

Session Four

Family Violence and Alcohol Use

Goal

To increase participants' understanding of the dynamics between abuse of women and the abuse of alcohol.

Materials

Alcohol, Anger & Abuse Lesson Guide; Resource Materials, **Alcohol, Anger & Abuse** DVD; A/V equipment, flip chart, magic markers

Time

90 Minutes

Procedures

1. Welcome the group to the session by introducing yourself, your place of employment/job title, and the overall theme and purpose of the session. Share the following information:
 - a. The session will last approximately 90 minutes.
 - b. The session will open with an icebreaker. Participants will get a chance to discuss their responses with each other.
 - c. The group will view a short video and discuss what they saw.
 - d. Information will be presented on family violence and alcohol abuse.
2. Handout the Resource Material to the participants and mention that this is Session Four of a five-part series. You may want to mention the remaining topics, dates and locations.
3. Review the specifics of today's session: length of the session, locations of the restrooms, breaks, etc.
4. If you have a large group, ask them to form smaller groups of 4 to 6 participants. Groups larger than six will cause the smaller groups to have to wait, or will not give members of the larger group sufficient time to talk. If the number of participants attending the session is small, conduct the activity as a large group.
5. Write the following Icebreaker on the flip chart and ask participants within the groups to take turns responding to the statements

Hello, my name is _____.

One thing I hope to learn from today's class is _____.

Allow 10-15 minutes to complete the activity.

6. Process with the large group the issues they hope to learn from the session. Write the issues on the flip chart. This is a good time to clarify any misconceptions participants may have.

7. Have participants refer to their Resource Materials and review the **Similarities Between Alcohol Abuse and Child Abuse**.
- a. **Problems Are Often Kept Secret.** Secrecy is the norm, not the exception, in families with substance abuse and child abuse. Family members are often embarrassed by the stigma associated with a substance or child abuser and would rather keep the problems secret than recognize the problems as treatable. Shame, blame, or outright fear based on ill-founded issues encourages other family members to protect the abuser and make excuses for his or her dysfunctional behavior. In child abuse cases that involve sexual abuse, children are sworn to secrecy by the perpetrator or perpetrator's adult partner and will often deny the incidents are occurring to protect the perpetrator from punishment. Some children are forced to deny based on overt threats the perpetrator will make toward the victim's siblings, pet, or security in the family.
 - b. **People Learn Victimization.** Characteristics of a "victim" include feelings of worthlessness, failure, a "can't do/can't try" attitude, low self-esteem and low self-concept, and an internalized perception that being mistreated is expected from others. The victim aligns him or herself with others who will act as perpetrators in carrying out the "deserving" victimization. These experiences become a person's self-fulfilling prophecy and the cycle of the victim/perpetrator relationship is complete.
 - c. **Substance Abuse and Child Abuse are Multi-Problematic.** In multi-problematic families, inappropriate patterns of interactions support one another creating a tangled web of confusion. Some issues include: massive denial and pretending that the abuse isn't causing any damage; difficulty for the non-addicted/non-abusing spouse to confront the abuser; extremely poor communication resulting in high levels of family conflict, inability to competently solve problems and set healthy boundaries. Added to the conflict is addition and physical, emotional, and/or sexual violence towards children.
 - d. **Substance Abuse and Child Abuse are Cyclic in Nature.** Substance abuse and child abuse are patterns of behavior that are interwoven into the personality of the family. In many families, these patterns have existed for generations where children have been reared in an atmosphere of denial, poor communication, violence, and substance abuse. The resulting impact upon the perceptions of life, adapted behaviors, awareness and acceptance of self and others is the fuel that feeds the dysfunction. Intensive intervention based on long-term treatment and re-parenting goals can modify and break the generational cycle of the dysfunction.
 - e. **Substance Abuse and Child Abuse Create Family Dysfunction.** In general, parental alcoholism and child maltreatment disrupt family life and contribute to the developing dysfunction of all family members. Poor communication to no communication occurs, denial, pretending, loss of self-worth, violence towards other family members, exaggerated sibling rivalry, and the lack of family cohesion, bonding and attachment commonly result in self-injurious or destructive peer relationships. Poor marital relationships, lack of appropriate intimacy, and feelings of futility and apathy are common results of prolonged family dysfunction.
 - f. **Substance and Child Abuse Create Individual Personality Disorders.** Victimization is the breeding ground for personality disturbances. Children of Alcoholics (COA) have a higher incidence of emotional, behavioral and developmental disorders than children of non-alcoholic.

8. Present **Part 4** of the **Alcohol, Anger and Abuse DVD** titled, “**Alcohol Related Child Neglect.**” Stop the DVD at the end of Part 4.
9. Discuss **Reasons Why People Abuse Alcohol**
 - a. **Parental History of Problem Drinking.** Children of alcoholics are at higher risk for developing alcoholism than are children in the general population. If both parents are alcoholic, the risk of becoming an alcoholic is probably over 50%.
 - b. **Heavy Drinking or Drug Use.** The more a person consumes, the more his or her body tolerates the alcohol and becomes dependent on it. Heavy and continuous drinking is a predictable contributor to the increase in alcoholism.
 - c. **Genetic Factors.** Studies show that there are genetic risks for becoming alcoholic. If alcoholism runs in the family, risk of becoming alcoholic in children dramatically increases.
 - d. **Psychological Problems.** Unresolved and suppressed pain magnifying inner conflicts which impact upon the person unrelentlessly. Environmental factors that generate stress often are more than a person can handle. Chronic drinking to numb suppressed pain and reduce stress often leads to drinking problems.
 - e. **Enabling.** Enablers are people who shield the alcoholic, make excuses for his or her behavior, keep secret the problem, and generally cover up the real issues. Enablers keep the drinking going by failing to recognize the problem and its symptoms. People who enable alcoholics get their own needs met and play a role in keeping the drinking problems intact.
10. Review the **Facts Related to Alcohol Abuse and Domestic Violence:**
 - a. Data on the concurrence of domestic violence and alcohol abuse vary widely, from as low as 25% to as high as 80% of cases.
 - b. Alcoholism and battering do share some similar characteristics, including:
 - Both may be passed from generation to generation
 - Both involve denial or minimization of the problem
 - Both involve isolation of the family
 - c. A battering incident that is coupled with alcohol abuse may be more severe and result in greater injury.
 - d. Alcoholism treatment does not “cure” battering behavior, both problems must be addressed separately. However, provisions for the woman’s safety must take precedence.
 - e. Battering is a socially learned behavior, and is not the result of substance abuse or mental illness. Men who batter frequently use alcohol abuse as an excuse for their violence. They attempt to rid themselves of responsibility for the problem by blaming it on the effects of alcohol.

11. Review the Types of Abuse to Women:

Physical	Slapping, pushing, hitting, kicking, biting, etc.
Emotional	Name calling, putting down, insults, etc.
Sexual	Being forced into sexual contact
Threats	"If you... I'll kill you!"
Intimidation	Gestures, looks, smashing things
Isolation	Being kept from seeing or talking to others, not allowed to go out, etc.
Economic	Being given an allowance, not allowed to have a job, etc.

12. Review the Characteristics of Men Who Batter Women:

- Low self-esteem
- Fear of intimacy
- High power/control needs
- High levels of anger/hostility
- Depression
- Low stress tolerance
- Defensiveness
- Denial/minimization/justification of own violence
- Possessiveness/suspiciousness/jealousy of partner
- Poor communication with partner
- Guardedness in all Relationships
- Difficulty expressing affection
- Verbal aggressiveness
- Negative attitudes toward women
- Violence in family or origin
- Alcohol and/or other drug abuse
- Unemployment or underemployment
- Child abuse (more than half of all batterers also abuse their children)

13. Review the Characteristics of Women Who Stay in Violent Relationships:

- Fear for their safety and the safety of their children
- Blame themselves for causing the situation
- Is financially dependent on her spouse
- Feels worthless and powerless
- Feels embarrassed over the situation
- Unable or incapable of using resources

14. Review the **Warning Signs That Domestic Violence May be Occurring**:

The abused woman:

- Shows guilt, ambivalence and fear over her living conditions
- Feels isolated and untrusting of others, even though she may be involved in the community
- Is emotionally and economically dependent
- Has a poor self-concept (this may not have been true before the relationships)
- Feels angry, embarrassed, and ashamed
- Is fearful of being insane
- Has learned to feel helpless and feels powerless
- Has unexplained injuries that may go untreated

The abusive man:

- Shows extreme jealousy and wants to keep the woman isolated
- Has an inability to cope with stress and shows a lack of impulse control (This may not necessarily appear outside the home).
- Has a poor self-image and blames others for problems.
- Shows severe mood swings
- May have a history of abuse in his own family and may have been abusive in courtship
- Presents a history of personal and/or family discord: unemployment, cruelty to animals, abuse of alcohol or other substances, other unexplained behavior

15. Answer any questions participants may have. At the appropriate time, end the session.