



Guide to community dialogue about domestic violence



*Help Me!* promotes community dialogue and action about domestic violence. It can be conducted as a live theatre performance or as a workshop using the *Help Me!* video. This book is a guide for a live show with actors or for workshops using the video - it contains facilitator's notes, key dialogue questions and facts, the script and graphic recordings from a theatre performance plus some music.

*Help Me!* explores:

- causes and effects of domestic violence
- attitudes of control, domination and rigid family roles
- how young family members respond
- safety strategies
- barriers to accessing support
- ways to improve support services
- practical ways outsiders can intervene
- ways to build safer, stronger families

Theatre is an engaging and entertaining way to promote dialogue about difficult issues. The 'forum theatre' process allows the audience to be involved in unravelling the complexities around domestic violence through interaction with the drama and the characters. The facilitator's questioning prompts the audience to dig deeper into motivations and barriers around domestic violence.

Following the drama, the audience question the characters and then discuss and role play practical ways the community can respond.

Graphic recordings of the dialogue and music can be used to enhance the learning experience.

*Help Me!* can be adapted based on local and cultural factors. Local support services can join the dialogue to connect with the community and explore how to be more effective. Local community workers, actors, and choirs could collaborate to develop and present a show. The show could also be translated into other languages.

*Help Me!* was created by the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS) with a multicultural group of young actors based on domestic violence research and family law workshops held over many years. Service providers and practitioners contributed to script and dialogue development. Two shows held at African House in Brisbane in July 2015 were filmed and made into this video and book package.

*Help Me!* is a collaboration between RAILS and the Queensland African Communities Council (QACC). Funding support came from Legal Aid Queensland and the Department of Social Services.

This package can be evaluated through action research by providing feedback from workshops/performance to RAILS at [education@rails.org.au](mailto:education@rails.org.au).

*We acknowledge the traditional custodians  
of this ancient and sacred land  
where we live.*

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## FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Help Me! starts with an audience warm up, then four scenes – a happy family; teenagers try to talk to their mother and each other about their parent's conflict; the older teenager talks to his best friend and gets offered drugs; the father becomes aggressive towards the children and mother. A 'Hot Seat' follows where characters are quizzed by the audience. Finally the audience come up with practical strategies to confront domestic violence.

The facilitator's task is to promote dialogue through the targeted questions at the end of each section and encourage the audience to explore practical strategies to deal with domestic violence. If using the Help Me! video pause the video at the end of each section when the questions appear.

'Key Facts' are included to support the 'Hot Seat' dialogue, however it is the audience and support services who hold the wisdom, and the forum process encourages this to emerge.

Facilitators should set up a safe space at the start and encourage respectful dialogue. They should acknowledge that domestic violence can raise strong feelings and that audience can leave and come back at any time. Support workers should be available if needed.

If time is limited, don't get too stuck on analysis or on the sections between the scenes. The main focus should be on practical strategies available to those within the violent situation and to the community – friends, neighbours, bystanders.

Conflict and violence in the home are complex and some dialogue may be difficult. If comments need to be challenged the facilitator could say 'Thanks for those views. How do others see this?' or 'Does this encourage healthy relationship?' etc. Some baselines are: abuse and violence are not acceptable ways to deal with conflict; safety is first; children should be protected from violence; adults should take responsibility for their actions; the law and services can help; and the community should stand up against domestic violence.

Care should be taken not to stigmatise specific groups. The audience should be reminded that domestic violence is widespread and occurs in all cultures and social groups. Shows/workshops that are branded positively as building stronger family and community may encourage more interest.

Graphic recordings of the dialogue during the workshop/performance can enhance learning.

Music is a powerful learning tool and a mix of traditional and modern music has been composed for Help Me! It includes some Hip Hop Helpline 'rap rhymes' to promote the key services and an uplifting sing-along finale.

Some of the raps have been created in other languages and are available online [www.rails.org.au](http://www.rails.org.au).

A key points handout for audience is included in this book. Detailed 'Dialogue Notes' for facilitators and actors is available in the resources section of the education page at [www.rails.org.au](http://www.rails.org.au).



# OVERVIEW



## CHARACTERS

- Patricia – wife and mother
- George – Patricia's husband
- Nelson – 19 year old son
- Sandra – 13 year old daughter
- Alex – Nelson's friend

## SCENES

- 1. Happy Family**  
The 'perfect' happy family.  
*Audience dialogue*
- 2. Avoidance**  
Nelson tries to engage with his mother about conflict she is having with her husband George. Nelson's sister Sandra listens in and then tries to talk to Nelson.  
*Audience dialogue*
- 3. Help Me**  
Nelson seeks help from his friend Alex, but the friend tempts him with drugs to soothe his worries.  
*Audience dialogue*
- 4. Fight**  
George comes home stressed from work. Things turn worse.  
*Audience dialogue*

## HOT SEAT

Characters are quizzed by audience and facilitator about their actions, motives, needs and barriers to seeking help.

## FORUM - How can we help?

Audience invited to suggest ways different members of the community could assist to help avoid violence, seek safety and confront the issues. .

Local police, family violence counsellors and lawyers provide input.

## FINALE

Pledge to act against domestic violence.

## Scene 1 Happy Family



Snapshot of a 'perfect' happy family.

*Props: Table and three chairs.*

**George:** Hi Honey. I'm home! *(puts down his briefcase).*

**Patricia:** Hi lovie! Have you had a good day? *(They hug and she takes his briefcase and puts it out of the way.)*

**George:** Thank you sweetheart.

**Sandra** *(running up to George for a hug):* Hi Dad! *They hug*

**Patricia:** Sit down, sit down. Let me get you a cold drink. *(Moves towards kitchen.)*

**George:** Thanks sweetie, but I think I'll go to the kitchen and cook tonight because you've been doing it for the last couple of days honey.

**Patricia:** Oh darling you really are the perfect husband but here's no need! I have something special prepared for tonight. So how about you sit down and relax. *(She leaves for kitchen.)*

**George:** *(sitting down)* How you doing son? You done your homework?

**Nelson:** Yes

**Patricia:** *(re-enters)* I have your favourite dinner in the oven.- roast chook with veg and chips, beer battered just the way you like them. I even brought home some double chocolate chip ice cream for dessert.

**George:** Mmmm I can't wait my darling.

**Patricia:** Look darling I got a new dress for our date on Friday. *(she holds dress up against herself to show him)*

**George:** Sensational sweetheart.. Soooooooo hot. I can't wait until Friday

**Patricia:** Well let me get a glass of wine. It's been such a long day. *(picks up her glass and spills it on George's lap – laughs)* Oh I'm so sorry. How silly of me.

**George:** *(laughing)* Oh darling, don't worry, I'll clean it up . ...

*Scene freezes.*

*Dialogue with Audience*



## Scene 2    Avoidance



Nelson, the 19 year old son, tries to engage with his mother, Patricia, about conflict she is having with her husband George. Nelson's young sister Sandra listens in and then tries to talk to her brother.

*Props: Table and 2 chairs facing.*

*Patricia is wiping table top. Nelson walks in. The clothes basket lies next to the table. Neither of them notice that Sandra is on the other side of the door listening in.*

**Nelson:** *Slumps up to the washing, picks up a shirt and sniffs*

Aww.... Muuum... you haven't done my washing.

**Patricia:** Oh what!. Sorry love.

**Nelson:** Aw, Mum. I really need my sports gear for tomorrow.

**Patricia:** *(staying seated, slightly agitated)* Well you should be able to do your own washing now... *(pause)*. Well come on son bring it here. I'll do it for you.

**Nelson:** Thanks.

*Patricia gets back up and continues to clean the table top*

**Nelson:** Are you okay, Mum?

**Patricia:** Why, love? Well yes...I suppose I haven't been feeling well lately.

**Nelson:** You know I've been worried about you, I've been wanting to talk but don't know how to bring it up...

**Patricia:** You know you can always talk to me about anything.

**Nelson:** Promise to be honest with me?

**Patricia:** I'm always honest with you.

*Sandra comes in*

**Sandra:** Mum, Nelson I'm home

**Patricia:** Hi honey did you have a good day?

**Sandra:** Yes.

**Patricia:** Me and your brother are just having a chat. If you want to go to your room I'll bring some yummie afternoon tea in 10 minutes. OK?

**Sandra:** *(hesitantly)* OK.:

**Patricia:** See you soon.... *(to Nelson)* So... what was it you wanted to ask me?

**Nelson:** .... *(pause)*... Ahmm ..What is going on with you and Dad? He's not the same. He doesn't treat you right.

**Patricia:** *(sits)* Honey – all married couples go through tough times.

**Nelson:** No Mum, I hear things. When I'm in my bedroom and you think I can't hear. I can!

*Patricia puts her hand on her cheek as if feeling the sting of punches and avoids eye contact with her son.*

*PAUSE.*

**Nelson:** Seriously ...Are you okay? Do you need help?

**Patricia:** *(pause)* It's just some little arguments we've been having We'll sort it out between ourselves. It's nothing for you to worry about love. I promise. Mum

*Patricia attempts a weak smile.*

**Nelson:** Dad says you're stressed...



**Patricia:** *(worried)* What? Were you talking? What did he say?

**Nelson:** Not much, just that you were stressed out... and weren't really coping... *(pause)*...Is he ... is he hurting you?

*Patricia takes her son's hand soothingly.*

**Patricia:** *(sighs)* Listen to me, son. I love your father so much. He isn't a bad person. We've been through a rough patch but things are OK now. He's had some tough things to deal with. He just wants things to be right all the time.

**Nelson:** You know ... *(hesitant)* Sometimes he scares me ...

**Patricia:** Nelson, you're his son. He loves you. He'd never hurt you.

**Nelson:** How do you know?

*Patricia looks away evasively then changes the subject abruptly.*

**Patricia:** Well, lets get that washing of yours done hey?...

*Patricia leaves room. Nelson, alone, puts hands on head and lowers it to the table. Sandra who has been on the outer, listening in, comes in and hesitantly approaches her brother at the dining table.*

**Sandra:** *(playfully)* Hi Big Brother!

*Nelson ignores her.*

**Sandra:** Hey, Nelly! Nelly!

*Nelson lifts his head off the table and looks at his sister.*

**Nelson:** For the last time, stop calling me that. Aren't you supposed to be at your friend's house..

**Sandra:** *(sighs)* Yeah I was, but we finished early so I came home.

**Nelson:** So you just got here?

**Sandra:** I was in my room. But you wouldn't notice that. So... is everything okay?

**Nelson:** *(sighs)* Yeah Sandy, everything's fine.

*Sandra playfully nudges Nelson's shoulder*

**Sandra:** *(getting angry)* Could you lie properly. I was in my room and I heard what you and mum were talking about, I know everything isn't okay.

So tell me what Mum said about Dad before I came in?

**Sandra:** *(agitated)* Hey talk to me!! What did she say.

*Nelson stands to storm out but Sandra reaches out for his hand. Nelson pulls his hand away.*

**Nelson:** You're just a kid. You don't need to know

**Sandra:** Sit down.

**Nelson:** Don't you have homework to do or something?

**Sandra:** *(getting more agitated)* Sit down dumb ass. I am NOT a kid. I'm 13 now. I'm turning 14... in a month. I'm not a kid any more. And I can hear things. And I understand things. I understand why Mum doesn't talk about this. But you can talk to me OK, YOU can talk to me and I can talk to you. We're siblings alright. Why do you just shut me down like this? We can talk about everything, right?

*Nelson gets up off chair angrily.*

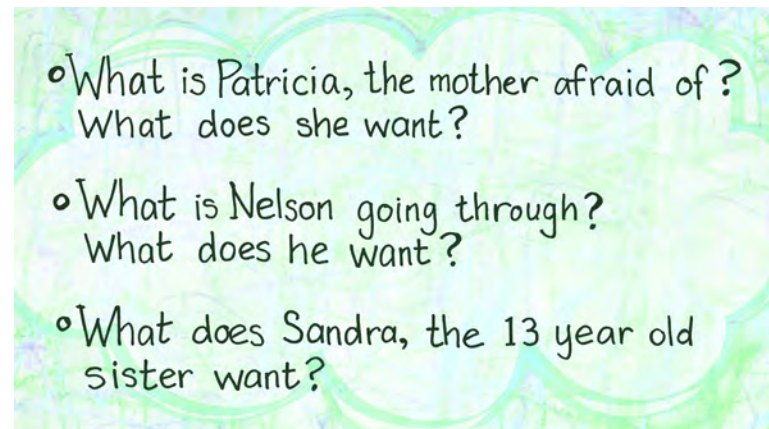
**Sandra:** Why do you just behave like this... Hey!

*Nelson storms out of the room.*

*Sandra holds her head.*

*Freeze.*

### Dialogue with audience



## Scene 3 Help Me



Nelson seeks help from his friend Alex, who tempts him with drugs to soothe his worries.

*Props: 3 chairs.*

*Nelson is at Alex's house and they're about to start a video game.*

**Alex:** You ready. Ready for this?

**Nelson:** Lets do this. I've been ready since we met 5 years ago. Let's do this!

**Alex:** Okay, lets get them. ....

*They play a little and lose the game.*

**Alex:** Aw Nelson, what are you doing? We usually beat these guys on this level.

**Nelson:** Don't worry about it. We'll get them on the next one.

**Alex:** Are you OK? What's going on?

**Nelson:** It's nothing. Don't worry.

**Alex:** *(to Nelson)* I'm you best friend in the world. Tell me what's going on.

**Nelson:** *(hesitant)* Well ... things at home haven't been going well lately.

**Alex:** Like what?

**Nelson:** mmmmm

**Alex:** What?

**Nelson:** Mum and Dad started fighting again, and Sandra... I think it's affecting her more than she's letting on.

**Alex:** Your Mum and Dad are fighting? But they always seem so in love.

**Nelson:** That's from the outside, but from the inside it's different. You know he comes home from work... and who knows what happened during his day.....  
*(pause)* He yells at Mum . Starts calling her names. But now it's getting physical. I just don't know what to do.

**Alex:** What's ya Mum doing about it?

**Nelson:** That's the scary part. She's doing nothing. She won't even talk to me. She just loves him too much and thinks that he's going through a tough time. I just don't know what to do man.

*Alex puts the controller down and moves around his room searching for something.*

**Alex:** You know what. I think you need to chill out for a while - and I have just the thing that will help.

*Alex pulls out a small zip lock bag filled with marijuana.*

**Nelson:** *(Whisper yells)* Dude what are you doing? Your mum's right next door in the kitchen!

*Alex sits back down and starts preparing a bong.*

**Alex:** Don't worry about it. She doesn't care what I do so long as I don't drop out of Uni. Chill.

**Alex:** *Takes a hit and breathes it out slowly and loudly.*

**Alex:** OK. Your turn. Come on!



**Nelson:** (*nervously*) Lets just continue this level. We'll beat them this time. Come on. I promise.

**Alex:** The games so much more fun when you're high. Come on Nellie, just have a go. Trust me it will do you some good.

*Nelson looks at the bong.*

### Dialogue with audience

- Nelson is tempted. Why? What might make him say yes or no?
- What could be the consequences?
- Where can young people find wise mentors?
- What would a wise mentor say and do?



## Scene 4 Fight



George comes home stressed from work. Things turn worse.

*Props: Table and 3 chairs in a row.*

*Nelson and Sandra are sitting on the floor. Nelson is playing a computer soccer game. Sandra is lounging around putting on nail polish. Patricia comes in and steps over dirty clothes on the floor.*

**Patricia** (*agitated*): Nelson, you've left your dirty washing on the floor again. How many times do I have to tell you?

**Nelson:** Awww Muuum

**Patricia** (*more frantic*): Do it please son. Your father's had to work late but he'll be home soon and you know how he hates a mess.

**Nelson:** I'll do it after.

**Patricia:** Do it please son.

**Nelson:** (*Nelson gets up and begins to walk away but pauses when he reaches Sandra*) What the hell is that smell?

**Sandra:** *(has opened her nail polish remover).* I'm doing my nails.

**Nelson:** Do it somewhere else. Why do you have to do it here?

**Sandra:** Because I can.

**Nelson:** Do it somewhere else.

**Sandra:** No.

**Nelson:** Yes.

**Sandra:** You going to make me.

**Patricia:** Would you two stop! The place is a mess, it smells like a paint factory and your father will be home any minute.

*They ignore Mum but come to strict attention when suddenly the door slams and George is home from work. He looks agitated.*

**Patricia:** *(moves toward him)* Hi honey. *(Tries to give George a hug but he shrugs her away. She tries to take his briefcase but he pulls it away from her and puts it down himself).* How was work?

**George:** Awful. . You do extra work and no-one thanks you. It's not worth... *(sees and points to the dirty washing)* What's this mess

**Patricia:** I didn't get time...

**George:** *(to Sandra)* Clean it up

**Sandra:** *(huffs)* It's not mine....

*(George stares her down threateningly)* Clean..... It..... Up..... *(Sandra slowly starts to clean it up. She's scared of him)*

**Patricia:** *(Gathers herself, puts on a smile.)* Come, and sit down darling. I have dinner in the oven.

**George:** I'm not hungry. *(he sits)*

**Patricia:** But it's your favourite, roast chook with veg and chips, beer battered just the way you like them. And I brought home some double chocolate chip ice cream for dessert.

**George:** *(ignoring Patricia)* Nelson, why aren't you studying or training? *(sniffs)* and what's that smell?

**Nelson:** It's Sandra's nail polish

**George:** Sandra, get that out of here. It stinks. And get me a drink. Make it quick.

**Sandra:** I'm cleaning up this washing that's not mine. I can't do everything.

**George:** *(pointing)* DONT answer me back you hear. *(Sandra walks away).* Nelson, get me a drink *(Nelson slinks slowly away. Keeping an eye/ear on things as he goes).*

**Patricia:** *(trying to lighten things - getting her new dress which is hanging up nearby)* Well honey, look. Umm... I got a new dress...

**George:** STOP! What did you say?

**Patricia:** I....err, got a new dress for our .....

**George:** *(more agitated).* You bought a new outfit WITHOUT asking me? Did I hear right?

**Patricia:** *(timid, frightened)* ... Yes... Well I....

**George:** *(revving up -pointing)* What were you thinking woman? Does my money grow on trees? Does it? Does it?

**Patricia:** *(getting more frightened)* No...

**George:** Do we have money to throw around, because the last time I checked, we were still paying off a mortgage and paying to get our kids educated..... Not that getting a qualification did any good for me, look where I am now?

*Nelson returns with a drink and George grabs it from him in anger.*

**George:** About time.. Now, you two go to your room. Both of you.

*Nelson backs away but hesitates, throwing a glance at Patricia, whose head is down looking at the floor.*

**George:** Don't make me repeat myself, boy.

*(Nelson quickly grabs the last of the mess and make a hasty retreat. Exit.)*

**George:** Go get my dinner. .... *(Patricia runs off stage. George's eyes follow her, menacingly. He's tense, ... He picks up the TV remote)* What's on the idiot box tonight? ...Yeah cricket, good stuff.

**George:** *(Picks up phone)* Mate. You doing anything tonight? .... Yeah. Big Bash cricket.... Come on over... Couple of beers as well.... Don't worry about her. I'll send her to the kitchen. .... She doesn't understand the great game mate. She's being a bitch anyway... Just come on over.

**Patricia:** (comes back from kitchen with his dinner) Well honey here's your dinner.

**George:** (looks at it with scorn. Pushes it away onto the floor) I don't want this. Useless bitch, can't you do anything right?

**Patricia:** (Frantic. On the floor cleaning up the mess) I cooked your favourite meal ...

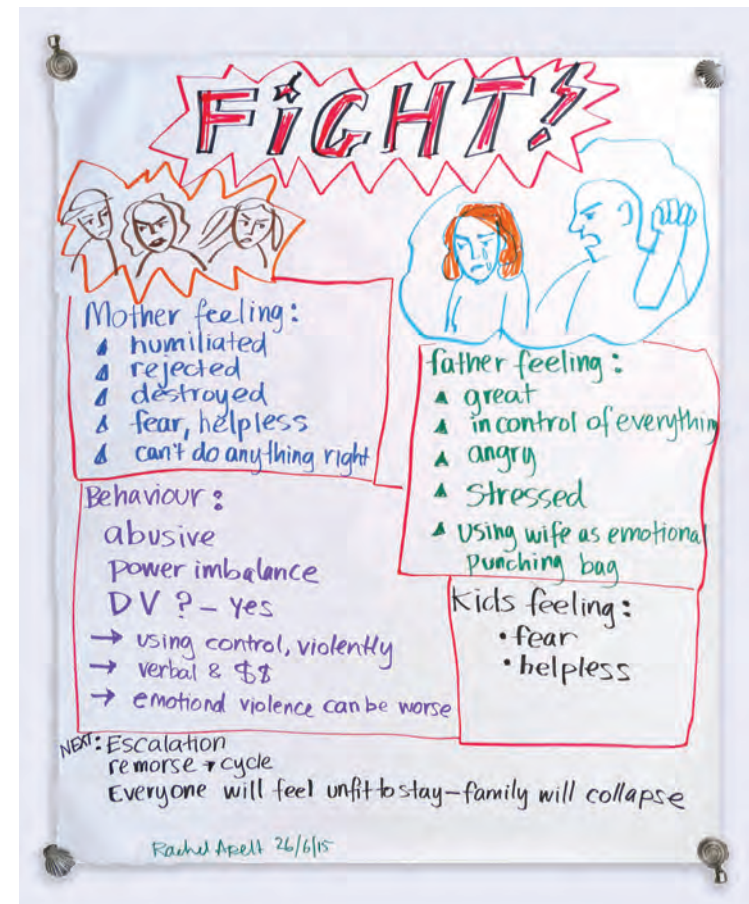
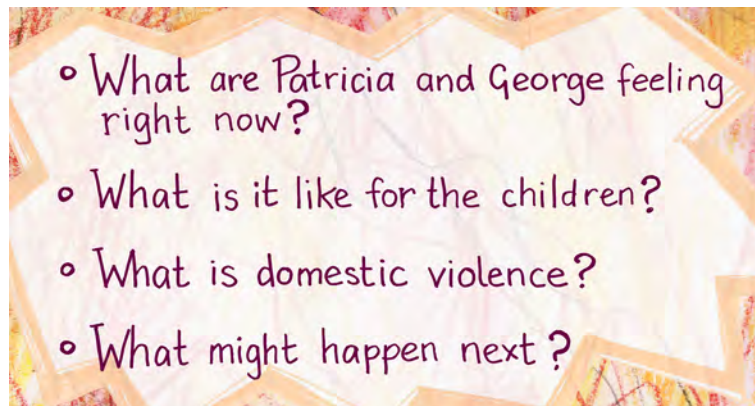
**George:** What did I say? I don't want your dinner. It's shit. I don't want it. I want you to do what I say. Do you understand?

**Patricia:** I...I... (on the floor, starting to sob)

**George:** (towers over her menacingly) DO YOU UNDERSTAND? I keep telling you and you don't get it do you? Who's the boss of this house? COME ON, TELL ME. TELL ME. WHO IS THE FUCKING BOSS IN THIS HOUSE? WHO'S THE BOSS?

Scene freezes as he stands over her menacingly. She's sobbing curled up on the floor.

### Dialogue with audience






# Hot Seat




Characters are quizzed by audience about their feelings, motives and actions. Some questions and responses are below. In a live performance invite the audience to question the actors one by one – first the children and then the parents. Focus mostly on the practical 'What can we do?' type questions.


## HOT SEATING

  
**Sandra**


- feeling? Pretending to feel ok.
- Why do you escalate it?  
Nelson doesn't talk to me won't tell me
- Why do you want to know?  
Because I care!
- What do you know?  
wonder a lot, lots of concern
- If Nelson told you, what would you do?  
Try to find a solution, or take care of myself
- Can you take care of yourself?
- Who's side would you take?  
Not sure. Mum doesn't do things well. At least Dad earns \$
- Do you feel safe?  
what do you mean?

  
**Nelson**

- do you look up to dad?  
- used to
- what's your role in family?  
-> look after myself - dad's not a good role model
- Sister? - protect her
- friend's place -> feel better there?
- No - worrying about home
- would you fight your dad?  
-> think about it, but he's my dad
- How do you feel when Dad sends you to your room?  
- feel lost
- Tempted to smoke w/ friend?  
No, Mum brought me up well
- What would you do if Mum told you whole story?
- If Mum told you whole story would you be able to control your emotions?
- What do you feel?

  
**Patricia**

- how do you feel?  
- pretty scared.
- who's responsible for this?  
- obviously I am
- have you thought of talking to husband before shopping?  
X No! Why should she seek permission?
- she's an adult (audience)
- Do you make lots of contributions at home?  
- I do lots, keep the house running
- Is it the mother's responsibility to keep control?  
X No! (audience)
- what has changed? (happy family to this?)
- Do you think it is abusive?
- What will you do?
- how do you feel about your kids getting involved?
- Would you get a divorce?
- If someone you trusted offered help, would you accept it?

  
**George**

- Why are you angry?
- do you think it's ok to treat wife this way?
- did your father treat your Mum this way?
- have you ever tried a different way?
- what does being 'The Man of the House' means?
- do you think you are selfish & dominating?
- When you see wife cry, what do you think?
- Why do you feel you are 'The Boss' of the house?
- Why did you become aggressive?
- what would you do if she left you?
- what about all the work ~~she~~ does?
- what effect do you think your behaviour has on kids?
- Do you think calling your wife a bitch to your friend is ok? What about all her work?
- How would you feel if a man treated your daughter the same way?
- Would it make a difference if she earned \$\$\$? Would you still expect her to love you?
- Do you love your wife? Clean?

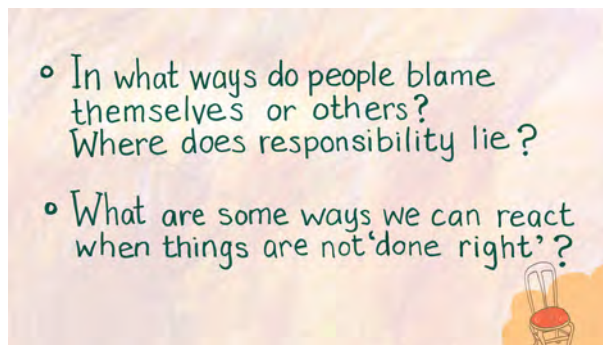
Rachel Powell 2010/11

## Is this Domestic Violence?

**Patricia:** I don't feel like it's abusing. What he does to me. I mean that's just him. I don't know. All marriages go through stuff like that and he's just got a short temper you know.

**George:** I wasn't violent. There wasn't anything. That's how we always talk.

### *Dialogue Questions*



## Why was he violent?

**Patricia:** I don't know why he does it. I just think sometimes he's just had a long day at work and comes home and something's not done right. Just when things aren't right...

**George:** The reason I went off because she didn't let the kids do the homework, the computer's broken down, and I had a hard day at work... you know, so I wasn't happy. Come home and there's a lot of problem at home.

### *Dialogue Questions*

- In what ways do people blame themselves or others? Where does responsibility lie?
- What are some ways we can react when 'something's not done right'?

## KEY FACTS

Abusers often try to minimise their abuse to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.

To protect themselves an abused person may:

- deny or minimise the violence
- agree with partner to calm them
- not seek DV services to avoid angering the abuser
- use alcohol and other drugs

Domestic violence in law is more than hitting. It's threats and control and other abuse which makes you fear for your safety or wellbeing. Verbal abuse can be psychologically damaging.

Domestic violence occurs in all cultures and social groups. It's a massive community problem.

## KEY FACTS

Abusers don't take responsibility for their actions. If they admit to aggression, they often:

- deny it was a wrong thing to do
- blame circumstances
- blame the victim

A typical domestic violence pattern is that a trigger sets off violence. Abuser says sorry, it will never happen again. Victim wants to believe the abuser will change. They make up. Life returns to 'normal' until tensions begin and the cycle continues.

All adults need to take responsibility for their own actions but if 'something's not done right' that doesn't justify violence.

## Was money part of the conflict?

**Patricia:** I think he gets angry sometimes. I think he gets upset and overreacts... and comes home and something's not done right or I've gone and bought like that new dress or something like that you know....

**George:** Yes she was doing something wrong. She bought a new dress without asking. I'm the only one that works in the house. I'm the one that should control the money because I'm the one that worked for it.

### *Dialogue Questions*

- In what ways does the partner who looks after the home contribute?
- What are some reasons for money conflict?
- What are appropriate responses to money conflict in the home?
- What are different types of financial abuse? What can be done about them?

## Was this about control and power?

**George:** The man needs to control the house control of the house. I'm the boss of the house. It's my castle. She'll just have to do what I tell her to do.

**Patricia:** I think he gets angry sometimes. I think he gets upset and overreacts. He's always had a temper but in the last couple of years it's got worse.

### *Dialogue Questions*

- In what ways might 'anger' and 'control' be factors in domestic violence?
- What are some reasons a person might want to control a relationship?
- What might be some triggers for violence in the home?

## KEY FACTS

Contributions made in keeping the house and raising children are now clearly recognised generally and in legal proceedings if families separate.

Many families live on tight budgets and conflict about finances is common. However this does not justify aggression and violence.

There are many ways an abusive partner can cause financial hardship towards their partner. There is social security to help enable abused family members gain some financial independence.

## KEY FACTS

Everyone gets angry and there is always conflict in any relationship. You can choose to get angry, or react calmly.

Domestic violence is often not uncontrolled anger but rather manipulation and planned to make the victim feel afraid, ashamed and helpless. The abuser wants power and control, not equality.

Abuse at its core comes from lack of respect and consideration for the other person.

A woman is not the property of the man as it may have been many years ago. Men of this mindset need to learn how to treat women with respect and move away from arrogant dominance and move towards equality.

Culture is no excuse for violence.

Many have deeply held attitudes that violence is the way to sort family problems and bring discipline. But violence just makes people afraid and less able to learn. Everyone learns best through building understanding and good relationships, rather than through fear.



## How does this affect the children?

**Patricia:** I don't know what its doing to the kids. I don't think it's good. But I also don't know what else to do to make it better. But I don't want them growing up like this.

**George:** Its not having anything on the children ... yeah they're used to it.

**Nelson:** Mums not really saying much to me and I'm kind of lost and my sisters wanting answers from me and I don't even know the answers so I'm kind of stuck.


**Sandra:** I dislike it. I don't feel its like a home. I don't know

**Nelson:** I had a chance to talk with my best friend but I didn't quite get the answers I was looking for.

**Sandra:** And Nelson doesn't talk to me. Mum and dad worry about other things. Don't spend time with us. They just think I am a kid and no-one should care about me. ...

**Nelson:** I think if I could sit down with Dad and really get him to talk to me about the sort of things he goes through then maybe that could solve part of the issue.

## Dialogue Questions

- What effect could domestic violence have on children?
  - What issues are there for young people to talk with parents about violence happening in their families?
  - What help is there for young people in domestic violence situations? What could people do or say to help?
- 

## KEY FACTS

Children exposed to violence may

- learn violent behaviour
- suffer nightmares, bed wetting, anxiety, be withdrawn.
- do worse at school, at forming relationships and at parenting

Parents may try to shield their children from the fact that abuse is happening.

There can be danger in a child raising the issue of domestic violence with an abusive parent.

The abused partner in a family needs to consider the negative effects of exposing the children to violence when deciding whether to separate.

Trusted wise mentors and friends can provide vital support where it's not available in the family.

Services such as Kids Help Line offer counselling and safety strategies. KHL is a confidential free service for people up to age 25. They always consider the safety of the young person first. KHL listen and reassure the person that they are supported and are never the cause of parental violence. Depending on age, a counsellor may map a "safety plan" with the person. Callers can remain anonymous and can call once or as often as they need.



## Why don't you get counselling?

**Patricia:** I think I would feel ashamed of going to counselling. Counselling costs money and all the rest of it so I don't think it would work.

**George:** Talk to someone? How are they going to help? They're not going to help because these things keep happening at home all the time. Are they going to help me? Are they going to help my wife?

### *Dialogue Questions*

- Are there ways to overcome barriers to going to counselling?
- Where else could you get support?
- As a friend or neighbour, how would you talk with someone you know is in a domestic violence situation?

## What can you do to keep safe?

**Patricia:** I mean sometimes he scares me but... I haven't talked to him specifically about it because I'm scared that if I catch him when he's in a good mood it'll turn bad.

### *Dialogue Questions*

- When and how would we contact domestic violence services or police?
- What barriers might there be and how would we overcome them?
- What might a domestic violence safety plan look like? Who would be involved and what would they do?

## KEY FACTS

Well-trained counsellors can provide strong support to people who have been abused, and their families.

Counsellors are trained to sensitively help people talk through their problems and make positive changes.

There are services that provide free or low-cost counselling.

People who have been helped by counselling should speak out about its benefits so as to lessen the shame and scepticism that are barriers to accessing this support.

## KEY FACTS

Violence breeds more violence. It often increases, and can kill.

There are free domestic violence services and shelters to escape domestic violence.

### **Safety is most important**

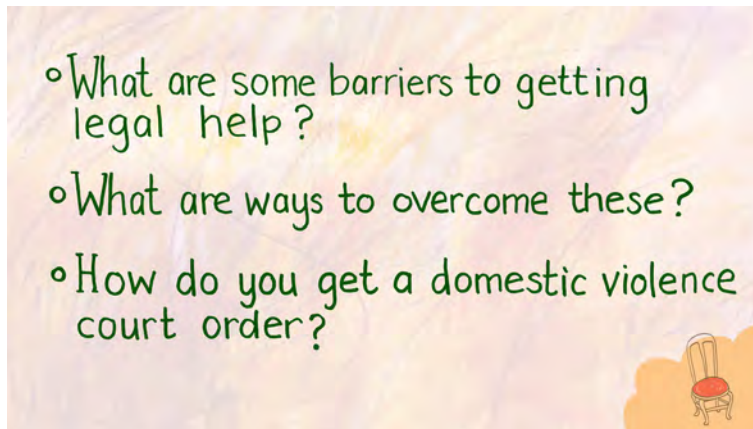
- Plan who to call, where to go, what to take
- Store contacts under secret names
- Check-in daily with someone
- Get neighbour to listen out
- Maybe alert police so they know

Police are contacted through 000 or 131 444 (non emergencies). They must respond. They can enter and search a place where they suspect domestic violence has occurred. They can apply for a domestic violence protection order in the court.

## Why don't you get legal help?

**Patricia:** If I go to Legal Aid and he finds out its not going to be good and I'm scared that I'll complain to them or say something to them and he'll find out and they wont have done anything and I'll be on my own in a worse situation.

### Dialogue Questions



## Why don't you leave him?

**Patricia:** I don't leave because of the amount of shame it would bring on our family and in our culture the way I was brought up you don't just leave, you don't walk out you don't give up. I wouldn't have any money. He brings home all the money. I wouldn't have anywhere to go because of that.

**Patricia:** I don't think it's a very healthy way to live but I don't see any other way right now ...

### Dialogue Questions

- What are the factors in deciding whether to leave when there's violence in a relationship?
- How do you weigh up these factors to make a decision?

## KEY FACTS

Lawyers and agencies must keep information confidential. DV court matters are not open to the public. Interpreters have a code of ethics to keep info confidential.

You can apply to a court for a DV order yourself or police will apply if they find evidence of domestic violence.

Legal Aid may help with a DV protection order and with family law advice. You can get phone advice if concerned about going to their office.

Children under 18 can not apply for a DV order against their parents as this is a child protection issue.

## KEY FACTS

Shame can keep domestic violence in the shadows and abused people in silence and fear. No-one should have to live in fear. Healthy relationships are based on trust and kindness – not fear and control.

Culture should not make us stay in unsafe situations. Culture cannot justify violence.

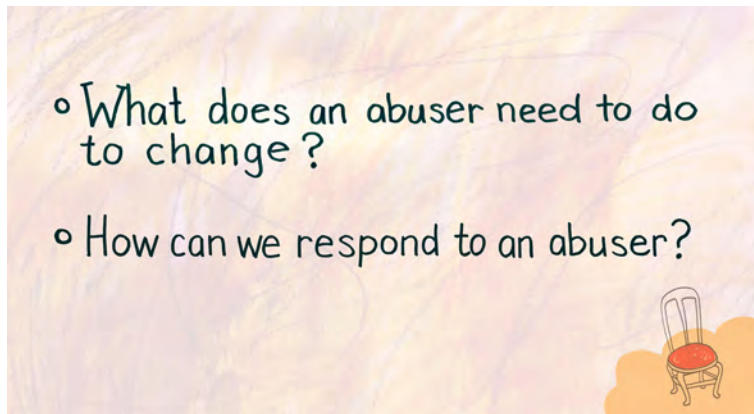
Many couples sort their separation out in a respectful way and learn to live new lives but share and care for their children in a positive way.



## What can be done to stop your abuse?

**George:** Yeah. I could have dealt with that differently but I wasn't thinking at the time. I guess I should talk to her in a nice way instead of reacting bad, calling her names.

### *Dialogue Questions*



## What do you wish for?

**Patricia:** I would want him to be the man that I married who was lovely and caring and gentlemanly and I just want to go back to that.

**George:** Just happy family. Just to be happy. Everybody's happy in the house. Kids going to finish, get a job, move out and we just live happy at home.

## KEY FACTS

Admitting you have a problem is a first step to solving it. Abuse is never necessary or inevitable – it's a choice, and there are better choices to make.

We must take responsibility for our actions. People in your community can help and there's support programs available. There's huge long term benefits in stopping violence

Abuse and violence always come from lack of respect and caring for the other person.

Where the violence is about anger rather than power and control there are anger management strategies:

- recognise your anger warning signs.
- take 'time out' to calm down so you can think about the bigger picture and respond in a better way.
- Say 'I am in charge of myself – I can make good choices'
- Remember to calm down, relax your body and breathe into your belly
- Remind yourself you can phone a help line or talk to a wise friend or relative

Good things can come from change but they are unfamiliar at first. When you embrace change, it shows you are strong inside.

Men especially, need to talk about their violence. Men need to challenge violence from other men and hold them accountable.

### *Dialogue Questions*

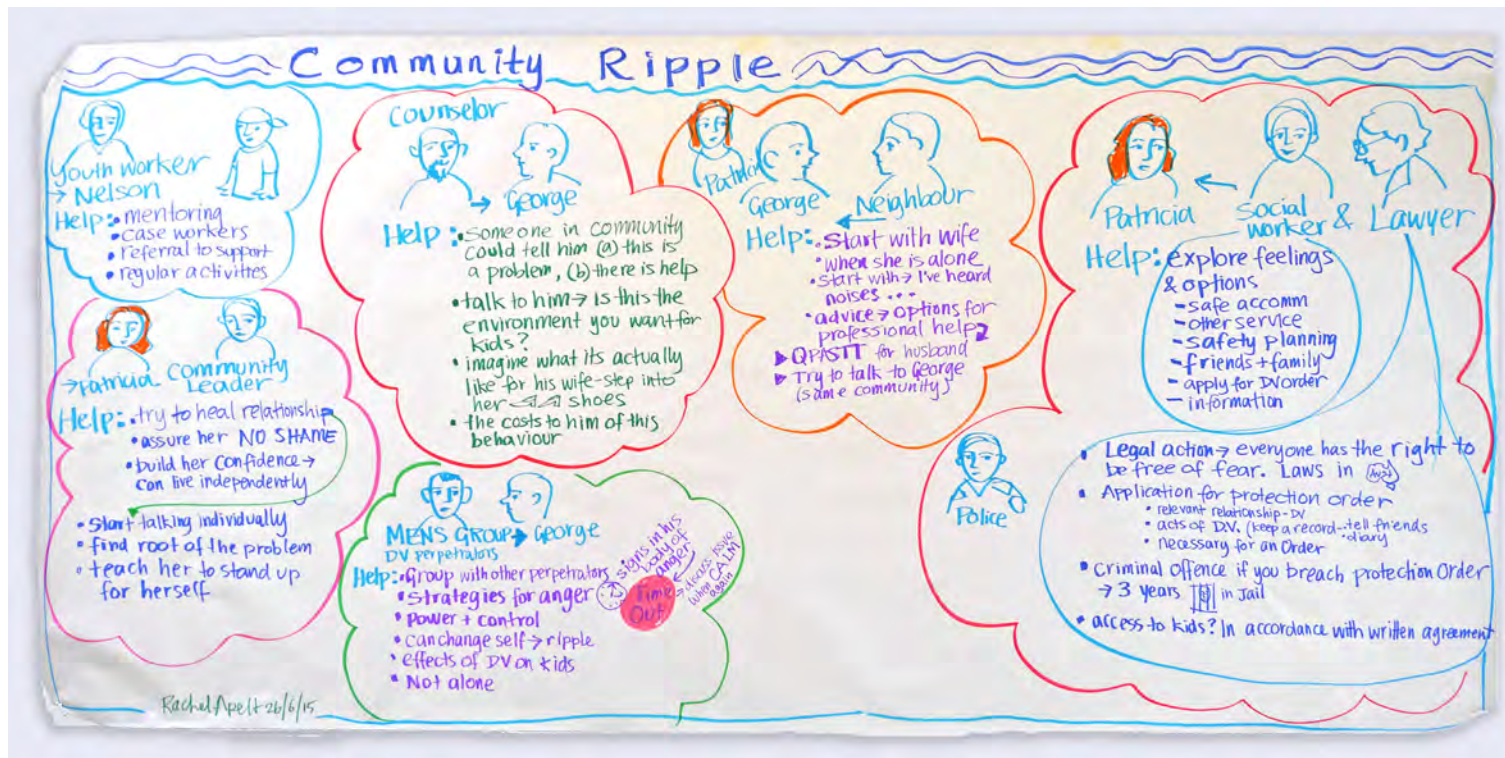
- How can you move towards equality in an intimate relationship?
- What are the good things each family member brings to the family?
- What are the good things the community can bring to the family?
- How do we bring all these good things together to create stronger, safer families?

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

Participants, now armed with a deeper understanding, are ready to explore practical ways to confront domestic violence. Some strategies may have already emerged from the dialogue previously.

Scenes could be revisited. For example, audience members, or an actor/facilitator, could role-play a neighbour of Patricia, a wise mentor for Nelson, the friend that George phoned in the fight scene.

A 'community ripple' could be formed where audience members come to the front to suggest how they might help - what they would practically say and do. This may be as family member, friend, neighbour, work colleague or bystander (in a live show they would stand near the characters they are helping). Local police, domestic violence workers, counsellors and lawyers can also provide input here. In the end we see a whole network of community and professional support on stage and can explore how this could be strengthened.



## Community Support

“Some people may find it hard to talk about their problems for fear that the community will find out and the family may be shamed or even split up. A community leader or support person would look to those most at risk and support them first. We would find a safe time to talk and may look at ways of getting the person involved in community groups and encourage them to get advice from support services about their safety and legal rights. We might also talk to the person who may be doing the abuse and remind them of their responsibilities and offer support if they wanted to take it up. Where we can we would encourage neighbours and friends to assist. At all times we need to remember that safety must be first.”

*Elijah Buol, President, Queensland African Communities Council*



### Rap

No problem too big, no problem too small.  
Got worries give Kids HelpLine a call  
if you're under 25 1800 55 1800  
is the number to dial to get support for a while  
1800 55 1800

## Domestic Violence Services

“Domestic Violence services give support to help keep you safe and free from fear. Services are: totally confidential; provide information, support, counselling and referral; talk with you and help you make decisions; and respect the decisions you make. Some services can help with crisis accommodation and check if any financial support is available.

Domestic Violence workers also help with safety plans. These include things like: being safer in your home; safety planning with your children; who to call, where to go, what to take if you have to leave; storing key contacts under secret names; having regular safety check-ins with others; making safety arrangements with neighbour or friends; and alerting local police to possible violence.

Domestic violence is mostly by men against women but there are also services that help support men.”

*Belinda Cox, Program Manager, Brisbane Domestic Violence Service*



### Rap

1 800 737 732 Domestic Violence Helpline can help you  
1 800 RESPECT is what you should get.  
No excuse for abuse, so connect to 1800 737 732



## Police

Police have powers to enter, search and investigate where they suspect domestic violence has occurred. The first priority is safety and to protect and serve the community. Police will separate each party to investigate what is happening and then take action. One form of action is a police application for a Domestic violence protection order that is heard in the court. A temporary order will first be put in place and served on the respondent, and it stays in force until a court decides otherwise. If police form the opinion that domestic violence has not occurred then they will refer both parties to support services or legal services. Where police liaison officers are available they will be contacted to assist culturally-specific communities. Domestic violence is a huge community problem and police and community need to work together to address this serious problem.

*Mary Kenyi, Senior Police Liaison Officer, Queensland Police Service*



### Rap

Phone 131 444

if you call the police they've got to come for sure,  
in emergency call triple zero 000

## Lawyers

"Domestic violence happens across all cultures. Everyone has a right to be safe and not live in fear and Australia has strong domestic violence laws to try to protect those at risk. Domestic violence is more than physical violence – it's also about using threats and abuse to maintain control and power over someone. Children are also at risk if exposed to domestic violence.

Legal Aid gives free, confidential legal advice so you can decide if you want to apply for a domestic violence protection order. Phone advice can be given if you have concerns about coming to our office. Interpreters can be used if needed.

A protection order is a strong warning. It will say the other person must be of good behaviour. It may say the other person must not go near you. It may say you can still live together. Under a Domestic violence protection order a person doesn't get a criminal record, but it's a criminal offence if they break the order.

The law supports that a domestic violence abuser must be held to account but people should be given a chance to change if possible."

*Mary Kalu, Lawyer, Legal Aid Queensland*



### Rap

Got a legal problem Legal Aid will help you out  
Break it all down, tell you what the law's about  
Listen up good – they'll break it down  
Tell you what the law is goin' on in this town.

## Perpetrator Programs

“Counselling and group programs are available for men who abuse or use violence on their partners and family. The programs help them to make changes to their behaviour and attitudes, to understand the effects of violence and of the value of healthy relationships. Participants also learn the value of taking responsibility for their own behaviour and of giving up blaming others. They learn to be more aware of themselves, to notice when they are heading towards violence and what they can do instead to ensure people around them always feel safe. Violence doesn’t solve problems, it causes them! These programs provide a supportive environment for change and skills for better learning and communication. The group programs are mainly for men as the great majority of those that use domestic violence are men. Men can join a group either because a court orders it or because they realise they need help and they’re ready to change.

*Paul, Secretary, Services and Practitioners for the  
Elimination of Abuse Qld (SPEAQ)*



### Rap

1300 78 99 78 MensLine can help you out mate  
1300 78 99 78 so you don't cross the line. Don't you cross the line mate

## Finale

Domestic violence is widespread across all communities and social groups. It is a massive community problem.

Rosie Batty, the 2015 Australian of the Year, in her acceptance speech, pleaded for domestic violence to be brought out of the shadows and into the light. She called for people to speak up and seek help where there's violence in the home. She spoke also to men saying they need to challenge each other and become part of the solution.

Let's make a pledge to speak up and always challenge and act against domestic violence. Lets take the learnings from 'Help Me! back to our families, friends and neighbourhoods and help build stronger, safer families and community.

'Stand Strong', a song of help and hope composed for the performance, could be sung here. A music score is included.

## EVALUATION

An evaluation of the performance/workshop could be done and findings shared through the creators of Help Me!, the Refugee and immigration Legal Service (email [education@rails.org.au](mailto:education@rails.org.au)) to contribute to research to towards improving education in the community about domestic violence.

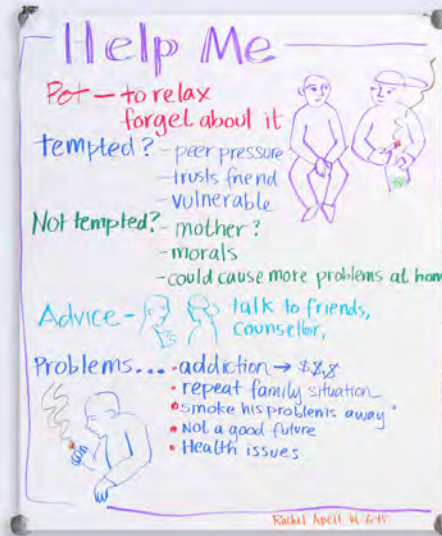
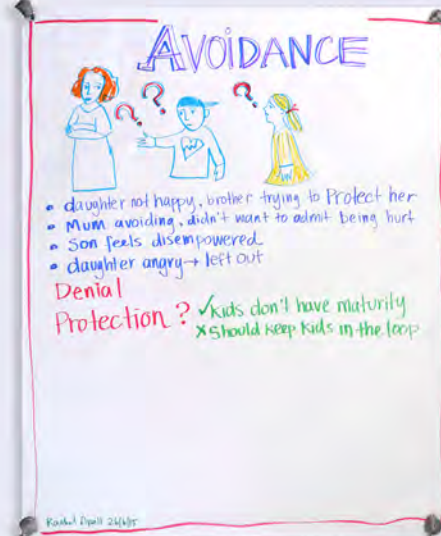
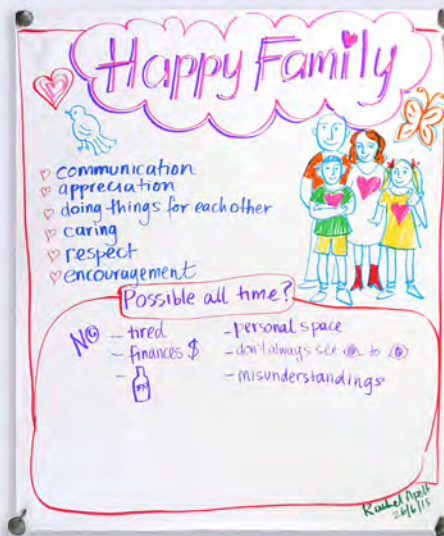
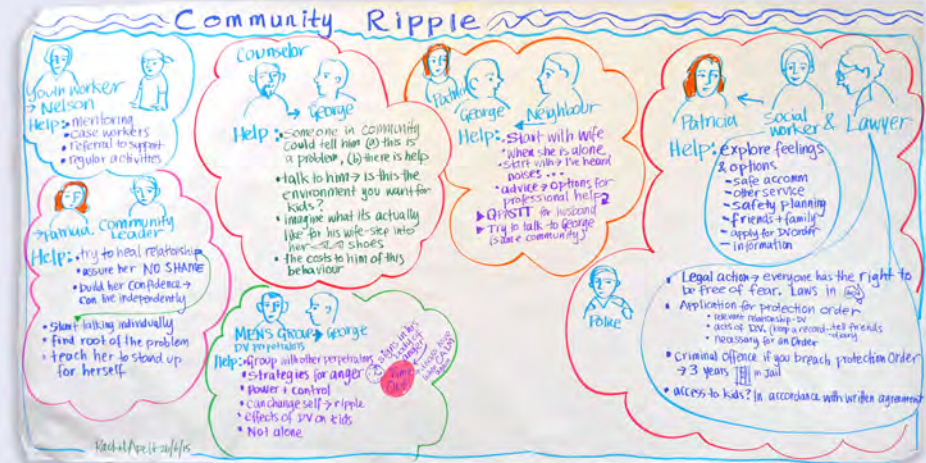
## Visual Problem-Solving

Graphic recording of the dialogue was done at the live performance.

Visual thinking can be a useful tool in collaborative problem solving and could be integrated into an extended workshop. For example, ask each participant to draw a picture or diagram of how to tackle aspects of domestic violence. These could be: What barriers are there to accessing legal aid or domestic violence services? What can you do to keep safe? How can we approach and support others who are in domestic violence situations?

Put the finished drawings on a wall and break into small groups to analyze any common issues and links that appear, and then come up with a stronger, clearer combined picture. Share the new diagram/s with the whole group and come up with strategies to better tackle domestic violence.

Based on 'Visual Strategy and Wicked Problem-Solving'  
by Tom Wujec at [tomwujec.com](http://tomwujec.com)





# Music

The music and rap rhymes in *Help Me!* were composed for the performance. The songs are available on the video and online at [www.rails.org.au](http://www.rails.org.au). Local community choirs could support domestic violence education by learning some of the songs and collaborating in workshops. A score of 'Stand Strong', an uplifting finale of hope, is included. The Hip Hop Helpline 'rap rhymes' promoting key services have been created in other languages and are also available online.

## Scene 1 Happy Family

HaHa... Happy families. Laugh, play games, like TV  
HaHa... Harmony. Together. We help each other out.  
Family proud. Laugh out loud

HaHa... Happy families Respect. Honesty.  
Listen carefully to each other  
whenever things go wrong  
Keeps family strong and together.

## Scene 2 Avoidance

Help me! What's going on?  
Talk to me!

## Scene 3 Help Me

Help me! Want to feel good. Help me!

## Scene 4 Fight

Hey family. Where are we going and what will be?  
Hey family. Where are we going What will be, will be  
will become of us?

## Finale Stand Strong

### Stand Strong

We will help you sister oh yeah  
Rise up - fly over raging seas  
stand strong and safely on the shoreline  
You don't have to live on your knees.

We will help you brother you know  
you have the power to choose  
to walk beside me as an equal  
and never no never abuse

We will help each other oh yeah  
rise up fly over raging seas  
Stand strong together on the shoreline  
No-one should live on their knees

We'll never live on our knees

## There is Help

- You're not alone
- There is support – access it
- You're not to blame.
- There's no excuse for abuse
- Partners should be equals. One is not



## Friends can Help

- Find a safe time to talk
- Listen and support - Don't judge or blame
- Give contacts for Help Services
- Be part of the Safety Plan



## Help Lines

### Kids Help Line

- Confidential talk
- Any problem – any time
- Safety is first
- You're not the cause of parent's violence

Challenging abusive parent may be unsafe.



### Emergency – 000

**1800 RESPECT** – 1800 737 732

**MensLine** – 1300 78 99 78

**Kids Help Line** – 1800 55 1800

**Legal Aid** – 1300 651 188

**Lifeline** – 13 11 14

**Relationships Australia** – 1300 364 277



## Safety Plan

- Plan who to call, where to go, what to take
- Store contacts under secret names
- Check in daily with someone
- Get neighbour to listen out
- Maybe alert police so they know



## Help Services

### DV Services

Are confidential and:

- Will support you and the children
- Will respect your decision
- Will offer free shelter if available

Won't call police unless there's danger



## Legal Help

- DV is more than hitting – it's also threats and control
- Children are harmed if exposed to DV
- DV court – closed to public
- DV Protection Order from court:

police make application, or self-application – you may get help to make this

- DV order is a strong warning. may say you can still stay together, but no violence may say abuser must not go near you won't give a criminal record, unless abuser breaks order. If abuser breaks order, can be fined or jailed if a serious breach.
- Law says abuser must be held to account but to be given chance to change if possible



## Help Others

- SPEAK OUT - there's no excuse for abuse
- If you hear or see DV. Make the call
- Disrupt, Interrupt - if you safely can



## Help Yourself



- Violence is a choice – there are better choices
- You have the power to choose to change
- Violence causes problems – doesn't solve problems
- Partners in a relationship should be equal
- There's help and support programs
- Huge long term benefits in stopping violence



## CREDITS

Forum theatre was created by acclaimed Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal as part of his 'Theatre of the Oppressed', which brings an audience into the performance to explore ways to tackle oppression.

This project was a partnership between the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS) and the Queensland African Communities Council (QACC). Funding support came from Legal Aid Queensland and the federal Department of Social Services

Writer/Producer – Rob Lachowicz, Education Officer, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service.

Script – Grace Edward, Pri Hemmadi, Rob Lachowicz, Sarah Woodland

Music – Rob Lachowicz, Dave Crane

Film and editing – Dave Crane

Illustrations and graphic recording – Rachel Apelt

Book design – Teresa Jordan

Full credits for the live theatre performance appear at the end of the *'Help Me!'* video.

Special thanks for help in development to:

Brisbane Domestic Violence Service  
Griffith University Theatre Scope  
Immigrant Women's Support Service

Legal Aid Queensland, Family Law Section  
Queensland Police Service  
Services and Practitioners for the Elimination of Abuse Qld (SPEAQ).

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)  
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[www.rails.org.au](http://www.rails.org.au).



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