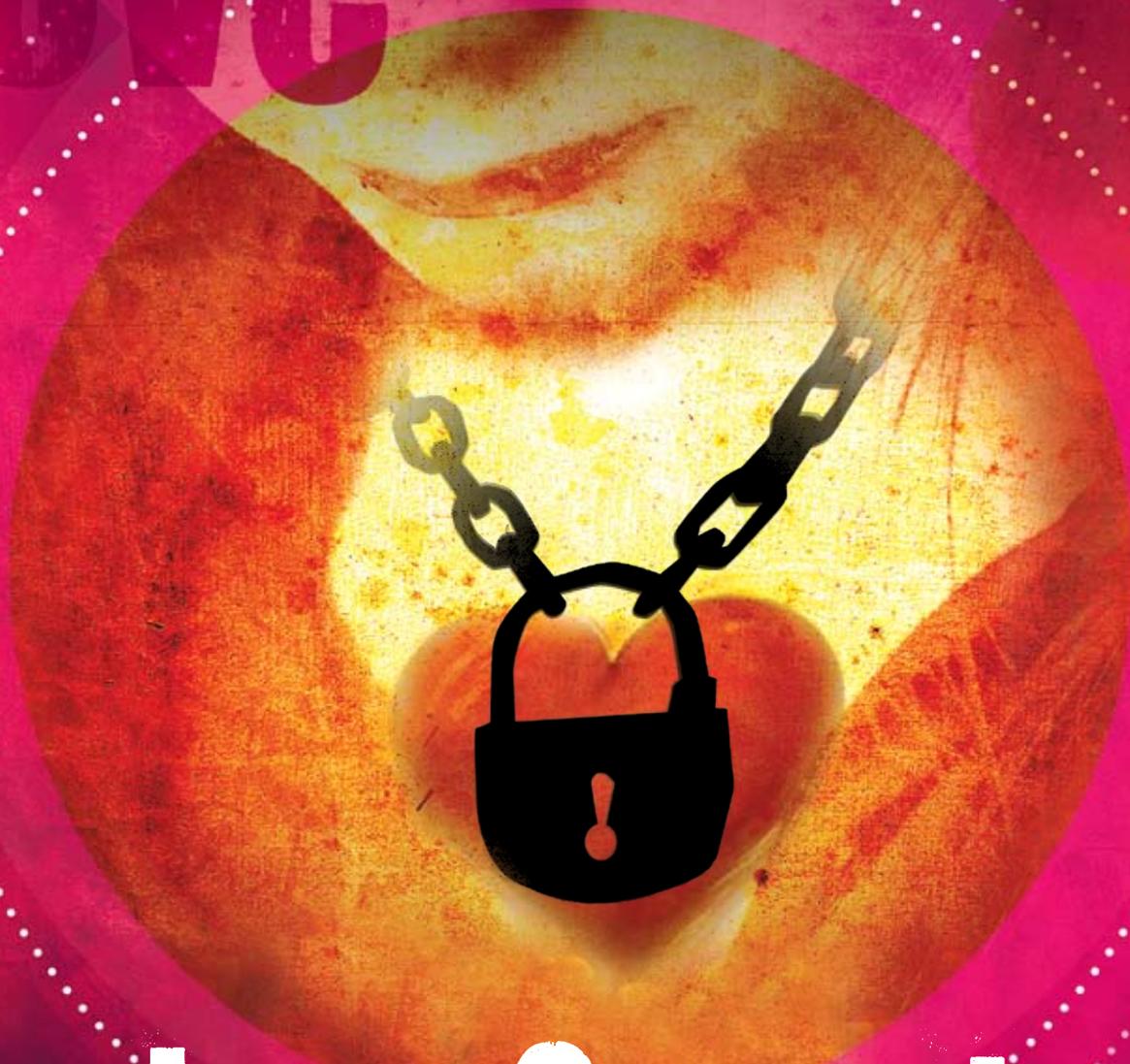


LOVE



Love Control



WOMEN'S HEALTH
IN THE NORTH
making
all the difference

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Introduction to the **Love Control** Resource Notes

Love Control is a groundbreaking film produced by the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services (NIFVS) team at Women's Health In the North in metropolitan Victoria, Australia. The DVD content is taken directly from young women's experiences of abusive relationships, showing how quickly jealous and controlling behaviour can escalate.

Since its launch in August 2009, the Love Control DVD has been seen 1,500 times on YouTube, been embedded within the websites of agencies such as headspace, and has been used by many government, educational and community agencies, both state-wide and nationally, as a learning tool. The Love Control DVD can be used in many settings including working with:

- **Individuals** – in casework settings, counselling and support interactions.
- **Groups** – in school-based programs and educational settings, community settings, youth and sporting groups, neighbourhood houses and other learning settings.
- **Workforces** – in capacity building with health, education, government and community-based training and development.
- **Volunteer educators** with additional needs.

These varied settings reflect the many sites within which young women are learning and interacting. It also highlights the many opportunities for preventative work available. Violence prevention is an active, collective and developmental process. Because it is an active process it operates simultaneously at a number of complementary levels and in a variety of settings.

The key messages of the DVD, and its goal as a prevention tool, are to honour women's voices, create a safe debate, and develop young people's critical thinking by informing them, seeding ideas and creating a safe emotional space for young people. The Resource Notes aim to support this development.



Using the **Love Control** Resource Notes

The Love Control DVD is recommended as an intentional program tool within a coherent program which:¹

- **Has a clear pedagogy** - a clearly articulated conceptual approach and meaningful adaptation for cultural sensitivity;
- **Has a sound theory** - including a clear acknowledgement of the gendered nature of family violence and a developed evaluation process; and
- **Operates with varied partnerships** that appreciate and resource diverse roles, encourage consultation and share delivery and evaluation.

Self-directed learning about health promotion, and violence and young people are also suggested for those wishing to use the tool. This can be aided by reading the Fact and Tip Sheets and pursuing information through the footnoted references and suggested resources.

**“I LIKED THAT
IT STARTED OFF
NICE, AND THEN IT
HAPPENED SLOWLY ...
THE PROGRESSION
WAS CLEAR.”**

YR 10 FEMALE, 2010

**“IT WAS A SHORT
AND SWEET STORY
THAT GOT TO THE
POINT.”**

YR 10 FEMALE, 2010

FOOTNOTES:

1. Evans, S., Krogh, C. and Carmody, M., 2009, 'Time to get cracking', The challenge of developing best practice in Australia sexual assault prevention education, pp20-22 at www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/issue/acssa_issues11.pdf

Using the **Love Control** Resource Notes

The Resource Notes include:

- An introduction to the background of the DVD and its recommended use;
- A series of **Fact Sheets**; and
- A series of **Tip Sheets**.

The Fact Sheets, titled in **blue**, cover:

- The key topics and messages that the DVD aims to address;
- Definitions of relationship violence;
- Descriptions of types of violence;
- Impacts of violence; and
- Resources and referral avenues.

The Tip Sheets, titled in **pink**, offer ideas on:

- How to use the Resource Notes;
- How to have conversations about the topics and messages contained in the DVD in careful and sensitive ways; and
- How to use the DVD in a variety of prevention settings.

Facilitators can use the Fact and Tip Sheets that most suit their needs and settings, as well as pursue further resources noted in the resource section.

The key messages of the DVD, and its goals as a prevention tool, are to honour women's voices and create safe debate. It aims to develop young people's critical thinking by informing them, and by seeding ideas and creating an emotional space so that young people are challenged and motivated sensitively. The key messages in the DVD, and the main ideas that facilitators should aim to highlight within conversations, include:

- Violence is very prevalent in our community, but it is hidden. Most women who experience it don't report to police or talk about their experience of violence.
- Violent behaviour occurs on a continuum, but all violent behaviours are harmful.
- The victims of violence are overwhelmingly female, and the perpetrators are overwhelmingly male.²
- There are a range of forms of violence: cultural, social, emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical, economic, and sexual. Examples of these are outlined in the Fact Sheets.
- Fear, power and control are used against women. These are common elements to all types of violence.
- Young women need to trust themselves, their own beliefs and feelings, and listen to what their bodies and heads are telling them.
- Women's choices and strengths are important but it is important to acknowledge that it's hard to leave relationships.
- Family violence, domestic violence or relationship violence happens in young people's relationships too, many people seem to think that it is only an 'adult' issue.
- Love isn't everything – what does respectful love look like?³

FOOTNOTES:

2. See how the data supports this in the Victorian Family Violence Data Base; Nine Year Data Report at www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/2ed0e280404a4dec8a04fbf5f2791d4a/VFVD_1999_2008.pdf?MOD=AJPERES
3. Emily Maguire, CASA House wrote this key messages section.



**“I'D LIKE TO
EXPLORE WHAT
IDEAS OTHERS
HAVE.”**

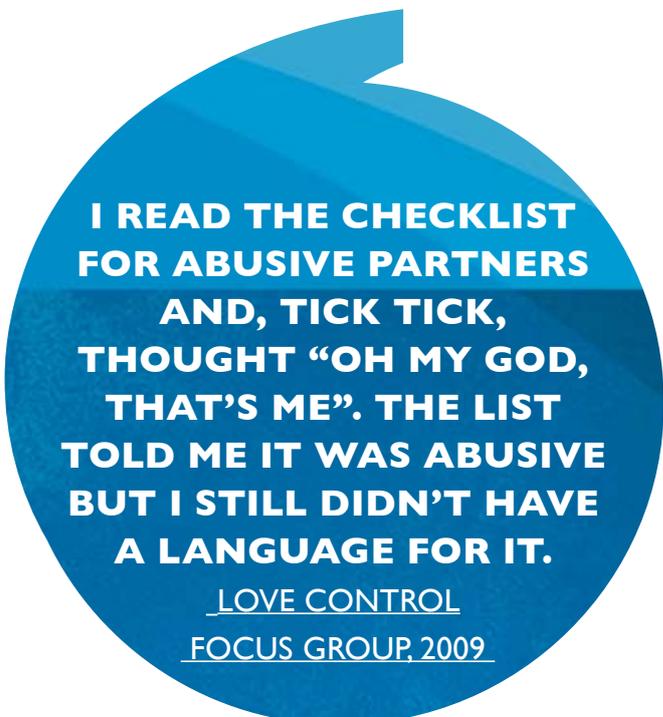
There are a number of ways to conceive of prevention and there are different types of violence prevention strategies. Each strategy requires both clear and distinct skills of practitioners, as well as a different focus.

One way to picture these types of prevention is through the common river metaphor that locates upstream interventions as primary prevention, systemic and structural. These upstream locations intervene at early and societal levels to address the root causes or determinants. Downstream prevention refers to increasingly focussed support to those who have already experienced violence. Prevention is also referred to as targeted or universal depending in the population target and scope of the intervention.

These types of prevention often intersect and coexist and it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between the different levels of prevention.

Young people are a key target for prevention activities for a number of reasons. Firstly they are at a stage in life where they are more open to learning. Secondly there is potential to intervene before they enter into romantic relationships; when they are forming ideas about what relationships should look like. Finally there are pre-existing structures, such as schools, which create a 'captive audience' for health promotion messages. However it is important to remember that young people do not exist in isolation, they are influenced by the adults and environments around them. Therefore an effective prevention strategy should operate at a number of levels – individual, community and institutional.⁴

The cumulative effects of prevention efforts for young people are significant as is the multifaceted and intergenerational nature of prevention efforts.⁵ Prevention is an active, collective and developmental process. Because it is an active process it may operate best when it functions simultaneously at a number of complementary levels and in a variety of settings. Importantly, Love Control is aimed at younger people who are at a significant life stage in terms of their relationship formations, choices and values development. It specifically aims to offer a resource that can be used preventatively to minimise the chances of, and effects of, relationship violence.⁶



**I READ THE CHECKLIST
FOR ABUSIVE PARTNERS
AND, TICK TICK,
THOUGHT “OH MY GOD,
THAT’S ME”. THE LIST
TOLD ME IT WAS ABUSIVE
BUT I STILL DIDN’T HAVE
A LANGUAGE FOR IT.**

LOVE CONTROL
FOCUS GROUP, 2009

FOOTNOTES:

4. VicHealth, Preventing violence before it occurs, A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria 2007 at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/PreventingViolence/framework%20web.ashx, pp 8-9.
5. 2008 Conference Presentation: Preventing sexual violence? Issues in program evaluation, Dr Anastasia Powell and Ms Renee Imbesi at www.aic.gov.au/events/aic%20upcoming%20events/2008/~media/conferences/2008-youngpeople/powell.ashx. Page 5 refers to the significant cumulative effect of prevention efforts for young people.
6. The 'What is prevention?' section was rewritten by Kiri Bear, Partners in Prevention Coordinator, Domestic Violence Resource Centre September, 2010.

A common definition of family violence is drawn from Practice Guidelines: Women and Children's Family Violence Counselling and Support Program:⁷

Family violence is the repeated use of violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour by an individual against a family member(s), or someone with whom they have, or have had, an intimate relationship. Violent behaviour includes not only physical assaults but an array of power and control tactics used along a continuum in concert with one another, including direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, property damage, social isolation and behaviour which cause a person to live in fear.

Other definitions of family violence encompass experiences of indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse women and women with disabilities.

There are many terms used to name family violence. In the Love Control Resource Notes the term relationship violence is used. This is a term drawn from young women's lives and experiences. Many young women don't have a name for their experience and see other terms such as family violence as less relevant to them, or as referring to physical violence only.

Significantly, while looking at all these broader definitions it is important to remember that across ability, culture and religion, it is women and children who experience the burden of family violence and that it is overwhelmingly males known to these women who assault them in private.

FOOTNOTES:

7. Grealy, C., Humphreys, C., Milward K. and Power, J., 2008, Urbis, Practice Guidelines: Women and Children's Family Violence Counselling and Support Program, Department of Human Services, Victoria, available at: www.office-for-children.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0004/168970/fvsa_dha_counseling_support_2008.pdf. Retrieved June 2010, p6.

EXPLORING DEFINITIONS

Ask the group, or small groups, to come up with their own definition of relationship violence as this can create a personal and more meaningful experience.

- In small groups, come up with a definition of hurtful or abusive behaviours that fits as relationship violence. It may be things people have experienced or things which they know happen to women in abusive relationships. Start the conversations with prompts such as: what words spring to mind? How would you start this? How would you name these acts of control and abuse? Definitions can be started by identifying endings to sentences such as: relationship violence is..., the effects of violence are..., and it is perpetrated by..., and sustained by... Each group then reads out what they have done and speaks about their reasons for choosing the words they have. The facilitator asks if they want to leave the definitions as they are, or to try and combine them.⁸
- Play the DVD without sound and ask the group to begin to write down what they see happening. Play again with sound and see if they were right.
- Groups may ask about men who are abused. Discuss whether this changes the core definition at all or if it broadens it. Is it still about power and control?
- Groups may also ask about different community groups' experiences and definitions. Have on hand some different definitions from indigenous groups, women with disabilities or culturally diverse groups.⁹ Also have on hand some definitions for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, queer and intersex (GLBTQI) young people.¹⁰ These can all be honoured as well as looking at what they have in common.

FOOTNOTES:

8. Women's Health In the North and Lancaster, C., 2008, Collected Wisdom - Facilitated Family Violence Support Groups With Women in the Northern Subregion, Women's Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria, page 53.
9. See the special collections for Indigenous, refugee and disability communities on the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House site at www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/specialcollections.htm.
10. See the Same Sex Special Collection of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House at www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/specialcollectionssamesex.htm.

There are many myths or stereotypes about why violence occurs that are prominent in our communities, media and attitudes.

People may believe that things like a person's culture, levels of stress, and drug use lead to violence or that violence is created by a victim's resistance or inability to stop it happening.

Factors in society can contribute to violence (like social isolation, or alcohol and drug use) but these things do not cause the violence. For example, alcohol may lower inhibition which then reveals violent supportive norms and beliefs. Being isolated may increase a sense of injustice and entitlement to act powerfully and violently. Similarly, a victim's actions or lack of action is not a cause of violence but it is a response to it and an attempt to stay safe and sane in the face of it.

Things that do determine and contribute to violence generally include:

- Believing in rigid gender roles and identities, and having weak support for gender equality;

- Holding a sense of masculine entitlement;

- Believing in male dominance, including the male right to control wealth in relationships; and

- Promoting these beliefs and values through social and organisational cultures.¹¹

Central to explorations about reasons for violence are the issues of gender, power and social expectation.

FOOTNOTES:

11. VicHealth, Preventing violence before it occurs, A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/PreventingViolence/framework%20web.ashx pp13 and 16-17.

Exploring the reasons for relationship violence will vary depending on what context the DVD is being used in. Different groups will have different exposure and comprehension of concepts. Issues of power, social expectation and gender are central to these explorations.

ISSUES OF POWER, SOCIAL EXPECTATION AND GENDER

- In the DVD the girlfriend says at the pub “he didn’t have any money so I paid...how do things like that become unspoken habits between us?” What does she mean? What unspoken habits are there in relationships? Who does this benefit?
- What are the other ways power is exercised in the DVD? How and why is someone powerful over someone else? Why is he acting like this? What does he get out of it?
- What are social expectations the boyfriend might be holding on to? Or that the girlfriend might be holding on to? One way to think of this is ‘what are the rules that society has written about that tell a man what he should or can do in his relationships?’ These ‘rules’ may not be believed but they are out there and we all swim amongst them and are affected by them. They can become habits that we stick to.
- What is love? Is the man in the video being ‘loving’? Violence is a choice. Whether you are feeling angry, under the influence of alcohol or mentally ill, there is no excuse for violence.

The DVD may be a springboard to address other issues because often people believe that abuse happens because of things like alcohol, cultural background or a woman’s inability to leave the relationship.

ALCOHOL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE HAVE A NON-CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP

The topic of alcohol may come up after watching the DVD. The group can discuss factors that co-exist within relationship violence such as alcohol and be clear of the non-causal relationship between violence and alcohol. However, alcohol can lower inhibition, which can reveal violent supportive norms and beliefs.

DIFFERENT CULTURES ALSO EXPERIENCE RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

The setting used in the DVD may not reflect the living situations and cultures of the people watching it. This provides an opportunity to discuss changing facets of the DVD to reflect greater diversity and discuss what these changes would look like and why. It is also an opportunity to address some myths and stereotypes.

- Ask small group teams to discuss one each of the following:
 - If the setting was a small country town what difference might this make for the woman in the DVD? For example include the impacts of transport, small communities and sporting cultures.
 - If the female actor was in a motorised wheel chair, or the actors were in a different country and of a different culture or religion, what difference might this make for the woman?

LEAVING A RELATIONSHIP IS NOT EASY

While the woman in the DVD ends the relationship, statistics show that violence may get worse at the time of a break up. It is important to stress that leaving is not easy, takes time, planning and practice, and deserves support. Leaving relationships is a choice women make with time and encouragement.

- What might be some of the barriers that make leaving difficult?
- How would a woman stay safe if she was thinking of ending a relationship?¹² Groups can create and decorate a safety plan booklet for young women to use.

FOOTNOTES:

¹². Safety plans and how to do them are covered in Victorian Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service website at: www.wdvcs.org.au/?p=CR&Bid=3&Your_Personal_Safety=

Violence is common, prevalent and serious.

- One in three young people (both male and female) reported that they experienced violence within their own relationships.¹³
- One in five Australian women identifies at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence by a current or known partner since the age of 18.
- Violence against women is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-44 years.
- Young people's experiences of dating violence increased with age, from 24% of 12-14 year olds to 46% of 19-20 year olds.
- When given a choice between the two, one in twenty young people considered forcing a partner to have sex, throwing things at each other, and regular slapping or punching are part of 'normal conflict' rather than domestic violence.¹⁴



FOOTNOTES:

13. Jane Mulroney, Australian Prevention Programmes for Young People, at: www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/prevention_progs_young.pdf
14. LOVE BiTES, at www.napcan.org.au/images/uploads/pdf/love-bites-evaluation.pdf page 4.

Statistical information can be persuasive and memorable if presented in interesting, engaging and relevant ways. Three methods of exploring statistics are:

STAND-UP

- Before the session, place varied colour stickers (for example blue, yellow, red, green and brown) randomly on tables in a pre-organised setting. Ask participants, “could all the blue stickers please stand”. You have randomly put out forty blue stickers before the session. Ten out of the hundred stand and then you mention the statistic on domestic homicides. Ask them to sit. Could all the red stickers stand and then 25 people stand. This visually represents another statistic. This activity can give a clear personal, visual reference to figures. Sample statistics may include those noted in the previous fact sheet.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

- Conduct a quiz on statistics giving three options for each question (for example, the leading contributor to death for Victorian women 15-44 is a - heart disease, b - breast cancer or c - family violence?).
- Discuss the surprises in these statistics. Why is it that as a community this statistic is not more commonly known?
- Move around in response to statistics and questions.
- Tell the group that different corners in the room will represent true, false or unsure. Read the first statement, ‘by the age of 18, one in ten women identifies at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence’. Ask the group to think about whether this statement is true or false and to move to the relevant corner. Remind people that if they are really unsure they can go to the unsure corner.
- When the group has settled on their answers, discuss the responses and confirm if the statement is true or not. Repeat the moving to corners activity for other statistic-based statements or questions.

Relationship violence can happen in different ways.¹⁵ The Love Control DVD looks at a boyfriend and girlfriend relationship.

EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL ABUSE

Making someone feel bad about themselves, or using threats or put-downs, is emotional abuse. This can be things like calling names, talking in a scary way, threatening to hurt or kill, giving scary 'looks', telling someone they are useless, or purposely making them feel bad about themselves.

SOCIAL ABUSE

Using someone's social life to control them or make them feel bad about themselves is social abuse. Examples of this may be where a boyfriend:

- Might want to do everything together, not allow his girlfriend to choose her own friends, tell her to stop seeing family or friends, or have them feel unwelcome when they're around;

- Might not allow her to go out, or ask her to tell him every detail about what she has been doing; and

- May wrongfully accuse her of 'getting on' with other people or put her down in public. Boyfriends can also abuse spiritual and cultural beliefs, using these as tools to hurt, intimidate, control and degrade.

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Money can be used as a way of taking power over someone. This means doing things that makes someone dependent for money, keeping control of all money matters, stopping someone from getting a job, or gambling or selling personal things without permission.

FOOTNOTES:

15. Used with permission © Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, Government of South Australia, at: www.cyh.com, and section on Relationship Violence www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=240&np=296&id=2115

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical acts that hurt or scare are abuse, whether they cause visible or non-visible injury.

This includes holding, shoving, pushing, restraining, torturing, driving a car dangerously in order to scare, punching, biting, threatening, kicking, burning, throwing or smashing personal objects, punching holes in walls or doors, hurting or killing pets, breaking things or using a weapon.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse includes things like using force to have sex, using demands or tricks to make someone do sexual things, or making someone feel bad about themselves and their sexuality.



The Love Control DVD shows some different types of violence at key points of the story. These signs or turning points build up throughout the narrative and, at the same time, we hear via the voiceover, the young woman's thoughts and feelings as she grapples with her boyfriend's behaviour and her increased awareness that this is not a healthy relationship.¹⁶ The viewer is aware of underlying tensions, and the control and anxiety that build up throughout the film – violence appears to lurk just below the surface. This sustained ambivalence is a tool of engaging audiences; it keeps people involved and intentionally promotes debate.

EMOTIONAL AND VERBAL

The boyfriend in the DVD is jealous "all the time" and it now feels to the young woman as if it is all constant, draining and "wearing thin". He doesn't like what she wears and doesn't like her seeing her friends. He has his arm on her or around her a lot and after buying her flowers uses his hand to mimic a chatting motion, as if he thinks she talks too much. At the end of the DVD, he intimidates her in an isolated alley.

SOCIAL

She had seen friends she hasn't seen in ages and yet he wants to leave the pub. She makes an excuse, one of many nowadays, as to why they have to leave the pub when he doesn't want to "be there anymore". He has a controlling arm around her on the train and jumps aggressively when another male commuter looks in their direction. He asks her to wear covering clothes so that other men don't "hit on her".

FINANCIAL

When at their favourite pub, he has no money and she pays. It appears that he often has no money and she often pays for him. She questions "how do things like that become unspoken habits between us?"

FOOTNOTES:

16. This point is drawn directly from the 'Love Control' focus group notes in the Project Evaluation by Toni Bentley, Modern Media Messages (Triple M's) Project Final Report, Women's Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria October 2009.

PHYSICAL

From the opening frame she says he has been edgy all day and she keeps the peace by changing her outfit which he doesn't like. He leaves the pub and then gets "worked up" because he thinks another guy is hitting on her. He buys her flowers to try and "smooth it over". She can feel his anger and tension in the pit of her stomach. She bites her nails with tension. All of a sudden he loses it and she is in a bad dream. He pushes her, yells in her face and crowds in on her in an isolated alley. "He looks like he could kill me."

SEXUAL

While sexual abuse is not overt in the DVD, it can be inferred and discussed in a learning group. She just wants to "keep the peace" so she changes into another outfit for him. He also says, "he doesn't like what she is wearing".



OTHER TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Women note that a category of ‘other types of violence’ is helpful for them to personalise their experience... Some categories don’t do justice to the totality and depth of their experience... Giving women other names or spaces to identify their own meanings is important.¹⁷

Sometimes young women use metaphors to express their experiences of violence rather than recognise set ‘types’ of violence.

ONE TYPE OF VIOLENCE IS AS SERIOUS AS ANOTHER

Sometimes women think that some types of abuse are worse than others and that real violence is only physical. Across the range of relationship violence, all types of violence are equally not okay.

IDEAS ON WHAT YOU CAN TALK ABOUT

- Create a quiz with quotes from the DVD asking what types of violence those acts, comments or feelings may imply.
- Play the DVD with no sound and ask the group to tune into the non-verbal actions and signals of violence.
- Ask small groups teams to write on a quartered pie chart what types of violence they have seen in the DVD, with each section of the chart outlining different examples.
- Have a conversation about:
 - What types of violence do you see in the DVD?
 - What types of violence are not in the DVD?
 - What strikes you about the types of violence you see in the DVD?
 - What are some other examples you know about?
 - How do we help friends understand that one type of violence isn’t ‘more important’ than another?

FOOTNOTES:

17. Women’s Health In the North and Lancaster, C., (2008), Collected Wisdom - Facilitated Family Violence Support Groups With Women in the Northern Subregion, Women’s Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria, page 49.

IMPACTS ON FEELINGS

Young women say the impacts of relationship violence include feelings like:

- Being initially 'safe' and 'cocooned'. This shifts quickly to feeling that their boyfriend is an imprisoning force in their lives, impacting on their sense of self and feelings of safety;
- Blurriness (between the comforting feeling of their boyfriend's neediness and entering into the dangerous terrain of his control);
- Suffocation, emptiness and silent crying;
- Being bandaged like a mummy, silenced, unable to move, vulnerable and ashamed;
- Being on edge and walking on eggshells;
- Being pressured by his constant presence; and
- Feeling lonely and having constant self-doubt, feeling a loss of voice and depression.¹⁸

IMPACTS ON THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR

Young women may feel grief, sadness and as if they can't work properly at school or their job. They may find themselves withdrawing from people, feel they have to 'fake' emotions in front of others, or become physically unwell and very stressed. Sometimes they have a sense of themselves as conscious active players who found themselves caught in a cycle of control that eventuated in violence. Young women may also feel confused, indecisive and lose trust in their judgment. It is important to recognise that young women who experience violence are strong, not weak or stupid.

FOOTNOTES:

18. These concepts are drawn directly from the Love Control Advisory Group quoted in the Project Evaluation by Toni Bentley, Modern Media Messages (Triple M's) Project Final Report Women's Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria, October 2009, page 8.

It is also important to remember that:

Family violence contributes tremendously to health problems for women, especially those in the 15-44 age groups. The known health impacts of violence against women include death, physical injuries, poor mental health (particularly depression and anxiety), chronic pain, substance abuse, and sexual and reproductive health complications. In terms of improving the overall health of women, strategies that seek to eliminate intimate partner violence are as equally relevant as (other traditional health promotion areas such as tobacco or drinking).¹⁹

IMPACTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Young women may avoid relationships they once valued because of the violence. It is important to share details of violence with trusted people who will respect the confidence offered through a disclosure. A young woman may lose her identity and behave in ways that are unfamiliar, or in ways that show she is lost and hurt.



FOOTNOTES:

¹⁹. VicHealth quoted in Women's Health In the North and Lancaster, C., (2008), Collected Wisdom - Facilitated Family Violence Support Groups With Women in the Northern Subregion, Women's Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria, page 21.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO 'TRUST YOUR GUT'?

How do young women trust their judgment about what feels wrong and is affecting their lives so completely? What it means to 'trust your gut' is not self evident and needs teasing out. Women often find that they lose trust in their own judgment when in a violent relationship. What, how and when to feel fearful becomes bewildering. They also become numb, confused and fatigued. Depending on the life experiences of the DVD audience the 'trust your gut' concept may not be familiar or may be a skill not used in a long time.

The 'trust your gut' message was formulated as a result of young women in the Love Control focus groups reflecting upon feelings of anxiety about their relationships that presented as 'bad vibes' or an 'uncomfortable feeling' in their stomachs prior to any physical violence occurring. The message is a reminder that by tuning into our bodies, we may recognise when a situation or relationship is not healthy.²⁰

The following activities may help understand the concept of 'trusting your gut'.

- In pairs or groups, draw on an outlined body shape the feelings and thoughts of trusting your gut about a new relationship.

- Watch the DVD and note down any time the female character refers to feeling things inside her, like vibes or bad feelings in the pit of her stomach.

- Have conversations about:
 - What does trusting your gut mean? What other words could you use?
 - What does it feel like to do trust your gut? How do you know if you are not doing it?
 - What feelings in your head and your body tell you that you are ignoring your own 'warning bells' or 'sixth sense', inner voice or gut feelings.
 - Do you have a story where you trusted your gut feeling?

FOOTNOTES:

20. The background to the DVD section of the notes is drawn directly from the Project Evaluation by Toni Bentley, Modern Media Messages (Triple M's) Project Final Report Women's Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria, October 2009.

**“WHAT ARE
THE VIBES IN YOUR
STOMACH TELLING
YOU?”**

LOVE CONTROL FOCUS
GROUP, 2009

Young women do stress the significance of strengths based exploration of impacts. Rather than be seen as 'victims' of violence who are passive and damaged, young women stress they:

...preferred to see themselves as conscious active players who found themselves caught in a cycle of control that eventuated in violence. Subsequently they felt that the film's protagonist should not be portrayed purely as a 'domestic violence victim' because it would not resonate with young women generally.²¹

- Discuss how young women can hold on to a sense of themselves as okay, even when they are being affected by relationship violence?

Other ideas to explore impacts of relationship violence include:

- Create a quiz with quotes from the DVD asking what impacts the violence, including the violent attitudes, acts, comments or feelings, may create.
- Play the DVD with no sound and ask the group to tune into the non-verbal actions and signals of violence. What effects may these have for a woman?
- Chat about what may be some immediate and longer-term impacts of violence.
- Create a booklet, movie or web sheet for young people about surviving relationship violence.

FOOTNOTES:

21. The background to the DVD section of the notes is drawn directly from the Project Evaluation by Toni Bentley, Modern Media Messages (Triple M's) Project Final Report Women's Health In the North, Thornbury, Victoria, October 2009.

The high prevalence of violence in society means that in any prevention setting, using any prevention type, a high proportion of those you are working with will have been subjected to violence.

The DVD story may prompt some to share a parallel story of their own or to disclose their experience or perpetration of violence. Sensitivity to this fact is important. Disclosures may happen during or after a session using the DVD, or during the planning of your session(s).

Lack of disclosure from group members doesn't mean that they haven't experienced violence or been violent themselves. It may be helpful to plan on the basis that many audience members have encountered violence. This fact should be anticipated in the planning and introduction. Statistics can illustrate how common the experience is. Explain that the facilitator will be available for private conversation and referral options later, and that if people have things to share they can do so after the session.

Consideration for safety should be paramount in all course planning and delivery.

COURSE PLANNING AND FACILITATION

Facilitators should:

- Provide people with options to participate at their level of personal comfort;
- Monitor behaviours in small groups to ensure safe and respectful communication;
- Have a group agreement around safe behaviour; and
- Provide follow up, brochures, information, wallet cards and websites at the session's conclusion.



**“I HAVEN'T TOLD
ANYONE THIS...”**

Facilitators using the DVD have a duty of care to manage disclosures sensitively and in a validating manner for younger people. Believing, supporting and helping young people feel safe as well as affirming they are not responsible for any violence they have experienced is vital. For those disclosing their use of violence, referral to support lines is essential and will encourage them to continue their efforts to take responsibility.

Audiences may have lots of questions, anecdotes and opinions after watching Love Control and may resist and struggle with the ideas posed or feelings generated by the DVD. Some audience contributions, statements or questions may be difficult or confronting as well as genuine or inquiring. This provides an opportunity to challenge myths, explore puzzles and refocus the participants' contributions. All contributions to group discussions will be valuable because they will reveal important issues and beliefs, and offer learning opportunities. Facilitating conversations prompted by challenging questions requires excellent communication skills.

TYPES OF CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

A range of comments and questions may be raised in a session. These might include challenging statements about the facilitator, the topic or the DVD, out-of-the-blue comments, attention seeking diversions, and blunt or poorly worded questions. These comments or questions may stem from misunderstandings, discomfort or a lack of knowledge.

DEALING WITH CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

- Before you show the DVD, tell the group that they will be addressing issues afterwards. Encourage people to record anything about the DVD that they might like to discuss later.
- Structure maximum opportunities for people to talk after showing the DVD. Smaller group discussions may be good for this. This may reduce the need for someone to dominate in a large group.
- Thank any participant with challenging questions. Respond calmly to the issue raised and avoid reacting to the person raising it. Some ideas to manage this include:

Reframe the comment and work it into your presentation by addressing their point with respect and guiding the person to consider a different point of view... Perhaps say something like, "I am happy to discuss that with you later but in the interest of others in the audience, I am going to continue with my presentation". It is also a good idea to refer to facts or statistics from your presentation to help contextualise the issues, and to ground your points in evidence.²²

FOOTNOTES:

22. White Ribbon, 'Responding to disclosures of violence and to challenging or difficult statements in training', at: www.whiteribbonday.org.au/media/documents/Fact%20Sheet%2011%20Disclosure%20and%20Difficult%20Statements%202009.pdf p3.

MANAGING GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Below are some initial suggested responses that respect challenging group contributions, clarify their content and meaning, then include them into the broader group discussion.

- Thanks for that idea Ebru, we don't have time to address that now but I will chat to you about it after we finish today. We will move on now.
- I think what you may mean is... is that right? (Clarify.)
- Yes Amy, that is a common concern/fear/thought/suggestion, let's explore it further.
- Mel has made a point and I wonder what others think about that issue. (Encourage comments about the issue not the contributor.)
- Thanks Wesley, we do understand your ideas on the topic/theme. We will move on from that point as we do have a lot to get through today. Or, I'd like to explore what ideas others may have on the DVD/issue under discussion/my initial question.



**“YES AMY, THAT IS A
COMMON CONCERN,
LET’S EXPLORE IT
FURTHER...”**



**“I’D WONDER
WHAT OTHERS
THINK ABOUT
THAT ISSUE?”**

The Love Control DVD may elicit particular types of comments due to its story-line and ways to tackle these comments are suggested below.

EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

“Yeah, but alcohol does cause violence...”

Alcohol can be a trigger for violence but is not a cause of it. Relationship violence is a systematic pattern of behaviours that allows a person to control another.

“Maybe he really loves her and is just being protective...”

Initially some women feel romantic, cared for and needed in a relationship when a partner behaves jealously. At the same time she may feel quite ambivalent about her partner and confused by him. As this pattern of control manifests in more and well-established forms of behaviour, her partner’s so-called ‘protection’ becomes an imprisoning force in their lives, impacting on her sense of self and feelings of safety. He frames it as something she should feel flattered by, but in fact she feels prohibited by it and not safe. Jealousy doesn’t mean love. It can mean insecurity, low self-esteem, high anxiety, fear or possessiveness.

“She is an idiot – she really was just asking for it...”

Some women feel safer thinking that relationship violence happens to ‘others’ who make ‘dumb choices’, thus it can’t happen to them. This need to feel safer may manifest as disparaging comments about the DVD’s female actor, being angry at her, or indifferent to her situation. Ways to sensitively tackle this issue include:

- Helping young women feel safe when discussing these issues;
- Showing respect for their contributions;
- Asking for other ideas on the point raised;
- Countering the comment with what we know about the prevalence of violence and how choices are often taken away from women experiencing violence;
- Exploring some of the social expectations the male actor appears to hold on to; and
- What do you mean by dumb/stupid? Do you think trust is part of a healthy relationship? Is it stupid to trust someone you love, and who is supposed to love you?

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES:

“He is a sexy hot-blooded guy. Doesn’t she know that is what they are like... (In the city, from that culture etc.)

This is part of a myth that relationship violence only happens to certain people in certain places and certain relationships. Statistics show that relationship violence happens to women of all ages, backgrounds and abilities from a variety of diverse men. It also equates violent behaviour with being ‘hot-blooded’ and sexier, but non-violence is safer, honest and passionate.

“She would’ve already left if he was that bad...”

Commitment, trust, affection and hope are brought into any relationship. These may encourage a woman to be hopeful of change if a relationship feels wrong. The results of relationship violence, such as confusion, lowered self-esteem, isolation, loss of trust in self judgment, and fear quickly limit a woman’s confidence. This makes even considering leaving frightening and perplexing, and compounds any other factors such as her economic, parenting or housing reliance on him.

“What was that guy eyeing her off on the train for anyway?”

This shifts responsibility for the abusive behaviour to an innocent bystander; looking at others is a meaningless and common thing to do on a train. The bystander was only “eyeing her off” in the mind of the jealous boyfriend. Even if she is uncomfortable, a woman can have the choice to speak for herself or ask for help.

“But that isn’t REAL violence is it? Or maybe it only happened once...”

Sometimes people try to minimise what they are seeing by saying it is not really bad or if it is bad it is not really frequent. Violence has many forms and is always unacceptable. The effects of relationship violence are significant and factual, and the frequency is consistent and extensive. Young people often experience relationship violence.

**“I THOUGHT I WAS
IN A COCOON OF
HIS NEEDINESS,
BUT REALLY I WAS
SUFFOCATING..”**

LOVE CONTROL
FOCUS GROUP MEMBER,

2009

It is important to be careful in deciding how to use the DVD in mixed gender settings, as males and females will experience the DVD differently. It is worth going over themes and revisiting the DVD to clarify and reinforce ideas.

The complex issues of violence may be best managed over a number of sessions. This offers chances for gender-sensitive learning and processing. A mixed group could use the DVD as part of a longer-term program where both females and males have had some separate sessions with their same-sex peers.

If resource limitations require a single session only, then it would be recommended to split the group and show the DVD separately to the females and the males. This gives women a chance to speak in a private setting that is safe and supportive.

The DVD was developed for young women. If facilitators wish to use it with young men only, they should consult with others who specialise in education with young men around violence. These contacts may include those resources listed at the end of these Resource Notes. These services may direct facilitators to staff who specialise in working with young men around violence and prevention.

Male workers have suggested that focusing on themes that address gender expectations and subtle forms of power and control can engage young men, these could include discussing:

- What things can you remember the boyfriend was doing that were not good things to do in a relationship? Replay those scenes again to see if they could pick up what was happening.

- What about when the girlfriend in the DVD paid for his drink and he walked off? Was there anything wrong with that? It's okay for a girl to buy drinks for a guy, right? So why is it bad here? Discuss how the boyfriend just expected her to buy them; there was no kind of negotiation or offer on his part, nor did he show any appreciation. Consider the other behaviours displayed in the DVD in a similar way.

- At the pub, when the girl saw her friends, why did her boyfriend start making a fuss and want to go home?

- Why did the boyfriend want to start a fight with the guy on the train? If you have a girlfriend and another guy looks at her, is that a problem? Discuss how it might be a problem if it was excessive and making your girlfriend feel uncomfortable, but how the occasional glance is nothing to worry about.
- Replay the earlier comment made to her about not wearing a certain dress because he said it will cause other men to look at her. Sometimes you might not like what your partner is wearing. Is it okay to give them advice on what they wear? At what point does it become not okay? If they disagree with you and they still want to wear it, that's okay, right? So why do you think the girl just went along with what he told her to wear? Did she really have a free choice, or was there something about him that made her think she just had to agree?
- Remember that as well as telling his girlfriend what to wear, the boyfriend also was being aggressive to a man who looked at her. He also behaved strangely when she wanted to hang out with her friends. If we think about those things together, what do you think he was trying to do to her? Discuss how he was trying to control everything she did, and isolate her so she could only interact with him. Discuss how he is insecure and can't handle her having attention from other men.
- Do you think trust is important to a good relationship? Does the boyfriend in the DVD trust her? Why doesn't he trust her? Is it because she has done something wrong, or is it an attitude problem that he has?
- The boyfriend in the DVD didn't actually hit his girlfriend. Do you think he is a violent guy? Ask why or why not. Discuss that violence is more than just physical.
- How does the boyfriend's behaviour make his girlfriend feel? Why do you think she just seemed to go along with everything and "keep the peace"?
- At the end the boyfriend buys flowers and tells her how much he loves her. Do you think that he really loves her? If you love someone, do you think it's okay to treat them that way?²³

FOOTNOTES:

23. Chris Mitchell, SECASA, August 2010.

School-based programmes often address gender norms and attitudes that influence personal and relationship development, beliefs and behaviours. Love Control has particular relevance for the key learning outcomes outlined within a range of school-based curriculum including:

- Health and Human Development, VCE;
- Community Services, VCE and VET;
- English and English as a Second Language;
- Civil Law and the Law in Focus - area 3 Law in Focus;
- Psychology – social relationships; and
- Sociology and sexuality sessions.²⁴

The Statewide Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Respect in Schools Strategy Prevention of Gender-based Violence 'Demonstration Project' is developing a range of important resources for schools. CASA House and Dr Debbie Ollis are working together to develop the trial curriculum guidance materials for this project. In addition, a whole-school model is being developed which includes:

- Guidance on creating a positive and respectful school culture and environment;
- Updating school policies and procedures;
- Providing a whole staff briefing and professional learning;
- Working with local agencies and engaging the wider community;
- Conducting evaluations and information on responding to violence that is already occurring; and
- Curriculum guidance materials for Years 8, 9 and 10.²⁵

FOOTNOTES:

24. www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/studies/healthnhuman/healthhdsd2010.pdf

25. Update on the DEECD Demonstration Project, May 2010, at www.dvrcv.org.au/pip/?tag=deecd

In VET and higher education courses, the DVD is a useful tool in many subjects and units of study. It provides a launching pad for discussion about:

- Believing in rigid gender roles and identities, and having weak support for gender equality;
- Holding a sense of masculine entitlement;
- Believing in male dominance and a male right to control wealth in relationships; and
- Promoting these beliefs and values through social and organisational cultures²⁶



FOOTNOTES:

26. Preventing violence before it occurs, A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/PreventingViolence/framework%20web.ashx pp 8-9 and 13.

Youth, sport and leisure groups, community groups and community-based employment or neighbourhood learning centres are often an accessible place for people to get help around issues of violence. This is particularly true for those young people or women who are not at school or in the workforce. These services could try and make sure they have diverse information, posters and resources around. This indicates the service as one that promotes respectful relationships and one where violence can be talked about safely.

Ideas for use of the DVD in these settings include:

- Trying to place the Love Control DVD into a broader program context after thoughts and ideas on violence have been addressed with staff;
- Linking the DVD in with other programs that are exploring building social capital, developing self-esteem, relationships, family violence, parenting or supporting adolescents;
- Using the Fact and Tip Sheets to construct a safe session for a group;
- Partnering with other services in the area that can help with the violence component of programs. Partners may include local family violence services, family support or women's agencies, local governments and violence prevention workers; and
- Developing awareness of how to identify family violence and respond to family violence disclosures through training.²⁷

FOOTNOTES:

27. Responding to family violence at:
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsandProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/PreventingViolence/framework%20web.ashx page 13.

The Love Control DVD can be used as a tool in capacity building sessions for health, education, community and other sector development. It complements other training content, processes and whole-of-agency approaches. The DVD could be used in an introduction to the issue of family violence and as a 'seeding' tool to start discussion in a session about violence prevention.

Love Control has also been used successfully as a tool to support social marketing and to attempt to modify social norms around violence.²⁸ The DVD has been embedded within a number of websites aimed at young people, and agencies can request to do this to complement their other organisational efforts.

Capacity building tips for staff to learn about family violence and violence prevention include:

- Using the DVD as a component of a series of information sessions for staff including managers and employees;
- Helping staff teams audit human resources and human services practices to support employees affected by family violence. Policies and practices may include helping staff with referral avenues, offering changes to leave rosters or pay methods, and enacting policies to maintain staff confidentiality and safety;
- Commencing a whole-organisational approach to violence prevention, with all sections of the agency taking responsibility for violence prevention; and²⁹
- Using the Fact and Tip Sheets throughout this kit to create family violence information sessions or prevention activities built around the DVD.

FOOTNOTES:

28. Love Control data unpublished at Women's Health In the North 2010, cites YouTube data showing the large number of hits the DVD has had and its access on other mobile devices and use on other agency websites.

29. See sample whole-of-organisation approaches at:
www.publications.health.sa.gov.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=allied and
www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/files/Family_Violence_policy.pdf

The DVD can help in creating an exploratory safe space in which young women can share relationship subtleties. It can generate conversations about choice and progress for young women who feel stuck in their relationship situations.

In what is quite an isolated context, watching the DVD with a support person can give young women the sense that they are part of a wider community of women.

It can also provide young women who have experienced abusive relationships with a sense of distance from the immediacy of their own experience. They can talk about the ideas and practices reflected in the DVD rather than having to talk about their own direct experience.

Drawing from narrative and strength-based theory, workers can facilitate this sense of distance and help young women to reflect on key concepts about relationship abuse. This can offer young women a sense of perspective and agency so that they can challenge power and control at an individual level.

Questions that could be used in contact sessions:

- As you watch the DVD, what stands out for you and why? What did you hear that most grabbed your attention? What struck a chord for you?

- Were there any thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences that you had as you watch the DVD?

**“IS THERE
ANYTHING IN YOUR
OWN HISTORY THAT
IS RESONATING
WITH THE THINGS
PORTRAYED IN
THE DVD?”**

- What ideas about, and practices within, relationships and specifically male/female relationships do you think the DVD addresses? What ideas about relationships is the boyfriend expressing/practising? What ideas about relationships is the girlfriend expressing/practising?
- Have you encountered these ideas in your life and relationships? Is there anything in your own history that is resonating with the things portrayed in the DVD?
- In your experience, what could support people, both men and women, to take up these ideas and act these ways? Think here about peer pressure, family practices, personal history and popular culture.
- What could support people in resisting or challenging these ideas and practices? Given that you are now here, in a safe place, what or who has supported you in resisting or challenging these ideas and practices?
- What things prevent or support us listening to our gut?
- When you took the decision to break free from being controlled, what would you say that you were placing value on? The term 'break free' is only one way to phrase this. Use whatever language the young person has used.
- Is there anyone in your life who would know about the importance of this value to you? What do you think they would say about the steps you have taken? Is there anything about your life that you value more, as an outcome of seeing the DVD?
- Think of an aspect of a relationship that you value or appreciate, for example equality, respect, sharing, and openness. How would you notice the presence of this value in a relationship?³⁰

FOOTNOTES:

30. Emma O'Loughlen, Counterpoint Anglicare and Advisory Group member, August 2010.

Learning happens in many settings both formal and informal. Love Control can be used to support community or peer educators who may be sharing ideas with others.

The Plain English sheet is intended for use by anyone who requires an easy-to-read sheet about the DVD. It is based on the Scope Victoria's Easy English Style Guide and shaped by input from Dr Patsie Frawley and her peer educators in the Living Safer Sexual Lives Project. While the sheet does presuppose that the educators would have team or co-facilitator support when they are working with a group, it does not assume high literacy levels.

Individuals or groups who may find this a particularly useful sheet include:

- Those working with lower literacy audiences;
- Peer educators with a learning disability;
- English as a Foreign Language settings; and
- School-based peer educators who require an easy reading version.

LOVE CONTROL DVD

This information is about a DVD called Love Control.

The people in the DVD are actors.

It is a story about abuse in a relationship from a man to a woman.

Relationship abuse can happen between two men or two women too.

The DVD was made by Women's Health In the North (WHIN).

WHIN is a women's health agency.

The DVD was made with help from young women and community organisations.

You are a peer trainer or community group leader.
You work with other people in a team.

You can read this information yourself or get help.



**“THIS IS THE
COVER OF
THE DVD.”**

WHY USE THIS DVD?

Your team would show this DVD to a group of women.

Groups can help women feel less alone and more hopeful.

Violence happens a lot in relationships. It helps to see a story about it.
You feel less alone and more hopeful.

It helps you know what to do. It helps you talk about it.

TALK ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND VIOLENCE

It is good to talk about relationships in your group.

Do this before you watch the DVD.

You can:

- Talk about your girlfriend and boyfriend relationships;
- Talk about being safe in relationships; and
- Talk about how we help each other if things go wrong.

WATCH THE DVD

The DVD is 5 minutes long.

It is good to watch it with a group who know each other.

They can help each other.

AFTER THE DVD IS OVER

After the DVD is over there will be questions.

Someone in your team can answer these questions.

MAIN THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

- Violence happens a lot in our community.
- Young people experience it too.
- Lots of people hide that it happened to them.
- It is not their fault.
- Violence happens mostly to women and to some men.
- There are lots of types of violence: social, emotional, physical and sexual.
- The one who is abusive uses fear, power and control.
- Young women need to trust themselves.
- Respecting each other makes a good relationship.

You can also:

- Talk about what abuse and violence in relationships is.
- Talk about how we help women when it happens.

ABUSE AND VIOLENCE INFORMATION SHEET

There is an Easy English sheet about abuse and violence in relationships.

It is on the internet at:

www.familyviolence.vic.gov.au/Assets/55/1/EasyEnglishfactsheet.pdf



Resources rapidly emerge and become outdated. The internet offers resources that are contemporary and current, accessed through key websites, and by contacting key agencies in your area such as family or domestic violence services, sexual assault services, women's health services, men's referral services and the police.

Internet searches may be aided by googling terms such as:

- Family violence, domestic violence or intimate partner violence;
- Prevention - primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention;
- Partners in Prevention;
- Whole-of-agency violence prevention;
- Organisational map of primary violence prevention;
- Love Control family violence;
- Young people relationship violence prevention;
- Relationship violence prevention; and
- Children, young people and domestic violence.

Some sites that may offer a collation of resources include:

- www.theline.gov.au/about

The Line discusses respectful relationships and what crosses the line to disrespect and violence.

- www.dvrcv.org.au/pip/

Partners in Prevention is a capacity-building project for professionals interested in working with young people for the primary prevention of violence against women. It offers collated resources, projects and innovations in the area of primary prevention.

- www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/

In 2003, VicHealth began identifying violence against women as a priority and as part of a broader program of activity aimed at addressing the preventable causes of poor mental health. Since then they have coordinated significant program and research responses to consolidate and sustain sound evidence-informed policy, coordinated action and appropriate resource allocation.



LOVE

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WOMEN'S HEALTH
IN THE NORTH
making
all the difference

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