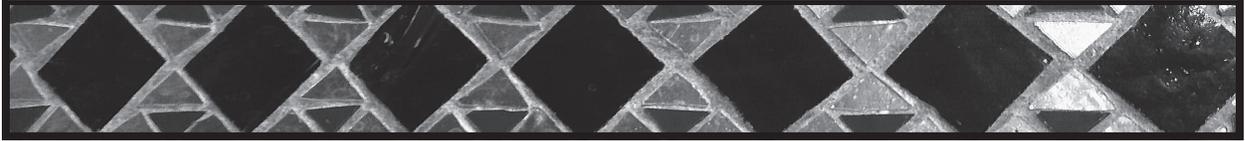




ACTIVITY

10

Case Study Discussion



ACTIVITY:

Using case studies to strengthen responses to victims of sexual and domestic violence.

BACKGROUND:

Throughout the training, participants have learned more about what victims of sexual and domestic violence have experienced. Participants have considered helpful and unhelpful responses to trauma and learned about response guidelines. This activity is an opportunity to put new knowledge and skills into practice.

GOALS:

1. To strengthen faith leaders' ability to work with advocates to support victims along the journey to safety and healing.
2. To help participants integrate what they have learned.
3. To help service providers and faith leaders strengthen collaborative responses to victims.

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this activity, participants should:

1. know more about their local advocate/faith leader colleagues and their work.
2. know more about their own roles within the wider community response to sexual and domestic violence.
3. have stronger community networks.
4. know more about safe and effective responses to survivors.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

ESTIMATED TIME: 45 minutes

MATERIALS:

Flip charts and markers

Case Studies (see below): Ruth (Christian), Yvonne (Christian), Leah (Jewish), Mubeenah (Muslim)

A copy of the questions (see below) for each participant or each small group

Talking points (see below)

A copy of the discussion questions for each participant or each group (see handout below)

Facilitator Talking Points

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- ◇ Brief advocates and/or service provider staff about this exercise and their role. The goal is to give the faith leaders as much latitude as possible to discuss the case studies while: 1) not compromising safety or confidentiality, and 2) keeping the victim's needs central to the conversation. The advocate/ staff member must be careful to give the faith leaders the opportunity to wrestle with the issues and explore some of their faith-based concerns. Intervene only when the suggested interventions are unsafe, when confidentiality is breached, or when the victim's needs are not kept central to the conversation.
- ◇ Familiarize everyone with the Case Studies.

- ✦ We have covered a lot of ground today. Thank you so much for your cooperation, participation, and enthusiasm. Lives will be changed because of what we do here today.
- ✦ We want to give you a chance to try out your new knowledge and skills by discussing a case together and developing some solutions.

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- ◇ Divide the participants into groups of 4 to 6 people. Include at least one advocate and at least one faith leader in each group.
- ◇ Alternatively, if the group is small, you could facilitate the discussion as one large group.
- ◇ The advocate(s) can point out places where agency or community services could be an effective way to meet the victims' needs. For example, if the faith leader voices a concern about the children or the abusive partner, point out where these family members might receive services (a Child Witness to Violence program? A batterers' intervention program?)
- ◇ The faith leaders can provide information about how the faith-based leader or faith-based counselor could respond, and how the victim's faith concerns could be met at the same time that her physical and emotional needs are met.
 - ✦ Ask each group to assign a note taker and someone who will report out to the larger group a summary of the conversation and some of the questions that arose.
 - ✦ Pass out to each group a case study that is, if possible, consistent with the faith of the faith leaders in the group.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

- ✧ *Give each person in the group or each group a copy of the Case Study Discussion Questions.*
 - ✧ *Encourage groups to remember the 5 response guidelines from Activity 8 in their discussion. Review these response guidelines very briefly: focus on the victim, prioritize safety, don't judge or blame, don't tell the victim what to do, and refrain from judging the victim based on personal characteristics, past decisions, or life choices.*
 - ✧ *Encourage groups to use the skills, services, and resources of BOTH the faith community AND the service agency to support the survivor.*
 - ✧ *Allow 20 minutes for group discussion. Check on the groups to make sure they get off on the right foot.*
 - ✧ *Gather the group back together and give each group three to five minutes to report. Make notes on the flip chart of questions that arose, insights, and learnings. Refer back to the protocols. Were they able to stay centered on the needs of the victim? Did they uphold the victim's safety? Did they provide options without telling the victim what to do? Did they refrain from blaming the victim? Were they able to work with the victim no matter how they felt about prior decisions, personal characteristics, or life choices?*
 - ◇ *Ask for questions and allow five to ten minutes for Q and A and discussion.*
 - ◇ *Close by reviewing some of the high points of the discussion, and thank the participants for their time and attention.*
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Case Study Discussion: Ruth

Ruth is a 33-year-old woman who has two daughters. She recently moved to [the area] from North Carolina, where she has deep family and church ties. Ruth and her husband, George, have been married for 10 years. Their daughters' names are Norma (7) and Louise (5).

Ruth moved here because her husband, George, got a job and moved the family to take the job. Shortly after moving here, however, George was fired. The family has been living in a two-bedroom rental home, but they aren't sure that they have enough money to make next month's rent. They have few financial resources, and not enough money to get back home.

Ruth's relationship with George has been difficult from the beginning. Ruth's family never approved of George and suggested to her numerous times that marrying him would be a mistake. Ruth and George have broken up on numerous occasions, but have always returned to each other after a few days. The break ups are usually precipitated by George coming home drunk and violent, or by his anger and threats toward Ruth. Twice in NC, the police were called by neighbors. Ruth has sustained several injuries, including a black eye and a cracked rib.

Ruth is worried about her daughters, who have sometimes seen the violence. Louise has started to wet her bed, which she hasn't done since she was a toddler. Ruth also wonders what to do next. She misses her congregation (Main Street AME Zion Church) back home and all the friends and support she had there, but George refuses to go back. He is certain that with Ruth's family and her connections to the church he won't have control over her the way he does now. He thinks her family is meddling and that the church mothers ask too many questions!

Ruth has also been trying to learn more about what makes George get so angry and violent. Like many victims, she is trying to figure out what she can do differently. She thought about calling the hotline or the battered woman's shelter and asking for information "for a friend," but she is almost certain that her pastor and the folks in her congregation back home would tell her not to. They would tell her that the battered woman's shelter breaks up families, and that it's her duty to stay with her husband. Ruth has no desire to leave her marriage, and she remembers everything she ever learned about how God hates divorce. She desperately wants to provide a good life for her girls, and she wants her marriage to George to be everything she has hoped for and dreamed of.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

Ruth has been attending a nearby Baptist church since she moved to the area, and she is slowly getting to know Pastor Thompson. Sunday morning gives her a few hours a week when she can forget how disconnected, lost, and alone she feels. But the rest of the week, she is frightened and confused.

Finally, with nowhere else to turn, Ruth asks Pastor Thompson if she can talk to him in his office. On the day of the appointment, Ruth sits down looking frightened and uncomfortable, and says that she is “having some trouble in her marriage.”

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Case Study Discussion: Yvonne

Yvonne is a 25-year-old Methodist woman who is not married. She is a waitress at a popular grille in her rural community. Yvonne has been seeing Jim for a year. Jim is 55 years old and a prominent banker in town. He is divorced and has two children. Though they come from different faith traditions, Yvonne is sure that Jim is the one she's been praying for and she's excited about their future together.

Yvonne met Jim at the grille. They see each other several times a week, usually at Yvonne's apartment. Jim pays half of her expenses; Yvonne couldn't afford to live there on her salary. Jim also gave Yvonne his old car. Yvonne spent several years praying for a husband, an affordable place, and a car, so meeting Jim seemed to be the answer to all her prayers.

Jim usually visits after work. He is sometimes in a bad mood and picks at Yvonne for how she is dressed or how she has decorated the apartment. He makes fun of how she talks and how poor her family is. Yvonne thinks he's just angry and tense about his job. She tries not to let it get to her, but sometimes she ends up crying and upset.

Jim began showing up at the grille unexpectedly. He called frequently on Yvonne's cell phone "just to see how she was doing." He also took back the car, saying his oldest child was learning to drive and needed it. Yvonne had to walk to work.

On Friday, during one of Jim's now frequent visits to the grille, he found Yvonne talking to a male customer. They were just chatting about a mutual friend, but Jim leapt to conclusions. He yelled at Yvonne, publicly humiliating her and frightening all the grille customers. The grille owner fired Yvonne on the spot. Jim gave her a ride home and yelled at her all the way. He told Yvonne he was happy she was fired. He said that if she didn't work, they would have fewer things to argue about.

Yvonne isn't sure what to do. She is still in love with Jim, and hopes to marry him. Confused and hurt, Yvonne calls her Pastor the minute she gets home. She says that she's "having some trouble at work," and wants to ask for advice.

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Case Study Discussion: Leah

Leah is a recent college graduate who feels fortunate to have found a job as an administrative assistant in a medical office about 45 minutes from where she lives. The pay is adequate, but not enough to move out of her parent's house—yet. Leah is lonely—sometimes her big outing of the weekend is going to synagogue with her dad on Saturday mornings.

Leah's colleagues are nice, especially one of the doctors. Dr. Z is good-looking, mid-30's, and married with 2 young kids. Leah talks to him frequently. Sometimes, their conversations border on flirtatious, and it seemed like he was going to kiss her one time, but nothing happened.

The commute home is long and, in the winter, treacherous. Dr. Z suggested that Leah get an apartment closer to the office, but Leah explained that she couldn't afford one. The following week, Dr. Z called her into his office and offered a promotion—with a salary increase. He explained, however, that the promotion would necessitate her being more available. Leah was thrilled and immediately found an apartment nearby.

Dr. Z became even more friendly and on several occasions suggested that they have dinner together. Leah thought it was unusual that he wouldn't go home to his wife, but she was lonely and thought there was nothing wrong with having dinner with one of her colleagues.

One night, after work, there was a knock on her door. It was Dr. Z with a pizza and some wine. Leah was so surprised that she didn't have the presence of mind to tell him that his coming to her house was a bad idea. And, in hindsight, even if she did think of it, she realized that she would have been too scared to turn him away—what if he fired her? She liked her job a lot and couldn't bear the thought of trying to explain to her parents if she got fired.

Leah didn't realize how tipsy she was until she got up from the table and spilled wine all over her shirt. When she went to her room to change, Dr. Z was right behind her. At first she thought he was teasing, but then he threw her onto the bed and raped her. When he left, he acted like everything was normal—he said, "see you at work tomorrow." Leah didn't know what to do so she didn't do anything—except cry herself to sleep.

This went on all summer. Sometimes he would hit her, sometimes not. Leah thought she should look for a new job, but was afraid that Dr. Z would poison other employers against her. She decided to ask her friends about it when she went home for Rosh Hashanah—if it came up.

Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model

Normally, Leah loved the holidays, but not so much this year. She knew she wasn't herself—she just hoped nobody else noticed. The day she went home to her parents, she had a nasty bruise that she spent a long time covering up. Her parents didn't notice it.

But later, her Rabbi asked about it. Leah wasn't prepared for this, so she shrugged it off saying that she had run into a door—she was so tired, not sleeping well, and work was just crazy. But the rabbi seemed concerned about her and asked for more details.

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Case Study Discussion: Mubeenah

Mubeenah is an older woman who has been married for 35 years. Her husband has always been difficult, and over the years his behavior has worsened. He sometimes physically injures Mubeenah, and always makes her feel humiliated and unsure of herself. In one particular incident, Mubeenah asked her husband to take her to an event at the mosque because she had had eye surgery and temporarily couldn't drive. He not only refused to drive her, but began to yell at her about spending too much time at the mosque. Mubeenah tried to contact one of her friends for a ride, but when her husband overheard her on the phone, he pushed her from behind and bruised her forehead on the wall. She knew she couldn't go out like that; it would be too difficult to explain another bruise!

Mubeenah remembered growing up with kind and loving parents. Her mother and father sometimes had disagreements, but she often heard them talking late into the night. Somehow, they seemed to work things out together. That had never been the case in Mubeenah's marriage. She felt that she must be doing something wrong to cause her husband to become so angry. Over the years she had tried to cook better, to wear nice clothes, to make sure meals were ready on time, and to be an observant and model Muslim wife. Nothing seemed to work. Now she wondered if the problem was that she was getting older and becoming a burden to him. She resolved to try not to ask him for help again.

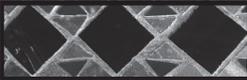
Two weeks later, Mubeenah's friends picked her up for lunch, followed by a new class on Islamic family relationships at the mosque. The class was an eye opener for Mubeenah. It helped her to see that her husband's anger and threats were intended to put her down and make her comply with what he wanted. The class reminded her of what she had learned in childhood--that the Qur'an encourages kindness and compassion between spouses, not anger and violence.

Mubeenah opened up to a friend from her women's study circle that met once a week to study the Qur'an. Her friend was sympathetic, and Mubeenah realized that maybe, with the support of her family and her friends, things could change. She resolved to make an appointment with the counselor who taught the Islamic family relationships class to talk more about her situation.

Mubeenah went to see the counselor. She felt frightened and confused. When the counselor asked her how she was, Mubeenah wasn't sure what to say. She responded, "I've been feeling a little depressed lately."

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Case Study Discussion Questions

- ❖ Based on the case study (and not just on what the victim has said), what are some of your concerns for the victim? Do you have safety concerns?
- ❖ What are the victim's primary needs?
- ❖ How could you elicit more information than what the victim has volunteered?
- ❖ What services, if any, might be helpful?
- ❖ Could the victim have faith-based concerns as well? How could they be addressed?
- ❖ What advice do you have for the faith leader or faith-based counselor?
- ❖ What additional questions do you have?

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