

Assessment

In assessment, the therapist gathers information about:

- Severity, intensity, frequency and duration of the violence
- Gender-role stereotypes, an unequal balance of power in interpersonal relationships and the social acceptance of violence against women.
- Antecedents and aftermath of violence (e.g. cycle of escalation and patterns of contrition or remorse)
- Types of physical force
- Abuser's use of other forms of control, manipulation or efforts to maintain a state of dependence or subservience on the part of the victim
- Whether weapons are used, and whether violence is reciprocated
- Various targets of aggression (e.g. property, pets, children, nonfamily acquaintances)
- Whether battering was witnessed by others, including children
- Level of fear experienced by victims
- Lethality of physical violence; whether victims are likely to be in imminent danger
- Whether the client has participated in any past treatment that focused on interpersonal violence
- Co-occurrence of rape or sexual assault
- Co-occurrence of child abuse

The therapist:

- Assesses client's strengths and coping capacities and communicates to the client that these sources of resilience provide a foundation for developing new skills
- Seeks information about the client's formal and informal support systems and identifies ways in which these resources can assist the client in developing safety and regaining strength
- Seeks information about the client's access to community resources, level of social isolation or connection and stressors that may exacerbate abuse issues, and the ability to be safe and protected
- Assesses for posttraumatic symptoms, including:
 - The numbing or constriction of emotions and sensations, and avoidance of reminders of abuse
 - Patterns of hyperarousal and the reliving of trauma, such as through intrusive thinking, flashbacks, nightmares or ruminative preoccupation
 - Alterations in consciousness, such as depersonalization, derealization or amnesia.
- Gathers information about the client's self-perceptions, self-structure and self-regulation
- Assesses the client's perceptions of the abuser's behavior and the client's approach to other interpersonal relationships.
- Uses gender-role analysis as a tool for assessing the degree to which the client is influenced by traditional cultural beliefs about masculinity and femininity by exploring:
 - The client's gender-role attitudes and their connection to family values, stage of life, culture of origin and current social environment

- The client's perceptions of rewards and penalties for gender-role conformity or noncompliance, both in the past and the present
- The relationship between the client's gender-role beliefs and her perceptions of interpersonal violence.
- Is attentive to the specific history of oppression (e.g. racism, heterosexism or classism, and the intersection of these "isms") and cultural values that may influence the individual woman's reactions to violence
- Helps the client place problems within a social and political context, increasing the client's understanding of the social attitudes that support victim-blaming attitudes, and helping the client develop solidarity with other survivors
- Is aware of the potential for inappropriate labeling of trauma survivors with diagnoses that may encourage victim blaming or that do not account for the complexity of trauma reactions (e.g. somatization disorder, borderline personality disorder)

Assess the Outcome of Help Seeking:

- Is your extended family aware of the abuse? What has their response been?
- Have you told anyone outside the family about the abuse?
- Have you seen a counselor? Was it helpful?
- Has your partner ever gotten help?
- Have you ever left home as a result of abuse? When? Where did you stay?
- Have the police ever been called? Who called? What was this like?
- Have you ever gone to court/filed for an OP?
- Have you ever utilized a program for women who have been abused?