

positive shift

groupwork for women to heal and
find viable alternatives to violence

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OPEN Symposium

18 October 2019

Acknowledgement to country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we gather today and recognise that this land has always been under their custodianship. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to emerging community leaders. I also extend respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today

+SHIFT's origins

Vista

A Program for Women Who Use Force



vista: an extended view

www.jbws.org

Family Violence

Family violence means conduct, whether actual or threatened, by a person towards, or towards the property of, a member of the person's family that causes that or any other member of the person's family to fear for, or to be apprehensive about, his or her personal wellbeing or **safety**" (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d.).

Use of Force

...refers to physically, verbally, and emotionally detrimental behaviors used toward an intimate partner...to gain *short term* control of chaotic, abusive and/or battering situations.

(Dasgupta, 2002; House, 2001; Larance, 2006; Osthoff, 2002)

Women's use of force

- Women's use of force can be categorised into the following areas:
 - Asserting dignity
 - Self defence
 - Aggressive use of force
 - Anticipatory
 - Both use force
 - Edge work
 - False accusations
 - Partner self-inflicts
 - Horizontal hostility
- (Source: Larance and Miller, 2017)

Outline of program

- 16 sessions
- therapeutic,
- gender-responsive,
- trauma-informed
- addressing intersectional identities
- facilitating participants' engagement with viable alternatives to force
- promoting healing.

positive
shift

Group Work

1:1
Case support

Goals of +SHIFT

- The +SHIFT curriculum provides a range of opportunities for women to:
 - Enhance their personal and familial protection and support strategies,
 - Heal from past and/or current trauma, and
 - Explore viable alternatives to using force.

+SHIFT Curriculum Highlights

- Who am I and what brought me here
- Anger
- Effects of force on children, family, friends and/or pets
- Shame
- Cultural messages

The Anger Umbrella

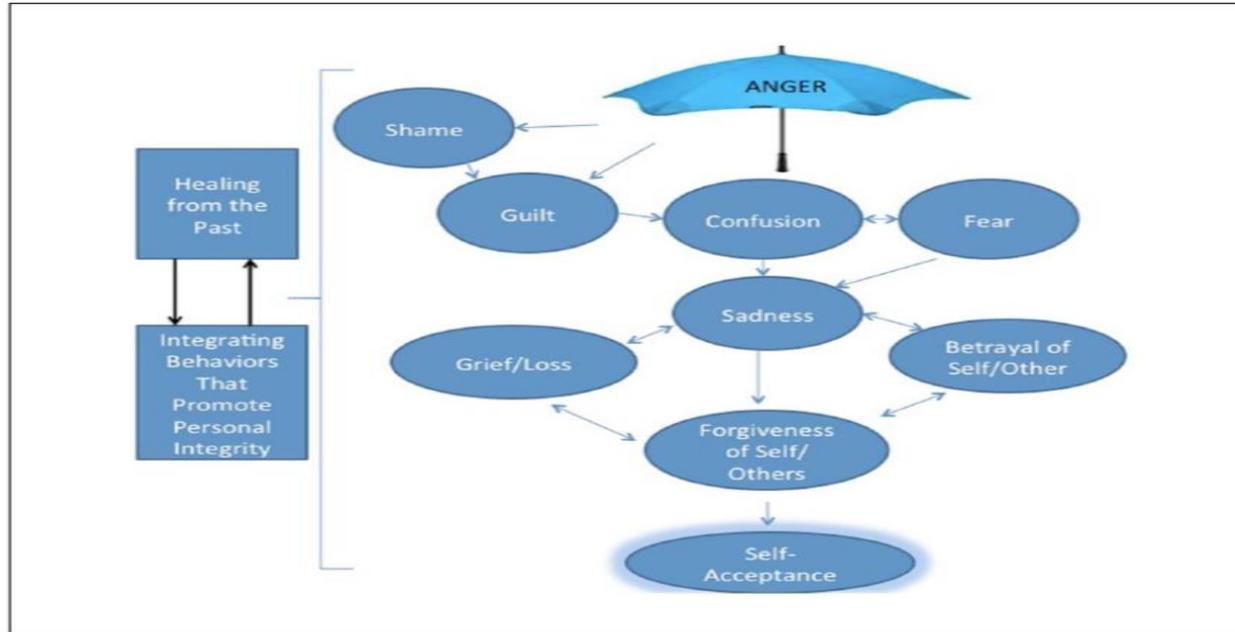


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Change Process.

From: Larance, L. Y., & Rousson, A. (2016). Facilitating change: A process of renewal for women who have used force in their intimate heterosexual relationships. *Violence against women*, 22(7), 876-891.

Children

- 1 in 6 women have experienced abuse before the age of 15
- Child of mothers experience domestic violence have higher rates of social and emotional problems than other children
- 1 in 4 young people think it's pretty normal for guys to pressure girls into sex
- 1 in 3 young people don't think controlling someone is a form of violence

(Source: White Ribbon Australia - <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/facts-violence-women/domestic-violence-statistics/>)

Effects of force on Children

Session goals

- Develop an understanding that unhealthy intimate relationship dynamics may directly and/or indirectly negatively affect their children.
- Reveal, in a safe non judgemental environment, continuing challenges and concerns regarding the impact their intimate relationship has/ had on their children.

Effects of Force on Children

Group Process:

- Women who have used force, are often already aware of how their use of force has negatively impacted their children.
- Some women may be less aware or in denial of the impact.
- Regardless of their awareness, this is a deeply impactful session because:
 - women often feel shame when they realise their use of force has had a negative impact and may have hurt them.
 - participants often reflect on their own lived experiences as a child victim/survivor of family violence.

Conclusion

The goals of +SHIFT are to encourage appropriate levels of responsibility for their actions; increase viable alternatives to use of force and cultivate protective strategies

+SHIFT participant numbers



64 participants in total

58% saw the program through to the end

+Shift Program Evaluation - Methodology

- Process evaluation
- Pre- and post program questionnaires
 - Demographic data
 - Validated measures
- Interviews with participants
- Interviews with staff and management
- Trial of measures

Trial of outcome measures

Outcome	Measure	Pre-program	Post-program	Follow up
<u>Primary outcome</u>				
An expanded repertoire of behaviour options that women can use as viable alternatives to using force	Buss-Perry Aggression Scale – Short Form	✓	✓	✓
	Contextual Abusive Behaviour Inventory (Larance)	✓		
<u>Secondary Outcomes</u>				
Changes in mental health	Kessler 6 (measure of psychological distress, anxiety and depressive symptoms)	✓	✓	✓
Social supports in place	Social Provisions Scale	✓	✓	✓

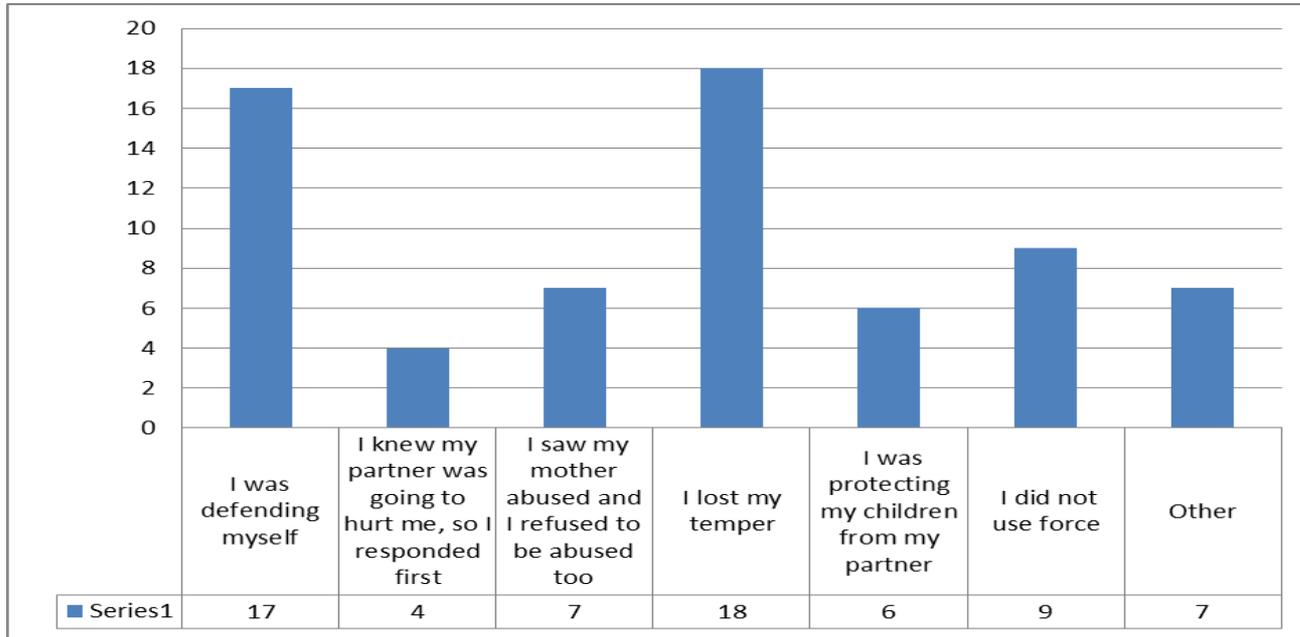
A snapshot of participants in the +Shift Program evaluation

- **Number of women who participated in the program evaluation:**
37 pre-program, and 18 post-program
- **Age:**
Women ranged from 19 years to 59 years. The average age was 37 years.
- **Background:**
Approx. 20% of women were born outside Australia;
Approx. 10% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

- **Sexuality:**

83% Heterosexual; 8% bisexual; 6% Gay/lesbian; 3% other

Reasons participants gave as to why they used force in their relationships



Ex-partner was most frequently given as the 'other'.

Women's experience of +SHIFT –

Group support & Safety

I've spoken about things in here that I haven't spoken about in 20 years but after speaking about it, being so scared to talk about it, you can't imagine, I guess, the weight that that takes off you.

The facilitators actually legit seem like they care. . . . They make you feel good about yourself, you know.

Sometimes at the end of the week, if it wasn't for group, I'd probably break, to be honest, like emotionally, physically, mentally, all of it.

. . . to see what other people are going through and know that you're not the only one that's feeling those things, not that you want anyone else to be in that place either but you don't feel like such a loser when you're not the only one. There's probably some comfort in that.

Women's experience of +SHIFT – Strategies

If anything, I feel probably calmer. I can sit there and actually think about things before I completely snap.

It was a bit more about knowing yourself . . . you control yourself better and you just make better choices I think.

I'm doing a lot of things that are more assertive and I'm doing a lot of things that I'm not looking at the problem so close-up. I'm actually stepping back and looking at things from a different perspective.

They help you understand that men are just men and if you're not communicating what you want, they're not going to know.

Women's understanding of the effect of their behaviour on children

he would sit in a room all day, every day and during the day I would slowly get angry because he wasn't doing anything. . . . it got to the point where by the end of the night, I was slamming doors and taking my frustration out on my children because they didn't have control over their situation. Yeah, then they tried to tell me how to do it differently, how I could have done things differently and I suppose I could have just . . . sat down and had a conversation with him, but I never did.

I wish I'd done it when my children were younger because when the children were younger, I was probably more forceful then, if anything. I wish I'd had the strategies then.

Towards the end I found it really good. If I said one of the kids had done this, you know, "I reacted this way", sometimes some of the other ladies would actually give input and say, "Well, maybe that happened because of this" and "What if you tried it that way?" So that was really good.

I suppose obviously ashamed of how I had been treating my family and treating others but, again, I know it was my behaviours but I just thought that was normal behaviour ... It's more about understanding and changing those behaviours, I suppose.

Viable alternatives to force

... with me having a new way of thinking, I have noticed a lot with people - even though some relationships are just still the same and I've got to do different tactics - with other people it has changed completely of how they view me and with me standing up for myself and being assertive and being more tactful of what I say.

I can be happy. I have every right to be happy if I want to be. So that's kind of what the program's taught me. You don't have to sit in your misery I guess. Put in those strategies. Use those skills in your toolbox to be okay with wanting to be happy because it's a right.

More information -

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