

# Dynamics of Abusive Relationship Transfer of Learning Packet

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The Academy for Professional Excellence is a project of the San Diego State University School of Social Work

# Dynamics of Abusive Relationships TOL

## How to Use:

This Transfer of Learning (TOL) Packet is designed as a companion to NAPSA Core Competency Module 8: Dynamics of Abusive Relationships, both eLearning and ILT modalities.

This TOL packet can be used in a variety of settings to include:

- Instructor-Led Training (virtual or in-person) with support from a facilitator
- During supervision when coaching staff around the skills of identifying dynamics of abusive relationships and how APS can best support survivors of this type of abuse
- Unit Meeting as a group activity with guidance from a Supervisor or Lead Staff

There are three activities available, independent of each other. Each activity has its own learning objectives. Facilitators and Supervisors are encouraged to complete the activities that support their staff's development needs most.

- Facilitator's Guide provides possible answers to support Facilitators and Supervisors when utilizing this packet can be found on pages 17-21.

## Instructions:

1. Participants will first view a video clip of Jewell, an older adult who is a survivor of intimate partner violence. This clip is provided by NCALL and requires those who access it to complete a short demographics survey.
2. To access the video, visit <https://www.liftingupvoices.net/>, fill out the demographics and click on Jewell: Intimate Partner Violence Including Economic Abuse clip.
3. Complete the questions provided for each activity that is desired for completion. Discuss additional possible answers, similarities, and discrepancies.

## Content Warning and Trauma-Informed Practice:

The video clip used for these activities shares real-life experiences from Jewell and can activate memories from participants' own lived experiences, past or current. It's imperative that psychological safety is in place prior to completing these activities. Group/pair trust, knowing what is expected, freedom of choice and validation are just a few ways to promote psychological safety. Facilitators and Supervisors should ensure a Content Warning is provided before watching the video and discussing answers. Encourage and allow participants to do what they need to in order to feel safe during these activities.

## Activity One: Identifying Power and Control Dynamics

### Learning Objectives:

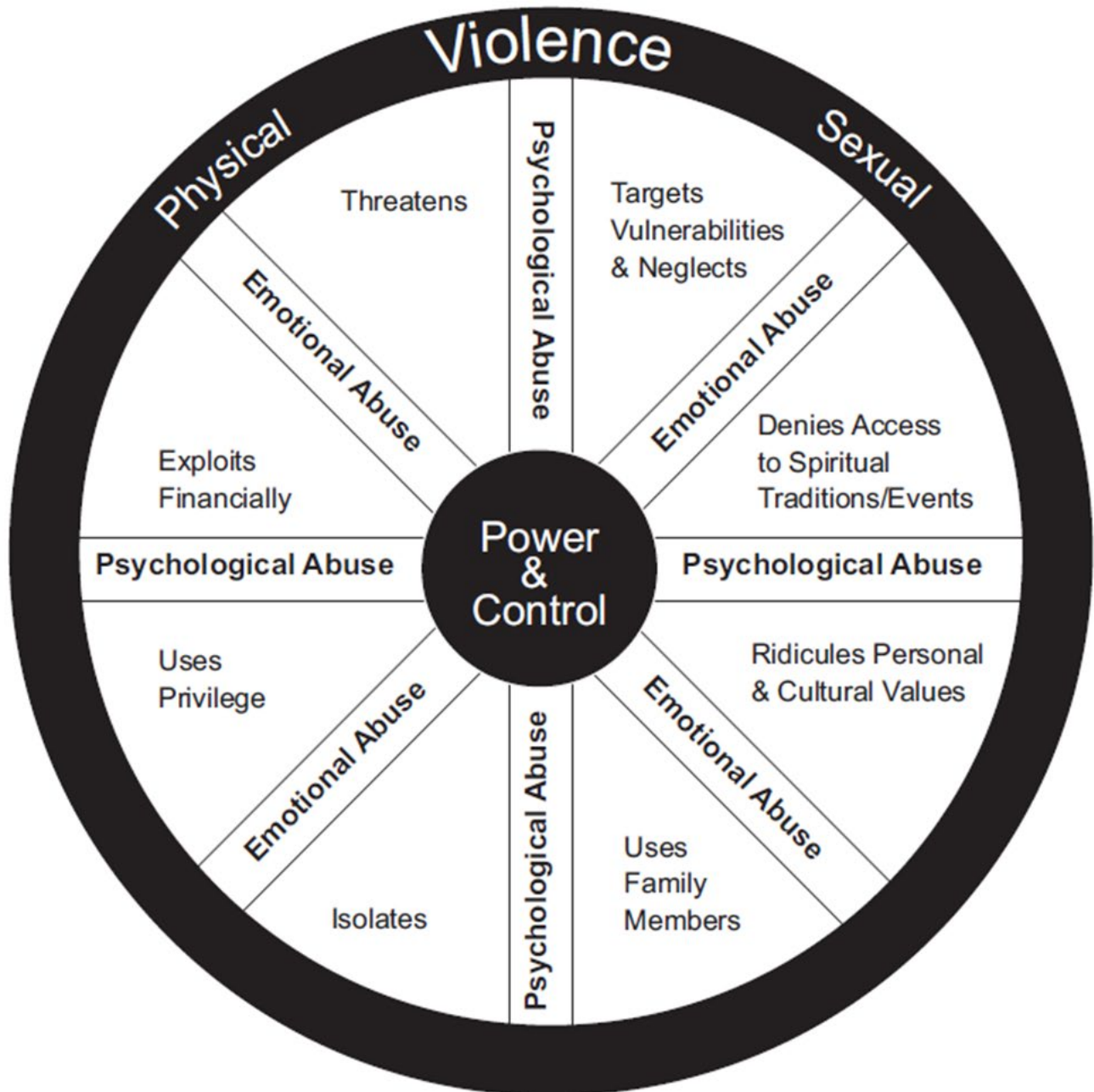
- Identify specific power and control tactics and provide evidentiary examples from video.
- Explain how being able to identify power and control dynamics is beneficial to APS investigations.

### Instructions:

- Review the NCALL Abuse in Later Life Power and Control Wheel on page 3.
- Watch the Jewell: Intimate Partner Violence Including Economic Abuse clip.
- Remember the theory behind the Abuse in Later Life Wheel assumes that the abuser's behaviors are intentional and they are responsible for the harm that they cause.
- Using the wheel and the video, **identify** the following:
  - What tactics (e.g. sexual, emotional, physical, uses privilege) from the wheel could you pick out in this video? List examples from the video for each tactic.
  - How would being familiar with the wheel or the dynamics of abusive relationships help in investigating a case like this?
  - What personal bias might any first responder, including APS, experience in a case like this?
  - How can APS professionals collaborate with advocates from domestic violence agencies?

**Remember** ideally, all APS investigations include determining if power and control tactics are being used to manipulate and/or coerce the victim. Any intervention strategies should focus on improving victim safety to the degree possible, which can only be accomplished if the underlying dynamics of the abuse are understood and taken into account.

# Abuse in Later Life Power & Control Wheel



In 2006, NCALL adapted the Power and Control Wheel, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN. Resource updated, April 2011.

## Activity Two: Identifying APS's Role

### Learning Objectives:

- Determine indicators of abuse as seen in video.
- Explain what APS would be able to do in this case, including collaborative efforts and identify appropriate referrals.

### Instructions:

- Watch the Jewell: Intimate Partner Violence Including Economic Abuse clip.
- Answer the following:
  - Did any type of abuse occur? If so, what type(s) of abuse?
  - What were the indicators that led you to identify that type of abuse?
  - What is the nature of the relationship between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s)?
  - What are the cultural, religious, racial, other considerations to take into account?
  - What is APS' role in this case (assume Jewel is eligible for APS services in your state)?
  - What steps should the APS professional take initially to promote Jewel's safety and to begin the investigation?
  - What other agencies should APS collaborate with?
    - Consider non-conventional options including community-specific shelters, faith-based options, neighborhood groups, etc.
  - What is APS' role with regard to the alleged perpetrator, if any?

## Activity Three: Safety Planning

### Learning Objectives:

- Summarize Safety Planning Guidelines and Tips as it applies to those APS serves
- Identify APS's role in safety planning and clarify when additional support from other agencies may be needed

**Reminder:** Participants learned in the Dynamics of Abusive Relationship module, APS should focus on safety of the victim. Sometimes, the APS responsibilities or interventions may overlap or conflict with the roles of other first-responders, such as law enforcement and Long-Term Care Ombudsman. Knowing our professional role, and working collaboratively with others, will greatly enhance the safety of the people you serve.

- As participants complete this activity, ask them to *remember and have an understanding as to why Jewel may choose to stay and why she may choose to leave and how these decisions may impact services offered.*
- Intervention strategies should always focus on improving victim safety to the degree possible, which can only be accomplished if the underlying dynamics of the abuse are understood and taken into account.
- Victim and APS professional safety issues are at the forefront in case planning and intervention. Violent situations can be very dangerous for both victims and APS professionals.
- When conducting an investigation, the APS professional investigates what happened, who is involved, and how and possibly why the abuse occurred. During this process, the focus must remain on the victim's safety. APS should always collaborate with other community agencies to bring the most resources and alternatives to these victims. Keep in mind that traditional Domestic Violence resources may not be equipped for those who APS typically serves. Look at community-specific shelters or placement, faith based options, neighborhood groups, etc.

### Instructions:

- Review the Key Considerations for Professionals Working With Older Adults of Abuse and Safety Planning documents on pages 7-16.
- Watch the Jewell: Intimate Partner Violence Including Economic Abuse clip.
- Answer the following:
  - What is APS' role in safety planning? (assume Jewel is eligible for APS services in your state)?

- What could the APS professional do or what questions could they ask to help facilitate safety planning?
- What should the APS professional consider for themselves in situations where an abusive relationship is present?





## **Victim-Centered Safety Planning: Key Considerations for Professionals Working with Older Survivors of Abuse**

### **What is Safety Planning?**

Safety planning is a process where a worker and a victim jointly create a plan to enhance the individual's personal safety. The safety plan is victim driven and centered. It is based on the victim's goals, not the professional's opinions and recommendations.

### **Who Can Benefit from Safety Planning?**

Safety planning can benefit a victim who is living in fear or being physically or sexually abused. Some victims who are being financially exploited or neglected may find safety planning useful while others may need other case management remedies to address their situation. The process can provide useful strategies for victims who choose to maintain relationships with abusers; those who leave and return to abusers; or those who end the relationship permanently.

**Remember that a safety plan, regardless of how well thought out, is not a guarantee of safety.**

### **Guiding Principles**

- Respect the integrity and authority of victims to make their own life choices.
- Hold perpetrators, not victims, accountable for the abuse and for stopping their behavior. Avoid victim blaming questions and statements.
- Take into consideration victims' concepts of what safety and quality of life mean.

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**National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)**

A project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin

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Phone: 608-255-0539 • Fax/TTY: 608-255-3560 • [www.ncall.us](http://www.ncall.us) • [www.endabusewi.org](http://www.endabusewi.org)



- Recognize resilience and honor the strategies that victims have used in the past to protect themselves.
- Redefine success—success is defined by the victim; not what professionals think is right or safe.

### **Evaluating Risks**

When safety planning with survivors of abuse, consider both batterers generated risks and life generated. These forms of risk will impact the choices survivors will feel are available to them.

- Batterer generated risks are the tactics abusive individuals use to control victims. Batterer-generated risks may include: 1) physical injury; 2) psychological harm; 3) health risks; 4) financial harm; 5) risk to or about family and friends; 6) loss of relationship; and 7) risks involving arrest or legal status.
- Life-generated risks are aspects of a victim's life that a person may have little control over. "These can include financial, home location, physical and mental health, inadequate responses by major social institutions, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or other bias."

For more information about evaluating risks and how to create safety plans based on this type of risk assessment, see "Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices" by Jill Davies, Eleanor Lyon and Diane Monti-Cantania (1998).

### **Increased Danger for Victims Who End Relationships**

Ending a relationship or leaving an abuser can increase the possibility of serious injury due to retaliation or death. Indicators of potential danger may include weapons in the home, a history of or escalation of violence, or suicidal comments by abuser. Offenders who fear they are losing control over their victims' lives and resources may become more dangerous.

## Additional Considerations

### General Issues

- Ask if the victim has any needs to be met or responsibility for caretaking.
- Determine if culture, language, religion, sexual orientation, or legal status is preventing the victim from accepting help or accessing resources.
- Ask if the individual resides in congregate living. If yes, are staff a resource or source of potential retaliation?
- Is the victim willing to consider staying at a domestic violence shelter? Are the domestic violence shelters accessible? Are they willing to accept victims who do not have children, or may be parenting grandchildren rather than birth children? Can they accommodate persons with medical needs or with a caregiver?

**Assistance  
must not and  
cannot be  
forced upon an  
individual.**

### Cultural Considerations

Cultural values impact safety planning. Learn about cultural norms in various communities to work effectively with older adults who will bring their own perspective to the safety planning process.

A cultural guide may be a helpful way to learn more about cultures in your community. Try to find someone who is from the community is willing to assist the victim in the process, understands the dynamics of abuse and is aware of the importance of the confidentiality. Using a friend or family member can be dangerous, as they may, whether intentional or not, pass information on to the abusive individual.

## Victim Mobility

Victims with mobility issues may need to discuss additional accommodations when safety planning. Some issues to consider:

- Consider how the abuser may use a person's physical limitations against him or her as an abusive tactic.
- Can the victim carry a cell phone at all times to call 911 in an emergency? Does the DV program offer free 911 phones?
- What accommodations and medical/assistive equipment will the victim need if not living at home?
- Consider adaptations to the individual's home that might make it safer and easier to escape from in a dangerous incident.
- Keep in mind issues such as spare batteries and backup assistive devices and food for service animals will need to be considered for some victims.

### Key Messages for Victims

- **No one deserves to be abused.**
- **I am concerned about you.**
- **You are not alone.**
- **Help is available.**

For more information about safety planning visit NCALL's website [www.ncall.us](http://www.ncall.us). Also visit the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence website for "[Model Protocol on Safety Planning for Domestic Violence Victims with Disabilities](#)" at [www.wscadv.org](http://www.wscadv.org).

### **Victim Capacity**

During the intake and safety planning process, consider the victim's capacity to create and follow the steps of a safety plan. The worker should presume capacity, but if it seems possible that the older adult may not be able to track information, contact health care providers who may be able to assist with a capacity assessment. When working with persons who have capacity limitations to create a safety plan, consider the following:

- Follow the victim's wishes as much as possible.
- Consider if the victim can follow a simplified plan with one or two steps such as "If I am afraid, I will call my sister Sara at \_\_\_\_\_"
- Consider whether the victim has a support network of family, friends, or paid staff who can assist with developing and implementing the safety plan.
- Consider whether a written plan or one with pictures is more effective.
- If offering a cell phone, be sure the person knows how to charge and use the phone. Consider having the phone programmed to 911.
- Safety planning may take more time with a person with cognitive limitations. A person's ability to track the plan may change over time and may need frequent updating.

For more information, see "*Safety Planning: How You Can Help*" at [www.ncall.us](http://www.ncall.us)

### **Technology and Safety Planning**

Technology can be a useful tool for survivors of domestic & sexual violence; however, it is important to consider how technology might be misused. If an abusive individual seems to know too many details regarding the victim's whereabouts, it is possible that phone, computer, email, or other activities are being monitored.

- Work with survivors on how to use technology safely.



- Have emergency cell phones available for survivors to use in case of emergency and make sure an older victim is comfortable using a cell phone.
- Consider preprogramming the cell phone to call 911.
- Assure the cell phone works in the area where the victim lives.

For more information regarding technology and safety planning, see the publication from the National Network to End Domestic Violence, "[Technology Safety Planning with Survivors](https://nnedv.org/mdocs-posts/technology-safety-planing-with-survivors/)" available on their website at: <https://nnedv.org/mdocs-posts/technology-safety-planing-with-survivors/>.

### **Worker Issues**

- Be aware, alert, and wary. Plan for your own safety when you enter someone's home.
- Be sure other staff knows your location. Keep your cell phone handy.
- If you are concerned about your personal safety, contact law enforcement to accompany you on the home visit.
- Avoid colluding with charming or sympathetic abusers. Focus on victim safety.

### **Success is:**

- **listening and having the speaker feel heard**
- **offering non-judgmental support and information**
- **providing resources to enhance a sustainable safety net**
- **seeing victims find their way so they trust and use their abilities to build peaceful lives**

# Safety Planning Tips

Safety planning is a process to help victims think through options prior to a dangerous incident so they can plan their next steps. These safety planning tips provide information about things to consider when creating a safety plan and items to pack in advance to leave quickly. For more information about safety planning, contact a local domestic violence program.

## During a Violent or Dangerous Incident

- Plan a safe place to go if you have to leave suddenly.
- Plan a primary and backup escape route out of your home.
- Practice getting out of your home safely.
- Try to avoid rooms that have only one exit like bathrooms, or that have no phone or cell phone to call for help.
- Be aware of items in your home that could be used as weapons, such as guns, knives, even cords used for strangulation.
- If you are being attacked, curl up and protect your head and heart.
- Arrange a signal with a trusted friend or neighbor for when you need help.
- If you have a disability that impacts your mobility, plan how best to escape or who to call for help.
- Keep your purse or wallet ready to leave suddenly.
- Consider getting a first call alert system that you can use if you are feeling threatened or unsafe.

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## Preparing to Leave (Temporarily or Permanently)

- Hide an overnight bag packed with your identification, important documents, medication and a change of clothes. Be sure to include things like glasses, hearing aids, dentures, or canes.
- Make copies of all your important documents and hide them in a safe place. Tell someone you trust the location of the hiding place.
- If you have a car, back into your driveway so you can quickly drive away. Keep the gas tank full. Hide a spare set of keys.
- Open your own checking and/or savings account. Have a credit card in your name only. Be sure to use a password your abuser will not guess.
- Contact Social Security or pension programs if you need to change how you currently receive payments. If you have representative payee, be sure this person is aware of your situation. If the representative payee is someone you no longer trust, change representative payees.
- Get a Post Office Box so your abuser cannot track you by where you have your personal mail forwarded.
- If you are 60 years of age or older, contact your local aging or tribal program about assistance with emergency housing, health care benefits, or financial assistance you might need or want.
- Call your local domestic violence program for assistance with safety planning and information about counseling and legal services. You can also call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).
- Be aware that your abuser can discover your plans or location by monitoring your phone, cell phone, TTY, your email or computer searches, and your car. Your abuser can place a locator device in your personal belongings or your car. Also, many cell phones have a GPS device inside. Ask for help if you need assistance if any of these actions have been taken.
- Consider getting a domestic violence stay away or restraining order. If you are a person over 60 years of age you may qualify for additional protections in some states. Your local domestic violence program can assist you with these orders.
- If you are concerned about your immigration status, speak with an immigration expert. You may qualify for special protection and consideration under the Violence Against Women Act.



## After You Have Left or Separated From a Former Spouse, Partner, Family Member, or Caregiver

- If you are still in the family home, change the lock. Add security devices such as motion activated exterior lights, a metal security door or gate, or an alarm system.
- If you haven't already done so, get Post Office Box for forwarding your mail and for deliveries. Open your new bank accounts and be sure to use a password no one will guess.
- Consider getting caller ID and an unlisted phone number. Many domestic violence programs can assist you with obtaining cell phone to call 911.
- Keep your Restraining Order with you. Make several copies. Keep one on your person, one in your car, and give a copy to a trusted friend or family member. If you haven't already gotten a restraining order, consider getting one now. Your local domestic violence program or adult protective services can often help you to obtain the court order.
- Let your neighbors or facility staff know about anyone who is no longer welcome on the premises. Ask them to call you and the police if they see that person(s) entering or loitering around your property.
- Let your co-workers or persons you volunteer with know about your situation. Ask them to screen your calls, walk you to and from your car, and keep a copy of your restraining order in your desk. Your employer may want to want to obtain a work-place restraining order.
- Avoid the stores, banks, and pharmacies you used previously. Establish new services or tell your previously used services who you are avoiding. They may be willing to help you avoid a situation that could become dangerous.

## Improving Your Current Living Space

- Phones: Have a charged cell phone that you carry everywhere with you.
- Handrails: Have grab bars and handrails installed (e.g., bath tub, stairs) so you have something to hold on to if you lose your balance.
- Lighting: Increase the wattage of light bulbs and ensure that closets, stairs, entrances, and walkways are well lit. Add motion lights outside your home so you will know if someone is outside.

- Hearing: If needed, increase the volume on the phones. If needed, use a smoke detector with strobe lights.
- Mobility: Keep floors clutter free and electric cords out of the way. Use slip resistant area rugs.

## Protecting Your Emotional Health and Safety

- Get counseling, attend workshops, or support groups. Do whatever you can to build a supportive network of friends and family to support you.
- If you are thinking of returning to your abuser have a friend, family member, or counselor you can call to support you.
- If you must communicate with your abuser, consider ways to do so safely. Meet in a public place, take a friend for support, or call the abuser from a phone other than your own.
- Leaving an abusive situation is a process; it does not happen in one day. There may be many times when you are tempted to contact your abuser 'just to talk,' to handle unfinished business, or to discuss how hurt or angry you are. Call a trusted friend or counselor first. Once you have aired your thoughts with a trusted friend or counselor, you may be able to eliminate your need to call your abuser all together.

OUR WHY: REVOLUTIONIZE  
THE WAY PEOPLE  
WORK TO ENSURE  
THE WORLD IS A  
HEALTHIER PLACE.



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