



*Counseling and Education to Stop Domestic Violence*

## **E-mail Newsletter**

**Working to Stop Domestic Violence Since 1977**

**Volume 1: Issue 5 ~ September 2006**

### **Greetings!**

This month's issue features an opinion piece by Jim Morin, one of EmERGE's group leaders. Jim looks at how the mixed message about control and violence in society contributes to violence on an individual level.

We also are providing information on a nationwide survey we have been conducting for over a year now, as well as listing recent updates to our discussion forum.

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## **Mixed Messages About Control & Violence**

***By Jim Morin, EmERGE Group Leader***



It may just be that my co-worker and I are working with a very challenging group of abusive men right now. Some nights we just shake our heads in frustration. The problem is they just don't seem

## **National Survey on Approaches to Abuser Education**



During the spring and summer of 2005, EmERGE staff conducted a national survey of abuser education programs. We contacted state coalitions and spoke with individual counselors and program directors to determine two things:

1. *How programs were working with LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) abusers*

convinced that giving up control over their partners is the right thing to do. While they might give lip service to the idea that abusive and controlling behavior is not right, an off-hand comment or some conspiratorial snickering exposes an alternative conviction that sometimes a man is justified in taking control. They have heard our message of respect and tolerance, but they don't buy it.

When considering why some of these men seem so reluctant to give up their ultimate right to control their partner, I recall the anecdote of the downstream life guard who, day after day, keeps pulling drowning people out of the river, and then one day realizes that a more effective rescue effort may be to find out how so many people are getting into the river upstream in the first place. The point of the anecdote is, of course, to raise the question of the source of the problem. When it comes to addressing the abusive and controlling behavior of men in intimate relationships, where is the best place to intervene? Is abusive behavior toward a partner a problem of the individual abuser? Or is it a social problem, better understood as suggested, sanctioned, and maintained by social and cultural institutions?

It probably comes as no surprise to any of us that work with abusive men that there are, in American society, powerful forces promoting violence and domination in the service of a supposedly virtuous identity. There are many ways this message is delivered. Watch almost any video game and you can see that it's now cool to be a killer. Weapons are shiny, high-tech products that bestow power. They are plentiful on the streets from Boston to Baghdad, and are mostly in the hands of men. I have been struck lately by some of the messages coming from the White House seeking to justify the use of American force against our enemies. Judging by his words and deeds, we not only have the right to defend ourselves with military force when attacked by our enemies, "the terrorists," we also have the right to destroy them if we believe they may someday intend to do us harm.

Of course this isn't just the current administration who is promoting this right to use force in self-defense. There are many institutions dedicated to promoting this point of view as patriotic. The message is promoted in the media, supported by

## 2. *How they dealt with heterosexual women who were referred for abuser education services*

Emerge staff spoke with program personnel in 23 states and one Canadian province, and gathered quite a bit of varied information. We were also able to identify specific manuals and/or approaches to working with both populations.

This survey has been ongoing as we continue to work to understand how agencies and individual counselors conduct services for abusers. If you are interested in seeing the current results of this survey, we would be happy to e-mail you a PDF version. If you are interested in filling out a survey on this topic, or in seeing the results of the survey please e-mail Christopher Hall at [emergedv@gmail.com](mailto:emergedv@gmail.com).

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## Some Useful Links...

[Emerge's Manuals & Materials](#)

[Emerge Training Information](#)

[Emerge's Links Page](#)

[Emerge's Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[The Silicon Valley DV Project \(Great Research Links\)](#)

our governmental agencies, considered in our schools, and lauded on our car bumpers with yellow ribbons. Consider this: Today it is patriotic to support the killing of thousands of people throughout Iraq and Afghanistan and other Middle East countries. Our government trains thousands of our young men and women to take up arms to execute this mission. You are a brave American if you are serving in uniform, willing to risk your life for this cause. You are a patriotic American if you endorse this mission and honor the troops who implement this violent imposition of our will. Make an informed decision to end the use of violence, "cut and run," and your loyalty and judgment are suspect.

What are we to make of the mixed messages about international violence and domestic violence? The idea that force is justified to control situations receives a great deal of exposure and promotion. In comparison, the idea that force is not justified in domestic situations, receives much less exposure and much less promotion. If we can believe the men in our groups, they claim this is new information. They say they didn't know that threats and intimidation were controlling, or that put downs and sarcasm were forms of abuse. Of course such remarks are self-serving on their part, but there is an element of truth in their claim that they did not know control that control of one's partner was unacceptable. So many messages tell us that control over others is justified; so few tell us that control of others is unjustified.

I am not suggesting that domestic violence is caused by this country's foreign policy. As is the case with other social values, many men are exposed to these messages yet do not attempt to control their partners. Many factors influence the choices we make, and the choices we have. My point is about mixed messages. Particularly, messages about how men should respond to conflict. Our national policy is to respond with force and to valorize those who serve that policy. Our commitment to respectful relationships with partners and to peaceful problem-solving is promoted much more equivocally.

Is domestic violence an individual problem, or is it better understood as a societal problem? Do we best address the problem of domestic violence by treating each abusive man as an individual who,

[MINCAVA \(Great Resource Links\)](#)

[Lundy Bancroft - Author / Former Emerge Staff Member](#)

[Battered Women's Justice Project](#)

[National Network of Batterer Intervention Providers](#)

[A Manual for Clergy and Congregations \(DV Training for Military Chaplains\)](#)

[The Caring Dads Program](#)

[Substance Abuse Treatment Locator](#)

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for whatever reasons and circumstances, has decided to employ violence in an attempt to control his female partner? Do we pull them out of the water, one guy at a time? Or do we better address the problem of domestic violence by identifying, confronting, and reshaping the societal institutions, structures and attitudes that legitimize domestic violence and the privilege of men to control women? Do we stop them from falling in upstream?

## August's Discussion Forum Highlights

During the month of August, we had a few new additions and questions that came in. Please join in on the discussions and share your information and experience with people around the nation!



Deke Simon asked a series of poll questions during July but he did not receive many responses. He is working on creating some role play videos for use in abuser education group sessions. He would appreciate any information on how you currently use videos in your groups or what you would like to see in such videos.

Mark710, a staff member at Emerge, has attempted to continue a discussion on the topic of cross training between abuser education programs and battered women's programs.

EFGomez has continued the discussion on how to refer to abusers. There are many conflicting opinions on whether using the term "batterer" is alienating or appropriate. This is a "hot topic" issue, so you must be registered in order to view or contribute.

Dgarvin posted an opinion on conducting partner contacts, and ChrisEmerge posted an alternate opinion on the same topic. This is another "hot topic", so you must be registered to view or contribute.

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Mark Lawson, of Vermont, is asking for input on how to address courts and judges who use studies and statistics which describe batterer intervention as being ineffective.

Finally, Cher provided the forum with a personal story that provides her experience of the pain she experienced from her abuser.

Since its launch in May, the discussion forum has had many new registered users. Our thanks to those of you who are interested in continuing to talk about domestic violence issues! It's still early on in the life of the forum, so those of you who are interested in asking questions, getting feedback or just sharing your experience, we'd love to have your input!

**[To View the Emerge Discussion Forum...](#)**

Email: [emergedv@gmail.com](mailto:emergedv@gmail.com)

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