

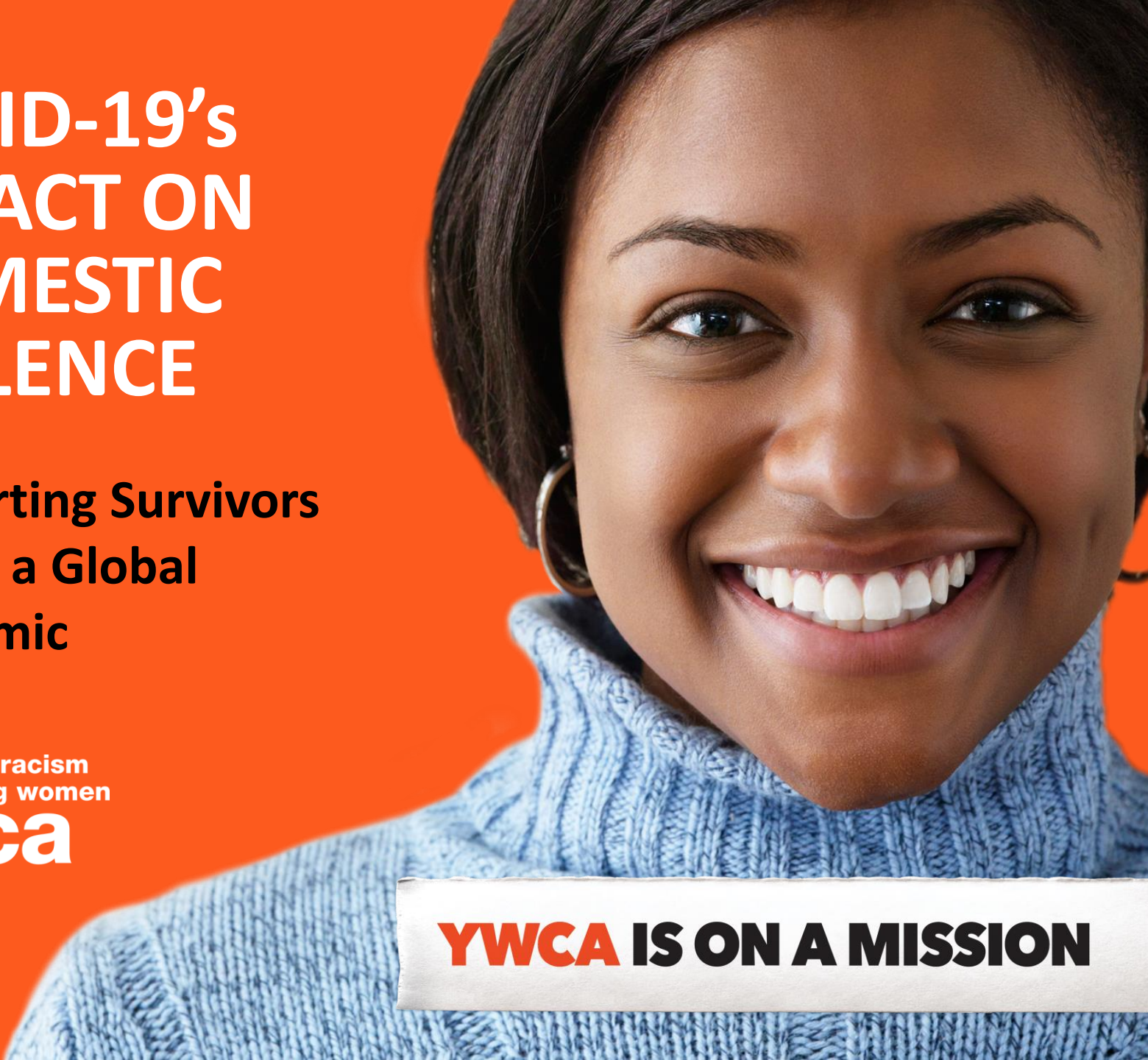
# COVID-19's IMPACT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Supporting Survivors  
During a Global  
Pandemic**

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**

**YWCA IS ON A MISSION**



# PRESENTER INFORMATION

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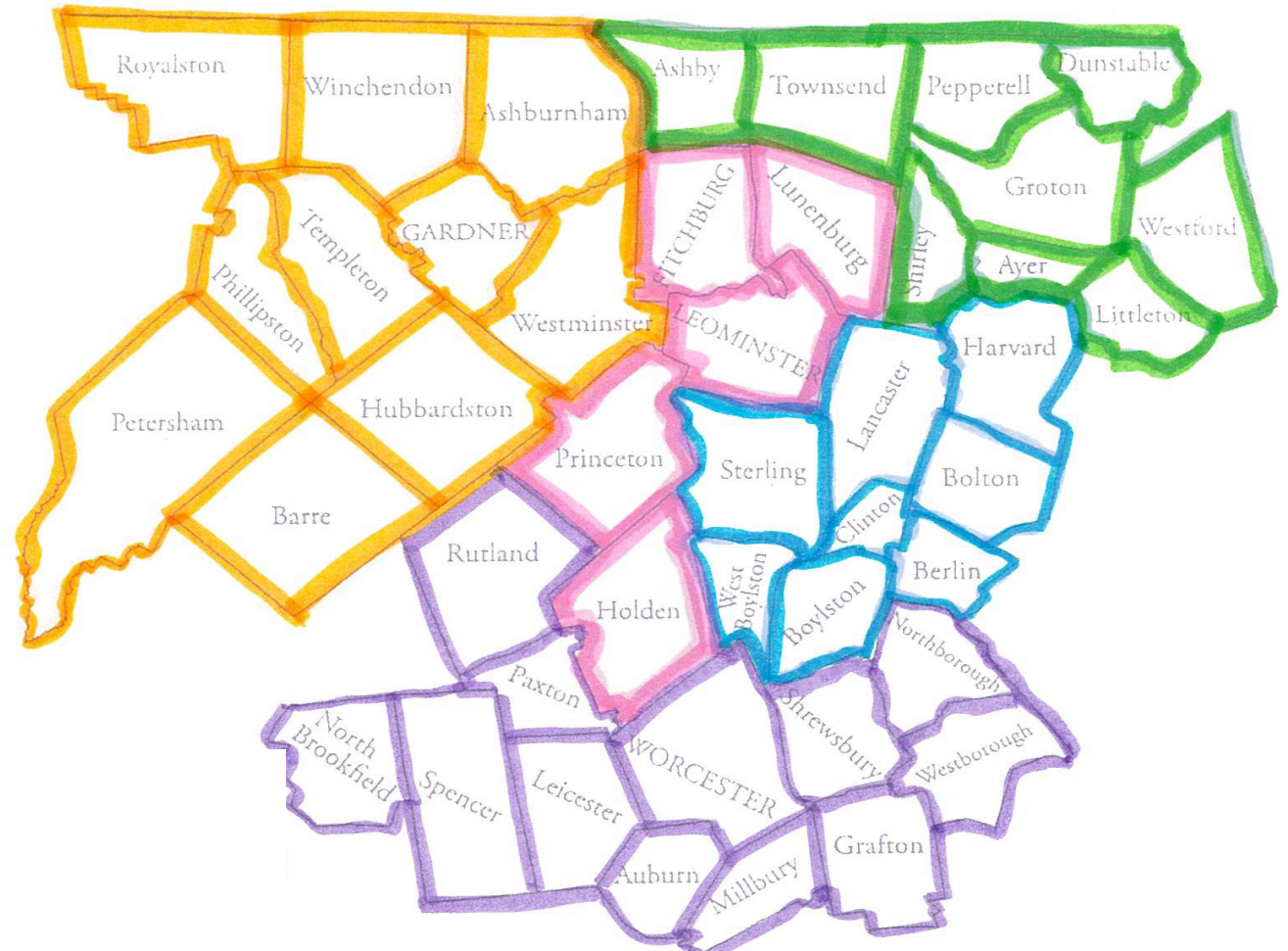
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# AGENDA

1. YWCA Domestic Violence Services
2. Review of Abuse Dynamics
3. COVID-19 Unique Impacts
4. Assessing Risk & Planning for Safety
5. Effective Response
6. Available Resources

# YWCA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

Serving 44  
cities and  
towns in  
Worcester  
&  
Middlesex  
counties



# YWCA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES



24-HR HELPLINE:  
**508-755-9030**  
[WWW.YWCAHELP.COM](http://WWW.YWCAHELP.COM)



CONFIDENTIAL  
EMERGENCY SHELTERS



COUNSELING,  
ADVOCACY & SUPPORT  
GROUPS



EDUCATIONAL  
CLASSES, WORKSHOPS  
& PREVENTION



SAFEPLAN –  
RESTRAINING ORDER  
SUPPORT SERVICES



CIVILIAN ADVOCATE,  
WORCESTER POLICE  
DEPT.



ICAPP, DV/SV-RELATED  
HOMELESSNESS  
SUPPORT



COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS:  
DVHRT, CCRN, CHNA-9

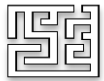


# DEFINITION OF ABUSE

ABUSE – or **COERCIVE CONTROL** – is a pattern of intimidating and controlling behaviors used to gain and maintain power over a current or former partner or family member.

*ABUSER* – a person who has recurring problems with disrespecting, controlling, belittling, or devaluing their partner or family member(s).

# CATEGORIES OF ABUSE



PYSCHOLOGICAL MANIPULATION



FINANCIAL INTERFERENCE



SEXUAL COERCION AND ASSAULT



PHYSICAL AGGRESSION AND INTIMIDATION

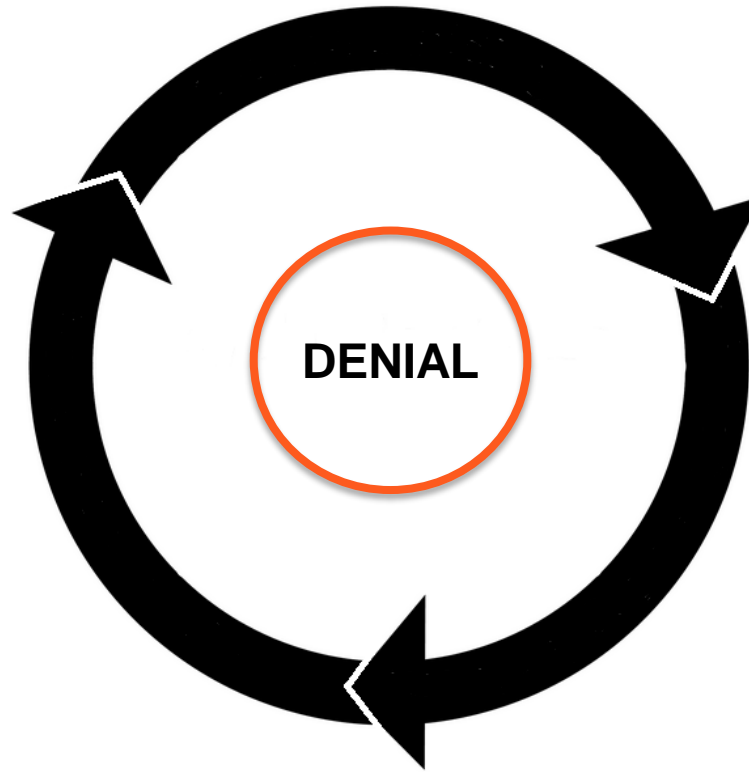


STALKING AND SURVEILLANCE

# PATTERN OF ABUSE



TENSION  
BUILDING



INCIDENT



RECONCILIATION



# BARRIERS TO DISCLOSURE

**FEAR** of retribution from the abuser, of losing custody of their children, of not being believed or being invalidated.

**DISTRUST** of systems who've harmed them in the past, or due to previous experiences of not being believed.

**NORMALIZATION** believing what they experience is normal and not worthy of comment.

**SHAME & GUILT** believing the abuse is their fault, that their behaviors or feelings provoked it, or that they aren't a real victim because they've hit back or been "mean" to their partner too.

**RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL BELIEFS** family privacy, healing power of God, betrayal, protective feelings of the abuser.

# CHALLENGES TO LEAVING



HOPE



MONEY/  
CREDIT



ISOLATION



FEAR



LOYALTY



DENIAL



CHILDREN



TRAUMA  
BOND



LOVE



MANIPULATION



NEGATIVE  
CONSEQUENCES



CULTURE

# COVID-19 UNIQUE IMPACTS

## Isolation:

- Cut from friends and family who may provide emotional support or be key to survivors' safety plans
- If home with kids or partner, less privacy for phone counseling or teletherapy
- Trauma of pandemic/isolation may trigger previous trauma of DV
- Child survivors home from school experiencing loss of structure, social life, and meals

# COVID-19 UNIQUE IMPACTS

## Financial:

- Loss of job/income means survivors less able to meet family's needs
- Surge in unemployment applications may mean delay in getting funds
- Court closings stalling divorce cases which may prolong financial and legal limbo
- Financial loss waiting for child support
- Increased risk of financial abuse from partner, including control or withholding of stimulus check

# COVID-19 UNIQUE IMPACTS

## Safety:

- If home with perpetrator, more risk for escalation and violence
- Changes in court protocol interrupting restraining order cases – some have lapsed, been denied, or dropped
- Some courts relying on police departments to grant emergency orders; police not safe or accessible for all
- Higher risk of homicide, serious injury

# COVID-19 UNIQUE IMPACTS

## Increased Risk of Infection:

- Survivors staying with friends and family not able to carry out social distancing, practice hygiene/cleanliness how they want or need to
- Homeless survivors in shelter may be more vulnerable due to congregate setting
- Trauma and stress may weaken immune system
- Survivors may be more vulnerable due to not being able to maintain health supports



# COVID-19 UNIQUE IMPACTS

## Limited Access to Resources and Information:

- Remote/staggered staffing and closed offices means resources and supports are not as readily available
- Information changing quickly, hard to find. Abuser may restrict access to information about COVID
- DCF involvement without access to physical visits with removed children, may experience delays in court dates/reunification
- Not feeling safe to visit ER or access preventative care
- Survivors without internet access may be left out of services that have moved online including schooling for children

# SAFETY & ESCALATION

Respond	calmly, no matter how bad something sounds
Respect	the survivor's knowledge and instincts about their safety
Recognize	the abusive mentality and signs of escalation
Reflect	on any barriers you face in effectively responding

# COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS



**ANGER**



**CHILDHOOD  
TRAUMA**



**MENTAL  
HEALTH**



**SUBSTANCE  
MISUSE**



**CULTURE /  
RELIGION**

# ABUSIVE MENTALITY

"I should be revered as an authority."

CONTROLLING

"I own you."

POSSESSIVE

"You owe me."

ENTITLED

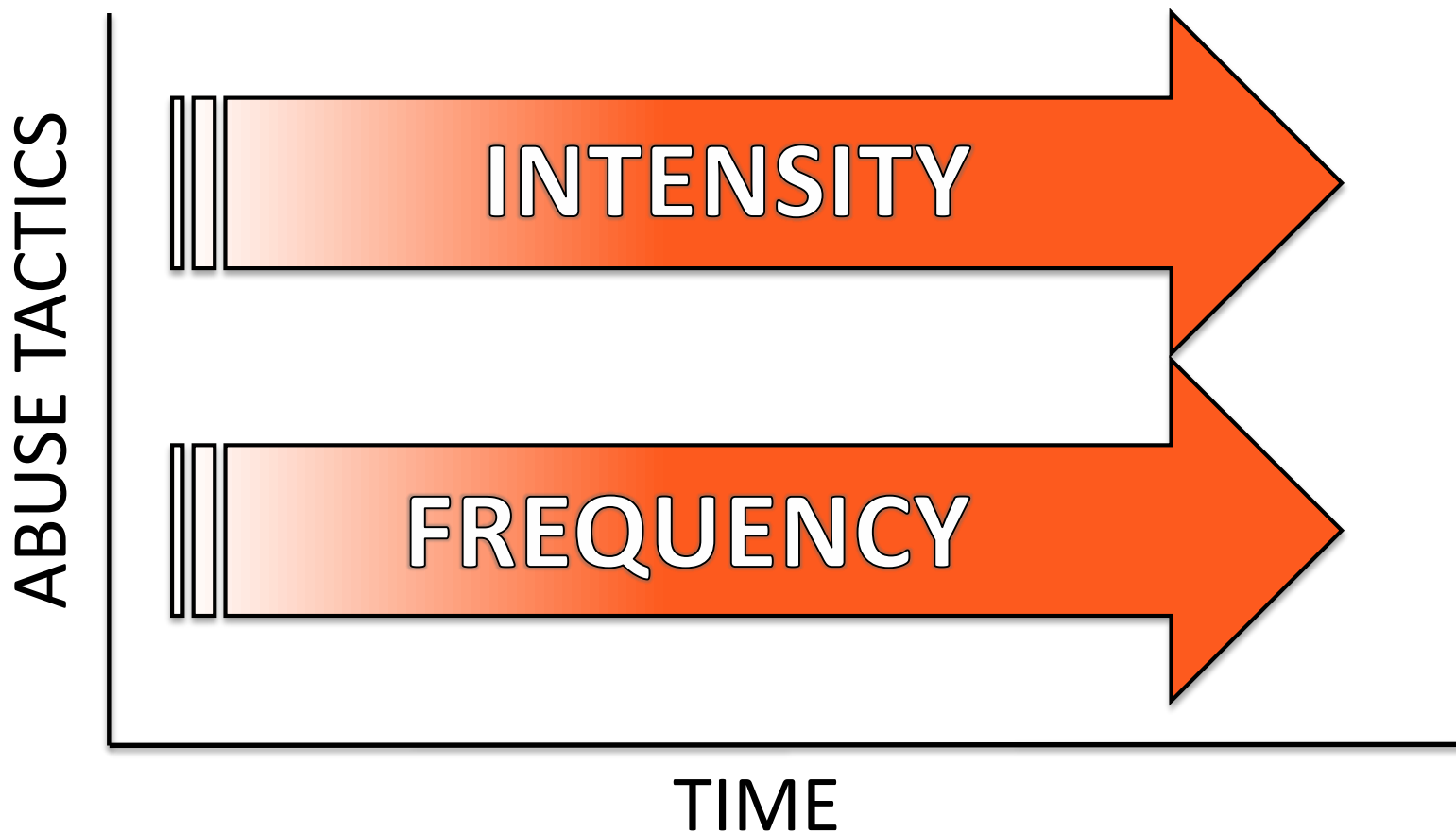
"My behavior is necessary to meet my needs."

JUSTIFIED

"It's not abuse (or if it is, it's not that bad)."

DENYING HARM

# ESCALATION



# INDICATORS TO WATCH FOR

- ✓ Threat to use a weapon, especially a firearm
- ✓ Graphic threats to harm
- ✓ Strangulations
- ✓ Sexual assault
- ✓ Jealous behavior



# FACTORS AFFECTING SAFETY

- Is the person in or out of the relationship?
- If in the relationship, do they live together?
- Does the person work outside the home?
- Does the person have access to friends and family?
- What type of technology do they use?
- Is the person pregnant?
- Are there signs the abuse is escalating?
- Is police/courts an option?

# PERSONAL SAFETY

What were the available resources/supports? Has COVID eliminated or made them inaccessible?

Who does the survivor trust? Who is aware of the situation and who can be made aware?

What is the financial situation? Is everyone working at home? Laid off? Essential employee?

What coping skills were being used before? Can they still be used now? Are there alternatives?

# SAFETY WHILE PARENTING

What is the parental arrangement? What are the concerns the survivor has regarding parenting?

Involve children in the safety planning in age appropriate ways.

If parenting separately, court orders are still expected to be followed, but emergency hearings can be requested.

If the abuser is being unsafe and an emergency hearing is not possible to file, survivors are left with difficult choices.

# TECHNOLOGICAL SAFETY

Every day technology can become a tool of surveillance.

Encourage the survivor to trust their instincts about suspected monitoring.

Ensure you are using safe technology to communicate.

Strategically plan around the technological abuses- sometimes it is safer to allow the monitoring to carry on.

# FORMULATING A SAFETY PLAN



The survivor is the expert on their safety.



Safety plans are fluid.



Safety plans should be realistic and practical.



Safety plans should be individualized and personal.

# BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

## TIME CONSTRAINTS

Supporting can be intensive and you may not have time in your role

## PERSONAL TRIGGERS

Many in helping roles have their own trauma that can impact their lens

## FRUSTRATION

Not everyone *wants* to leave, or get the restraining order, etc.

## BIAS

Cultural/religious/social biases affect everyone and can inhibit our ability to hear and understand others' experiences

## THINKING YOU KNOW BEST

You may have specialized knowledge and it is good to share that, but the survivor is the expert in their own life

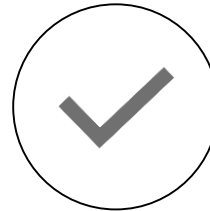


# TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE



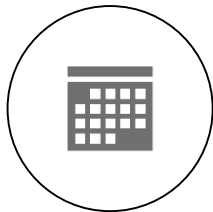
## **LISTEN & BELIEVE**

Not believing someone is very damaging



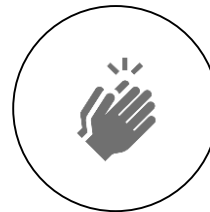
## **VALIDATE FEELINGS**

Feelings can cycle rapidly much like a grieving process



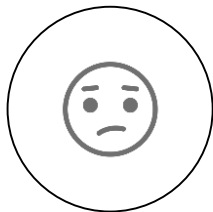
## **BE PATIENT**

Let go of expectations; there is no “quick fix”



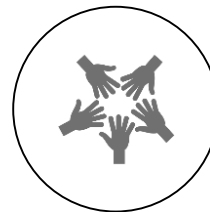
## **BE ENCOURAGING & SUPPORTIVE**

Don't tell the survivor what to do; they ultimately must live with their decisions



## **EXPRESS CONCERN**

It's alright to let them know you are worried



## **GET HELP**

Don't forget to take care of yourself and call us if you need support.

# AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- YWCA DV 24-hour Helpline: **508-755-9030**  
Chatline: [www.ywcahelp.com](http://www.ywcahelp.com)
- SAFELINK (State-wide DV/SV Helpline): **877-521-2601**
- Trial Court Help Line: **833-91COURT** | staffed M-F  
from 8:30am to 4:30pm
- <https://www.healthygreaterworcester.org/covid-19-community-resources>
- United Way's COVID-19 Response Fund: Text COVID  
HELP to 50155