

Signs & Symptoms of Coercive Control:

The Co-Occurrence of Child Abuse, Animal Abuse & Family Violence

Catherine Vannier
Special Victims Resource Prosecutor
Missouri Office of Prosecution Services
(573) 644 2409
Catherine.Vannier@prosecutors.mo.gov

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Abuser Accountability
 +
Victim & Caregiver Safety
 =
Homicide Prevention
 &
Justice Served

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The Team Approach

“(I)f a house is divided against itself, the house will not be able to stand.”

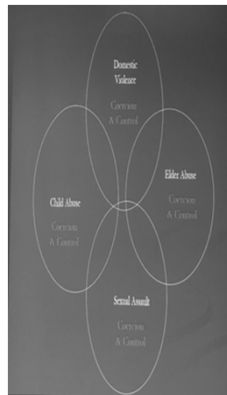
-Mark 3:20-35



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Coercive Control

- 1) Acts perceived by recipient as violent or threatening
- 2) Recipients’ fear of attack or retaliation
- 3) Threats alternated with kindness



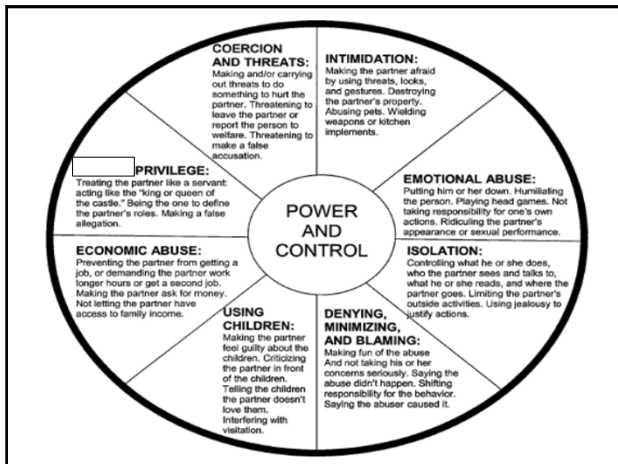
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Understanding the Dynamic

- Self blame & guilt
- Rollercoaster of emotions
- Dependency & hope for independence
- The New Normal
- Hope for change
- Fear of exposure
- Physical, sensory & memory barriers

Why do we need to know?

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Power and Control Tactics

How might outsiders see these?

ISOLATION...

- Doesn't want others in the residence
- Children told to hide or leave
- "My partner is not available to talk to you"

INTIMIDATION...

- > Following a visitor from room to room
- > Aggressive stance
- > Reading the body language

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The Root of All Crime

The root of all crime is in the neurobiology of the brain after childhood trauma and abuse.

- Casey Gwinn

National Family Justice Center Alliance, 2014



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TYPES of CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & ANIMAL ABUSE:

- 1) Direct witness to violence (see or hear)
- 2) Witness aftermath of violence (injuries, property damage, police response)
- 3) Used by abuser (e.g., spy on victim, forced to watch)
- 4) Injured or at risk as a result of violence
- 5) Sense of guilt for failing to protect others
- 6) Threats to kill or harm animals as means of control adult and children

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“Infants and small children...

...experience so much added emotional stress that it can harm the development of their brains and impair cognitive and sensory growth...at an early age, a child's brain is becoming hard-wired for later physical and emotional functioning. Exposure to domestic violence threatens that development.”

-- Victor Vieth NFJCA 2011
citing Behind Closed Doors: Impact of Domestic Violence on Children (United Nations 2006)

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Fostering Resiliency

Factors in a Person's Response to Trauma

- Positive perception of mother
- One stable care-giver/ Secure parental attachment
- Sporadic (vs. chronic) abuse
- Peer support
- Safety of community
- Positive parenting characteristics
- Connections to extended family network
- Positive self-image and self-esteem
- Determination to differ from abusive parent / Autonomy
- Strong commitment to school

--Victor Vieth NFICA 2011 (Herrenkohl et al, 2008)

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Co-Occurrence

- Studies show that in roughly half of homes with intimate partner violence the children are directly abused regularly as well
- Batterers are 700% more likely than non-batterers to physically or sexually abuse children

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Why do we have animals as pets?

- Childlike Behaviors
- Protectors
- Teach us to Love and Be Loved
- Give us Confidence and Courage
- Give us Purpose
- Help us Heal
- Teach us the Better Qualities in Ourselves

- Denise Massey, MOPS 3rd Annual DSV Conference Materials

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Animal Abuse Shows Itself in Many Ways

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THE LINK FACTS

- Threats or actual abuse of pets increases probability of intimate terrorism by 38.6% (Fitzgerald et al.,2020)
- Batterers who also abuse pets are more dangerous, more controlling, and use more forms of violence than batterers who do not (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007)
- 62-76 percent of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children (Faver & Strand, 2003)
- Children often intervene to protect their mothers and pets from being battered.... Some children may even allow themselves to be victimized to save their pets from being harmed or killed (Edelson et al., 2003)

-- National Link Coalition

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Tell me about the animals at your house....

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The Animal Cruelty Task Force

(314) 647-8800

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**Understanding
Coercive Control in
the Community
Response**

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**Victims & non offending caregivers
cannot stop the abuse.
Only the community can stop the abuser.**

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Chemistry & Trauma

- Perceptual narrowing
- Loss of cognitive & motor skills
- Critical incident amnesia
- Fear of doubt & blame
- Hyper-vigilance
- Hyper-intuition of abuser's next move

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The Body Keeps the Score...



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Older Adults & Trauma

“Accumulated traumas have been called the “hidden variables” in the lives of older adults...”



“The Things They Carry,” January 2020, Breckman, Risa, et al.

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User Friendly Systems

- Normalizing the stress and frustration.
- Non-judgmental conversations
- Support & resource mobilization

“Let’s see if together we can...”

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**“Whatever a victim tells
you at any given time is
never going to be all of it.”**

- *Retired* Sgt. Joanne Archambault

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The User Friendly System

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But could it be like this?

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Stepping Outside Ourselves

- What does this person think?
- What does this person feel?
- How is this person holding his or her body right now?

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Which ones have the potential?



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**When is a domestic violence
victim**

(and the family... and the friends... and the coworkers...
and the police officers....)

at highest risk?

- when they attempt to leave the relationship

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**21.03 & 22.04. Warrant of Arrest - When
Issued**

(a) When...sufficient facts have been stated ... a
summons **shall** be issued unless the court finds there are
reasonable grounds to believe:

- (1) The defendant **will not appear** upon the summons
or
- (2) The defendant **poses a danger** to a crime victim,
the community, or any other person.

codybrewington@missouristate.edu

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Lethality & Risk Assessment Factors

- Recent Separation
- Presence or Accessibility of
Firearms
- Presence of stepchild in the
home
- History of Violence
 - Escalation
 - Strangulation
 - Forced Sex
- Use or threat of use of
weapons
- Following or Monitoring
Victim's Activities
- Child or Animal Abuse or
threats to children or animals

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Assessments

- www.dangerassessment.org
- www.mosaicmethod.com
- http://www.bwip.org/files/bwip/articles/DV_Risk_Assessment_Bench_Guide.pdf
- http://www.justicewomen.com/dv_risk_assess.pdf
- And so on...

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If you only have time for 3 questions...

- (1) Do you think he/she will seriously injure or kill you or your children?
- (2) How frequently and seriously does he/she intimidate, threaten, or assault you?
- (3) Has the suspect threatened to harm you if you call the police or participate in the court/legal process?



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**Was there a recent separation
... or other new threat to the abuser's
power and control?**

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**Is the suspect violently &/or
constantly jealous?**

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**Has the abuser
ever watched
the victim or
followed the
victim or
monitored her
activities?**

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Do they have access to guns?

**Have guns ever been used as
a threat or to assault before?**

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**Have there been any death or
suicide threats?**

Any history of mental health issues?

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**Are there children or animals
in the home?
Whose are they?
Has anyone ever threatened
or hurt them?**

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Has the victim ever been afraid
for her life or the lives of the
children or pets?

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Articulating Danger

- Presence of lethality & risk factors
- Facts of the offense(s) that support a continuing danger to the victim or any other person.
- Defendant's known history of violence,
 - going beyond cases whether Defendant was previously arrested or charged.
- Proximity & access to the victims/ witnesses
- Possession of weapons
- Prior bond/ probation violations
- Prior attempts to escape or failure to obey orders
- Threats or hostility to law enforcement or others

Microsoft Word - Rule 33 Recs 8.27.19 (mo.gov)

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Safety Plans:

- http://www.abanet.org/tips/dvsafety.html#safe_tips
- <http://www.domesticviolence.org/personalized-safety-plan/>
- <http://www.mocadsv.org/Resources/CMSResources/pdf/Safety%20Plan.pdf>
- And more...

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Policies To Consider

- Community Education
- Workplace Policies
- Courthouse Policies
- **Safety Planning Protocols & Personnel**
- Identification of High Risk Cases
 - *Recognizing a case can go quickly from low to high*

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The Brevity of Childhood

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Few will have the greatness to bend history itself... but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

-Robert F. Kennedy

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