, as well as regular 'turns' to individual members. The following is a brief description of each element of the Second Stage curriculum.

Check-Ins and Individual Turns

A turn is usually 15-30 minutes allocated to a particular member to complete an assignment or to receive feedback from the entire group about his behavior outside or within the group. Often, turns are assigned based on what men have reported during the weekly 'check-ins'.

Check-ins occur at the beginning of each session. Each member 'checks-in' by giving a report that must minimally include the following:

- Was I abusive or controlling to my partner/ex-partner? If so, how ?.
- Did I have any conflict with my partner, regardless of whether I was abusive or controlling? If so, what was it about?
- Was my partner/ex-partner upset at me, or was I upset at her, regardless of whether there was any conflict?
- Were there any significant things that happened, or any significant discussions about anything?
- Was I abusive or controlling behaviors toward the children?
- Were there any conflicts with the children?
- Were there any significant things that happened concerning the children?
- Was I violent or abusive to anyone else (eg. relatives, co-workers, strangers)? If so, how ?
- Did I have any alcohol or drugs during the past week? If so, when and how much?

(additional questions for clients who do not live with their partners):

- Did I have any contact with my partner or ex-partner? If so, when and where?
- Did I have any contact with my children?
- What did I do with my children during the past week?
- Did I date or have sexual relations with anyone else during the past week?
- Was there any abusive or controlling behavior toward that person?

Generally, 20-30 minutes is spent at the beginning of each group session for group member check-ins.

If a particular member has reported an incident of abuse or control toward his partner or children, group leaders will assign a turn to this member during that session or during a future session (since turns may have already been assigned to others for that session or group time may have been allocated for an educational exercise).

Besides being assigned 2-3 turns while in the Second Stage to receive feedback about his abusive behavior, each group member additionally participates in a Relationship History, Goal-Setting, Role Play, mid-point evaluation, and end-point evaluation. The following is a brief description of each.

Relationship History

Within 2-3 sessions of a man's entry in the Second Stage, he is asked to do a relationship history in the group. This consists of his describing, in sequence, each significant intimate relationship he has had. For each relationship, he is asked to address:

- Her name
- Your and her age when the relationship began
- What attracted you to her?
- Were you abusive or controlling in any way?
- At what point, if any, did you have sex, and did you pressure her in any way?
- Did you argue, and if so, what about?
- Whether there were any children. If so, does he have contact with them now?
- How did the relationship end? Were you abusive during or after the break-up?
Do you still have contact with her now?

While the person is relating his relationship history, a group leader or another group member chosen by group leaders summarizes his responses on newsprint. Upon its completion, group leaders ask the person and other group members if they see any patterns to this history. Common patterns which have emerged from relationship histories include his jealousy or possessiveness, difficulty accepting the ending of relationships, preferring younger partners, sexual coercion, having many relationships, frequent infidelity, or relationships revolving around alcohol or drugs. Once these patterns have been discussed, the person who has done the relationship history is asked to think about the goals that he'd like to establish for the remainder of his time in the program. He will then be assigned an additional turn, within the next 2-3 sessions, to complete his Goal-Setting assignment.

Goal-Setting

Each person completing this assignment is asked to begin by describing his abusive behavior toward the partner for whom he is attending the program. This account should include descriptions of his most recent and most serious incidents of abuse, descriptions of other serious incidents, and an estimate of the number of incidents, including the frequency of his psychological, verbal and economic abuse. The member is then asked to develop and state 3 goals that he will work on while in the program. These will be listed on his Goal Sheet (usually on a piece of newsprint which is posted on the wall during each group session) Besides the goals that he chooses, there are three standard goals that must be included: "No physical abuse of my partner(s)", "No physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of my own or my partner's children", and "Take responsibility for my abuse toward my partner (use her name) by describing it fully in group"

The group member is asked to explain each goal he generates in terms of his past behavior and planned change in future behavior. Each goal must relate to behavior that is solely within his own control and does not depend upon the participation of his partner. He is asked how each

goal fits within his partner/ex-partner's wishes for their contact or relationship. After the person has stated his goals, other group members are asked to give their suggestions for goals, based on their having heard his Relationship History and his accounts of abuse. These posted goals become a visual point of reference for group member's ongoing feedback to each other. We ask each member to keep a copy of his goals to take outside the group, but caution him about sharing these goals with his partner (unless she expresses an interest for him to do so).

Role Plays

Some clients may be asked to re-enact one example of abusive or controlling behavior toward their partner by doing a role play in the group. Usually, one of the group leaders plays the part of the victim. Prior to the reenactment, the person is asked to describe his own and his partner's behavior (from both his own and his partner's perspective) during the incident to be role-played. Role plays help to show group members and group leaders how each person's abusive behavior looks. We've found that role plays often serve to bring out important aspects of each person's abuse which had not been identified when the person simply described his behavior. For instance, role plays help to bring out one's tone of voice, choice of words, facial expressions, body posture, and sequence of behavior. Abusive behavior is therefore reconstructed in a less filtered and more complete manner, enabling fellow group members to better identify its damaging effects on the victim.

Following the initial enactment of an abusive incident, group members are asked to identify each element of abuse and control that they observed and to discuss its likely impact on the victim. The abuser is then asked to re-play the incident with the goal of not repeating his abusive or controlling behavior. Instead, he is asked to use non-abusive language and behavior. Often, it takes 3-4 tries, with group feedback and coaching after each attempt, before the person is able to show completely noncoercive behavior.

Role plays may also be suggested by group leaders for enactment of scenarios that have not yet happened, such as apologizing to one's partner for a particular act of abuse. Role plays may also be used to give group members experience in responding to angry or unpredictable responses from partners.

Self-evaluations

Clients are asked to evaluate their own progress as they approach the mid and the end points of

the program. One week prior to this evaluation, the group member is given a Self-Evaluation Form to complete at home. This asks him to describe his most recent act of violence and to write how he would respond differently now, given the same circumstances. The person is asked to address specific questions about how he has taken responsibility for his violence, which respectful behaviors he is showing toward his partner/ex-partner, and which forms of self-care he is using. Examples of respectful behavior include listening, trying to understand her point of view, respecting her independence and differences, and taking responsibility for the children and the household chores, etc. Examples of self-care include not abusing alcohol or drugs, actively seeking employment or seeking better jobs, developing one's own interests or hobbies, developing friendships with those who will support one's nonviolence, taking classes, self-reflecting, reducing stress, and making other kinds of changes. After the person has addressed these questions, fellow group members are asked to give their feedback by discussing how much they agree with that person's self-evaluation, saying how much they think he has met his established goals, and making recommendations. Group leaders also give their input. The purpose of the midpoint evaluation is to help the person being evaluated to identify continued areas for improvement while in the program. The purpose of the end point evaluation is to help the person identify whether he has met the conditions for program completion, fulfilled his established goals, and if so, how he will maintain and build upon these changes in the future.

The conditions for program completion at Emerge follow the minimum conditions stated in the Massachusetts Guidelines and Standards for the Certification of Batterer Intervention Programs. (Massachusetts, 1995) These include that the person:

- has remained violence free for no less than twenty consecutive weeks prior to discharge
- has accepted responsibility for his violent behavior; ceased to blame the victim for violence; and recognized the adverse effects of his/her violent acts
- has completed the program according to the intervention contract and has met the financial obligation for the intervention

While each client of Emerge is expected to establish individual goals which exceed the minimum conditions for program completion, such as 'become a better listener', 'respect my partner', 'stop all controlling behaviors', we view these as aspirational goals and not as absolute conditions for program completion. Realistically speaking, very few clients are able to meet these higher standards within the 40-session timeframe. More typically, clients at this point have met the minimum conditions and shown some progress toward these higher standards. Those who have not met the minimum conditions have usually been previously advised that they are not on course for completing the program. They are advised that their failure to meet these minimum conditions may result in their being terminated or extended in the program until they have met

these conditions. Those who have only met minimum conditions, with little or no progress toward the higher standards, are usually asked to make a commitment to continue for a designated period, eg. 2-4 months at Emerge. If they decline to do so, the court or other referral source is given a narrative final report that summarizes the ongoing problems and states that they have completed only the minimal conditions of the program.

Educational Curriculum

Group leaders in Second Stage Groups at Emerge intersperse individual turns with educational exercises that are of relevance to everyone in the group. The Emerge Second Stage Curriculum consists of a menu of 10-15 educational exercises that group leaders choose from in consultation with their supervisor. Which exercises they choose depends upon which issues (eg. jealousy, difficulty accepting partners' wishes to end relationships, dishonesty, problems with taking responsibility, not listening, hypercritical thinking, are most prevalent in the particular group. The following selected list of these educational units is intended only as a broad outline.

1) Accountability

(identifies responsibility-taking for abusers and shows members how to develop an accountability plan)

2) Bargaining about giving up abuse

(identifies various ways that batterers bargain about giving up abuse and helps them to recognize the benefits of becoming non abusive)

3) Historical perspective – attitudes toward women

(helps members to identify how historical oppression of women and minorities contributes to their own expectations and behavior concerning women)

4) Ending relationships respectfully

(identifies the benefits of ending relationships non-abusively and the costs of doing so in an abusive fashion)

5) Jealousy

(identifies the damaging effects of jealousy on one's partner, one's relationship and oneself)

6) Listening and giving feedback

(helps members to recognize the value and the components of active listening and giving feedback; helps to identify various roadblocks to open communication)

7) Dishonesty

(helps members to recognize the effects of dishonesty and to identify their own ways of being dishonest, such as active and passive lying)

8) Focusing on the positive attributes of your partner or ex-partner
(helps members to re-balance what is often a skewed picture of their partners/ex-partners)

9) Self-care
(helps members to see the benefits of self-care and to establish a self-care plan)

10) The bully
(reacquaints members with the experience of being victimized by others, usually as a child, and helps them to recognize how long lasting the effects can be)

11) Repeat of various First Stage Exercises
(review of particular exercises from the first stage, with more emphasis on helping members to consider how this information relates to them)

Group Interaction

The educational activities listed above are designed as interactive exercises rather than as didactic presentations. Usually, group leaders begin the exercise by giving a brief introduction of the topic, followed by a description of the purpose and steps of the activity. For instance, in introducing Activity I about Accountability (Emerge, 2000), group leaders might say:

Tonight, we're going to be doing an exercise about accountability. Accountability is a group of behaviors and attitudes that are part of a process of change for a violent person. It is not only about admitting your past violence and abuse, or paying money to compensate for damages or injuries. Accountability includes stopping current abuse and dealing with the consequences that arise with the abused person. Accountability isn't about "rolling over", giving up or being punished. It's about beginning to make amends for a situation you've caused, and doing so in ways that aren't always easy or quick. Remember the exercise in the First Stage about quick fixes? You shouldn't expect to be rewarded by your partner or ex-partner for being accountable. It's simply taking responsibility for damage created by your past abuse and trying to repair the damage. The purpose of this exercise is to help everyone understand what accountability can look like in your particular situation. We're going to be dividing you into four small groups for this exercise and we'll give each group three questions to answer. The three questions we want each small group to address are written here on the board. Each group will brainstorm and then discuss answers to the following questions:

- 1) How can you admit your abusive behavior in a way that takes responsibility for it?
- 2) What are the ongoing effects of abuse on the victim's life? Give examples relevant to the following areas:

- the relationship
- the children
- her work and career
- her physical health
- her mental health
- her ability to have friends
- her desire to have friendships with others
- her interests and hobbies

- 3) Do a brainstorm of different ways of being accountable toward partners, ex-partners and children. Be specific to the particular categories listed above.

(Following completion of the small group task, group leaders assign the following as a take-home task:

During the next week, we'd like each of you to develop your own accountability plan, by answering the same questions, only this time, responding for yourself only.

Question 1: Describe your abuse in a way that takes responsibility.

Question 2: How has your abuse affected your partner or ex-partner? Be specific about each area of life that you identified in the small group?

Question 3: Having identified the effects of your abuse in the various areas of your partner's life, what would accountability look like for you?

Question 4: What is your accountability plan; which things are you committed to doing?

Emergent group leaders promote group interaction by encouraging active and constructive participation in the educational activities. This helps to insure that the agenda does not deviate onto victim blaming, general complaints about the system, or topics that are irrelevant to domestic violence. Another way that group leaders promote constructive interaction is by giving instruction and feedback about positive group participation. This is accomplished in two ways; 1) educating the group *as a whole* about the value and elements of giving good feedback, and 2) giving specific feedback *to each member* about the quality of his feedback to others, as well as his overall participation, in the group. "Educational Activity 6: Listening and Giving Good Feedback" (Emerge, 2000) gives group members basic education about the mechanics of constructive feedback to others. Group leaders then provide regular feedback to each member about the quality of his feedback to others. Without this guidance, there is a natural tendency for abusive men to sympathize with and to reinforce each other's ways of minimizing and making excuses for their abusive behavior. Often, men avoid confronting each others' excuses for fear that they will be seen as overly judgmental or hypercritical. This avoidance of meaningful and constructive feedback creates an atmosphere in which groups come to operate at the level of the lowest common denominator. We believe that group leaders' active guidance about constructive participation is essential to creating a group atmosphere that is higher functioning and that holds its members to a higher standard. To accomplish this, Emergent group leaders frequently give individual group members feedback about the quality of their feedback, and more importantly, ask group members to assist in this commentary. The following group dialogue, which occurred during one member's turn, is an example of this:

George: I had a close call the other day. Mary did something stupid, really stupid. But I it didn't get physical. I guess the program is working for me.

Jim (Group Leader): Can you explain what happened?

George: Well, Mary blew a tire on our car by driving it against the sidewalk. I got a little mad about it but it was contained.

Janice (Group Leader): What did you do?

George: Nothing. I was quiet. She could tell I was angry.

Janice: Before you were quiet, did you say anything?

George: I might have yelled a little. Yeah, I might have swore at little. Not at her, just out of frustration.

Jim: Does anyone in the group have any feedback to George about this?

Marty: I can understand your feelings, man. Tires are expensive.

Janice: Before we continue with George, does anyone have any feedback to Marty about what he just said.

Phil: Man, you really threw out the life preserver!

Carl: Yeah, I think you really let George off the hook. I mean, he's still yelling and swearing at her, isn't he?

Andy: It was an accident! I don't see how you (to George) can get mad about an accident.

Jim: Yes, but before we get back on what George did, let's stay with Marty a bit. Let me ask the group, how do you think Marty's feedback would influence George?

Andy: Oh it would make George feel more justified in the future.

Janice: Justified about what?

Andy: About yelling and carrying on about nothing. Just an innocent mistake!

Carl: And blaming her.

Jim: Is George still being abusive to Mary?

Phil: Oh yes, I'd say so.

Jim: Did Marty recognize this?

Marty: Maybe not; I just wanted George to know I understood his feelings?

Janice: But was Marty helping George?

Phil: No!

Andy: No way!

Jim: Do you have anything to say to George now, Marty?

Marty: I'm sorry I didn't jump all over you, man?
(Laughter from group)

Janice: Seriously?

Marty: Yeah, I guess I let you (George) down..... by not expecting more. (Emerge, 1998)

Though the focus eventually shifted back to analyzing George's actions, the initial focus of group leaders was on Marty, who was the newest member of the group. Such feedback is essential in order to help group members to clarify how they can best help each other. When confrontation comes solely from the group leaders, group members settle into a passive role and fail to internalize the values and higher standards of the program.

This higher level of group functioning helps to avoid manipulation and bargaining by abusive men. Men who batter, much like substance abusers, will often attempt to bargain with others

(particularly their partners and their counselors) to retain as many of their abuse as possible. (Adams, 1989) Bargaining often takes the form of the batterer making adjustments in his abusive behavior rather than abandoning it altogether. By making *adjustments* rather than more qualitative *changes* in behavior and attitude, batterers are learning to become 'better batterers'. Group leaders sometimes become unwittingly complicit with this manipulation when they praise clients who have apparently 'taken a step in the right direction' by exhibiting a lesser level of abuse.

Developing cultural competence

Emerge was one of the first batterer intervention programs to provide services in Spanish and was the first to develop services in Vietnamese and Khmer. Emerge also provides African-American and Caribbean-American men the option of being in all African and Caribbean American groups during the second phase of the program. Reflecting the racial diversity of its clients, half of Emerge's group leaders are African-American, Latino or Asian. Aside from its language-specific groups, all groups at Emerge are racially-mixed. Since 1996, Emerge has provided groups for lesbians who batter. Emerge is currently developing a program for gay men who batter and began its first group in May, 2000.

When establishing services for a previously unserved population, Emerge has sought to learn as much as possible about its community and culture. This learning process is one aspect of developing cultural competence. (Williams & Becker, 1994) One useful step in this learning is the establishment of advisory groups composed of members of the new community. When developing a program for Vietnamese and Cambodian men, for instance, Emerge established an advisory group that was made up primarily of Vietnamese and Cambodian service providers and community activists. This group not only helped Emerge to develop culturally appropriate services but also assisted in recruiting bi-cultural staff, promoting the program, and developing a community education component. One key recommendation of this group was, because older people are revered in Asian culture, that group leaders are more accepted and trusted if they are middle age or older. Another cultural adaptation is that groups for Cambodian men are small, with 2-4 members each. Prior to their placement in a group, Cambodian men are seen individually for 3-5 sessions. Individual intakes and smaller groups more easily fit Asian cultural values that eschew personal disclosure to strangers or large groups. To engender community awareness and support, program staff in Emerge's Latino, Cambodian and Vietnamese programs devote half their time to community outreach and education. For instance, the Cambodian community educator is a monthly guest on a Cambodian call-in show about domestic violence

that airs on a Cambodian radio program.

That men come from such diverse racial, economic, occupational backgrounds, combined with their differences in age and life experience, creates an opportunity for each client to gain feedback from multiple perspectives. An exercise that taps into this potential is one in which Emerge group leaders ask men to discuss what their particular culture (however they want to define this) taught them about being a man and how this has influenced their expectations toward women. This exercise enables men to overcome preconceptions or misconceptions about particular cultures, and to see their own cultural background in a broader perspective. The exercise also serves to create trust among men from different ethnic backgrounds by providing a context for them to acknowledge and discuss ethnic and racial differences and underlying similarities. This is one aspect of a process that Oliver Williams has called creating groups of healthy heterogeneity, as opposed to those in which issues of race or ethnicity are ignored. (Williams, 2000)

Another exercise that helps abusers to discuss differences in cultural perspectives is “Historical Perspective - Attitudes about Women”. This exercise begins with a presentation of a brief history concerning voting and property rights for women and people of color in the United States. Following this, group members are asked to brainstorm the following:

- what are the effects on the person/persons being devalued?
- what are the effects on the person who is devaluing others?
- what effect does this thinking have on the relationship between the person being devalued and the person who is devaluing?

After they have addressed these questions, group members are asked more specific questions that help them to recognize, in more concrete ways, how the devaluation process has affected their partners, their children and themselves. A common result of this is that men who have experienced oppression because of their racial, economic, or religious background are more able to empathize with women whom they have oppressed through their abuse and control. In groups of batterers in same-sex relationships, Emerge group leaders similarly make use of members’ experiences with homophobia and heterosexism to better understand their victim’s perspectives.

Conclusion

Since Emerge's founding in 1977, a great deal has been learned about how to educate and motivate men who batter to take responsibility for their violence. Despite this, the vast majority of batterers don't seek help unless ordered to do so, and even many of those who do remain resistant to change. Emerge will continue to refine its approach, particularly by learning more

about how to promote internal motivation among abusers.

One recent shift in Emerge's philosophy concerns our understanding of the abuser's resistance to change. While we have historically seen resistance as reflecting the abuser's denial and wish to avoid change, more recently we have come to see that this resistance also reflects concerns and needs that are common to most adult learners. Unless addressed by programs, these concerns can become barriers to learning. These unique concerns often include:

- having an increased investment in not questioning or changing what we already know
- fears and distrust of what we don't know
- a focus on the financial and time costs of the program
- desire to know the qualifications and life experience of the teachers
- embarrassment or shame about admitting mistakes
- sometimes feeling 'stupid' or uncomfortable when introduced to new information or perspectives.

By acknowledging and addressing these concerns, Emerge seeks to create a more self-motivated learning environment for adult men who batter.

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