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December, 2011  
Fall Newsletter from Emerge

## Peer Support for Change

**Emerge:**  
**Counseling and  
Education to Stop  
Domestic Violence**  
*"Working for change  
since 1977"*

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Friends, relatives or colleagues of abusers often ask Emerge for advice on how they can talk to an abuser about his situation. Typically, these individuals have not learned about the abuse in the form of a direct confession. Instead, this information usually comes from the abused partner or from another person. Even if the abuser discloses the abuse, it is often not an acknowledgment of responsibility but a complaint about the situation (for example, the partner asking the abuser to leave his home).



### Attend a Training at Emerge!



Attend a 3-Day training provided by Emerge to learn how to run groups for abusers!

**Three dates in 2012**  
January 25-27, 2012  
May 9-11, 2012  
September 12-14, 2012

Attend a 2-Day training for people who are familiar with Power and Control Models of Abuser Education, or who have already

Often, teachers and coaches ask how they should talk with their students about allegations of abuse. How and whether they talk to the abuser should depend upon two factors: who revealed the abuse to them and that person's wishes. If the source of information is the victim, it is especially important to respect her wishes. Does she want any information disclosed to the abuser? If so, how does she want it to be discussed? Even when the information comes directly from the abuser, how one responds is influenced by a variety of factors. For instance, how well a person knows the abuser, whether he or she is a friend or relative of the victim, and his or her level of comfort in discussing the problem with the abuser all affect the person's response to such information.

Sometimes, in peer leadership programs, individuals seek training on how to have effective conversations with abusers. Some of these are community-based peer leadership programs that are charged with training peer leaders to address violence of all kinds. Some are church-based programs for lay counselors who must address any problem that arises among their parishioners. Others are school-based or youth-based programs that are specifically geared toward addressing dating and domestic violence among their target population. Emerge provides training on how to best motivate abusers to seek help for their behavior. In these trainings we include the results from research that we've conducted about excuse-making strategies of abusers.

In addition to providing tips for how to respond to these common excuses, we sometimes facilitate role plays with peer leaders so that individuals can gain experience and confidence in responding to such excuses. We point out two extreme responses which may actually aggravate or reinforce the

attended our 3-Day training.

**Two dates in 2012!**  
April 12-13, 2012  
November 1-2, 2012

**For more information or to register, click here!**

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abuser's behavior. One extreme is to antagonize the abuser by acting in a confrontational or aggressive manner. Though interveners who use this approach might believe that they have set the abuser straight, such confrontation is often counterproductive. The abuser may feel further alienated from potential sources of help and may even make the victim pay for such unpleasant encounters. The other extreme is to wittingly or unwittingly collude with the abuser by responding in a manner that actually reinforces his excuses.

Remaining silent--a response which falls somewhere in between these two extremes--may also reinforce the abuse. Many abusers may understand the silence as acceptance or even support for their actions. The following Talking Points are intended as guidelines for interveners to avoid such extremes and respond in a more constructive manner.

## Talking Points: Tough (But Caring) Talk for Men Who Have Abused Their Partners



If you are a friend, co-worker, neighbor, teacher or coach of a man who has abused his partner, you are in a good position to help prevent future abuse, but only if you give the right feedback. Sometimes, we end up responding in a way that inadvertently supports abuser's *excuses* for abuse, regardless of our intent. Here are some talking points that will help you to hold your friend to

a higher standard:

### General Responses

1) Say that you are concerned about him and cite one or more of the following possible consequences (based on your knowledge of what is most meaningful to him).

*If this goes on, you could:*

- get arrested;
- ruin your relationship;
- push her (partner) away;
- harm your kids by being exposed to it, or by seeing the aftermath;
- alienate your kids;
- lose a lot of money from legal consequences/paying for another residence;
- face emotional and financial stress;
- harm your own, and partners, health;
- create bad publicity for you and your family; or
- lose friends.

2) Tell him that he needs to get help to make sure that this does not happen again (in his current or any future relationships). Point out the limitations of quick-fix strategies, like:

-Promises that it will never happen again

*Your response: That's a good start but promises can backfire when immediate trust is expected.*

-Apologies

*Your response: Great but apologies won't work if you expect an immediate acceptance of your apology.*

-Gifts

*Your response: Gifts don't mean anything if you keep repeating your behavior.*

-Getting help

*Your response: Good, but studies have shown that outcomes are poor for people who don't stick with it; also, you have to get the right kind of help.*

-Bargaining (e.g. I'll get help if you get help; I'll get help if I can move back in.)

*Your response: You need to be committed to changing your own behavior. She is not responsible for helping you to change or for rewarding you.*

### **Responses specific to particular excuses he might be making:**

"She provoked me."

*Your response:*

*-Nobody can cause you to do anything you don't believe in doing.*

*-You can't control her actions; but you can control your own.*

*-You are 100% responsible for how you choose to react.*

*-I'm not justifying what she did, but your violence can only make it worse.*

"I lost control."

*Your response:*

*-You did have control, because you chose not to... (give an example of something he didn't do, such as punch her with a closed fist or stab her)*

*-That's a cop out; you are still responsible for your own behavior.*

"It's only because I love her so much that I have such strong feelings."

*Your response:*

*-That's not the way to show it.*

*-Your intentions are good but your behavior creates the opposite effect.*

"I was just trying to point out how wrong she was."

*Your response:*

*-That may be true but now all she remembers is your violence.*

*-Would you want to listen to someone who hits you?*

"I'm just under so much stress."

*Your response:*

*-There's stress that you can't control and stress that you create for yourself.*

*-Yes, and that's all the more reason to not create more stress by getting yourself arrested, etc (point out other consequences).*

"It only happened because I had too much to drink."

*Your response:*

*-You are still responsible for what you do when you drink. Not all drinkers hit their partners.*

*-You should monitor your drinking, knowing that you might become violent or say ugly things when you are drinking.*

*-The consequences don't disappear just because you were drinking.*

"It's the only time this has happened."

*Your response:*

*-Great, but let's make sure it doesn't happen again.*

*"It was self-defense."*

*Your response:*

*-There's a difference between self-defense and paying someone back with interest. Self-defense means taking the minimum necessary actions to protect yourself from harm, for example by leaving the situation, blocking her blows, etc.*

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## Questions?

Contact us.

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