



 **ACTIVITY**
3 **“Why Doesn’t She Just Leave?”**

ACTIVITY:

To build a better understanding of how domestic violence progresses over time.

BACKGROUND:

Faith leaders and members of congregations often get involved in domestic violence when something tragic or painful has occurred, and wonder, “Why is she even in this relationship? What does she see in him? Why doesn’t she just leave?” And that very human part of us that wants to distance from anything painful or difficult, is saying: “I would never let that happen to me!” If we are thinking that, we have already passed judgment on the victim. It’s important to move past this common understanding to an appreciation of how domestic violence evolves over time.

In this activity, you will help the participants better understand how a victim gets “hooked into” an abusive relationship and why a victim may find it difficult to leave. We have provided you with three similar stories of victims, told from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish perspectives. Pick the story that works best for your community. We encourage you to tell the story as if you were the victim. Feel free to embellish for your audience, add local detail, and make it your own. This exercise helps build compassion for victims and survivors, and emphasizes the importance of hearing the entire story, and not just a snapshot (as the participants were given in Activity 1). With this story, they will see how domestic violence evolves over time and how difficult it is to “just leave.” By relating this story to their own experiences of trauma (developed in Activity 2), faith leaders will gain a better understanding of the challenges and barriers that victims face.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

GOALS:

1. To explore the evolution of a domestic violence relationship over time.
2. To explore victimization and the dynamics of control within a domestic violence relationship.
3. To better understand the importance of non-judgmental responses to victims.
4. To name and consider the “hooks” that may keep a victim in an abusive relationship.
5. To deepen appreciation for the impact of trauma in the life of a domestic violence victim.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Understand the evolution of a domestic violence relationship.
2. Explain why a non-judgmental response is important.
3. Identify some of the techniques of manipulation and control.
4. Place themselves in the shoes of a domestic violence victim and see the situation from their point of view.
5. Understand more fully what the domestic violence victim may be feeling emotionally and spiritually.

ESTIMATED TIME: 30 minutes

MATERIALS:

“Why Doesn’t She Just Leave” Script
(see below—choose the Christian, Jewish, or Muslim story,
based on what will work best for your community)

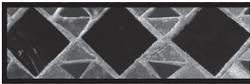
Flip chart pages detailing the emotional, physical, and spiritual
symptoms of trauma from Activity 2

Facilitator Talking Points

- ❖ Faith leaders, law enforcement agents, advocates, and others often encounter domestic violence when a significant incident has occurred, and when the relationship has been going on for some time. Because domestic violence escalates over time, the situation is often entrenched and extreme. It is easy to look at that “snapshot” of what is going on and think: “What does she see in him?” “Why is she still in the relationship?” “Why doesn’t she just leave?”
- ❖ If we are thinking that, we’ve already passed judgment on the victim. So we need to take a moment to step back and ask ourselves: “How does domestic violence happen?” The majority of domestic violence relationships start in a very different place.
- ❖ We need to see the newsreel and not just the snapshot of a domestic violence relationship. This is an activity to help us see how a domestic violence relationship evolves over time, and how any of us could get hooked into an abusive relationship.
- ❖ If you went out with someone for the first time and he or she punched you, would you go out with them again?” [Most participants will answer: “Of course not!”] Well, victims of domestic violence wouldn’t either!
- ❖ But that’s not how domestic violence happens. When someone finally reaches out for help we have to remember that there has usually been a long history, and the victim’s faith often plays a role in that history. Our job is to ask to see the newsreel, and not just the snapshot.
- ❖ So, I’ve put together this story that is a composite of different experiences. It’s not any one person’s story, it’s a summary of many of the common themes in the stories that I have heard over the years. It’s not my own story, but I am going to tell it to you in the first person, as though it were my own.



◇ The scripts below can be used as written or as a jumping-off point. The storyteller should feel free to personalize the story based on the community with which you are working. Also, personalize based on the storyteller’s comfort. If that person is younger, they may want to incorporate different activities; if the storyteller is older, maybe this is not their first relationship. The storyteller shouldn’t be afraid to add details—this can help make the story even more relatable and compelling.



First-Person Story from a Christian Perspective

Facilitator, as victim/survivor: So... I met a man [*you may want to give him a name*]. I met him through a friend at church. He was charming, had a stable job, was a committed Christian. And, he was nice-looking to boot. He was polite and interested in me. In fact, he wanted to know all about me!

Oh, I was so excited! I was not expecting to meet anyone—as a matter of fact, I had kind of given up on that idea. But here was someone who I wanted to get to know, someone who didn't seem to have a lot of extra baggage, someone who I could just enjoy spending time with.

We started seeing each other pretty much right away. And for about four months, we went out every Friday night. He was so sweet and thoughtful. He really listened to what I said. One week, I was going on about how much I love M&M's, and he brought me some. Another time, we were having a discussion about a musician I really like and he brought me a book about her. I loved that he was thinking about me when we weren't together, because I sure was thinking about him.

As we got to know each other better I learned what he liked. I knew he thought I looked good in blue, so I started looking through my closet for blue clothing—and even bought a couple of new blue tops. And he said he liked my hair a certain way, so I started wearing it that way to please him.

He didn't seem so interested in meeting my friends or doing anything with people at church—and that was fine with me! We gradually started spending more time together.

My friends started asking: "Where's [*choose a name*]? We haven't seen her for weeks!" And someone else would say, "Oh, it's OK. Haven't you heard? She's in love! We will talk to her when her feet are back on the earth." I have to admit that I was a little embarrassed that I hadn't been in touch with my friends—they are so important to me and always are there for me. But I seem to be so busy...

Well, one morning, I was having trouble with my car, so [*my boyfriend*] volunteered to pick me up in the morning and drop me at work. He said that he went right by my apartment on his way to work and he didn't mind at all. It was so nice! I felt like we had a chance to touch base in the morning and again at the end of the day. I loved seeing him—even if just for a ride home. So, a few days later my car was fixed, but he still wanted to pick me up and give me rides. He said he would be going right by anyway, and it gave him a chance to see me every day. I loved the idea and next thing I knew, he was driving me everywhere—we were doing errands together, getting dinner, etc. I hardly had to take my car out of its parking spot!

I hadn't seen my friends in a while and I got a call from a friend from my Bible Study Group. They were going to celebrate another friend's birthday Wednesday after study group—they were going to someone's house for cake and coffee, just for a short time. Couldn't I please come—they all wanted to see me and hear about my relationship.

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I knew [my boyfriend] was going to pick me up afterward and give me a ride home, but we didn't have any special plans. And I hadn't spent time with my friends from church for weeks. So I said, "Sure." I left him voice messages at home, at his parent's house, on his cell phone, at his office, everywhere that I thought he could be and I texted him! I told him, "I'm going out with some of the women from Bible Study. We won't be gone long, and I'll call you as soon as I get back home."

I was only out for a couple of hours and had a great time. I loved updating my friends about this new, wonderful relationship and I was also happy to reconnect. I had so much fun. But, when I got home and finally pulled my cell out of my bag, there were so many texts and voicemails! You might be thinking that they were angry messages, but they weren't. Here's what they sounded like.

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer:

- ❖ I got your messages. I hope you get home soon.
- ❖ I'm wondering where you are? I hope you're OK. Call me as soon as you get home.
- ❖ I'm so worried about you. I don't know where you are. Call me as soon as you can.
- ❖ I can't even enjoy my evening because I'm so worried about you. Please call me as soon as you can.
- ❖ I'm just miserable with worry. What on earth could have happened to you? Call me.

Facilitator, as victim: How do I feel?



◇ Wait for participants' responses. Usually they will say: guilty, sorry, apologetic, sad, upset, confused.

Facilitator, as victim: Well, as soon as I heard all those messages, I called and apologized profusely. I didn't mean to upset him like that. I told him I was sorry again and again.

But despite my heartfelt apologies, it took him a long, long time to let go of it. And it took us a long time to get back to a place where it felt like things were OK between us. I had to work really hard to placate him and smooth things over.

So, am I likely to go out with my friends again on the spur of the moment?



◇ Wait for participants' responses. Usually they say: no way, probably not, it's not worth the effort, and so on.

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Facilitator, as victim: Doubtful! It was way too much work to get him over it.

The next day he picked me up as usual. He seemed fine and things were back to normal. As we were driving, he apologized for last night, but explained that he was frustrated that he couldn't reach me. He said that he knew my cell phone was problematic (believe it or not, I still have a flip phone). He then told me that he had ordered me a smart phone. I would be able to text so much more easily and I could install different apps, including one that shares where you are. He said, "I don't think I would worry so much if I just knew where you were all the time."

How sweet of him to be so concerned. And I really did need a new phone. The only problem was, now that I had this new phone, he was texting me all the time and expecting a reply! I put my cell phone on silent at work so no one could hear it, but he kept interrupting my work, meetings, conversations, whatever. He asked me what I was doing, who I was talking to, when I was going to be done, and he told me how much he wanted to see me. And he asked why I went across town, why I went out at lunch.... My boss was annoyed that I was on my cell phone all the time, and I was having a hard time balancing my work and my boyfriend.

So the cell phone thing turned out to be stressful, but if I didn't answer him, he was a lot worse. And at least with the new app we won't have to go through that whole mess again where he didn't know where I was.

Of course, we're still enjoying each other and going out. He was just such a nice guy. I mean, 95% of the time he was just the greatest guy ever!

Remember how I said he really listens to what I say? Well, here is another example of that. I had mentioned I loved this local band—they play fun music that you can dance to—and that I hadn't heard them in ages. So, what does he do? He finds out where they are playing and surprises me with tickets to hear them play. It was so much fun! We were dancing and really enjoying the music. After we had been there about an hour, he went to the bathroom. While he was gone, a man I didn't even know asked me to dance. Well, of course, I said, "No, I don't want to dance with you; I'm here with someone." I thought that was it, I didn't even give it another thought.

But when my boyfriend came back to the table he asked me, kind of in a menacing way, "Who was that guy you were just talking to?" I said, "He's just some guy that asked me to dance." "Well, what did you say?" "I said I didn't want to dance with him. I told him I'm here with you. That's all that happened. It's no big deal!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I bet you wanted to dance with him."

Facilitator, as victim: "NO!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I bet you thought about it."

Facilitator, as victim: "NO, of course I didn't think about it. I'm here with you!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I bet you looked at other guys on the dance floor."

Facilitator, as victim: "NO, of course I don't. I'm here with you."

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Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: “I bet you think about other guys at work.”

Facilitator, as victim: “Look, let’s just go home if being here upsets you.”

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: “I bet you talk to other guys at work!”

Facilitator, as victim: “I have to talk to them! I work with them!”

Facilitator, as victim: And that’s how it went. He just kept questioning and questioning, making up more and more accusations. I suggested that we leave and go home, hoping that a change of scenery would improve the situation. But driving home in the car he got more and more upset. I tried really hard to reassure him and calm him down, but he just got more and more angry. We got to my house, and I turned to thank him for taking me, and before I could get the words out of my mouth, he slapped me across the face.

I was shocked. No one ever hit me before. I ran from the car to the house crying. I went to sleep crying. The next morning I woke up with a big bruise on my cheek.

How did I feel?



◇ Wait for participants’ responses.

Facilitator, as victim: I was so upset...so confused...so shocked. How could I have not seen this coming?? I felt so stupid!!

I had no idea what to do. I called one of my girlfriends and told her. “I can’t believe that I couldn’t see this coming. I can’t believe that he could do this; he’s always been so nice.” My girlfriend said, “Oh my goodness, [name you are using], this is terrible. You’ve got to break up with him right away!” And I totally agreed. I had to break up with him.

And then the doorbell rang. It was a delivery man, with a dozen roses. The card was full of apologies. Of course, I am crying as I read the card. And then he called, crying and apologizing profusely. He said, “I love you so much! If I wasn’t so crazy about you, I wouldn’t be so jealous.”

So, I thought, this has never happened before; he’s always been so charming and attentive. He’s only jealous because he thinks I’m so special.

Facilitator, as victim: What do you think I should do?



◇ Wait for participants’ responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Should I see him again?



◇ Wait for participants’ responses.

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Facilitator, as victim: Do you think that something like this will happen again?



◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Will I tell my girlfriend next time?



◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Of course not, because I am really embarrassed that I got back together with him! And I am so ashamed and confused. I'd been taught to forgive 7 x 70, so when he said, "I'm sorry, please forgive me," I knew that's what I should do. And I was loyal, and determined, and I so hoped that we could make this relationship work. I could see he had some problems, but I was sure that if I just loved him enough, he'd become a better person.

Facilitator, as victim: Honestly, 90% of the time he was such a wonderful, nice guy; he just kept having these violent jealous rages. I didn't know what to think! I had never known anyone like this before.

And that's when he said to me, just as sweetly as you can imagine: "If we were married, then I'd know that we were together, and I wouldn't have to be so jealous all the time. I'm just so worried that some guy is going to take you from me. I love you so much, I just need to be sure of you. Will you marry me?"

So, fast forward 15 years. I'm married. I've got three young children. I haven't worked outside my home in 15 years, and I know I can't support myself and the kids. We wouldn't even have a place to live, let alone food. And my youngest has health issues, so I don't want to move too far from our doctors. Besides, I'd be so ashamed to get a divorce. Everyone in town knows us, and they see us as "the perfect couple."



◇ Point to the list of emotional, physical, and spiritual symptoms of trauma made in Activity 2.

Facilitator, as victim: But the abuse is almost every day now. And here's how I'm feeling.

And I'm feeling all this while I'm getting the kids off to school, and keeping the house the way he wants it, and cooking dinner, and trying to keep him calm all the time.

Meanwhile, he's head of the Little League. He's got a great business here in town, and he's a respected member of our church. The way he presents himself publicly now is the way that he presented himself to me in the beginning. Everyone loves him.

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So -- if he only treats me like this, it must be something I'm doing. No one else has any trouble with him.

This is where you get to meet me. I'm so confused I don't know which end is up. I'm a wreck. And my friends are all thinking "what's wrong with her? She must be crazy." I know that if I tell anyone what's happening, they'll look at him and how great he is, and they'll think I'm nuts. Half the time, I think I'm nuts!

Because here's the crazy part of it: he's not like this all the time. Sometimes, he's wonderful. So I keep trying to figure out what I'm doing wrong, what I can say or not say, or do or not do. I lose weight, I dye my hair, I own all blue clothes. But nothing works. It just keeps getting worse. And I just keep trying.

Because I don't really want to leave him. What I really want is for the relationship to continue and the abuse to stop. I want the marriage to work. I don't know what else to do, except just keep trying. I'm terrified that he will kill me. I made a vow before God: for better or worse, until death do us part. I just didn't realize that the "death" would be mine.

If there is a co-facilitator, it is best for that person to take over the discussion if possible.

◇ *Pause briefly to hear some of the participants' reflections on this narrative. Possible questions to get reflections going are:*

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◇ *What are some of the factors that keep this person in the relationship?*

◇ *What are some of the techniques that her boyfriend used to manipulate and control this woman?*

◇ *Thank the participants for their attention.*

Many thanks to Debra Robbin of Jane Doe, Inc.
for allowing Safe Havens to adapt and use this exercise.

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First-Person Story from a Jewish Perspective

Facilitator, as victim/survivor: Well, I met him at a lunch after synagogue on Saturday—he was a friend of my sister’s husband. He was visiting them and I was having lunch there. We sat across from each other and while we didn’t talk to each other during the meal, he and my brother-in-law didn’t stop talking. I couldn’t help but notice—he was really interesting and charming. He was also nice looking and I knew he would be more than “Jewish enough,” because he was friends with my brother-in-law. After lunch, while my brother-in-law and the children went to nap, my sister asked if I would take the baby for a walk with her—and he asked to come along. So, the three of us took a walk with her baby. He seemed really interested in me—he kept asking me questions and ignoring my sister.

I was all excited. He seemed like someone without a lot of problems and extra baggage, maybe someone my family would approve of. So, I mentioned it to my sister who said she would mention it to her husband first and then talk to my mother....

In the meantime, I ran into him several times over the next couple of weeks—at the store, on my way home from work.... We would always talk and linger; there was no question that I was interested and he really seemed interested too.

My sister did talk to her husband and then my mother. My mother had everyone checking up on him—he came from a great family, had a great job, was generous, kind, thoughtful.... Everyone thought he was wonderful and would be a GREAT match for me. But, before my mother’s “investigation” was complete (i.e. to her satisfaction), he actually approached my brother-in-law asking about me! I was ecstatic!

So, we started dating and getting to know each other. We would meet at different places, always in public. He was so sweet and thoughtful. He really listened to what I said. One week, I was going on about how much I liked Twizzlers, and he brought me some. Another time, we were having a discussion about a musician I really like and he brought me a book about her. I loved that he was thinking about me when we weren’t together, because I sure was thinking about him. We were seeing each other at least once a week—and he asked me to go to Shabbat services with him so we could spend some of “Shabbos” [*pronounced ‘Shaw-bus’, another word for the Sabbath*] together.

As we got to know each other better I learned what he liked. I knew he thought I looked good in blue, so I combed my closet for blue clothing. And he said he liked my hair a certain way, so I started wearing it that way to please him. He was clearly trying to please me, and I wanted to please him too.

I was so excited. I felt like I had finally met someone that I could potentially have a future with.

He didn’t seem that interested in meeting my friends or getting together with other people. We would talk or text frequently and we were spending increasingly more time together.

My friends started asking: “Where’s [*choose a name*]?” We haven’t seen her for weeks!” And someone would respond that I was dating a GREAT guy and was busy falling in love—this might be “it”!

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One morning, I was having trouble with my car, so my boyfriend—it seems funny to call him that, but we were certainly committed to each other at this point—volunteered to pick me up in the morning and drop me at work. I was kind of surprised that he was willing to be alone with me, but I was late and needed a ride so I didn't question him about it. And, a few days later when my car was fixed, he still wanted to pick me up and give me rides. He said he liked seeing me at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. Besides, he told me, we were saving gas and anyway, he wasn't as "traditional" as everyone thought he was. Next thing I knew, he was driving me everywhere. I hardly even had to take my car out of my parking spot!

I had been so busy with life and my new boyfriend, that I hadn't even been to my weekly Torah study class, let alone seen any of my friends. So when I got a call from my friend reminding me about the next week's session and inviting me to celebrate another friend's birthday right after, I was excited. They were going to someone's house for cake and tea, just for a short time. And I knew my boyfriend and I didn't have any special plans, so I agreed to go.

I left him voice messages at home, at his parent's house, on his cell phone, at his office, everywhere that I thought he could be and I texted him! I told him, "I'm going out with some of my friends after Torah Study. We won't be gone long, and I'll call you as soon as I get back home."

I was only out for a couple of hours, but it was so energizing. Torah Study was great, and I loved sharing with my friends about my new, wonderful relationship. It was so good to reconnect with these women. I really had a lot of fun and made a promise to myself to see them more often.

I hadn't looked at my cell phone all night and finally pulled it out of my bag. I was so surprised—my boyfriend must have called and texted every 15 minutes! There were so many messages! You might be thinking that they were angry messages, but they weren't. Here's what they sounded like.

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer:

- ❖ I got your messages. I hope you get home soon.
- ❖ I'm wondering where you are? I hope you're OK. Call me as soon as you get home.
- ❖ I'm so worried about you. I don't know where you are. Call me as soon as you can.
- ❖ I can't even enjoy my evening because I'm so worried about you. Please call me as soon as you can.
- ❖ I'm just miserable with worry. What on earth could have happened to you? Call me.

Facilitator, as victim: How do I feel?



◇ *Wait for participants' responses. Usually they will say: guilty, sorry, apologetic, sad, upset, confused.*

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Facilitator, as victim: Well, as soon as I heard all those messages, I called and apologized profusely. I didn't mean to upset him like that. I told him I was sorry again and again.

But despite my heartfelt apologies, it took him a long, long time to let go of it. And it took us a long time to get back to a place where it felt like things were OK between us. I had to work really hard to placate him and smooth things over.

So, am I likely to go out with my friends again on the spur of the moment?



◇ *Wait for participants' responses. Usually they say: no way, probably not, it's not worth the effort, and so on.*

Facilitator, as victim: Doubtful! It was way too much work to get him over it.

The next day he picked me up as usual. He seemed fine and things were back to normal. As we were driving, he apologized for last night, but explained that he was frustrated that he couldn't reach me. He said that he knew my cell phone was problematic (believe it or not, I still had a flip phone). He then told me that he had ordered me a smart phone. I would be able to text so much more easily and he said he would install different apps, including one that shares where you are. He said, "I don't think I would worry so much if I just knew where you were all the time."

How sweet of him to be so concerned. And I really did need a new phone. The only problem was, now that I had this new phone, he was texting me all the time and expecting a reply! I put my cell phone on silent at work so no one could hear it, but he kept interrupting my work, meetings, conversations, whatever. He asked me what I was doing, who I was talking to, when I was going to be done, and he told me how much he wanted to see me. And he asked why I went across town, why I went out at lunch. I started talking to fewer people so I wouldn't have to explain every conversation to him. Worse still, my colleagues and my boss were frustrated at the change in my work habits, and the fact that I was always on my cell phone.

It was stressful, sometimes. But if I didn't answer the phone, things were a lot worse. And at least with the new app we won't have to go through that whole mess again where he didn't know where I was.

Of course, we're still enjoying being together and going out. He was a gentleman, always thoughtful, and very serious about us and our future. I mean, 95% of the time he was just the greatest man ever!

Remember how I said he listens to me? Well, here is another example of that. I had mentioned I loved this folk musician—she plays fun music and I hadn't heard her in ages. So, what does he do? He finds out where she is playing and surprises me with tickets. It was so much fun! The first set was amazing. At intermission, my boyfriend went to get us some snacks. I was enjoying the atmosphere when a man came up and asked if we had gone to the same overnight camp. We had a short conversation about camp and Jewish geography. He left and

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I didn't give the conversation another thought. But when my boyfriend came back to his seat, there was suddenly a problem. In a kind of menacing way, he asked me about the man that I was talking to. I told him that the man thought I was someone else. "Well, you were talking to him for a long time. What did you say to him? What did he say to you?" I said, "It was just a friendly conversation, we played a little Jewish geography. There was nothing more to it!"

I thought it was over, but my boyfriend kept going.

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "You thought he was good looking, didn't you? That's why you kept talking to him."

Facilitator, as victim: "I didn't even notice. I was just being friendly."

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "You just wanted an excuse to flirt with someone else."

Facilitator, as victim: "NO, of course not! I don't want to flirt with anyone else! I'm here with you!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I saw the way you were looking at him! Don't lie to me!"

Facilitator, as victim: "I'm not lying."

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I bet you look at lots of other men—you are so loose. I mean, look at you, you are willing to be alone with a man in the car!"

Facilitator, as victim: I was flabbergasted. He was judging me for being alone in the car with him, and he was the one who suggested it! I didn't know what to say after that. But he just kept questioning and questioning, making up crazy accusations. I suggested that we leave the concert and go home, hoping that a change of scenery would improve the situation. But driving home in the car, he became even more upset. I tried really hard to reassure him and calm him down, but everything I said made him angrier. We got to my house, and I turned to thank him for taking me, and before I could get the words out of my mouth, he slapped me across the face.

I was shocked. No one ever hit me before. I ran from the car to the house crying. I went to sleep crying. The next morning, I woke up with a big bruise on my cheek.

How did I feel?



◇ *Wait for participants' responses.*

Facilitator, as victim: I was so upset...so confused . . . so shocked. How could I have not seen this coming?? I felt so stupid!!

I had no idea what to do. I called my sister and told her what happened. We were both in a state of disbelief. He was always so charming and considerate. But I begged my sister not to tell her husband. I was afraid he wouldn't believe me, and if he did believe what happened, I didn't want him approaching my boyfriend until I decided what to do.

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As I hung up the phone, the doorbell rang. It was a delivery man, with a dozen roses. The card was full of apologies. Of course, I am crying as I read the card. And then he called, crying and apologizing profusely. He said, "I love you so much! If I wasn't so crazy about you, I wouldn't be so jealous."

So, I thought, this has never happened before; he's always been so charming and attentive. He's only jealous because he thinks I'm so special.

Facilitator, as victim: What do you think I should do?

i ◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Should I see him again?

i ◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Do you think that something like this will happen again?

i ◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Will I tell my sister next time?

i ◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Of course, I won't, because I am really embarrassed. And I am so ashamed and confused. I felt the relationship had become too serious to simply walk away. My family and friends knew we were together—what would they say about me if I broke it off? My family thought he was "the one." Maybe I just had to work a little harder to please him, and everything would be fine. I was so loyal, and determined, and so I hoped that we could make this relationship work. I could see he had some problems, but I was sure that if I just loved him enough, he'd become a better person.

Facilitator, as victim: Honestly, 90% of the time he was such a great guy; he just kept having these violent jealous rages. I didn't know what to think! I had never known anyone like this before.

And that's when he said to me, just as sweetly as you can imagine: "If we were married, then I'd know that you were mine, and I wouldn't have to be so jealous all the time. I'm just so worried that some guy is going to take you from me. I love you so much, I just need to be sure of you. Will you marry me?"

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

So, fast forward 7 years. I'm married with three young children. I haven't worked outside my home since we got engaged, and I know I can't support myself and the kids. We wouldn't even have a place to live, let alone food. And my youngest has health issues, so I don't want to move too far from our doctors. Besides, I'd be so ashamed to get a divorce. Everyone in our community knows us, and they see us as "the perfect couple."



◇ *Point to the list of emotional, physical, and spiritual symptoms of trauma made in Activity 2.*

Facilitator, as victim: But the abuse is almost every day now. And here's how I'm feeling.

And I'm feeling all this while I'm getting the kids off to school, and keeping the house the way he wants it, and cooking dinner, and trying to keep him calm all the time.

Meanwhile, he's head of the Little League. He's got a great business here in town, and he's the President of my family's synagogue. The way he presents himself publicly now is the way that he presented himself to me in the beginning. Everyone loves him.

So -- if he only treats me like this, it must be something I'm doing. No one else has any trouble with him.

This is where you get to meet me. I'm so confused I don't know which end is up. I'm a wreck. And my friends are all thinking "what's wrong with her? She must be crazy." I know that if I tell anyone what's happening, they'll look at him and how great he is, and they'll think I'm nuts. Half the time, I think I'm nuts!

Because here's the crazy part of it: he's not like this all the time. Sometimes, he's wonderful. So I keep trying to figure out what I'm doing wrong, what I can say or not say, or do or not do. I lose weight, I dye my hair, I own all blue clothes. But nothing works. It just keeps getting worse. And I just keep trying.

Because I don't really want to leave him. What I really want is for the relationship to continue and the abuse to stop. I want the marriage to work. I don't know what else to do, except just keep trying. I'm terrified that he will kill me. I made a vow before God: for better or worse, until death do us part. I just didn't realize that the "death" would be mine.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

If there is a co-facilitator, it is best for that person to take over the discussion if possible.

i

- ◇ *Pause briefly to hear some of the participants' reflections on this narrative. Possible questions to get reflections going are:*
 - ✧ *What are some of the factors that keep this person in the relationship?*
 - ✧ *What are some of the techniques that her boyfriend/husband used to manipulate or control this young woman?*
 - ◇ *Thank the participants for their attention.*
-

Many thanks to Debra Robbin of Jane Doe, Inc.
for allowing Safe Havens to adapt and use this exercise.

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First-Person Story from a Muslim Perspective

Facilitator, as victim/survivor: So, I met someone. I met him through a friend at the mosque. My girlfriend knew his family, and she knew he was single, so she set us up, and introduced us. He was nice, he was charming, he was really good looking, and he was a really committed Muslim. He seemed really solid. He was kind and interested in me. In fact, he wanted to know all about me.

We had spoken briefly at the mosque on a few occasions, always surrounded by friends and community members, but he asked if he could take me to dinner. I was eager to get to know him. I was worried about someone from the mosque seeing us out alone together, that maybe someone would gossip, so I chose a restaurant in a different neighborhood where we didn't know anyone. On that first date, we talked for hours about our lives, walking outside until very late. It felt so romantic and like a dream come true.

Saturdays turned into our date nights. He would take me to a restaurant or we would go to a movie together, or even take a drive outside the city to take a little adventure. I had never felt so bold, adventurous, and even reckless. But his strong ties to the mosque and our community made me feel safe, and like I was on the right path.

I was so excited. I felt like I had finally met someone that I could potentially have a future with.

As we got to know each other better I learned what he liked. I knew he thought I looked good in blue, so I started wearing blue more often. And I knew he liked to hear from me every day, and he liked to be the first person to text me in the morning and the last at night. We started talking on the phone more, too, and soon he was calling me each day, sometimes for twenty minutes, and other times for an hour.

On top of my work schedule and family, my commitment to this new person in my life meant I had less and less time for my girlfriends. I often didn't have time to go out with them each weekend as we used to, or catch up with them during the week, since I was so busy talking to the new man in my life.

My friends started asking: "Where's [choose a name]? I haven't seen her for weeks!"

One morning, I was having trouble with my car, so my boyfriend—it seems funny to call him that, but we were certainly committed to each other at this point--volunteered to pick me up in the morning and drop me at work. A few days later my car was fixed, but he still wanted to pick me up and give me rides. He said he would be going right by anyway, and it gave him a chance to see me every day. Next thing I knew, he was driving me everywhere. I hardly even had to take my car out of my parking spot!

And then one Wednesday evening one of my friends in the mosque's fiqh class [*Islamic law – pronounced 'Fikk'*] invited me to go out after the class ended. It was someone's birthday and the whole group was going. I hadn't attended the class in a while, but they all encouraged me to come, saying, "We haven't seen you in ages, and we miss you!"

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

I hadn't spent time with my friends from the mosque in weeks now, and I realized how much I missed being with them. So I agreed, and messaged my boyfriend that he wouldn't need to give me a ride today. I called him and left a message on his cell phone, and even at his office, trying to cover all my bases. I told him, "I'm going out with some of the women from the mosque after the fiqh class tonight. We won't be out too late. I'll call you as soon as I get back home."

Well, we went out for desserts, and we were probably gone about an hour and a half. We had a great time. I had my phone in my purse and was so focused on catching up with them, and celebrating with them, that I only looked at my phone on the way out. When I saw that I had 12 voicemails, all from him, I felt panicked. You might be thinking that they were angry messages, but they weren't. Here's what they sounded like.

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer:

- ❖ I got your messages. I hope you get home soon.
- ❖ I'm wondering where you are? I hope you're OK. Call me as soon as you get home.
- ❖ I'm so worried about you. I don't know where you are. Call me as soon as you can.
- ❖ I can't even enjoy my evening because I'm so worried about you. Please call me as soon as you can.
- ❖ I'm just miserable with worry. What on earth could have happened to you? Call me.

Facilitator, as victim: How do I feel?



◇ *Wait for participants' responses. Usually they will say: guilty, sorry, apologetic, sad, upset, confused.*

Facilitator, as victim: Well, as soon as I heard all those messages, I called and apologized profusely. I didn't mean to upset him like that. I told him I was sorry again and again.

But despite my heartfelt apologies, it took him a long, long time to let go of it. And it took us a long time to get back to a place where it felt like things were OK between us. I had to work really hard to placate him and smooth things over.

So, am I likely to go out with my friends on short notice again?



◇ *Wait for participants' responses. Usually they say: no way, probably not, it's not worth the effort, and so on.*

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

Facilitator, as victim: No way! Because it just took too much work to get him over it.

The next day he picked me up as usual. He was very nice, and everything was all back to normal, and he even got me a gift, a necklace with my name on it in beautiful calligraphy. After he gave it to me, he asked if he could see my cell phone. I gave it to him, and he downloaded an app that would tell him where I am every minute! He said, "I don't think I would worry so much if I just knew where you were all the time."

I could see how concerned he was. I truly wanted to avoid any future misunderstandings, and I thought it was a small concession to make to keep us in a good place. The only problem was, even with the app, he still called me all the time! He kept calling and interrupting my work meetings, and the rare outings I had with my girlfriends. Between calls, he would text and ask me what I was doing, who I was talking to, what the contents of our conversations were, and when I would be done. I started talking to fewer people so I wouldn't have to explain every conversation to him. Worse still, my colleagues and my boss were frustrated at the change in my work habits, and the fact that I was always on my cell phone.

It was stressful, sometimes. But if I didn't answer the phone, things were a lot worse. And at least with the new app we won't have to go through that whole mess again where he didn't know where I was.

Of course, we're still enjoying being together and going out. He was a gentleman, always thoughtful, and very serious about us and our future. I mean, 95% of the time he was just the greatest man ever!

One day in the summer we went to a street festival. After we had been there about an hour, he had a phone call, and walked off to a quieter area to take the call. I kept perusing the stalls and vendors and stopped at one that was selling antiques. The man behind the stall said a friendly hello and then complimented me on my necklace and asked what it said. I told him it said my name in calligraphy. He continued to make small talk. I really did not think anything of it other than that it was a pleasant conversation. But when my boyfriend came back to find me there was suddenly a problem. He pulled me away angrily. "Why were you talking to him? What did you say to him? What did he say to you?" I said, "It was just a friendly conversation, there was nothing more to it!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "You think he's good looking. You wanted to talk to him."

Facilitator, as victim: "I barely looked at him! I was just being polite!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "You just wanted an excuse to flirt with someone else."

Facilitator, as victim: "NO, I was not flirting! I don't want to flirt with anyone else!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I saw the way you were looking at him! Don't lie to me!"

Facilitator, as victim: "I'm not lying!"

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: "I bet you look at other guys at work."

Facilitator, as victim: "Look, let's just go home if being here upsets you."

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

Facilitator, pretending to be batterer: “I bet you talk to other guys at work!”

Facilitator, as victim: “I have to talk to them! I work with them!”

Facilitator, as victim: And that’s how it went. He just kept questioning and questioning, making up more and more accusations. We left the festival, and driving home in the car, he got more and more upset. I tried really hard to reassure him and calm him down, but he just got more and more angry.

And then he hit me.

I was shocked. No one ever hit me before. I felt numb and said nothing, just ran from the car into my house, and collapsed onto my bed. The next morning, I woke up with a big bruise on my cheek.

How did I feel?



◇ Wait for participants’ responses.

Facilitator, as victim: I was so upset...so confused . . . so shocked. How could I have not seen this coming?? I felt so stupid!!

I had no idea what to do. I called one of my girlfriends and told her. “I can’t believe that I couldn’t see this coming. I can’t believe that he could do this; he’s always been so nice.” My girlfriend said, “Oh my goodness, [name you are using], this is terrible. You deserve better than this. You should break it off right away.” And I totally agreed. I had to end this relationship before it got any more serious.

And then the doorbell rang. It was a delivery man, with a dozen roses. The card was full of apologies. And then he called and apologized profusely. He said, “I love you so much! If I wasn’t so crazy about you, I wouldn’t be so jealous.”

So, I thought, this has never happened before; he’s always been so charming and attentive. He’s only jealous because he thinks I’m so special.

Facilitator, as victim: What do you think I should do?



◇ Wait for participants’ responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Should I see him again?



◇ Wait for participants’ responses.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

Facilitator, as victim: Do you think that something like this will happen again?

i ◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Would I tell my girlfriend next time?

i ◇ Wait for participants' responses.

Facilitator, as victim: Of course I won't, because I am really embarrassed that I didn't take her advice to cut off the relationship! And I am so ashamed and confused. I felt the relationship had become too serious to simply walk away from. Friends of mine and members of the community knew that we were together—what would they say about me if I broke it off? Maybe I just had to work a little harder to please him, and everything would be fine. I was so loyal, and determined, and so I hoped that we could make this relationship work. I could see he had some problems, but I was sure that if I just loved him enough, he'd become a better person.

Facilitator, as victim: Honestly, 90% of the time he was such a charming, nice guy; he just kept having these violent jealous rages. I didn't know what to think! I had never known anyone like this before.

And that's when he said to me, just as sweetly as you can imagine: "If we were married, then I'd know that you were mine, and I wouldn't have to be so jealous all the time. I'm just so worried that some guy is going to take you from me. I love you so much, I just need to be sure of you. Will you marry me?"

So, fast forward 15 years. I'm married. I've got three young children. I haven't worked outside my home in 15 years, and I know I can't support myself and the kids. We wouldn't even have a place to live, let alone food. And my youngest has asthma, so I don't want them to live in a place that might have mold or mice or something. Besides, I'd be so ashamed to get a divorce. Everyone in the community sees us as an upstanding couple and an example to follow.

i ◇ Point to the list of emotional, physical, and spiritual symptoms of trauma made in Activity 2.

Facilitator, as victim: But the abuse is almost every day now. And here's how I'm feeling.

And I'm feeling all this while I'm getting the kids off to school, and keeping the house the way he wants it, and cooking dinner, and trying to keep him calm all the time.

Meanwhile, he's head of the Little League. He's got a business here in town, and he's a respected member of our mosque. The way he presents himself publicly now is the way that he presented himself to me in the beginning. Everyone loves him.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

So -- if he only treats me like this, it must be something I'm doing. No one else has any trouble with him.

This is where you get to meet me. I'm so confused I don't know which end is up. I'm a wreck, but I spend half my time hiding it, and pretending to everyone else that I am fine. I know that if I tell anyone what's happening, they'll look at him and how great he is, and they'll think I'm crazy. Half the time, I think I'm crazy!

Because here's the crazy part of it: he's not like this all the time. Sometimes, he's wonderful. So, I keep trying to figure out what I'm doing wrong, what I can say or not say, or do or not do. I lose weight, I dye my hair, I own all blue clothes. But nothing works. It just keeps getting worse. And I just keep trying.

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◇ *Pause briefly to hear some of the participants' reflections on this narrative. Possible questions to get reflections going are:*

i

◇ *What are some of the factors that keep this person in the relationship?*

◇ *What are some of the techniques that her boyfriend used to manipulate and control this woman?*

◇ *Thank the participants for their attention.*

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