



padvn PRESBYTERIANS AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NETWORK

September 2010

Dear Friends,

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) provides this annual awareness packet to assist your congregation as you seek to address relationship violence in all of its forms. If you are not in a position to use this material, please pass it along to your pastor or youth group leader.

Our 2010 packet focuses on Parent/Youth Relationships. We hope that the contents here will aid in beginning, or adding to, the conversation about making faith-based decisions in family relationships. While parents are the first defense in making sure that their children understand healthy relationships, studies have shown that teens need to hear that message from a variety of persons and groups who have their best interests in mind. What better place than in our congregations. Parents can certainly benefit by their congregation addressing this often unarticulated concern, as well.

Since 2001, PADVN has produced a packet for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. During those years, we have covered a number of topics: domestic violence 101, children who witness the violence, men's involvement in the movement, elder abuse, tough issues that arise in congregations, education, and advocacy, and teen dating violence. All of these resources can be found on the PADVN website: <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn.htm>

Among the resources in this year's packet, you will find an article on repairing and restoring right relation when "the line has been crossed" in the parent/teen relationship, a covenantal contract for family members to protect against crossing that line, societal factors contributing to violence, a reflection on the "normal family," worship resources with sermon suggestions using October's lectionary readings to address issues of relationship violence, and suggested resources for youth leaders.

As always, PADVN is available to help you as you engage your congregation or presbytery around these issues. If you have received this packet and are not a member of PADVN, please consider joining our network to stay connected and to show your continued support for this important emphasis in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Sincerely, Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN)

PADVn is one of the 10 Ministry Networks of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

Compassion, Peace & Justice Ministry of the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC)

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When the Line Has Been Crossed: Violence in Parent/Teen Relationships

By the Rev. Dr. Kevin E. Frederick, PADVN Leadership Team

Hometown, USA. It is a Saturday morning and an angry single mother confronts her son with his curfew violation from the night before. This is not the first time it has happened and yet this time the argument becomes so intense that it ends with her son balling up his fist in her face and threatening his mother with physical harm. The scene is so alarming to the mother that she becomes greatly concerned for her safety but is unsure where to turn for guidance It is a weekday evening and a father discovers that his daughter has been secretly seeing a boy about whom the father has well grounded concerns. The father has just learned that his daughter has violated his restrictions to not date the boy. An argument ensues that quickly becomes very heated and the father says some very hurtful things to his daughter in his anger that he knows have just erected some very substantial barriers with her . . .

Both of these scenarios are indicative of the level of stress that impacts the relationships between parents and teenage children every day for millions of American families. Verbal arguments come with the territory of parenting. On one hand, a parent needs to set clear boundaries of behavior for their child to function well within, and on the other hand, it is the very nature of teenage emotional and social development to push those boundaries and grow. But there are essential guidelines and boundaries that both parents and teens should have a clear understanding of, as a point not to be crossed; otherwise the well-being of the relationship between parent and child will be severely compromised and violated.

All should agree that any physical violence from either party has already crossed the line. But what about the emotional or psychological impact that crosses the line? How do you know when either you, or your child, have crossed the line from a relatively harmless display of emotional anger to a degree that psychological or emotional damage has occurred? Such a perspective is often at least partially subjective. One parent may think that a verbal threat of a child's hatred for him or her has clearly crossed an inviolable line, whereas another parent might interpret that same threat as the child's blowing off steam, believing the words were just an emotional outburst. Subjectivity also impacts the reaction of the teenager, as well. However, there is a baseline that should be used to measure all parent/teen relationships.

Parents and teens need to acknowledge that violence is not just of a physical nature, it can also be displayed psychologically. As a general rule teens are at a more fragile and less mature stage of emotional maturity than their parents. A parent should be clear in his or her mind that any kind of put down or cruel comment that negatively impacts the self esteem of the teenager has crossed the line from a healthy argument or display of will, and has entered the realm of an emotionally abusive action. Also, generally speaking, parents have more life experience and self esteem to draw from and so the emotional impact of a tirade from a teen to parent is not likely to be as damaging as if it comes from the parent to the child. Having said this, any serious threat of physical violence from either parent or child to the other illustrates crossing the line to an unhealthy dimension.

When the line has been crossed, both parent and child need a cooling off period between them. Both parties should immediately stop the unhealthy engagement for a time-out period until both can talk more rationally with each other. But it is clearly the responsibility of the parent to initiate the process of reconciliation, if it is not forthcoming from the child. A parent should always be the leader in the relationship, regardless of who is at fault. The final responsibility rests with the parent to initiate a healthy restoration of the relationship. It is up to the parent to articulate to the teenager the boundaries that protect a healthy relationship between them, regardless of who crossed the line first. If the parent crossed that boundary, it is also up to the parent to admit his or her fault and ask the teen for his or her forgiveness. Whether that forgiveness is readily offered by the teen, a genuine request by the parent demonstrates a clear desire for a restored relationship. If the teen has crossed the line of a healthy relationship, then the situation may require that the parent rationally explain to the teen what behavior had actually threatened or harmed him or her as a parent, and why that boundary is essential to maintain. Ideally, the parent should steer the conversation towards an agreement of what healthy boundaries are, when having an argument.

Regardless of who crossed the line, it is again up to the parent to take the lead by communicating a genuine love and respect, not only for the well being of the child, but also towards repairing and rebuilding a healthy relationship with him or her. And this needs to be done by affirming the deep and undying love of the parent for the child, along with identifying and commenting on the positive qualities and talents of the child in a way that does not seem contrived or forced. Significant thought should be given to this conversation before it occurs, so that it is clear and well stated by the parent. Finally, if the line of a healthy relationship has been crossed once, it may be the indicator of the need for family counseling with a professionally trained counselor who specializes in parent/teen relationships. But if the line is repeatedly crossed, then professional assistance from a counselor is essential to reorient the relationship in a healthy direction.

As a pastor and the parent of a two teenagers myself, I cannot conclude this article without providing a theological framework that informs our identities as Christian parents and teenagers. As Presbyterians, we recognize and acknowledge that all human beings are sinful humans; which helps us to remember that there is no perfect parent, nor is there a perfect child. That sets the framework to allow our relationships with our children to be informed by personal humility and molded by grace. In all likelihood, no one can expose the flaws and limitations of a parent as effectively as one's own teenager, while he or she is growing into a sense of self. But it is very comforting to remember that if we have raised our children, teaching them how to love others, and we have taught them how to forgive, those truths still live in their hearts even when it is not easily identifiable in their daily actions. As Christian parents, we believe that God's grace and wisdom are available to us at all times through the presence of God's Holy Spirit, and that when we make mistakes with our children, grace will heal the hurt and help us to reconcile with those we love so deeply. God's great gift of wisdom teaches us not only to openly forgive our children but to be humble with them; admitting our faults and covenanting with our children to continue the process of growth as

a Christian family, grounded in the love of God. As we struggle with that unfolding reality each day, it is comforting to know that God's Holy Spirit is our ally, and actively serves as an advocate that directs us towards an understanding of God's wisdom which helps us to experience forgiveness in our own hearts and in the hearts of our children.

A Family Covenant to Protect Against Violence

We take the model of biblical covenants as a guide in our relationships with God and with each other.

I believe I honor God, myself and my family when I protect myself from unsafe and unhealthy influences and activities which include, but are not limited to verbal and physical abuse, violent movies and video games, sexting, addictive substances and coerced sexual acts.

I will speak up when something threatens my family's well-being. If I am afraid or concerned about a problem I will speak to a trusted and responsible person about it.

I affirm that God is not sending violence into my life to test or to punish me. I know that in all times and in all places, God's desire for justice is at work in the world, and that God's will is for people to be in relationships of mutual love and respect.

I believe that no one has the right to use violent words or actions to control me. Furthermore, I promise never to use abusive behaviors to attempt to control anyone. I will make every effort to speak out against behaviors and attitudes that encourage, excuse or ignore abuse.

I believe that my relationship with God and my relationship with all people in my life should be fulfilled in much the same way, through loving thoughts, actions and words.

Signatures of family members:

Factors Beyond the Family that Promote or Allow Violence

By Joan Fenton, PADVN Leadership Team

Where does violence begin? What nourishes and permits violence?

It is generally understood that children who witness, or are victims of abuse are more likely to experience violence as adults or to become abusive in later relationships than are children who come from non-abusive homes.

There are other factors that influence males as they develop their images of self and the ways they believe girls and women should be treated. Boys and men often receive messages from their peers that give them a rigid and unhealthy image of manhood. Consider how relationships are formed that are uneven in power, and lack mutual respect as you read these familiar sayings:

- The man is the head of the household.
- A man's home is his castle.
- A woman's place is in the home.
- Women should be barefoot and pregnant.
- Women are the weaker sex.
- Men are rational, while women are irrational and emotional.
- If someone hurts you, you should hurt them back. (An eye for an eye)
- Women are responsible for child rearing.
- It's a man's world.
- Might makes right.
- All's fair in love and war.

Author Jackson Katz refers to the "man box" in his book "The Macho Paradox," as does author Anthony Porter in "Well Meaning Men...Breaking out of the Man Box." In their books the authors use the term to describe how boys learn to be men. The process involves taking on a role of power and privilege. Boys learn that they must not act like girls, and must never show emotions, with the exception of anger. Maintain the system, stay in the "man box," and men will reap the benefits, (at least according to the advertisements): money, cars, good jobs, women and lots of sex. Men are also told they should take what they want; they deserve it and they have a right to it. This attitude is fueled by the high profile sexual activities and abusive behavior of well known athletes, politicians and other powerful men.

There are plenty of books, television programs, music videos and violent video games that present opportunities for youth to observe powerful men. Shown are images of bullying and brutal attacks against anyone who lacks power. These scenes are played out realistically as 'entertainment' in the various media, or one can observe actual, everyday violence on the news stations at 6:00 PM and again at 10. In December, 2009

The Value of Boundaries

By The Rev. Diane C. Smalley, PADVN Leadership Team member

Boundaries help people assume responsibility for their choices. In an article entitled, "Building Lasting Relationships: Exploring Boundaries and Limits," the following definitions of BOUNDARIES were offered:

- Give a foundation for loving parents;
- Provide a positive stepping stone to what you will do, what you will tolerate and what you want;
- Another word for limits and self care;
- Help guide parents and teens so that they are not judgmental, do not attack, criticize or alienate others;
- Do not manipulate or "WIN;"
- Nothing is personal with clear limits and boundaries.

Regardless of the type of relationship—family, friend or dating—teens cannot be in healthy relationships unless every person in the relationship is clear on their personal boundaries (i.e., how they want to be treated), and has respect for the other's boundaries. It is, therefore, crucial for teens to develop or learn what rights and responsibilities they have in a relationship. Knowing these rights and responsibilities (a) lays the groundwork for maintaining healthy relationships; (b) helps teens better identify abuse when it occurs; and, (c) helps teens take steps to protect themselves from further harm.

Without boundaries, teens are likely to take things personally, get into power struggles and generate resentment. Boundaries help teens assume responsibility for their choices. Physical boundaries define how close someone can be to you and not make you uncomfortable. For example, you may feel comfortable sitting close to your boyfriend or girlfriend on a bus, but awkward sitting close to a stranger. Emotional boundaries refer to how much of yourself you will share with someone (e.g., feelings, thoughts and ideals). It also means respecting things the other person tells you in confidence and not saying things to embarrass or hurt them.

In families, boundaries are established so that clear rules and consequences are defined. The earlier limits are set, the more comfortable parents and teens will feel. If 17 year-old Adam and his parents have agreed that Adam has a curfew of 11:30pm and Adam returns home late after the curfew, his behavior indicates that he has chosen to accept the consequences. One of the best steps parents can take in order to establish a healthy relationship with their teen is to set up clear boundaries, clear rules, and clear consequences.

in Indianapolis, Indiana, newspapers told the story of a seventeen year old boy who killed his ten year old brother because he had fantasized about being like his favorite television serial killer. His need to murder someone was similar, he told the authorities, to craving a hamburger.

http://therisingsunrecorder.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1070&Itemid=104

Male role models, as portrayed in the media, don't often lead youth to such chilling behavior. But if men are shown as mostly take-charge people who do what they do because they can, we have given a message to our boys and adult men that may be interpreted as an opportunity, or even a mandate to control their partners and children. These toxic messages must not have the last word. We need to look to the PC (USA) web site for policy statements and resources on abuse:

<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn.htm>

and to our God for loving, caring images that clearly deny anyone the right to hold power over others.

What is “Normal”?

By the Rev. Bonnie M. Orth, PADVN liaison to the PHEWA Board of Directors

We all like to think that our family is “normal.” But what is “normal?” According to the Encarta Web dictionary, normal is :

usual: conforming to the usual standard, type, or custom

healthy: physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy

occurring naturally: maintained or occurring in a natural state

We hear about the “normal” family. If we watched television, we saw many examples of the so-called “normal” family. In my generation, media told us the “normal” families were the families represented in *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, *The Waltons*, *Little House on the Prairie* and *Family Ties*. As the family system began to change so did our media representation of the “normal” family, as evidenced by *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Full House* and *Family Affair*. Today, many view the “normal” family as being the *Gilmore Girls*, *Boy Meets World*, *Grounded for Life* and *The Secret Life of an American Teenager*.

When you grow up in a dysfunctional family, you somehow know that your family is different, but the reality of your daily life quickly becomes your “normal” and your view of what is a “normal” family becomes shaped by your experiences. We look at a “normal” family as being like and behaving like everyone else’s family. As much as you, on some level, know that your situation is different, you still believe that your family is “normal.” Part of you desperately wants to believe this and part of you really does not know what a “normal” family looks like.

As much as we may want to be “normal,” there is nothing really normative about being regular and ordinary. But we feel like we ought to be “normal.” We live under the cultural myth that there is a “right” way to raise children. The old “normal” family was a mom, dad, 2.5 children, a dog and a cat. Today’s families often look very different and the majority of families today do not fit into that old “normal” family mold.

New scientific information has emerged in the last 10 years that contradicts the idea that there is one right way to raise children. We now know that children can thrive in many different family forms. The scientific evidence shows conclusively that what is important for them is the quality of the relationships they have with the people who care for them, rather than the number, sex, or marital status of their caregivers.

Parents must train or discipline their children with an attitude of servant leadership. Discipline must be for the good of the child, not because our feelings were hurt or because the parent had a bad day. Most children will rebel at some time and, at times,

parents may become overbearing, expecting too much and frustrating their children. But God calls us to something different. Children are given two injunctions: to obey and to honor their parents. Obedience is doing what one is told, in our relationship with God and our parents. But this relationship with God and our families does not imply a difference in worth or intelligence and it does not imply violence of any kind.

Instead of worrying about what is "normal," we should instead focus on what is "healthy." A healthy family is one that lives with respect for each other with a good sense of boundaries. Instruction is the responsibility of the parents, teaching their children morals, values and instilling in them a good sense of self. It is also important to have a good sense of humor, a sense of conviction that the parents are doing the right thing and most important, relying on God's wisdom in Word and through prayer. Parents have the responsibility to model and should not be afraid to reach out for help from pastors and counselors when they find themselves "stuck."

In **Deuteronomy chapter 6**, God says through Moses: "These commandments I give you this day are to be upon your hearts, and you shall teach them diligently to your children" at all times. With God's grace and wisdom, and a good deal of hard work, parents can nurture a healthy family.

Worship Resources for Domestic Violence Awareness Month October 2010 – Theme: Parent/Youth Relationships

By Kevin E. Frederick

Call to Worship

adapted from Psalm 133

Leader: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

People: Adults and children, parents and teens, grandparents and infants.

Leader: It is like the precious oil on the beard, on the beard of Aaron,

People: It is like story-telling where the wise and the innocent listen together,

Leader: It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.

People: It is like laughter at a family reunion where everyone celebrates their family ties.

Leader: For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forever more.

People: In family we see yesterday's vision unfolding and tomorrow's promise revealed.

Opening Hymn: #239 How Happy Is Each Child of God

Or #367 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love

Prayer of Confession:

Holy and Merciful God, you reveal to us your vision of wholeness and your will for human relationships through the Holy Trinity. Integrated in every way, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are deeply interconnected and demonstrate your Truth through each distinct person of the Trinity. And yet, O Lord, we acknowledge how far our relationships of love fall short of reflecting your divinely interconnected love. We argue when we should listen, we demand obedience at times when we should seek to understand, and, too often, we violate those we love with hurtful words and actions. Lord God, you gave us marriage to provide comfort and support to one another within the context of our families, you gave us the gift of family, allowing us to grow in our understanding of love, on so many different levels, and yet the routine of our lives causes the sacredness of our family relationships to fade. Lord, forgive us for our shortcomings in our relationships with our family members and help us to grow more deeply into the covenant of love we share together as families. For we pray in names of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Additional Hymns for this Sunday

358 -Help Us Accept Each Other

407 -When A Poor One

394 -There Is A Balm in Gilead

353 -Great God Your Love Has Called Us Here

436 - We Are Your People

401 -When Will People Cease Their Fighting?

Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday in 2010 is scheduled for October 10, 2010 (but can certainly be a designated observance in your congregation at any time!).

The Old Testament Passage for that particular Sunday is very fitting to the theme: **Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7** addresses the exiles in Babylon with a word of hope to return to Jerusalem and start families, "Take wives and have sons and daughters . . . Multiply there and do not decrease." Here, God is calling the people who live in exile to return and repopulate the land with their offspring. Implicit in this text is the recognition that reestablishing a prosperous community is dependent upon the family unit and the creation of community. One might ask. What are the qualities of a healthy family life that benefit the welfare of a community? They include relationships based on love and interdependence, teaching and learning, fellowshiping and serving the welfare of the larger community together. A sermon could be created around this theme, centering on the will of God for human families and the blessings and benefits that healthy families provide for the community as a whole.

In looking at the other lectionary scripture passages for October 10, (2 Timothy 2:8-15 and Luke 17: 11-19) they do not lend themselves to issues surrounding parenting youth into mature adulthood. If it is the intent of the preacher to build on the theme of parent/teen relationships, then there are two other readings that could easily be substituted that would take on a whole different meaning through the lens of parent/teen relationships.

Recommended Gospel reading: Luke 2: 41-52; The story of Jesus as a twelve year old staying behind in Jerusalem, to go to the Temple and learn from the chief priests and scribes and to be in dialogue with them. Note the dynamics at play from the perspective of Mary and Joseph, having traveled a day's journey away from Jerusalem, they suddenly discover that he is not in the caravan of travelers and returned to Jerusalem, where they search for three days and finally find him in the temple. Frantic to discover him, when they find him they ask a question, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety!" His answer does not comfort them, in fact they are completely in the dark about why he did what he did. Here, we see the will and the personal direction of a child coming into direct conflict with the direction of his parents and the conflict that is created as a result. It provides the perfect opportunity to reflect on the issue from the perspective of each. The preacher could explore this text from inside the depth of the conflict between Jesus and his parents and explore both healthy and unhealthy ways this set of circumstances might play themselves out in a parent/teenager relationship today.

Recommended New Testament Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; The biblical context of this passage explores hardships that occur within ministry, so that through those hardships, the glory of God can be revealed. Verses 16-18 describes the renewal of spirit within, as a gift of God, keeping one's eyes ever fixed upon the promise of hope and fulfillment as the difference between the temporary nature of this life and the promise of fulfillment in the eternal glory of God's kingdom. The sermon context could center around "the clay jars," the imperfect vessels, of both parent and child found in every family of human beings, where the struggles exist every day between parents and emerging identity of their teens. It would be wrong to overplay the parallels of parent/teen relationships with part of this text which centers on the oppressive challenges of being persecuted as a follower of Christ (Verses 8-12). However, a good sermon could be built on verses 7, 13-18 with a focus on how both parent and teen are blessed with the same spirit of God as a source of direction, comfort, and wisdom in their lives. And it should emphasize the quality of hope that both parent and child can focus on in working through the difficulty of identity formation and

individual autonomy that every healthy teenager and their parents must struggle through. As it applies to this theme, verse 18 could give great hope to both parents and teens who realize that the process of growing up will ultimately, through faith and grace, change both parent and youth into becoming a more congruent Christ-like identity.

Resources for Youth Leaders

Joan Fenton

Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse

If you work with children or adolescents in any capacity in your congregation, most states require you to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to their state child abuse hotline. While there is no National Church policy requiring training in this area, we recommend that you work with your Church leadership to develop training for church leaders and specific policy for reporting child abuse and neglect. You will find useful, the 46 page resource, ***“We Won’t Let it Happen Here! Preventing Child Abuse in the Church,”*** developed by members of PHEWA’s Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network & the PC(USA) Office of Child Advocacy. It is downloadable at no charge from:

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/we-wont-let-it-happen-here-preventing-child-abuse/>

Two organizations that provide training on child abuse reporting and sample policies for use in your congregation are:

Safe Sanctuaries www.safesanctuaries.org

Praesidium, Inc. www.praesidiuminc.com

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-Child

Website: www.childhelpusa.org

The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. The hotline is staffed 24 hours daily with professional crisis counselors who utilize a database of thousands of emergency, social service and support resources. These services are available to professionals who need to report suspected abuse. This includes school nurses, teachers, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, pediatric dentists, fire investigators, and members of the faith community. All calls are anonymous and toll-free.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE

Website: www.ndvh.org

NDVH is a nonprofit organization that provides crisis intervention, information and referral to victims of domestic violence, perpetrators, friends and families.

FaithTrust Institute

Website: www.faithtrustinstitute.org

Faith Trust Institute is a national, multifaith, multicultural training and education organization with global reach working to end sexual and domestic violence. They offer a wide range of services and resources, including training, consulting and educational materials, providing communities and advocates with the tools and knowledge they need to address the religious and cultural issues related to abuse; promoting safety, justice and healing and addressing those that may present roadblocks to ending sexual and domestic violence. They offer a six-session curriculum on healthy teen relationships – Love-All That and More.

<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA000000M7rhIAC/>

Anguished Hearts

<http://store.pcusa.org/Browse-Categories/Social-Policy>

A seven-session study on domestic violence for use in congregations, the title is taken from Psalm 55:4a, "My heart is in anguish within me..."

The seven sessions cover different faces of abuse; spouse/partner, child, elder, sibling, dating violence and abuse of vulnerable people. This resource can be used for church school classes, groups, sessions, retreats or other educational events sponsored by the church. This item can be ordered on the PC (USA) website, **PDS #7027003025 or by phoning (800) 524-2612.**

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<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn.htm>

PADVN is a volunteer ministry network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA). We provide advocacy and resources for the prevention of and healing from societal and domestic violence. Our website has available to download many helpful resources for addressing and preventing domestic violence in your congregation and communities. In addition, we can provide on-site training on how churches can prevent or address domestic violence. We are a membership organization and by becoming a PADVN/PHEWA member, you stay connected with others throughout the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) engaged in and concerned about this ministry being a vital part of our denominational witness. Join us!

Write to us on our website; phone us through the PHEWA office (800) 728-7228 ext. 5800.

For further information and resources contact the domestic violence program in your area.