

**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Power and Control Wheel

**Possible Uses:** Facilitate conversation about how power and control is the foundation of domestic violence.

**Target Audience:** Any professional who works with domestic violence cases.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes

**Objectives:** Upon completion of this activity, participants will be able to:

* Identify how power and control is used by people who cause harm in domestic violence.

**Key Terms &** Domestic Violence Dynamics

**Concepts:** Power and Control

**Equipment or** Online: breakout rooms

**Materials Needed:** In-person: white board or flip chart

**Preparation:** N/A

**Instructions:**

* Each participant group is assigned a spoke of the wheel. Instruct the groups to brainstorm examples of each power and control strategy. Give the groups approximately 5-10 minutes to meet. Bring the group back together and have each group report out their brainstorming session.
* In the following 8 slides of the PowerPoint, the power and control wheel is broken down with examples. After each group presents their findings, present the slide that correlates with their topic.
* At the end of the activity, give participants the Power and Control Wheel handout with the spokes filled in with examples. victimization or trauma to a person who experiences domestic violence.
* Bring small groups back together and have each group report out. Challenge each group to change the practice or response to be more trauma informed.
* Write all group responses on a flip chart or white board.

**NOTE:** N/A

Diagram

Description automatically generated

**Power and Control Wheel**

Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of domestic violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the batterer, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, make up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instill threat of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of the woman's life and circumstances.

The Power & Control diagram is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by a batterer to establish and maintain control over his partner. Very often, one or more violent incidents are accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.

Description of the Power & Control diagram:

* **Coercion and Threats:**  Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her. Threatening to leave her, commit suicide, or report her to welfare. Making her drop charges. Making her do illegal things.
* **Intimidation:**  Making her afraid by using looks, actions, and gestures. Smashing things. Destroying her property. Abusing pets. Displaying weapons.
* **Emotional Abuse:**  Putting her down. Making her feel bad about herself. Calling her names. Making her think she's crazy. Playing mind games. Humiliating her. Making her feel guilty.
* **Isolation:**  Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, and where she goes. Limiting her outside involvement. Using jealousy to justify actions.
* **Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming:**  Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously. Saying the abuse didn't happen. Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior. Saying she caused it.
* **Using Children:**  Making her feel guilty about the children. Using the children to relay messages. Using visitation to harass her. Threatening to take the children away.
* **Economic Abuse:**  Preventing her from getting or keeping a job. Making her ask for money. Giving her an allowance. Taking her money. Not letting her know about or have access to family income.
* **Male Privilege:**  Treating her like a servant: making all the big decisions, acting like the "master of the castle," being the one to define men's and women's roles.

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A copy of the diagram can be found on the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence's web site at [www.ncdsv.org](http://www.ncdsv.org/) [[1]](#footnote-1)

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1. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=38490> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)