


# Abuser Typologies & Personality Disorders



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## Learning Objectives:

**Define & Identify**

- Typologies and characteristics of domestic abusers and coercive controllers
- Different types of personality disorders commonly found in abusers
- Safe & Together™ model

**Discover**

- How typologies and personality disorders are connected
- How we can use Safe & Together™ model as a framework to understand and address abuser issues throughout this course

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## REMINDERS

- The Advocate's role is to support victims/survivors.
- Avoid diagnosing.
- Avoid using clinical terms.
- Be cautious of "pop psychology."



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**DYNAMICS:**

**WHAT MAKES HIM TICK?**



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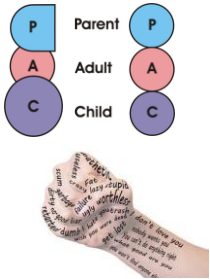
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**His Unresolved Feelings:**

Victimization

Primary Relationship

- Filling the void

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**The Abuser's Childhood**

- Witnessing parental coercive control & violence
- Emotional abuse/neglect
- Lack of respect for women/children
- Legitimate to use violence under certain circumstances
- Substance abuse of parents



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### Issues with a Clinical Approach

**Clinical Approach**- bases the actions purely on childhood trauma and does not encourage the abuser to take full accountability

Childhood trauma is, to some degree, a factor...

- ...but the **choice to abuse** is based in **entitlement and pride**.

Step one of treatment is accountability. Part of Coordinated community Response (CCR).

- Once that's taken, then working on the childhood trauma is appropriate.

**Note: Safety of the victim** has to always be maintained. Part of CCR.

- When you work with an abuser, your primary client is not in the room. This is inverse to how most clinicians generally operate.

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**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you. (Proverbs 23:7)**

- ESV says "for he is like one who is inwardly calculating."
- NIV says, "for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost."

Abuse stems from an underlying belief system.

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### Abuser's Beliefs About Women

Women are possessions

"Possession" of a woman is a symbol of power

Relationships with women reduces fears, insecurities, and loneliness.

Everything in family is his property and loss of anything is loss of everything.

Must discipline and control partner.

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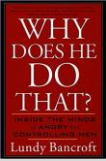
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### Types of Abusers



- The Demand Man
- Mr. Right
- The Water Torturer
- The Drill Sergeant
- Mr. Sensitive
- The Player
- Rambo
- The Victim
- The Mentally Ill Or Addicted Abuser
- The Terrorist

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### The Demand Man

**The central attitudes driving the Demand Man are:**

- ✓ It's your job to do things for me.
- ✓ You should not place any demands on me. You should be grateful for whatever I choose to give.
- ✓ I am a very loving and giving partner. You're lucky to have me.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. (1 Cor. 13:4-5)

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## Mr. Right

**The central attitudes driving Mr. Right are:**

- ✓ I know better than you do, even about what's good for you.
- ✓ Your opinions aren't worth listening to carefully or taking seriously.
- ✓ When you disagree with me about something, no matter how respectfully or meekly, that's mistreatment of me.

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. (Psalm 12:15)*

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## The Water Torturer

**The central attitudes driving the Water Torturer are:**

- You are crazy. You fly off the handle over nothing.
- I can easily convince other people that you're the one who is messed up.
- As long as I'm calm, you can't call anything I do abusive, no matter how cruel.

*His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity. (Psalm 10:7)*

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## The Drill Sergeant

**The central attitudes driving the Drill Sergeants are:**

- I need to control your every move or you will do it wrong.
- I know the exact way that everything should be done.
- You shouldn't have anyone else – or anything else – in your life besides me.

*The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. (Psalm 103:6)*

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## Mr. Sensitive

### The central attitudes driving Mr. Sensitive are:

- I'm against the macho man, so I couldn't be abusive.
- Nothing in the world is more important than my feelings.
- As long as I use a lot of "psychobabble," no one is going to believe that I am mistreating you.

"Not me..."



His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. (Psalm 55:21)

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## The Player

### The central attitudes driving the Player are:

- Women were put on this earth to have sex with men – especially me.
- It's not my fault that women find me irresistible. It's not fair to expect me to refuse temptation when it's all around me; women seduce me sometimes, and I can't help it.
- If you could meet my sexual needs, I wouldn't have to turn to other women.



For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (1 John 2:16)

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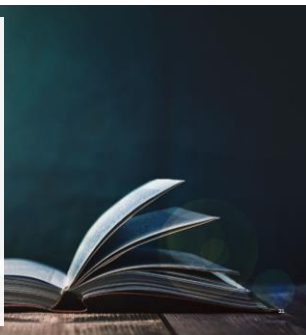
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A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. (Proverbs 18:2)

Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel. (Proverbs 12:10)

When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord. (Proverbs 19:3)




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## Rambo

### The central attitudes driving Rambo are:



- Strength and aggressiveness are good; compassion and conflict resolution are bad.
- Femaleness and femininity (which he associates with homosexuality) are inferior. Women are here to serve men and be protected by them.
- Men should never hit women, because it is unmanly to do so. However, exceptions to this rule can be made for my own partner if her behavior is bad enough. Men need to keep their women in line.

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. (Philippians 4:5)

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Psalm 147:10-11)

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## The Victim

### The central attitudes driving the Victim are:



- Everybody has done me wrong, especially the women I've been involved with. Poor me.
- When you accuse me of being abusive, you are joining the parade of people who have been cruel and unfair to me. It proves you're just like the rest.
- I've had it so hard that I'm not responsible for my actions.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Matthew 7:3

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## The Mentally Ill or Addicted Abuser

- I'm not responsible for my actions because of my psychological or substance problems. I'm not abusive, I'm just\_\_\_\_\_.
- If you challenge me about my abusiveness, you are being mean to me, considering these other problems I have. It also shows that you don't understand my other problems.
- If you challenge me, it will trigger my addiction or mental illness, and you'll be responsible for what I do.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:17-18

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## The Terrorist

The central attitudes driving the Terrorist are:

- You have no right to defy me or leave me. Your life is in my hands.
- I would rather die than accept your right to independence.
- Seeing you terrified is exciting and satisfying.



And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mark 7:20-23)

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## Biblical Accounts of Abusive Personalities



- There are different accounts of abusive people in the Bible.
  - King Saul and David- e.g., jealousy, alternating between (what appears to be) positive treatment and terrorizing, similar to domestic abuse dynamics
    - See Joy's (2015) [blogpost](#)
  - Abigail's husband Nabal- he "was harsh and evil in his dealings." (1 Samuel 25:3); we also see her trying to "cover his tracks."

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Where do Bancroft's categories fit in the framework?



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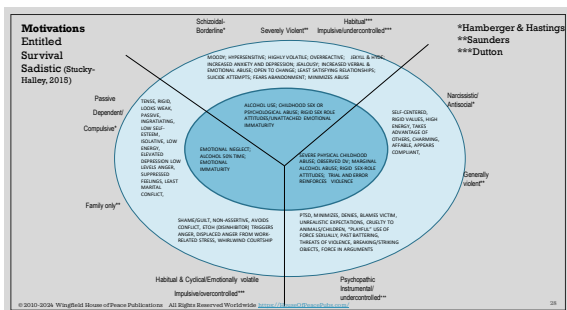
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## DARVO

- Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender (DARVO) to confuse and silence their victims
- DARVO was commonly used by individuals who were confrontant.
- Women were more likely to be exposed to DARVO than men during confrontations.
- Higher levels of exposure to DARVO during a confrontation were associated with increased perceptions of self-blame among the confrontants.

(Harsee, Zubriggen, Freyd, 2017)

In an experiment exploring the potency of DARVO, researchers at the University of California Santa Cruz and the University of Oregon found that people who were exposed to DARVO tactics perceived the victim of abuse as less believable, more responsible for the fallout, and more abusive than the person who was actually behaving abusively. 9

K.A. Ramsey  
The Lord Is My Courage: Strapping Through the Shadows of Fear: Saved the Voice of Love

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**DARVO**  
IS THE TYPICAL ABUSER'S RESPONSE WHEN YOU CALL OUT MANIPULATIVE BEHAVIOR OR ABUSE, WHEN YOU SAY NO TO THEIR SEXUAL ADVANCES, AND SOMETIMES EVEN WHEN YOU DISAGREE WITH THEM:

D - Deny "it didn't happen"  
A - Attack "you're crazy"  
R - Reverse "you were wearing a short skirt" or  
V - Victim & "you're making it up to hurt me" or  
O - Offender "you're cruel/aggressive"




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DARVO as a tactic of abuse and abusive systems can help demystify the confusion of what you (or people you love) have experienced. - Deny. The person's experience is denied or downplayed. - Attack. The person speaking up is attacked. Their character is malignied. Things shared in confidence or vulnerability are used against them. - Reverse Victim and Offender. The script quickly gets flipped, and the dissident voices, victims, or whittlelovers are painted as the actual offenders and treated as such. 8

**K.J. Ramsey**  
*The Lord Is My Courage: Stepping Through the Shadows of Fear Toward the Voice of Love*

#kindlequotes

Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer describe how this dynamic often gets deployed in church systems, writing, "Elders, leaders, or other voices of authority at the church may explain how accusers are 'not behaving biblically' or are refusing to engage in relationship restoration."

**K.J. Ramsey**  
*The Lord Is My Courage: Stepping Through the Shadows of Fear Toward the Voice of Love*

#kindlequotes

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW SHERIDAN

## DARVO and the Church

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So...I feel like today was a new starting line in some ways. Vision for the future. So much promise and great things to look forward to. Kind of like looking at the years of investment in a garden and seeing the fruit of your labor. The words of St Paul... "forgetting what is behind and pushing forward". Learning from past mistakes and recognizing the hand of Satan when the fiery darts of accusation come in.

So people...do not grow weary in doing good because you know at the right time you will be rewarded for what you are doing.

If there are people in your life who attack you behind your back...have no interest in reconciliation or forgiveness but simply have an axe to grind because they are so toxic, hateful and simple unable to carry on a blessed life and are imparting this legacy to their children...leave them. Forgive them. Wish the best for them but do NOT get sucked into their cycle of despair. They will be known by their fruit.

### DARVO Example (spiritual context)

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## Emotional Deficits in Abusers

### Empathy:

n. understanding a person from his or her frame of reference rather than one's own, or vicariously experiencing that person's feelings, perceptions, and thoughts. Empathy does not, of itself, entail motivation to be of assistance, although it may turn into **sympathy** or personal distress, which may result in action. In psychotherapy, therapist empathy for the client can be a path to comprehension of the client's cognitions, affects, motivations, or behaviors. See also **perspective taking**; **—empathic** or **—empathetic** adj.; **—empathize** v. (APA Psychology Definition)

### Compassion:

n. a strong feeling of **sympathy** with another person's feelings of sorrow or distress, usually involving a desire to help or comfort that person. **—compassionate** adj. (APA Psychology Definition)

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## Mental Health vs. Personality Disorders

- Autism Spectrum
- Bi-polar
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Schizophrenia
- PTSD/CPTSD
- Antisocial
- Avoidant
- Borderline
- Dependent
- Histrionic
- Narcissistic
- Obsessive-Compulsive
- Paranoid
- Schizoid
- Schizotypal

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## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Complex neurobehavioral and neurodevelopmental conditions characterized by:

- impaired social interaction and communication
- restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior or interests
- altered sensory processing (Mazotta et al., 2020)



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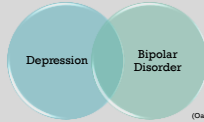
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### ASD: Comorbidity

Can often be comorbid with other neurological and psychiatric disorders

- Most common mood problems-



(Oakley, Loth, & Murphy, 2021)

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### ASD: Other Considerations



Social cognitive deficits

Arousal/emotion regulation difficulties

Rigid thinking patterns and perseverative tendencies

(Im, 2016)

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### ASD: Trauma-Violence Association?

No conclusive evidence that those with ASD are more violent than those in the general population

Literature that addresses trauma as a potential contributor to violence in ASD is limited.

Potential mechanisms suggested for trauma-violence association:

- sensitized prefrontal-cortical-limbic networks that are overloaded in the face of trauma
- cognitive dysfunction in theory of mind, central coherence, and executive function that affects trauma processing in ways that portend violence

More research is needed to confirm these mechanisms and clarify whether in fact trauma increases violence risk in ASD.

(Im, 2016)

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### ASD & Abuse

- Autism is not a "cause" of abuse. Abuse is a choice.
  - Persons on the autism spectrum are still responsible for their actions;
  - Capable and able to make changes to how they do relationships through skills classes and being intentional



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For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7)

A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty; rescue them, and you will have to do it again. (Proverbs 19:19)

Answer **not** a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. (Proverbs 26:4-5)

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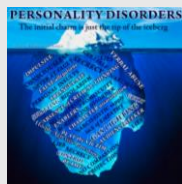
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### Personality Disorders Definition

Personality disorders are associated with ways of thinking and feeling about oneself and others that significantly and adversely affect how an individual functions in many aspects of life.

An enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the culture of the individual who exhibits it.

These patterns are inflexible and pervasive across many situations. The onset of the pattern can be traced back at least to the beginning of adulthood.



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**REMEMBER:**

As advocates, our role is not to diagnose.

We also want to help survivors to avoid labels and diagnoses.  
Encourage survivors to describe *behaviors* and *impacts* instead.

Diagnoses are not an excuse for abusive behavior.

You are not obligated to stay because someone has a mental illness.

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## Features, Traits, & Disorders

Millon uses the MCMI to differentiate between Features, Traits, and Disorders.

- **Features**—characteristics related to the disorder
- **Traits**—habitual patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion
- **Disorders**—To be diagnosed as a personality disorder, a behavioral pattern must cause significant distress or impairment in personal, social, and/or occupational situations.

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## DSM 5: Personality Disorder “Clusters”

CLUSTER A	*CLUSTER B	CLUSTER C
<p><b>The Odd, Eccentric Cluster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paranoid PD</li> <li>• Schizoid PD</li> <li>• Schizotypal PD</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Dramatic, Unpredictable Cluster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antisocial PD</li> <li>• Narcissistic PD</li> <li>• Borderline PD</li> <li>• Histrionic PD</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Anxious, Fearful Cluster</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidant PD</li> <li>• Dependent PD</li> <li>• Obsessive-compulsive PD</li> </ul>

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### Antisocial Personality Disorder (Cluster B)

Characterized by:

- a long-standing pattern of a disregard for other people's rights
- often crossing the line and violating those rights

Usually begins in childhood or as a teen

- diagnosed when a person's pattern of antisocial behavior has occurred since age 15 (although only adults 18+ can be diagnosed)
- continues into their adult lives

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### Antisocial Personality Disorder Symptoms

Consists of a majority of these symptoms:

- ❖ Failure to conform to social norms
- ❖ Deceitfulness
- ❖ Impulsivity
- ❖ Irritability and aggressiveness
- ❖ Reckless disregard for safety of self or others
- ❖ Consistent irresponsibility
- ❖ Lack of remorse

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AS AN ADVOCATE, IF A SURVIVOR PRESENTED THEIR DIAGNOSIS OF THEIR PARTNER, EX, STBX AS A PSYCHOPATH, SOCIOPATH OR ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY, HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?



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### Advocate's Response

- Helping survivor learn how to deal with this type of personality...
  - What are the abuser behaviors that need to change to help her feel safe?
  - How many more times is she willing to go through the same patterns before she says it is enough?
  - How are the abuser behaviors impacting her? The children?
  - How does the abuser study you and the children to get the responses he wants?
  - How does the abuser show cold, calculated demands to get what he wants? His payoff.



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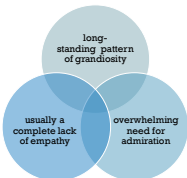
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### Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Cluster B)

Characterized by:



**"As with any mental health disorder, neither you nor anyone else should try to diagnose someone with NPD, ...; it takes a trained mental health professional to make such an assessment."** (Malkin, 2017)

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### Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms

**Must meet 5 or more of the following symptoms:**

- Has a grandiose sense of self-importance
- Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
- Believes that he or she is "special" and unique
- Requires excessive admiration

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

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### Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms

- Has a very strong sense of entitlement
- Is exploitative of others
- Lacks empathy
- Is often envious of others
- Regularly shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

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**AS AN ADVOCATE, IF A SURVIVOR PRESENTED THEIR DIAGNOSIS OF THEIR PARTNER, EX, STBX AS BEING NARCISSISTIC, HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?**

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### Advocate's Response

- As a trained advocate, I know that popular culture has mis-informed survivors that all abusers are narcissists. However, I know that neither I nor you are able to diagnose someone with a personality disorder. Even a trained clinician is not allowed to diagnose a family member. Please use descriptions of the abuser's behaviors to better help others understand your experience.
- How would you describe the abuser's behaviors for your attorney or a judge?
- What kind of timeline do you have to show the patterns of his behaviors?
- What kind of impacts do his behaviors have on you? Your children?
- What do you, the safe parent, do to protect your children even in the midst of the coercive control?

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### Borderline Personality Disorder (Cluster B)

Main feature: pervasive pattern of instability in...

- interpersonal relationships
- self-image
- emotions

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

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### Borderline Personality Disorder Symptoms

Consists of a majority of these symptoms:

- ✓ Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment
- ✓ Alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation
- ✓ Identity disturbance
- ✓ Impulsivity
- ✓ Recurrent suicidal behavior
- ✓ Emotional instability
- ✓ Chronic feelings of emptiness
- ✓ Inappropriate, intense anger
- ✓ Transient, stress-related paranoid thoughts

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

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AS AN ADVOCATE, IF A SURVIVOR PRESENTED THEIR DIAGNOSIS MADE BY THEIR PARTNER, EX, STBX THAT SHE HAS BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER, HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

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### Advocate's Response

- What is the motivation behind his abuse?
  - How does he show entitlement?
  - How does he show his passive-dependence on you and the children?
  - How does he show his inability to survive without you and the children?
  - How does he show cold, calculated control?
  - How does he show satisfaction he elicited the response he wanted?

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### Other Personality Disorders

#### Cluster B

##### Histrionic Personality Disorder-

- marked by an unstable emotions, a distorted self-image, and an overwhelming desire to be noticed.

#### Cluster A

##### Paranoid Personality Disorder-

- pattern of distrust and suspicion of others without adequate reason to be suspicious.

##### Schizoid Personality Disorder-

- consistent pattern of detachment from and general disinterest in social relationships

##### Schizotypal Personality Disorder-

- consistent pattern of intense discomfort with relationships and social interactions.

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## Other Personality Disorders

### Cluster C

#### Avoidant Personality Disorder-

- poor self-esteem and an intense fear of rejection.

#### Dependent Personality Disorder-

- often feel helpless, incapable of taking care of themselves, and may have trouble making simple decisions.

#### Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder-

- involves an extensive preoccupation with perfectionism, organization and control.

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

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A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin. (Proverbs 26:28)

A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. (Proverbs 29:5)

Therefore, pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. (Psalm 73:6-8)

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## Understanding Systems

- How do different systems view the survivor's case?
- What language do the different systems use?
- How can we make the abuser and his choices/behaviors more visible?
- How can we make the survivor's strengths and protective capacities more visible?



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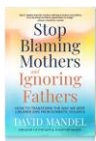
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**David Mandel, MA, LPC**  
Safe & Together Institute



**Overview:**

- Developed an approach that shifts systems away from **blaming survivors** by viewing them as "failing to protect" their children to focus on the **abuser's pattern of CC and impacts on the children and family**
- Identified how an **abuser (perpetrator) pattern-based approach** can improve our ability to help families and promote the development of domestic abuse-informed child welfare systems
- **Keep abusers' actions at the forefront!**

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**An "Abuser (Perpetrator) Pattern-Based Approach"**

Has the following characteristics:

1. the abuser's **pattern of behavior** and choices are identified as the **sole source** of the harm to children caused by domestic abuse
2. the abuser is **exclusively responsible** for their own behaviors and choices
3. it applies **high standards** for men as parents, and
4. it understands the foundation of good child-centered domestic abuse practice rests on the ability to **describe the specific behaviors of the domestic abuser and their impact on child and family functioning**

(Mandel, 2019)

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**Safe & Together™ Principles**

- 1 Keeping child safe and together with non-offending parent**  
Safety Healing from trauma Stability and nurturance
- 2 Partnering with non-offending parent as default position**  
Efficient Effective Child-centered
- 3 Intervening with perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to child**  
Engagement Accountability Courts

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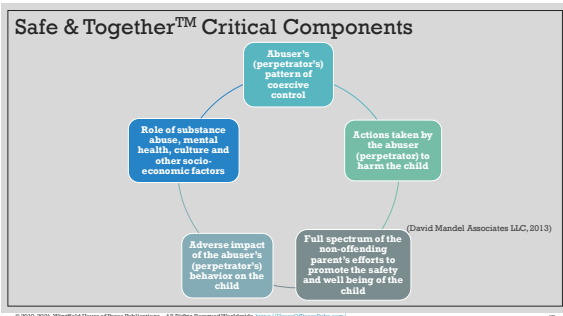
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“When domestic violence is the concern, the perpetrator and his behavior are the foundational source of the risk and safety concerns for children, **NOT the adult survivor or her behavior.**”  
 (Mandel, 2019)

*How is victim blaming harmful to child safety?*

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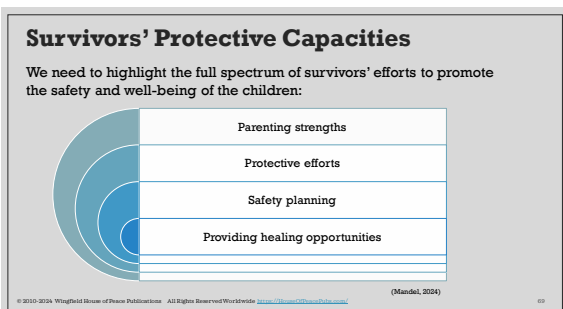
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**Advocate's Role:**

*Our focus is to help survivors make the abuser visible through descriptions of his **behaviors** and **impacts** on her and the children.*

*We can help her with how to do this in family court.*

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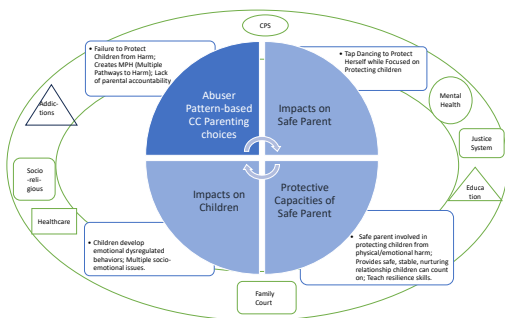
## S&T™ Model and Advocacy Training

Safe and Together model aligns with our training program and focus on abuser's pattern of behavior & impacts (holding abusers accountable)

We are integrating the model into current practices and principles

Fits with our Timeline Form (updated to include mothers' protective capacities): <http://houseofpeacepubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Timelineexample-1.docx>

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## Timeline of Controlling Events

**Reminder: the court is most concerned with the impact on the children**

How to use this timeline:

**Column one (Date/Time/Season):** is for the date and time or if you don't remember exactly possibly a season or something that gives you a time frame for what happened. It could center around a significant event, such as a birthday.

**Column two (What abuser did):** is to **DESCRIBE** what the abuser did without using the word ABUSE or putting any labels on the behavior. Cover what lead up to a situation to provide context for the reader. For example, he came in mad from work and started ranting and raging about clutter in the living room.

**Column three (Impact on Survivor):** Describe the **emotional and physical impacts on the survivor**. (Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn, Fear); Physical injuries including cutting off your ability to breathe. Emotions you experienced.

**Column four (Impact on Children):** Describe the **emotional and physical impacts on the children**. This is the most important part for the court to see and understand

How did she use her **protective capacities** to help the children? Resilience skills education? Good touch, bad touch? Setting healthy boundaries? Nurturing, stabilizing emotions, and creating a safe environment.

Add as many rows as needed to complete the document. It may be wise to use this document ongoing to show patterns of behavior. You could color code them according to types of control by highlighting the left hand column.

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