

WRITTEN EXERCISE:

Violence in Couples ⁴⁵

FORMAT:

INDIVIDUAL
AND GROUP
EXERCISE

TIME: 60 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: VIOLENCE IN COUPLES: WRITTEN EXERCISE IN APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

SUMMARY:

This exercise explores violence against human rights defenders who are in intimate relationships. This relates primarily, although not exclusively, to partnerships, but it can be applied as well to intimate relationships with a parent, in-law or close friends.

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- Ask participants to work individually on the written exercise for 20 minutes.
- After the individual work, facilitators ask participants to work in pairs, and simply listen to each other as they reflect on whatever aspect of the exercise they wish. When someone is listening to their partner, they should not offer advice or opinions – the listener’s role is to listen, and as required, gently reflect and offer support. This process allows participants some time to assess the exercise safely and also to practise deep listening.
- A follow-on plenary should simply ask participants to reflect on the experience of having the undivided attention and support of another participant, and remind us that this is a protection strategy.

FACILITATION NOTES:

- This exercise is primarily, although not exclusively, of value to those participants in relationship(s). Think carefully before doing this exercise, because at times activists’ relationships and partnerships are fluid, so some participants may be able to speak about a current relationship whereas others may not, and because this exercise could unveil some hard realities.
- Note that, in some cases, even if you are not in a relationship(s), there may be someone (such as an in-law, child or parent) who relates to you in a similar way as a partner.
- Facilitators should recognise that many of the questions in this exercise are tough ones, and that they may make some participants feel sad, angry or anxious. Tell participants to take their time, and only answer the questions they feel that they can. Also encourage them to take time to speak to someone they trust afterwards, if they would like to talk.



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OVERVIEW

Violence in couples is a problem shared by non-activist women, but among activists it assumes different shades. This type of violence may be justified or tolerated for very different reasons, such as economic, emotional and affective dependence, low self-esteem and a feeling of inadequacy, and, in some cases, religious principles that urge one to maintain a relationship at all costs, or for fear of being discredited or socially rejected in the event of separation.

When children are involved, they can become the 'primary reason' for remaining in a destructive relationship.

Likewise, in the case of yet others, the social obligation to settle down and be in a relationship, or being unable to imagine yourself alone or the fear of solitude, are two other reasons for remaining in a violent or destructive relationship.

For activists, other aspects are sometimes involved, including: guilt due to not being able to fulfil 'correctly' one's role as a spouse or mother according to expectations; and the difficulty of mixing personal spaces and spaces for participation. To some extent, furthermore, ending a relationship also involves giving up the space for political participation and the ties on which it has been built, besides the fear of being criticised or judged by common friends.

QUESTIONS

For the first section (a), take your time to read through and answer each question, using a rating of 0-4, where:

0 = never

1 = very occasionally

2 = sometimes

3 = frequently

and 4 = always.

In section (b) write down your thoughts on the open questions.



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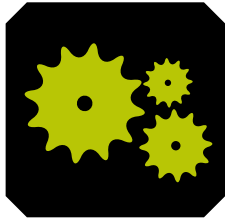
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Violence in Couples

a) Types of violence in your relationships

Try to note below whether any aspect of the following forms of violence is exercised by your partner or by yourself:

Type of violence	Frequency in your relationship with your partner? (0 = never to 4 = always)
<i>Isolation and intrusion:</i>	
Hides your things, listens to your conversations, reads your correspondence, e-mails or personal documents	
Controls your activities, who you see, who you speak to and where you go	
Prevents you from seeing or visiting your friends and family members, or them from visiting you	
Interferes in your friendships, calls your friends behind your back, asks them questions about you	
Other:	
<i>Emotional abuse:</i>	
Makes you feel clumsy, stupid or crazy	
Blames you for everything	
Ridicules, makes jokes about you or your family in front of your family members, friends or strangers	
Uses your personal information to manipulate or humiliate you	
Does not respect your decisions, does not take your needs into account and pressurises or manipulates you so that you do what they want you to	
Blackmails or threatens you	
Does not address you, ridicules you or speaks to you in an aggressive manner	
Other:	
<i>Economic abuse:</i>	
Does not let you work outside the home, puts pressure on you or creates obstacles so you are not able to.	
Makes you ask him/her for money, or in the event you have shared expenses, denies you money for these common expenses	



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Type of violence	Frequency in your relationship with your partner? (0 = never to 4 = always)
<i>Economic abuse:</i>	
Questions how you use your money, unilaterally establishes the priorities for spending	
Checks your account(s) or 'manages' your money	
Other:	
<i>Sexual abuse:</i>	
Physically or emotionally obliges you to engage in sexual practices against your will	
Does not take your wishes or needs into account even when you express them	
Hurts you physically (without your consent) or emotionally during sexual intercourse	
Ignores you sexually, tells you that you are no longer desirable, that you do not excite him/her or and that he/she has sexual relations with you as a 'favour to you'	
Other:	
<i>Physical violence:</i>	
Pushes you, pulls your hair, pinches you or slaps you 'in jest' or 'by accident'	
Slaps you in the face, twists your arm, kicks you 'to get a reaction, make you listen or see reason'	
Throws things at you to hurt you	
Causes you injury using weapons (knives, firearms or any other), either intentionally or 'by accident'	
Openly hits you.	
Other:	
<i>Intimidation and threats:</i>	
Terrorises you with looks, gestures, acts or by shouting	
Breaks things and destroys or hides your things	
Prevents you from entering or leaving the house	
Threatens to hurt you, hurt others or to commit suicide	



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Type of violence

Frequency in your relationship with your partner? (0 = never to 4 = always)

Intimidation and threats:

Other:

Domestic servitude:

Holds you solely responsible for managing the house and keeping it clean (paying bills, managing services, cleaning, maintenance), or for some reason, when distributing 'shared' activities it is always your turn

Does not participate in domestic chores (or in looking after the children if there are any) or only 'helps' you and makes you feel that he/she is 'doing you a favour' or that 'you should be grateful'

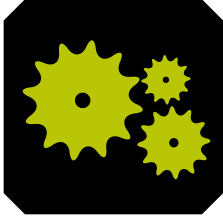
Demands that you serve him/her or blackmails you into doing so

Other:

b) Think about ...

The reason or reasons that are making you remain in a relationship that is governed by these characteristics?

How you contribute to your relationship continuing as is, with no changes to the way it functions and with no renegotiation of agreements?



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What advantages do you accrue from the conditions that have prevailed thus far?

What should be your role in a relationship to make it work?

What would happen if you decided to move from the place where you have been stuck in your relationship? What would happen to your partner? What would happen to your relationship? What would happen to you?
