

50-50

INCREASING THE ODDS FOR SAFETY AND RESPECT



DVD and Resource Notes for Applying a Primary
Prevention Approach to Gambling and Family Violence



50-50:

INCREASING THE ODDS
FOR SAFETY AND RESPECT

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Introduction

This DVD and accompanying resource notes were produced as part of a primary prevention project, 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect', that applied a gendered lens to the link between family violence and gambling. The project was conducted by Women's Health In the North (WHIN) and Women's Health East (WHE).

The research on which this DVD is based has focused principally on gambling related to electronic gaming machines (EGMs), commonly known as poker machines. However the issues may also be applicable to other forms of gambling such as sports betting and online gambling.

This introduction provides some background to the project, the vignette featured in the DVD, and the concepts underpinning the project. The second section examines the link between gambling harm and family violence. The subsequent section explores how the DVD can be used by examining the dialogue and considering suggested questions either by oneself or as part of a facilitated group discussion. Referral information is provided at the end of the notes.

Audience

The project team developed these DVD resource notes to help guide trainers from both the gambling and family violence counselling fields.

The main audience is professionals, including counsellors, who work with clients living in families in which both family violence and gambling harm exist. The DVD can also provide the broader community with examples of language to challenge expressions of gender inequality that support violence against women and underpin violent and abusive behaviour.

Film Objective

The key objective of the film is that viewers will report increased confidence in identifying and challenging comments that reflect the drivers of violence against women including condoning of violence or seeking to control women's independence. The film also aims to model appropriate responses to violence-supportive attitudes and increase confidence in referring clients to appropriate services.

Definitions

Gambling-related harm is any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement [reduction] in the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community or population (Langham et al., 2016).

Family violence occurs when a perpetrator exercises power and control over a partner, former partner or other family member. It involves coercive and abusive behaviours by the perpetrator that are designed to intimidate, humiliate, undermine and isolate, resulting in fear and insecurity. These behaviours can include physical and sexual abuse, as well as psychological, emotional, cultural, spiritual and financial abuse (State of Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2017). Family violence is a gendered crime overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women and children.

“ THE FILM AIMS TO MODEL APPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE-SUPPORTIVE ATTITUDES AND INCREASE CONFIDENCE IN REFERRING CLIENTS TO APPROPRIATE SERVICES. ”

The Link between Gambling-related Harm and Family Violence

Gambling harm and family violence are both serious, prevalent and preventable public health issues. Family violence is three times more likely to occur in families where there is problem gambling than in families in which there are no gambling problems (Dowling et al., forthcoming).

70%

of participants believed that **problem gambling** and **family violence** were related

OVER HALF

of family members of problem gamblers reported some form of family violence in the **previous 12 months**

Furthermore, over half of people with gambling problems report perpetrating physical violence against their children (Dowling, 2014). Suomi and colleagues (2013) note that over half of family members of problem gamblers reported some form of family violence in the previous 12 months and 34.2% stated that the family violence was perpetrated by or against at least one problem gambling family member. Moreover, 70% of participants believed that problem gambling and family violence were related.

When gambling co-occurs with family violence, the short and long term health impacts for women and children are potentially magnified and responses to each issue require an understanding of the intersection between the two. This understanding is important not just in relation to service responses delivered in the community but also for policy makers and planners working in both family violence and the gambling reform areas.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence notes that the relationship between gambling and family violence is an emerging area of inquiry. The commission report states that economic security is one of the necessary pillars for women's recovery from family violence and that financial abuse as a form of family violence is not yet widely recognised nor addressed. When gambling occurs in the home, it has the potential to negatively impact on women's economic security (State of Victoria, 2016).

The relationship between family violence and gambling is complex. In some instances, family violence has been found to precede gambling, with victims and perpetrators of violence using gambling as a coping mechanism (Korman et al., 2008). Research by the Women's Information and Referral Exchange into women experiencing problem gambling and isolation suggests that some women experiencing family violence use gaming venues as a safe space away from home (Women's Information and Referral Exchange, n.d). Gambler's Help counsellors and family violence workers report anecdotally that some female clients who are also victims of family violence visit gaming venues to escape violence at home and that some then develop problems with gambling: '[A gaming venue is seen as] a safe place for women to be, it's under cameras. There's other people there, you can be social without actually talking to anybody (Rintoul, forthcoming).

In many cases, gambling has also been found to occur before incidences of family violence (Dowling, 2014). A recent Victorian study describes the link between EGM accessibility and police-recorded family violence. Postcodes with no EGMs were associated with 20% fewer family violence incidents and 30% fewer family violence assaults, when compared with postcodes with 75 EGMs per 10,000 people (Markham et al., 2016).

For further discussion of the above issues please see the 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect' issues paper, fact sheet, conference poster, local government information paper and one-page tip sheet, all on WHIN's website at whin.org.au

Using the DVD

The film is informed by a women and children-centred approach to family violence (Dwyer and Miller, 2014). The film models a conversation in which a man is challenged in a manner that prioritises the safety of women and children and is non-stigmatising.

The Dialogue

The film shows 'Phil', a man with gambling issues, expressing a need to control his partner's independence and decision-making. Phil is also expressing stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity.

We witness this man's friend 'Ahmed', who works as a counsellor, challenging these comments. In this way, the men's interaction models how professionals could respond to clients or other individuals expressing similar views or behaviour.

The film demonstrates the shift counsellors can make from working within a gambling/addiction framework to a family violence/prevention of violence framework when expressions reflecting gender inequality are made, or if red flags about potential violence are raised. The family violence framework puts women and children's safety first and brings women's experiences to the fore by naming the woman and by inviting the perpetrator to think about the impact of his violence on her rather than focusing on the intention of his actions. In this way, the impact of the behaviour, not the perpetrator's intention, is the focus of the intervention.

“ THE DIALOGUE RECOGNISES HOW MEN CAN JUSTIFY, MINIMISE, SHIFT BLAME, AND EXCUSE THEIR USE OF POWER AND CONTROL. ”

The counsellor's responses are guided by responding to the drivers of gendered violence identified in *Change the Story*, the national strategy on preventing violence against women.

These drivers are:

- condoning of violence against women
- men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

The dialogue recognises how men can justify, minimise, shift blame, and excuse their use of power and control.

When challenging violence-condoning behaviour, counsellors can:

- Ensure women and children are present in the conversation by naming them, speaking of their experiences, and identifying the impact of the man's behaviour.
- Resist invitations to collude, for example smiling or laughing at a sexist joke, or allowing justifications or blame to pass without comment.
- Ensure anything you say is something that you would feel comfortable saying in front of the woman and her children. Picture them in the room with you.

Questions for Viewers to Consider

The questions appear with suggested answers (quotes from the film) below each. The questions and answers may be considered by individual practitioners or those using the DVD alone, or as part of a facilitated group discussion:

🗨️ What expressions of sexism and sex-role stereotyping did you hear?

- 'You know what they're [Aisha and her friends] like when they're out.'
- 'What if the kids wake up and all they want is their mother, what then?'
- 'The rules, they're just different [for men and women], so she [Aisha] shouldn't be staying out late, she should be at home, so if the kids wake up she's there.'

🗨️ In what ways did Ahmed challenge Phil's expressions of control and violence?

- 'She was meant to be home by 11.'
- 'I texted her like 15 times...'
- 'She says she's out with the girls but how do I know where she is or what she's up to.'
- 'I just wanted to know where she was.'

🗨️ What expressions indicating condoning of violence against women did you hear?

- 'I thought I was gonna lose it.'
- 'I was just so angry when she didn't come back.'

Q At what points did Ahmed resist invitations to collude?

- In response to Phil's comment, 'You know what they're like when they're out', Ahmed said, 'No. I don't know what they're like when they're out.'
- In response to Phil saying Aisha came home at 12.30am, Ahmed says, '12.30. What? Aisha staying out isn't an issue. You and I have stayed out much later than that.'

Q How did Ahmed ensure Aisha was included in discussion?

- Ahmed continued to name or mention Aisha throughout their conversation with comments such as 'How does Aisha feel?'

Q In what ways did Ahmed challenge Phil's expressions of control and violence?

- When Phil said, 'I just wanted to know where she was', Ahmed responded, 'Because?'

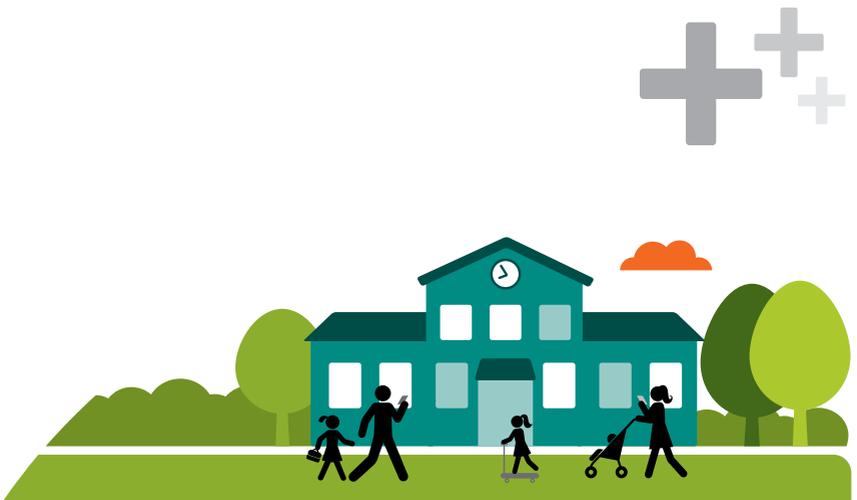
Other answers are:

- 'I understand you being worried but it sounds like you want to be in control of Aisha, where she is, who she's with.'
- 'I still haven't heard you acknowledge that you're saying some things based around controlling Aisha.'
- 'I'm hearing that you want to know what Aisha is up to when she's out, and it's coming out like you want to control her. That's not healthy.'
- 'You justify to yourself your yelling when she doesn't do what you want her to do.'
- When Phil said 'I get angry. I can't not feel', Ahmed responded, 'It's how you deal with those feelings. If you lose it and they translate into acts of violence and control, then you've crossed the line.'
- 'Your relationship with Aisha is a 50–50 split. You need to communicate respectfully and consider how Aisha feels.'

Conclusion

This DVD and accompanying resource notes were developed as part of a primary prevention project, 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect', that brought a gendered lens to the link between family violence and gambling.

Given that these resources support the primary prevention of violence against women, counsellors and response practitioners still need to be supported by training to identify and respond to family violence, both victims and perpetrators.



Referral Information

If in immediate danger

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No to Violence: Men's Referral Service

1300 766 491

(provides professional development for service providers who work with men using violence and provides counselling and information for men taking responsibility for their violent behaviour)

Gambler's Help

1800 858 858

(provides free, confidential information, advice and counselling for people with gambling problems and those who care about them)

Safe Steps: Family Violence Response Centre

1800 015 188

(offers a range of services for women and children living with family violence including 24 hour response, safety planning, and safe house accommodation)

1800RESPECT

1800 737 732

(provides 24/7 confidential telephone and online information, counselling and support for people experiencing impacts of sexual assault or family violence)

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Acknowledgements

50-50: Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect was developed by Women's Health In the North as part of the project 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect' with partner Women's Health East.

The film was developed by Sandra Morris, Manasi Wagh-Nikam, Monique Keel and Ada Conroy, and was produced by Poached Egg Pictures. The resource notes were written by Claudia Slegers, Sandra Morris, Manasi Wagh-Nikam and Ada Conroy.



Women's Health In the North acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government.



Women's Health In the North acknowledge Victorian Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we provide our services. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and recognise the ongoing living culture of all Aboriginal people. We express commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and our hope for reconciliation and justice.



The 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect' project was funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

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Suggested Citation:

Women's Health In the North (2017). *50-50: Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect*. Thornbury, Victoria: Women's Health In the North.



The 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect' project was funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

The 'Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect' project was a partnership between Women's Health In the North (WHIN) and Women's Health East (WHE).

For more information, please contact WHIN on **03 9484 1666**, or at **info@whin.org.au** or visit the WHIN website at **whin.org.au**

