

WORKING WITH MOMS AND CHILDREN – RESPONSE BASED APPROACH

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RESPONSE BASED PRACTICE: DIGNITY AND SAFETY AT KAUSHEE'S PLACE

- The staff at Kaushee's Place follow several principles that take into account the need of women and children to experience dignity.
- Self-analysis: We must be willing to examine our own ideas and practice.
- Critical analysis: It is important to contest victim-blaming and mother-blaming in all forms.
- We do not judge people by their past.
- Every time a woman returns to the transition house with her family, we see it as a fresh start, as though it were their first visit.
- We let the women and children decide what they want to do and talk about.
- We believe in the women and what they say.
- We take a pro-choice attitude regardless of our personal beliefs.

In these conditions, women parent in safety.



“Children who witness”

Versus...

Children who *experience, respond, and resist*
violence



WHY WE WORK THE WAY WE DO

Common tactic of men who use violence:

- Sabotage mother's dignity as a women
- Undermine women as mothers
- Attempt to create doubt in women's parenting
- Damage mother-child bond



IT JUST MAKES SENSE

Working with moms and kids together:

- ❑ Seems natural
- ❑ Allows for collaborative storytelling
- ❑ Encourages togetherness instead of isolation

Working together we can respect and restore the relationships between mothers and children...



CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Push to interview mothers and children separately:

- Infringes immediate limits to the conversation for staff and residents
- Based on ... mother blaming
- Creates fear and doubt

Of particular relevance for First Nations women, past and current apprehension rates must be considered.

“If I am to take their children aside, I could be seen as a child protection worker, as a threat. I do not see that as productive.”



“Domestic violence intervention needs to change to take account of **the significant barriers that may have been created between mothers and their children by violence and abuse.** The priority for post-crisis work therefore needs to involve the **strengthening of the recovery of the mother-child relationship** in the aftermath of domestic violence. However, the shift in culture this work requires is not straightforward. The **traditional fracturing by organizational structures... replicates the fracturing of the relationships between many mothers and children living with domestic violence.** It is an issue of particular relevance to social worker managers and front line workers as they straddle the service sectors working with structures that can inadvertently continue to reinforce rather than address the undermining of the mother-child relationship.” p. 167

Cathy Humphries, 2010



CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT TO SUPPORT THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

- Working with mom and child together
- Not separating mom and child during crisis
- Honor time when mom and child need to talk about what happened and how each responded
- Honor how they work as a team to keep each other safe



IN THE 30 DAYS

- Children's responses change overtime:
 - 24 hours
 - 72 hours
 - 30 days
- What does parenting in safety look like? How is it different than parenting under siege?



- Spend time together, allow conversation to come up naturally:
 - Car rides
 - Shopping trips
 - Camp fires
 - Cooking and eating meals



- Support women as mothers:
 - No “Shiny Syndrome”
 - No Fair Tale Mom Myth
 - Refer back to mom
 - “Did you ask your mom?” “Mom knows best”



- Find ways to shift the negative messages of dad
 - Mom is not to blame for everything
 - Mom is hard working
 - Mom protects



PARENTING IN SAFETY

- Have a conversation of what parenting looks like when you are safe
- How it can be different than when you fight to keep your child and yourself safe
- How children may start acting like children and be loud, rowdy and playful
- How they may act out as they start to feel safe



PARENTING AT TIME OF CRISIS

- Reframing perspective on mother's parenting skills during crisis:
 - Identify how she has been brilliant
 - How she pushed back to the violence and minimized it's impacts
- Speaking about how she responded to and resisted the violence will help show all the ways he was abusive.



WORST TIME IN YOUR LIFE

Mom still has a lot to deal with:

- Separation
- Custody
- Housing
- Health issue
- Grief

It's not time to teach or give tools, but to be an ally and strategize with her.

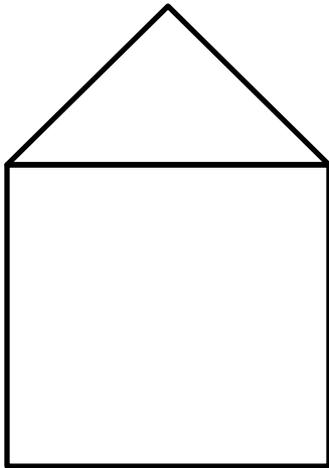


ACTIVITIES

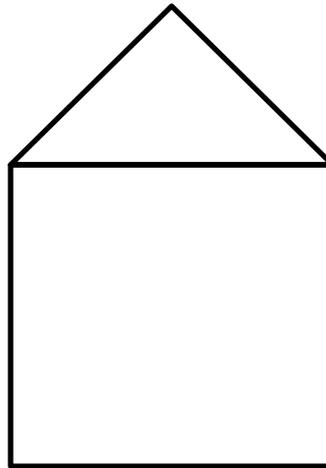
ALLAN WADE CENTRE FOR RESPONSE-BASED PRACTICE

3 Houses... and a Rickety Response-Based Shack

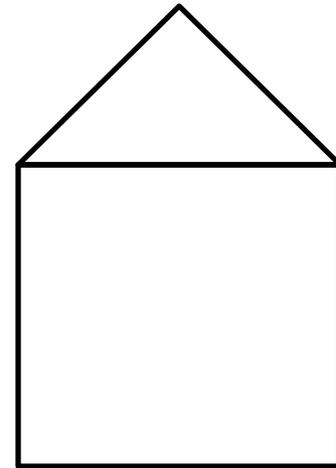
Original work by: Nicki Weld & Maggie Greening



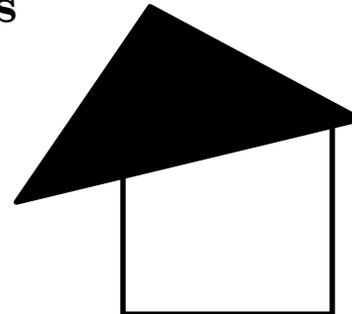
**Good
Things**



Worries



Dreams



Rickety Response-Based Shack



SHOW AND EXPLAIN YOUR GROWTH

Have a child stand against the wall and measure their height then have them move away and appreciate it. Ask how tall the child thinks they were one year ago and mark that. Now you can ask questions around what and who helped promote that growth: How did you do that? What did you mom do to help you get from there to here (pointing at the differing marks)? What did you sister do?

Bring mom into the discussion and ask her about things that her child is doing now at this height that they weren't doing one year ago? How did they come about?

*This exercise looks to encourage bragging about each other and highlights teamwork.



Boys Role in Safety

Start asking boys

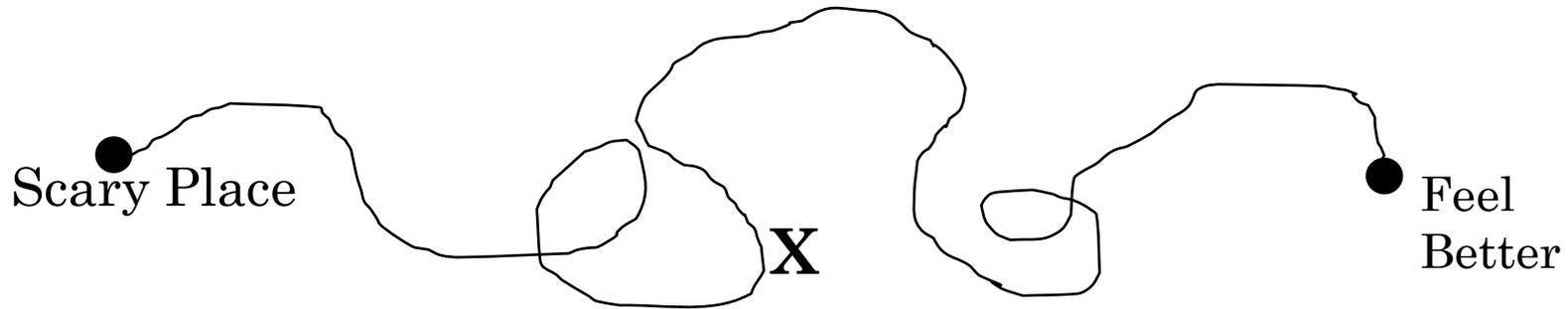
How do you keep girls safe – at school, with friends, in groups, alone?

How have you seen other people keep girls safe? What does it look like?

Do you know others who work to promote safety for girls?



2 DOTS



Draw a winding road connecting the two. Ask the child to put an X mark where they feel they are right now. Ask the child how they got from the scary place to where they are now.

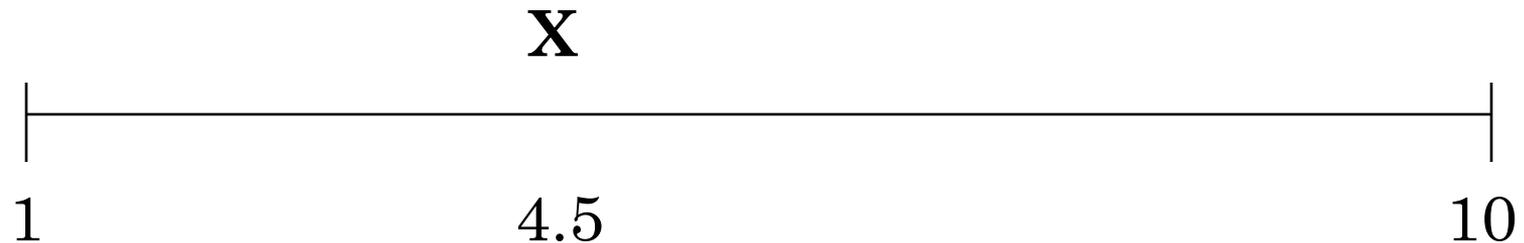
“There is a path, isn’t there? Where are you on the road now?”

“Wow that’s quite a long ways along. How did you get from the scary dot to your new place? Who helped?”



2 DOTS FOR WOMEN

Have the women pick a number for where she is now



Inquire about why she picked that number as opposed to another? What is the context behind that number for her? What has changed? What has potential to change?

