



Working to End Violence in the Home and Strengthen Attachments



Program Background

- ReNew is a response to an influx of mothers coming for support with their sons who were using violence against them.
- The program itself is a joint program between Carinity Communities – Talera and the Domestic Violence Action Centre (DVAC) in Ipswich.



Eligibility Criteria

- We are currently funded by the QLD Government to work with mothers and sons.
- The child cannot be living with foster parents or in residential placements.
- Ages 12 – 17
- Child / YP has witnessed DV
- The mother has experienced DV
- Child / YP is using violence / coercive and controlling behaviour against their mother
- The father / perpetrator is not living with the family.



Program Structure

- The program consists of 20 sessions. They are a combination of:
 - YP only group sessions
 - Mother only group sessions
 - YP and mothers together group sessions
 - Joint sessions with mothers and sons to process specific issues for that family



Program Structure Cont:

- ReNew:
 - Combines trauma, attachment and child – to – parent violence research with a DV focus
 - Is co – facilitated with a male and female worker to model a respectful relationship.
 - Each facilitator has equal time in the group. This should be formally mapped out to start, until facilitators are used to each other.
 - Also employs a women’s advocate to work with mothers in between sessions.
 - This includes case support, check – ins, emotional regulation and safety planning.
 - Uses a YP and Mother workbook that they keep after the program finishes.

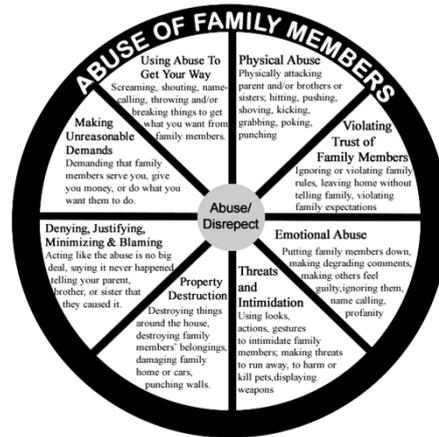


Program Structure Cont: Working with Young People

- Working with YP is different from adults in “Men Stopping Violence Programs”:
 - A majority of the work is attachment focused
 - Even though we still hold YP accountable and work on beliefs, the goal is to strengthen the attachment between mothers and sons.
 - Mothers do not have the option to leave the relationship
 - We do not use the word “perpetrator” **EVER**
 - YP need to understand the impact violence is having on them before understanding the impact on others



What is Violence?



What is Respect?



Impacts of Domestic Violence:

- Domestic violence undercuts the mother's authority
 - Verbal abuse
 - Not adhering to boundaries put in by mum
 - On contact, perpetrator telling the young person not to listen to mum
 - Domestic violence does not allow mum to be the parent she wants to be
- Domestic violence destroys attachment
- Domestic violence is a parenting choice

Risks: Future Violence in Relationships (Izaguirre & Calvete, 2017)

- There is a large crossover between child / adolescent – to – parent abuse and using violence in future relationships
- Researchers compared child / adolescent – to – parent violence to violence in dating relationships and found:
 - Women are the primary target of violence in both groups
 - A young person is more likely than not to use violence in future relationships if he is using violence against his mother.
- This indicates that the violence will continue in future relationships without intervention

Adolescent Activities:

- In ReNew we address the risk of using violence in future relationships with these activities:
 - Question / evaluate gender beliefs
 - Impacts of violence on others
 - Processing feelings towards dad / DV perpetrator
 - Non – violence plans
 - Weekly goal setting

Risks: Juvenile Justice Involvement

- Amanda Holt (2011) found that mothers:
 - Felt that community support services did not believe them
 - Feared that services would report the level of violence at home, which would lead to their children being removed
 - Did not involve any services until calling the police to intervene
- Risk:
 - The level of violence within the house is quite severe, including use of weapons.
 - YP with an adolescent – to – parent violence background have more violent crimes in their history than others (Contreras & Cano, 2014)

Risks: Isolation:

- Holt (2011) found that mothers who have experienced DV and adolescent – to – parent violence suffer from a “double stigma”
 - The stigma of experiencing DV
 - The stigma of being abused by their children
 - Fear of being seen as a bad mother
- Jackson (2003) and Hunter, Nixon and Parr (2010) found that mothers felt isolated, unsupported and marginalised within the community.
- The risk in these cases is that high levels of isolation can increase risk of homicide and an increase of violence at home



ReNew Screening Tool:

- A phone intake screening tool was developed by Emily Cheesman, who is a woman’s advocate in ReNew.
- This combines Amanda Holt’s description of violence as coercive control (2013) with a domestic violence specific danger assessment.
- This intake not only clearly outlines the level of adolescent-to-mother violence, but also assesses for homicide risk. This ensures the family is linked with the correct service.



Why Use Adolescent-to-Mother Violence

- There is a great deal of debate on how to define this phenomenon.
- Some define it as only instances of physical violence (Peek, Fischer and Kidwell, 1985), while we take on a more holistic definition (Holt, 2013).
- We use “adolescent-to-mother violence” to acknowledge the age we work with and how mothers are the primary target.
- Current research is beginning to use “abuse” instead of “violence” to encapsulate how the behavior is part of a larger pattern of control (Simmons et.al, 2018).



Adolescent-to-Mother Violence Research

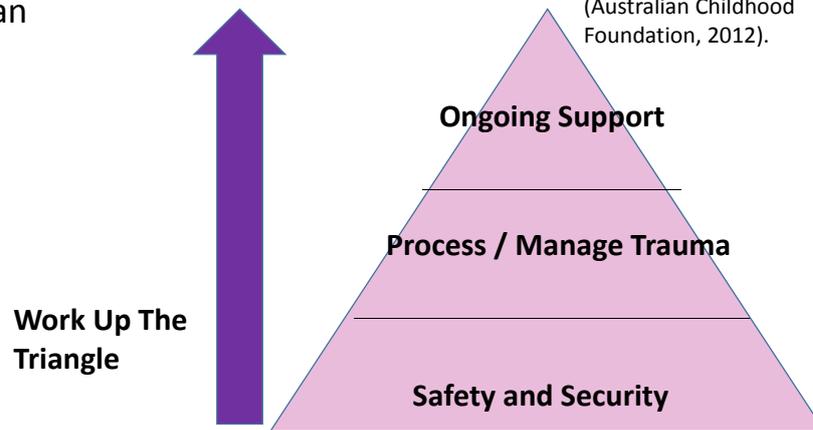
- Mothers do not feel valued in most CPV programs (Jackson, 2003).
 - Most mothers are not included in programs
 - Feel that their experience is not being valued
 - Why mothers are included in our program
- These YP most at risk of using violence in adult relationships (Simmons, et. al, 2018)



Trauma: Group Structure

Plan

(Australian Childhood Foundation, 2012).



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Attachment and ReNew

- Studies have identified a strong parental attachment as a protective factor against adolescent – to – parent violence (Ibade & Bentler, 2015; Peek, Holt, 2013; Fischer & Kidwell, 1985).
- Moreover, young people with low attachment scores were found to have higher rates of of violence
- Therefore, a focus on attachment based interventions can help build in a protective factor against future violence.
- Moreover, programs that include mothers can break isolation, as well as target attachment (Jackson, 2003).

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Attachment Activities

- In ReNew we have a number of activities where families break into groups and work on a common activity:
 - Impacts of domestic violence on families
 - Goal setting
 - Family sessions
 - Planning time to spend together
 - A joint positive memory



Client Feedback: Mothers

- Mothers:
 - I love the weekly catch-ups, it makes me aware of my current situation. And we make changes weekly. We have progressed in leaps and bounds. It's a beautiful gentle space to bring my teenager.
 - The relationship I have with my son has changed and we are learning new ways to interact with each other.
 - We have more tools to articulate what is going on for us. My son is connecting better with all family members, his attitude has softened. His behaviour is more respectful towards me and his sister. He apologises more quickly when he wrongs others.



Client Feedback: Sons

- Sons:
 - I'm learning new ways to deal with the stress, anxiety and anger. The results are not immediate. It takes time but it helps to build a healthy relationship.
 - It has been great and I have built healthy relationships with Mum and my brothers.
 - The experience I had in the ReNew program was safe and secure, and we all kept each other's privacy.



Thank You

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