



The Allies Curriculum: An Integrative Model

MEN'S ABUSE INTERVENTION GROUP CURRICULUM MANUAL

By
Dr. Christopher Huffine
Licensed Psychologist

Address 1675 SW Marlow Ave, Suite 110, Portland, OR 97225 | Phone (503) 297-7979
Fax (503) 297-7980 | Email Allies@AlliesinChange.org | www.AlliesinChange.org

**ALLIES IN CHANGE
MEN'S ABUSE INTERVENTION GROUP CURRICULUM MANUAL**

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Introduction

This manual has truly been over twenty years in the making. This curriculum was originally conceived in 1982 at Men's Resource Center. Men's Resource Center was started in Portland, Oregon in the early 70's as a pro-feminist non-profit to support men. It initially addressed a variety of feminist concerns of relevance to men including non-sexist child rearing, sexism in the schools, homophobia, and rape. It held educational forums, discussion groups (referred to as "rap groups"), and did other political activism, all without charge. It first started offering therapy services (for a fee) in 1977. Over the next few years those therapy services grew even as interest in the non-therapeutic services diminished. This led to it converting to a for profit counseling center in the mid 80's. A few years after that, acknowledging a demand for therapy services for women, the Women's Agenda Counseling Center was launched as a sister organization using the same staff and space.

Men's Resource Center first started offering groups for abusive men in 1982. It was one of the first providers, if not the first provider, in the state of Oregon to offer specialized groups for abusive men. Those groups were a blend of traditional anger management principles offered through a feminist lens. At that time the weekly groups were 3 months in length. There would not be a significant increase in agencies offering specialized groups for abusive men until the mid-1990's, reflective of similar trends around the country. Aspects of the Duluth curriculum were incorporated in the late 80's and the groups were extended to 6 months in length shortly after that. Women's Agenda Counseling Center also started groups early on for women who were victims of domestic violence and later for women who were identified as perpetrators of domestic violence.

For many years, until the turn of the century, Men's Resource Center was the largest provider in the state of services for abusive men, at its peak offering over 40 groups a week for abusive men at four different locations. Because of its size, from at least the late 80's, there was a regular staff meeting where staff met multiple times a month to discuss the curriculum and related issues. This led to a continuing and on-going refinement of the curriculum. It is still relatively rare for agencies to be large enough or to have a dedicated enough staff to meet on a regular basis to discuss and review the curriculum and discuss the continuing challenges of working with abusive men.

I became involved with Men's Resource Center in the spring of 1992 and throughout the 90's the curriculum continued to be refined including incorporating work by Paul Kivel (e.g. the "Act Like A Man" box), Patricia Evans (e.g., Power Over vs. Personal Power), Terrence Real (e.g., grandiosity, externalizing), and the substance abuse field (e.g. self-care, relapse). Hand-outs/concepts developed at Men's Resource Center during that time included the list of controlling behaviors, the partner recovery process, and expanded conceptualizations of accountability and self-care. I had a significant hand in developing many of these concepts although many other people were involved as well.

In 1997 I founded the Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider network which is a monthly (initially twice a month) meeting of individuals who work with abusive men in the Portland metro area or who are interested in the work of helping abusive men to change. Each month a specific topic is selected for discussion (more typically) or occasionally there is a presentation. Those discussions, using a Facilitated Discussion format, have been incredibly informative and enlightening, utilizing the synergy of multiple people and programs from a diversity of philosophies. It has definitely deepened my understanding of many dynamics of working with abusive men.

I left Men's Resource Center in the fall of 2004 to start Allies in Change Counseling Center. At that

time I reframed the Men's Resource Center curriculum into the Allies model, including incorporating some new and expanded concepts. In the nine years since there have continued to be weekly staff meetings which have primarily focused on curriculum development. We also have an annual staff retreat which has also focused in part on curriculum revision. Additional influences on the Allies curriculum have included the work of John Gottman (e.g., accepting influence, contempt, repair attempts), Dan Wile (e.g., emotional barometer), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (e.g., self-awareness, treatment interfering behaviors), and individuals both named—Dave Wight's concept of intentional vs. informational, and unnamed (e.g., the Platinum rule).

My point in sharing this background is to make it clear that this curriculum has been “cooking” for over three decades in general and for over two decades within my own head. While I have had a significant hand in its continued development, dozens of individuals have made contributions to it over time. It has had the benefit of being analyzed and discussed by a group of people working with abusive men for that entire time, a number of whom have been doing this work for many years. It has also incorporated aspects of many schools of thought including feminist thought, cognitive behavior therapy, the Duluth curriculum, motivational interviewing, the substance abuse field, and many others.

What sets this curriculum apart from most others is its long gestation and development and review by so many different individuals. It has been “field tested” on thousands of abusive men over the years. This has led to a subtle and nuanced analysis that reflects more than two decades of refinement. As such, while continuing to evolve, the changes these days are pretty slight and modest ones and primarily involve additions as this field and related ones continue to advance. While aspects of this curriculum may be fairly familiar to you, others will be new or offer a slightly different take on traditional concepts. My hope is that you will use aspects of this curriculum, if not the entire model, to improve the work that you do with abusive men, just as we have done over the past two plus decades.

As mentioned earlier, while I have had a significant role in helping to evolve and shepherd this curriculum over the years, dozens of colleagues have made contributions both large and small to it. I wish to acknowledge the countless contributions of the staff of Men's Resource Center, Women's Agenda Counseling Center, and Allies in Change to this curriculum. One specific individual who deserves acknowledgement is Steve Stewart who made an extensive edit of the initial draft of this document. Likewise, I need to acknowledge the continuing commitment and hard work of Trey Nance as the organization Director of Operations and James Lund as the organization Program Manager. They have dedicated years to administratively manage the agency and keep it growing and healthy, including helping it transition to a non-profit in 2013, just as this manual is being launched.

Chris Huffine, Psy.D.