

Supporting Survivors Post Separation/Divorce

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Professional Background

- MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING
 - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
 - HIGHER EDUCATION
 -
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – 16 years and counting

- CSD-MN DV Program Coordinator, 2003 – 2005
- Consultant to ASADV (now IGNITE), 2006
- Consultant, *Effectively Serving Deaf Survivors Focus Group* (Seattle), 2006
- ASADV (now IGNITE) Advocate, Counselor, Director, 2010 – 2016
- Domestic Violence course (Criminal Justice), RIT/NTID, 2019 – present

Personal Background and Identity (Lens)

- Survivor of Domestic Violence
- Survivor of Domestic Violence, Post-Separation/Divorce
- Deaf Woman
- White
- Lesbian
- Cis
- Able-bodied



Recognition and Gratitude



Knowledge



- I do not consider myself an “expert” on this topic
- **Goals for today** = to share my experiences, my learning journey, as well as my knowledge, and understanding of domestic violence that is experienced during and after separation/divorce
- **Knowledge retrieved from:** personal experiences, talking and working with other Survivors post-separation/divorce (“Survivor Stories”), observations, and the literature
 - Info in the literature is **lacking** in the area of domestic violence, post-separation/divorce – need to rely a lot on DV/IPV literature and apply to post-separation/divorce experiences

Triggers & Self-Care



Canva



Poll –

What is your primary role/reason for participating today?

- Survivor
- Advocate
- Community Member
- Systems-Changer

Opinion Poll –

Does Separation/Divorce End Domestic Violence?

Yes

No

No, but domestic violence is significantly reduced

No, but domestic violence is somewhat reduced



What Do We Know? (*Or Think We Know?*)

- Separation does **not** end Domestic Violence
- Separation is the most dangerous time
- Domestic Violence is about Power and Control (*pattern*)
 - Post-Separation Power and Control Wheels
- Cycle of Violence Theory (Lenore Walker, 1979)
- Safety Planning is necessary and important for Victims/Survivors
- Children are used as tactics/tools to cause harm
- Abuser/Offender Accountability is necessary

What Else Do
We Know?

[Download PDF](#)[Journal of Family Violence](#)August 2013, Volume 28, [Issue 6](#), pp 547–560 | [Cite as](#)

Post-Separation Abuse of Women and their Children: Boundary-Setting and Family Court Utilization among Victimized Mothers

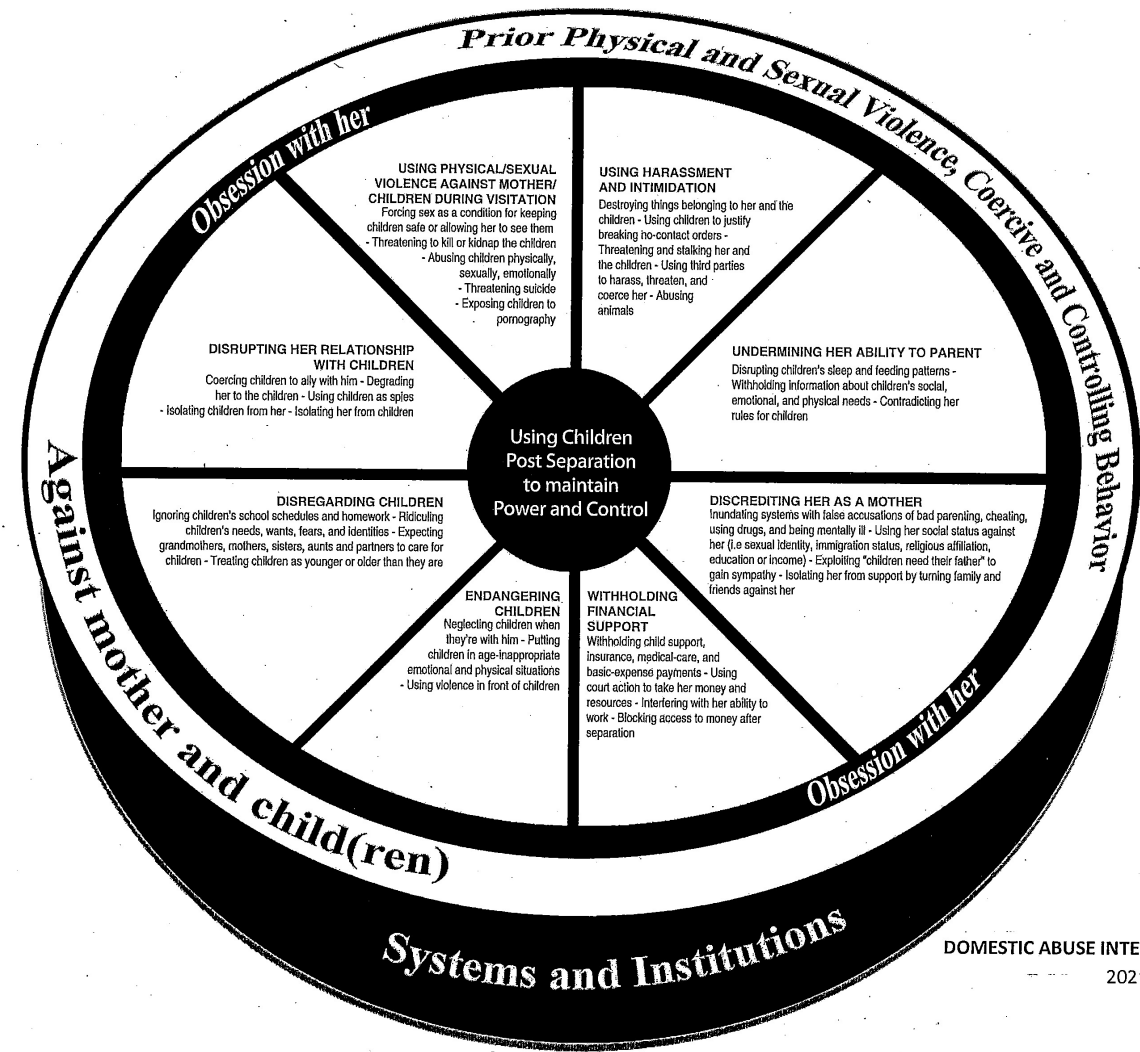
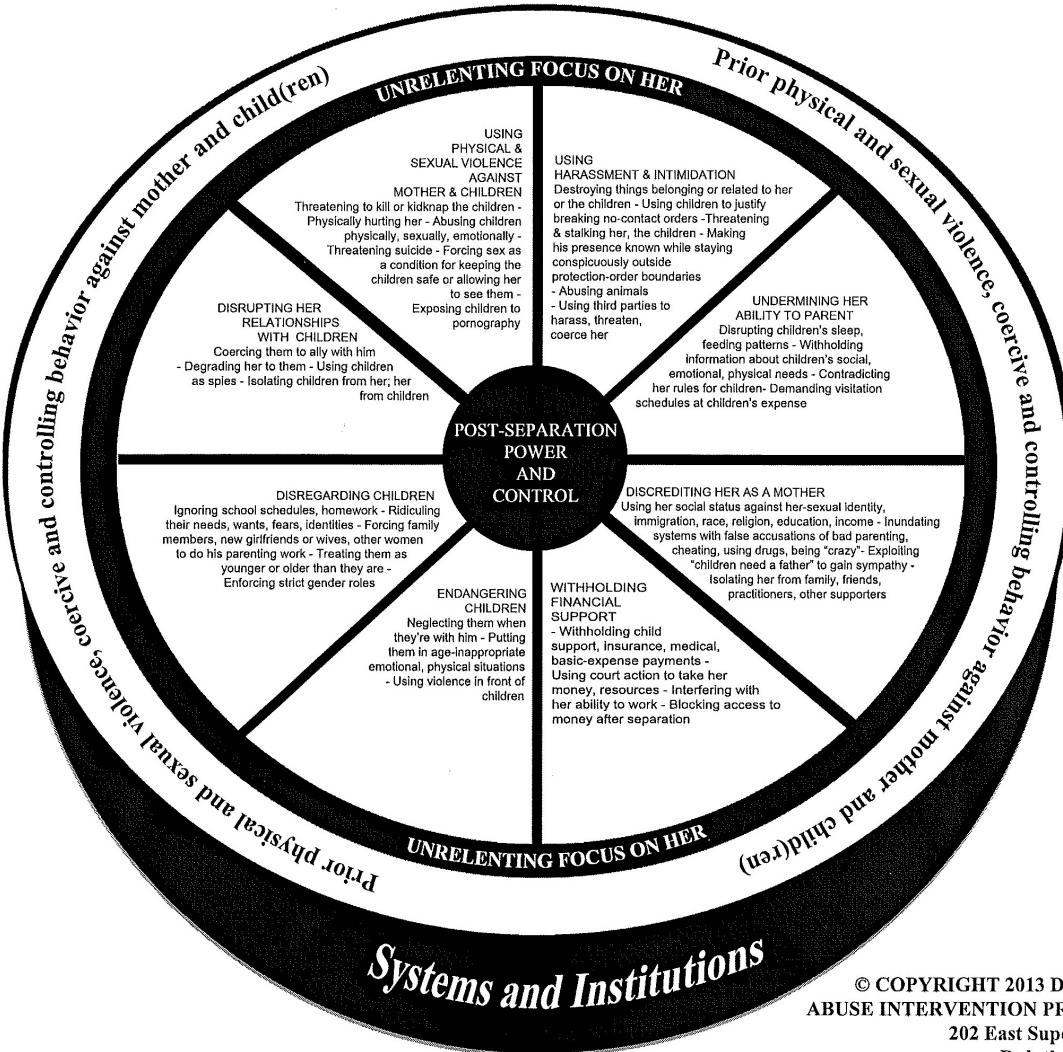
[Authors](#) [Authors and affiliations](#)April M. Zeoli , Echo A. Rivera, Cris M. Sullivan, Sheryl Kubiak

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RESEARCH

First Online: 21 June 2013

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a factor in many women's decisions to end their marriages (Kurz [1996](#)). While it is commonly assumed that leaving an abusive partner will increase a woman's safety, this is not always the case. Previous research has established that, in many cases, IPV does not end upon separation (Fleury et al. [2000](#); Hardesty [2002](#); Hardesty and Chung [2006](#); Jaffe et al. [2003](#); Johnson et al. [2005](#); Kurz [1996](#); Slote et al. [2005](#)). In fact, abuse often escalates post-separation (Johnson and Sacco [1995](#); Wilson and Daly [1993](#)). Many victimized women report continued threats and intimidation when leaving their assailants, including threats against their children (McCloskey [2001](#)). Moreover, estrangement has been identified as an important risk factor for intimate partner homicide, with men murdering their wives/ex-wives most commonly within a year of separation (Campbell et al. [2007](#)).

Post-Separation Wheel (Using Children)



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Post-Separation Power & Control Wheel

- The Post-Separation Power & Control Wheel was developed by the Duluth Family Visitation Center (DFVC), a division of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Program
- **Google:** “Post-Separation Power and Control Wheel”

www.theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Using-Children-Wheel.pdf

Post-Separation Abuse Featured in the New Duluth Power and Control Wheel

Post-Separation Abuse Featured in the New Duluth Power and Control Wheel

*Chris Godsey lives, teaches writing, and works as an ally in the movement to end men's violence against in Duluth, MN. He can be reached at cgodsey@d.umn.edu. Renita Robinson is a Trainer with DAIP on post-separation violence, and the Executive Director of the Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA) in Mankato, MN; she can be reached by email: renitar@inspire-hope.org/.

This article appeared in *Domestic Violence Report*, August/September 2013.

In this article, authors Chris Godsey and Renita Robinson describe the Duluth Post-Separation Power and Control Wheel, which depicts the commonplace tactics used by batterers to continue their battering during the post-separation period. These tactics typically involve the manipulation of the children and of the mother's relationship to them.

Any reader who is familiar with domestic violence custody cases is likely to recognize these strategies in cases they have seen. Since the post-separation period is the most dangerous time for a victim, it would seem exceptionally important for battered women, along with their lawyer and other allies, to be able to recognize these tactics and do everything to put a stop to them before the batterer is allowed to continue wreaking emotional and psychological havoc on the victims and their children.

Battering survivors, their advocates, and many practitioners know that when a woman escapes a man who abuses her, she and their children usually face **intensified dangers**. **Experience tells them that he will begin using their children**, the effects of his past abuse, and his **potential for more violence as tools** in new forms of force in his efforts to engage **systems and institutions** in **maintaining power and control over her**.

Dissecting the Wheel

- **Black base layer = Systems and Institutions**

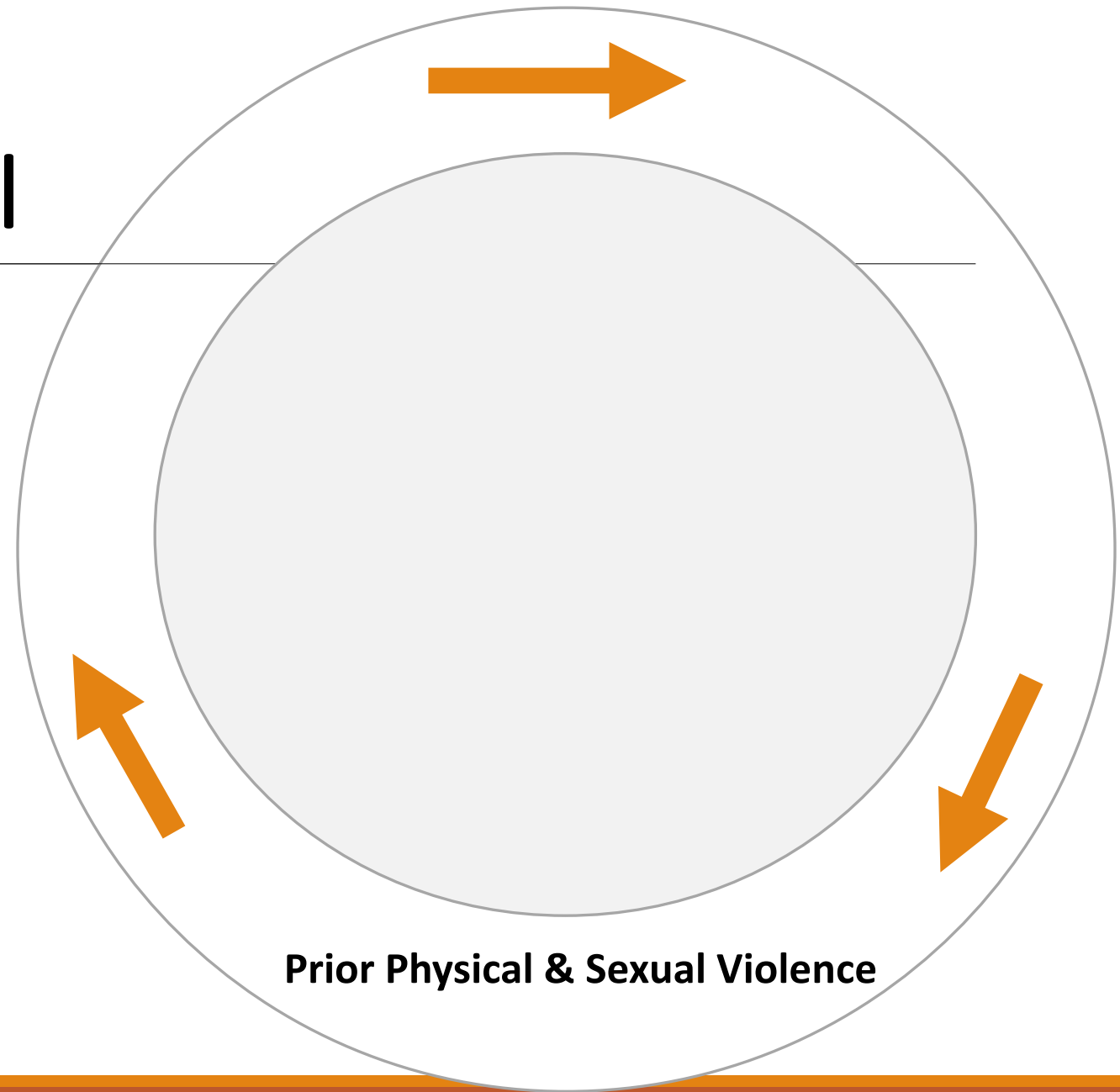
- Represents how these “often collude with an abusive father in his controlling tactics by providing a foundation of policies, decisions, and interactions that ignore the effects of his past and potential violence” on the woman/children



Systems and Institutions

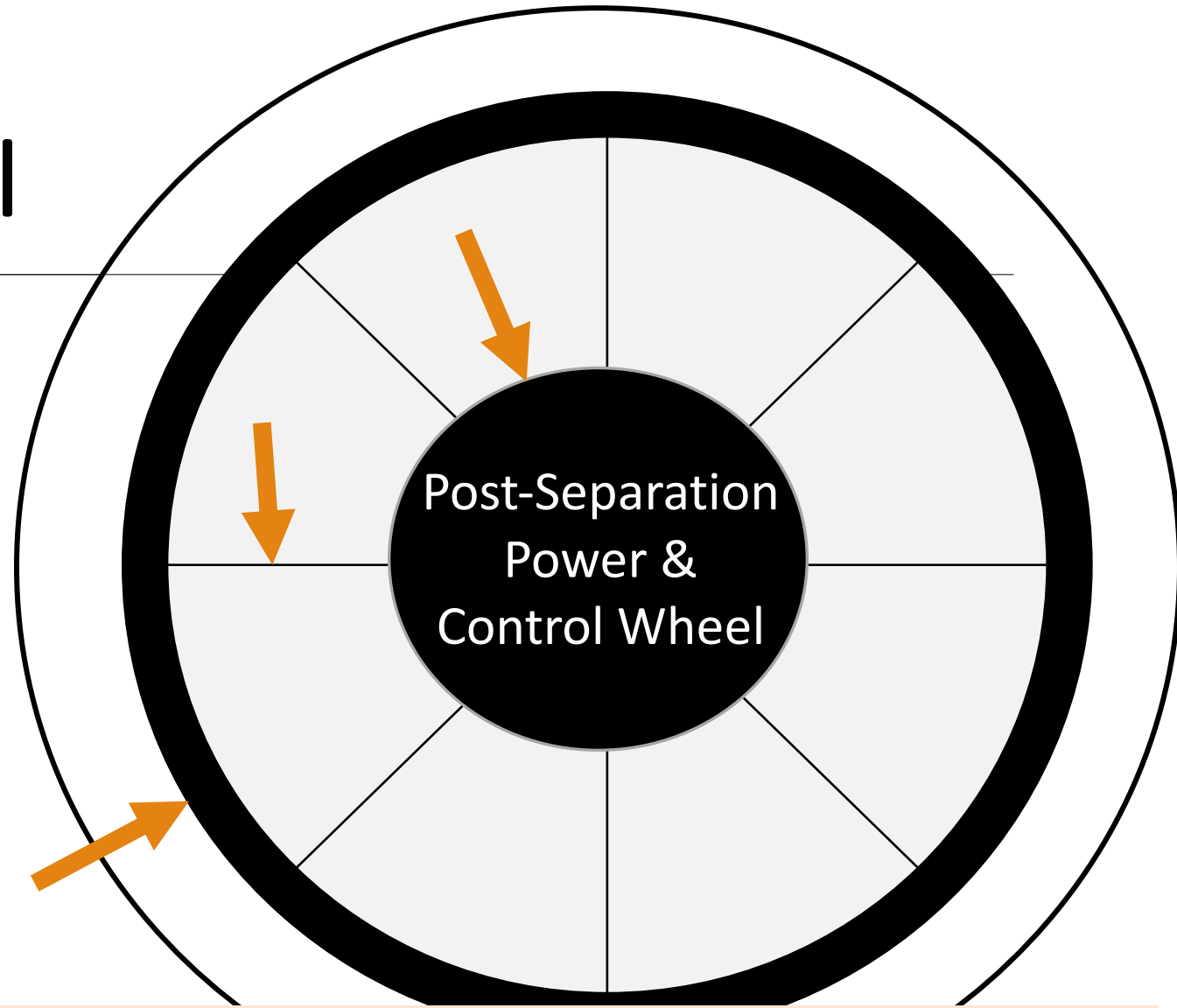
Dissecting the Wheel

- **White middle layer =**
Prior Physical & Sexual Violence,
Coercive and Controlling behavior
against Mother and Child(ren)
- “Represents how the abusive father’s
past abuse, and its effects, support his
post-separation tactics using children”



Dissecting the Wheel

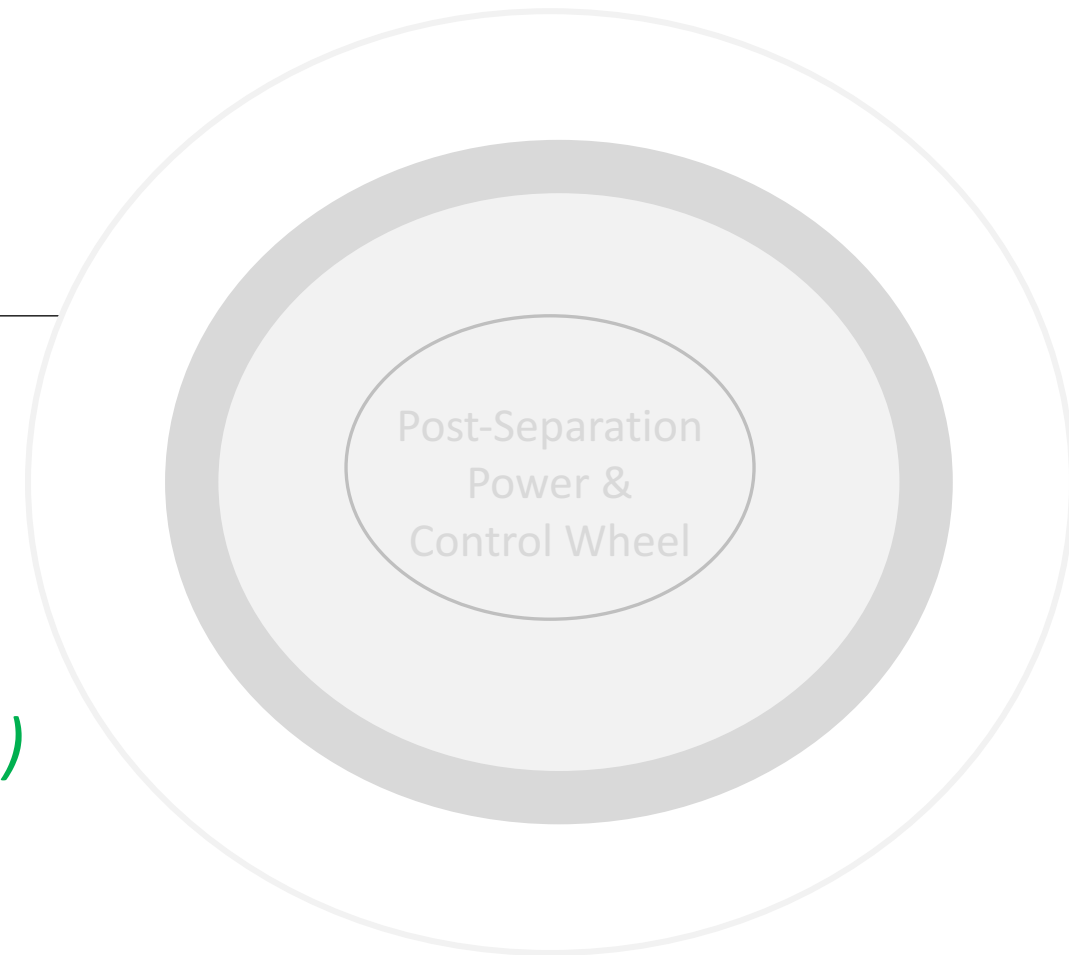
- **Top layer** = “hub, spokes, and rim”
 - **Rim** – Unrelenting focus on Survivor and systems/institutions
 - **Spokes** – Tools/tactics
 - **Hub** – Power and Control



“Shows how the batterer’s unrelenting focus on the survivor + systems and institutions (the rim) that he has engaged, allow him to use children as tools in a system of tactics (the spokes) that enable his power and control over her (the hub) even when they aren’t together – and even if he is under a court order not to contact her”

Wheel – Identified Tactics

- Using harassment and intimidation
- Undermining her ability to **parent**
- Discrediting her as a **mother**
- Withholding financial support (*for children*)
- Endangering **children**
- Disregarding **children**
- Disrupting her relationships with **children**
- Using physical and sexual violence against mother and **children**



Opinion Poll –

The Post-Separation Power & Control Wheel is:

- ❑ **Current** – still applies to all women, post-separation/DV
- ❑ **Outdated** – does not apply to all women, post-separation/DV
- ❑ **Both current and outdated** – some things continue to apply, but updates are needed



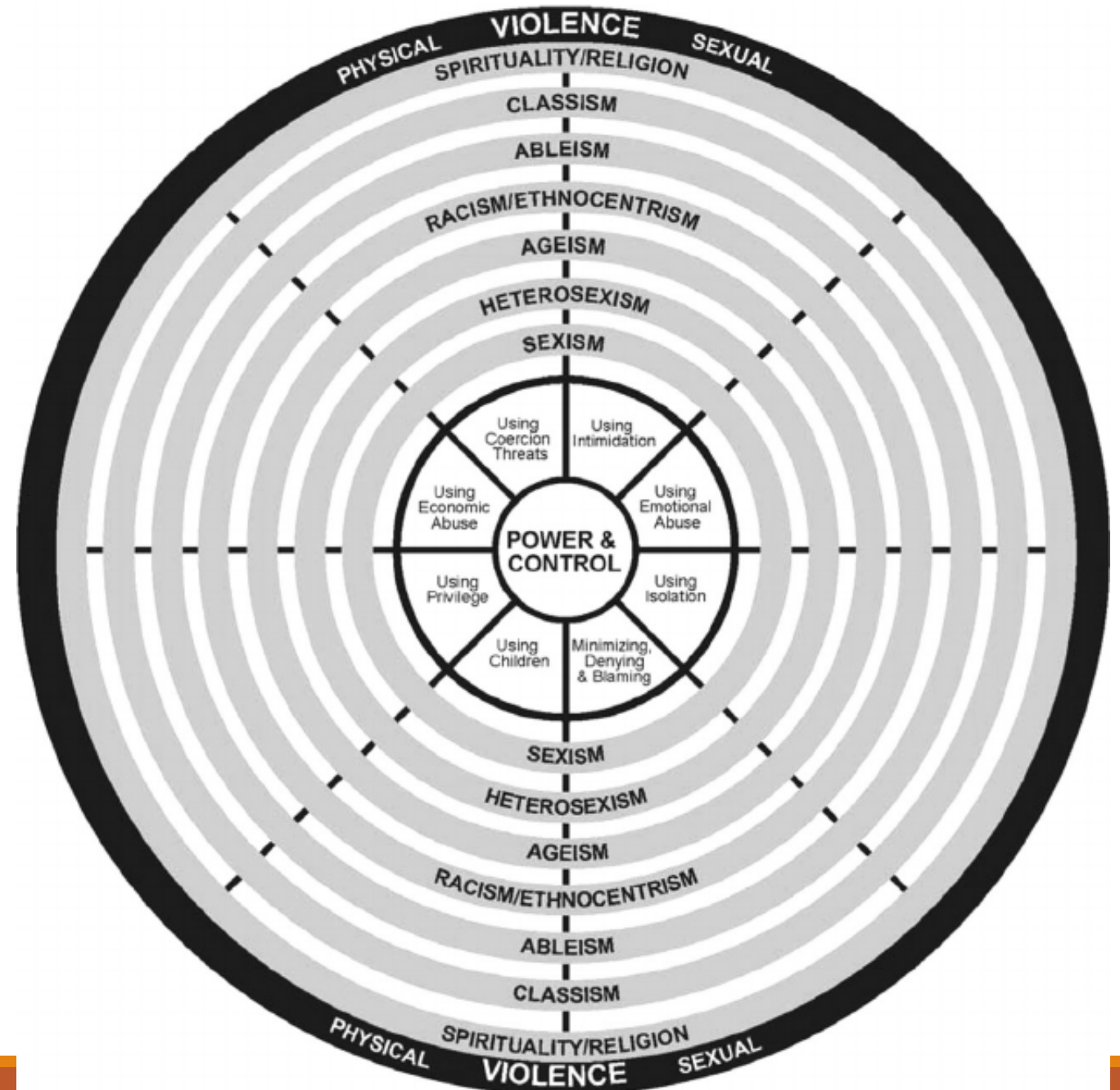
Post-Separation Wheel

- Still applies to Survivor situations today – all abuses are spot on, but many are missing
- Does not really consider separations that do not involve children or “blended families”
- Does not consider pets (“abuses animals” vs. “using animals to abuse”)
- Superficial in regards to using community, systems, and institutions (“using third parties”)
- Need multicultural considerations (intersectionality)
- Need Deaf Survivor considerations (small community considerations)
- Many other considerations need to be added (**will discuss!**)

Multicultural Power & Control Wheel

Chavis, A., & Hill, M. (2009).

“Integrating multiple intersecting identities: A multicultural conceptualization of the power and control wheel.”



Multicultural Power & Control Wheel

- Developed as a response to the lack of attention to issues of diversity in the DV/IPV literature
- Recognizes inadequate attention to unique experiences of:
 - Immigrants
 - Racial/ethnic minorities
 - Elderly survivors
 - People with low income (SES)
 - Survivors with disabilities
 - Those in same-sex relationships
 - The role of religion/spirituality
- Societal factors, cultural norms of violence, norms of inequality between women and men, and general institutionalized sexism – all reinforce and perpetuate DV/IPV

“Hot Sauce” Analogy

Preference Poll:

- Supremely Extreme Spiciness
- Blazin’ Hot
- Medium
- Zingin’ Between Mild-Medium
- Mild
- Sweet n’ Spicy
- No spiciness at all – plain!

Spice o-Meter



Source: Lisa Nolan, November 2019, Willow DV Center, Rochester, NY

Spiciness = Personal Preference (Judgment)

Relationships = Personal

Break-Ups = Personal

Unless there is danger!



Everyone has the right to
break up
with dignity and respect
and to move on.

Harmful Experiences

(Stories/Examples)

Overview: During and After Separation

- Unrelenting Focus on the Survivor (*obsession*)
- Previous Power and Control Tactics
- New Power and Control Tactics (*may also be previous tactics*)

“New” Power & Control Tactics

- Use of reasons (real or perceived) for the break-up/separation
- Use of child(ren), children’s belongings, and parenting time/schedule
- Use of finances and assets
- Use of boundaries (and lack of)
- Use of systems and institutions
- Use of family, friends, and community
- “Paper Abuse”
- Stalking

MORE!

Use of Reasons for the Separation

- These reasons (blame) may be real or perceived
 - “Broke” marriage vows
 - Left the children
 - Had an affair
 - More...

- Reasons are used repeatedly over time to gain supporters for person causing harm and gain haters toward person receiving harm

- Reasons are used to continuously shame the survivor



Use of Children

- To discredit, blame, turn against, create victim-villain scenario, etc.
- ***Survivor Stories:***
 - “Bitch” at the door – “see Mom doesn’t like me”
 - Diblings (donor siblings) in LGBTQ+ relationships
 - Court – force children to talk with appointed lawyers (or testify)

Use of Children's Belongings

- Person causing harm may keep children's belongings at their home and refuse to share, even if they did not purchase those belongings
 - *Coats, shoes, boots, hats...*
 - *Clothes*
 - *Lunch boxes, water bottles...*
 - *Toys, videogames, videogame equipment*
 - *Smart phones*

Disrupt Relationships With Children

- When with the children, the persons causing harm may unplug wifi so children/survivor cannot communicate via smart phone or videophone when children
- May tell stories to children that make the survivor look bad
- May tell stories/show pictures of when parents were together, when they got married, etc., to stir up feelings in children (blame, resentment)

Use of Parenting Time Schedule (Time with Children)

- Person causing harm sends excessive emails to Survivor during Survivor's time with the children
- Person causing harm refuses to be flexible with parenting schedule (i.e., switching days or weekends) unless they know why the Survivor wants to make the change and unless the change is in favor of the children (if the change is for the Survivor's benefit, the person causing harm will refuse)
- Forces Survivor to make changes in parenting plans or to give up time with the children because they have better plans for them or have out-of-time plans for them (and may even say the plans were dropped at the last minute)

Use of Finances: “Lack of”

- May use credit card or other finances during separation (before finances have been separated) or after separation
 - **Survivor Story #1:** Person causing harm used credit card to stay at a hotel for a month
 - **Survivor Story #2:** Person caused harm by taking cash rewards accumulated on card
 - **Survivor Story #3:** Person causing harm applied for store credit card using Survivor’s info
- Will not pay anything on the child(ren) on top of child support, if paying child support
 - **Survivor Story:** No gifts for birthdays or holidays/celebrations because of child support (blame)
- Will not get a job or work only under the table to avoid paying child support

Use of Finances: “Lots of”

Other end of the spectrum:

- Overspending/splurging on child(ren) (to be the preferred parent, to groom, or to “buy” information)
- Constantly signing up children for expensive extracurricular activities, expensive birthday parties, expensive birthday cakes to force Survivor to pay their part even when they cannot afford it
- Choosing doctors and medical professionals outside of insurance network to force Survivor to pay additional costs
- Use money to get information from children (may also give money to family/friends)

Use of Assets

- Person causing harm may keep all assets after separation/divorce, even assets that belonged to Survivor before their relationship
- Person causing harm may use children to get assets from survivor
- Person causing harm may sell survivor's assets without their knowledge or permission

Disrupt and Play with Boundaries

- Use Privileges and Oppressions (i.e., *audism, homophobia, racism, sexism...*)
 - Deaf community
 - LGBTQ+ community
- May use children to communicate with survivor and send texts including selfies or other pictures including themselves, saying the texts are for the children and asking survivor to share these with the children
- May send excessive emails/texts, especially when the survivor is with the children, to disrupt their time together

Use of Systems and Institutions

- Law enforcement
- Attorneys
- Courts
- Community (community support)
- Community/social events
- People with privilege
- Schools and teachers
- Place of employment
- Medical professionals
- Social media
- DV Agencies

MORE!

Use of Schools and Teachers

- **Important considerations:** School Open Houses, Parent-Teacher Conferences, IEP meetings, School Events, Report Cards, School Pictures, Homework, Communication with Teachers and School
- Over-involvement or under-involvement (excessive vs. no communication with teachers)
- Triangulation
- Reprimanding
- “Tattletaling”
- Over-complimenting + gifts



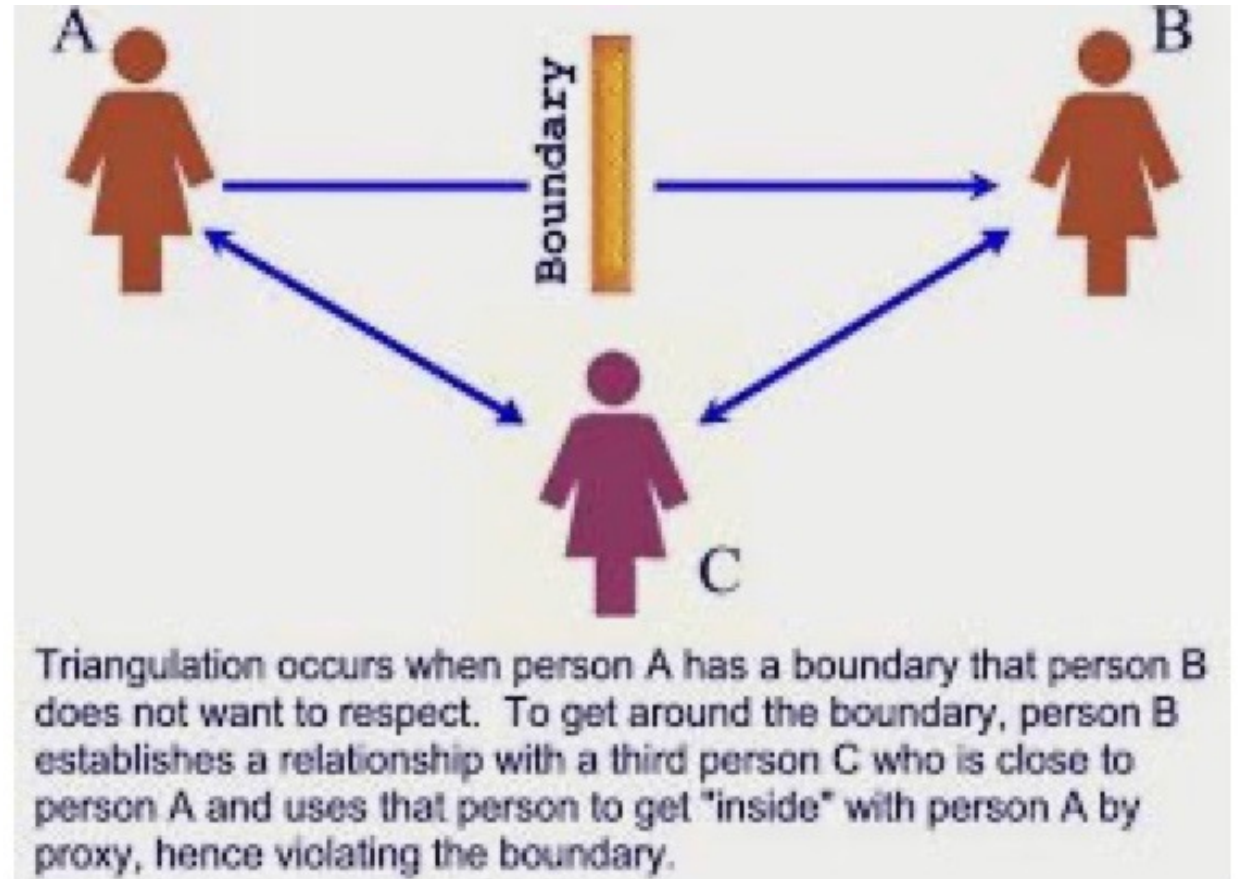
Triangulation

Used to confirm abuser's version of reality and shame you into believing that you truly are alone in your beliefs and perceptions.

It fuels a victim's sense of alienation when another person agrees with his or her distortions



@RebelliousGoat



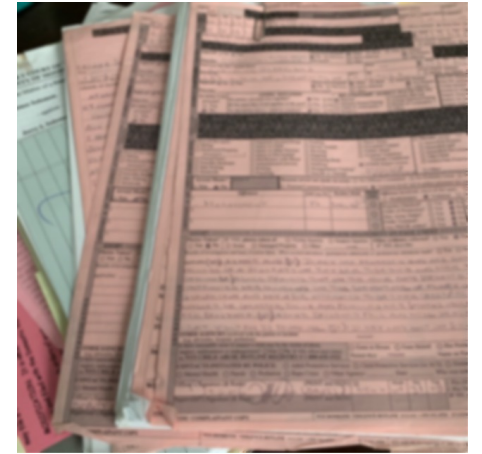
From angry-alcoholics.blogspot.com

“Paper Abuse”

- Use of Separation Agreement or Divorce Decree to increase or maintain power and control
 - **Survivor Story:** Forced Nesting Approach
- Constant visits to court to change child support and/or custody arrangements
- Person causing harm may fill out forms on other parents’ behalf without permission or awareness
 - **Survivor Story:** Person causing harm filled out forms for daughter’s medical appointment and wrote info about the other parent’s undiagnosed psychological background (depression, anxiety)

Paper Trail Pressures

- Documenting harms and abuses is very time consuming and stressful
- Often needed to show proof of pattern(s)
- Sometimes useful or admissible; sometimes not
- May include:
 - In-person abuses that have occurred
 - Violent or harassing text messages, emails, or social media posts
 - Police reports (pink papers!)
 - Court sessions
 - Receipts
 - Appointments, meetings (and MORE)



Stalking



- May not be obvious
- Persons causing harm commonly stalk survivors using other people (“flying monkeys”)
- May also try to find out information about survivor using public records, online search services, or by hiring investigators (or using friends/family to investigate)
- Posting information and spreading rumors about survivor on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth are also examples of stalking
- More Stalking examples: <https://www.thehotline.org/2019/01/25/stalking-safety-planning/>

Case No: [REDACTED]
Order No: [REDACTED]
NYSID No: [REDACTED]

An Act of the Family Court of the State of New York,
held in and for the County of Monroe, at Monroe County Family Court
Hall of Justice, 59 Exchange Blvd, Rochester, NY 14614-2107, on
November 18, 2019.

PRESENT: Kristin F. Splata, Court Attorney Referee
In the Matter of a FAMILY OFFENSE Proceeding

File # [REDACTED]
Docket # [REDACTED]
Order of Protection

[REDACTED]
Petitioner
- against -
[REDACTED]
Respondent

NOTICE: YOUR FAILURE TO OBEY THE
CRIMINAL PROSECUTION, WHICH MAY BE
CRIMINAL CONTEMPT, AND/OR MAY
INCARCERATION FOR UP TO SIX MONTHS.

THIS ORDER OF PROTECTION WILL BE
CONSENTS TO HAVE CONTACT OR COMMUNICATION
ISSUED, THIS ORDER OF PROTECTION OF
PROTECTED PARTY CANNOT BE HELD TO
ORDER.

A petition under Article 5 of the Family Court Act
[REDACTED] having been prayed in Court and not held
NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED
conditions of behavior:

[02] Refrain from assault, stalking, harassment, or
obstruction of breathing or circulation, disorderly
conduct, criminal mischief, sexual abuse, sexual
misconduct, forcible touching, intimidation, threats, identity theft,
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED].


[99] Observe such other conditions as are necessary to further the purposes of protection:
Respondent is not to use or possess firearms nor hold or apply for a pistol permit during pendency of this order.

Any future order of Supreme Court or Family Court which contains provisions governing physical residence, custody or
visitation regarding the subject children will supercede this order with respect to those issues only.

It is further ordered that this order of protection shall remain in force until and including November 28, 2019.

Date: November 28, 2019

ENTER


Kristin F. Splata, Court Attorney Referee

Orders of Protection

[02] Refrain from assault, stalking, harassment, aggravated harassment, menacing, reckless endangerment, strangulation, criminal obstruction of breathing or circulation, disorderly conduct, criminal mischief, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, forcible touching, intimidation, **threats**, identity theft, grand larceny, coercion or any criminal offense against [REDACTED]

[99] Observe such other conditions as are necessary to further the purposes of protection: [REDACTED]
Respondent is not to use or possess firearms nor hold or apply for a pistol permit during pendency of this order;

Any future order of Supreme Court or Family Court which contains provisions governing physical residence, custody or visitation regarding the subject children will supercede this order with respect to those issues only;

It is further ordered that this order of protection shall remain in force until and including November 28, 2019.

Orders of Protection

- Process = difficult, time-consuming, stressful (can be hard to get)
 - ******Privileges:** hearing, white, heterosexual, residence, American citizenship...
- Strong emphasis on physical harms (not so much on other harms)
 - Threats – tend to mean threats to life/physical harm
 - Emphasis on weapons (Gun Control Act)
- It is also extremely challenging to get papers served (law enforcement limitations + lack of training/experience with Deaf people)
 - **Survivor Story:** Police used KODA teen to interpret serving of papers to father in front of mother, even with mother's protests against it

Examples of Questions Asked by Survivors

- 1) Since the **Deaf/KODA community** is so small, what to do when the abuser uses its Deaf community and children to **judge and/or isolate the other parent**?
- 2) Please explain **parallel parenting** and **co-parenting**. What are the pros and cons for both when working with the other parent who is an abuser? How to practice parallel parenting when the abuser wants co-parenting?
- 3) How to set up and maintain **boundaries** with the abuser when they do not respect them?
- 4) **What is parental alienation?** What qualifies as parental alienation? What to do if this happens to the survivor? What should the survivor do should if this happens?
- 5) How does the **survivor support her children** when they're convinced (or brainwashed) that the other parent is the "better" parent?
- 6) **How to communicate with the abuser and the children post-divorce?** What is considered healthy communication? What is considered a good boundaried response?
- 7) What to do if the survivor attends some **Deaf events** and the abuser is there? (with and without the children?)
- 8) **What to do and how to get support if deaf/signing DV/SV advocates are also friends with the abuser?**

Other Specific Considerations

- **Face-to-Face and In-Person Communication:** what communication is necessary and what is not?
- **Consider the different types of parenting/parenting styles:** What works best? What is safest?
- **Consider LGBTQ+ Survivors:** Service providers often assume relationships are heterosexual
- Consider experiences of **immigrants** or those with green cards
- Consider **PTSD** experiences/symptoms (*not all wounds are visible!)

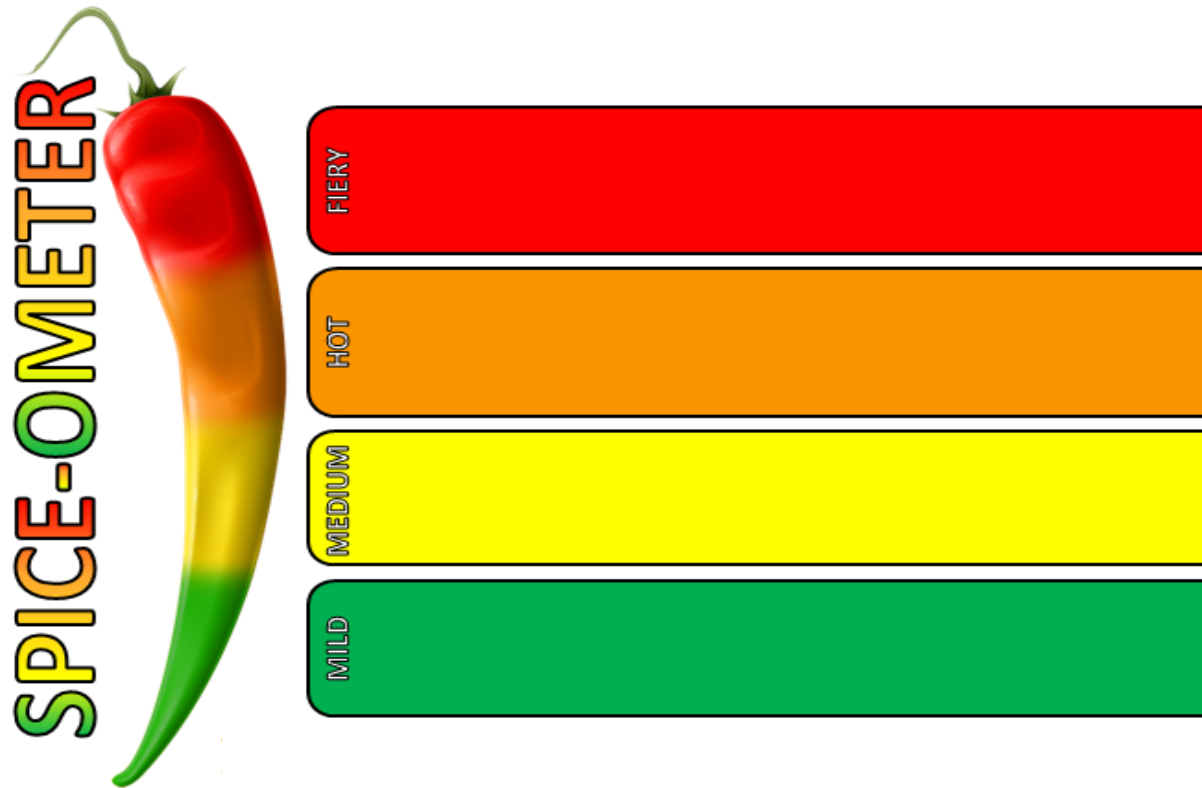
Need for Solutions + Change

“Attitudes and training matter.”

-Lisa Fischel-Wolovick (p. 200)

How will you use the Spice O'Meter?

- Personal lives
- Professional lives
- As DV Advocates
- As members of a small community



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