

## **Empathy Role Play**

The point of this exercise is to try and elicit greater understanding from the man in group of the effects of his behaviour upon his (ex) partner and build his empathic understanding as a result.

This is also often a point where new detail is added to what is already "declared" by the man and is useful in terms of other men gaining insight into what may have been up to this point a somewhat limited portrayal of a partner.

### **Set up:**

To begin with decide who is going to conduct the interview. They can then talk the man through set up or let the co-facilitator do this. To try and begin getting the man into role it can be useful to ask him how he imagines his partner might have sat if she were being interviewed and how he imagines she might have felt e.g. nervous?

It can sometimes also be worth asking some additional questions such as "What was xxx's favourite colour?" "What was her favourite band?" etc When you are satisfied that the man is ready you can then begin. "I'm going to ask you some questions now and I'd like you to respond as you think xxx would" If at any time you feel that they are struggling to stay in role just halt things for a few moments and go through putting them back into role again.

You can begin an interview as you might for someone coming into the women's support service. It's fine to begin with early part of the relationship:

"How did you meet?"

"What attracted you to him?" etc

Some men will take this as an opportunity to say how lovely they were and boost their ego – don't worry about this too much as it can be a useful point of contrast later. The key is to take as much opportunity as possible to reflect back how events affected the partner being played emotionally.

Example questions:

"Tell me about your relationship with xxx, when did you meet? What was it about him that you liked?"

"What was the relationship like in the beginning?"

"When did things begin to change?"

"Do you remember the first time he was violent towards you?"

"How did it feel to have this man who said he loved you use violence towards you?"

“What was the worst time of violence towards you?”

“How do you think it's affected the children? How does that leave you feeling?”

“How has it affected your relationships with family/friends?”

“What do you tell family and friends?”

“Have you had to lie to anyone about your partner's behaviour?”

“Do you think he'd seriously harm you or the children? How are you making that assessment?”

“How do you square someone you think is a good father with someone who has been violent towards you?”

“Who do you have to support you?”

“What are your hopes for the relationship now?”

Once you have an overview of what the effects of behaviour were upon his (ex) partner's emotional wellbeing – you can bring in the rest of the group:

“How do you think xxx has been affected?” “How do you think the children were affected?” “What stands out for you about what you've heard?” “What was the hardest thing to hear?”

You can also ask the man out of role the same type of questions:

“Reflecting now what do you think would have been hardest for your partner?” etc