



The response-based approach in working with perpetrators: An investigation

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Overview

- Men's Counselling Service
 - Response-based approach
 - A Foundation of safety
- Research
 - Methodology
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Conclusion



Men's Counselling Service

- Developed in response to clients going back to their partners without support services in place
- Service opened its doors in 1991
- Offers individual and group counselling to men who are abusive
- Also provides counselling to partners of male perpetrators



Men's Counselling Service

Men's Counselling Service Mission

- To support perpetrators' agency in making non-abusive choices and creating safety in their relationships
- To support victims' efforts to increase their safety and their agency in opposing abuse



Response-based approach

- MCS uses the response-based approach in working with perpetrators and victims of violence
 - Originated by Dr. Allan Wade, Nick Todd, Dr. Linda Coates
- Based on a distinction between the language of effects and the language of responses
- Focus on effects as opposed to responses can contribute to an incomplete and overly negative view of victims



Response-based approach

- 5 basic assumptions of response-based approach
 - 1) Whenever people are badly treated, they always resist
 - 2) People tend not to notice that victims resist abuse
 - 3) Perpetrators of violence know that victims will resist, so they make plans to stop the victims from resisting



Response-based approach

- 5 basic assumptions of response-based approach (continued)
 - 4) Violent and abusive behaviour is always done deliberately
 - 5) When it comes to domestic violence, appearances are deceiving

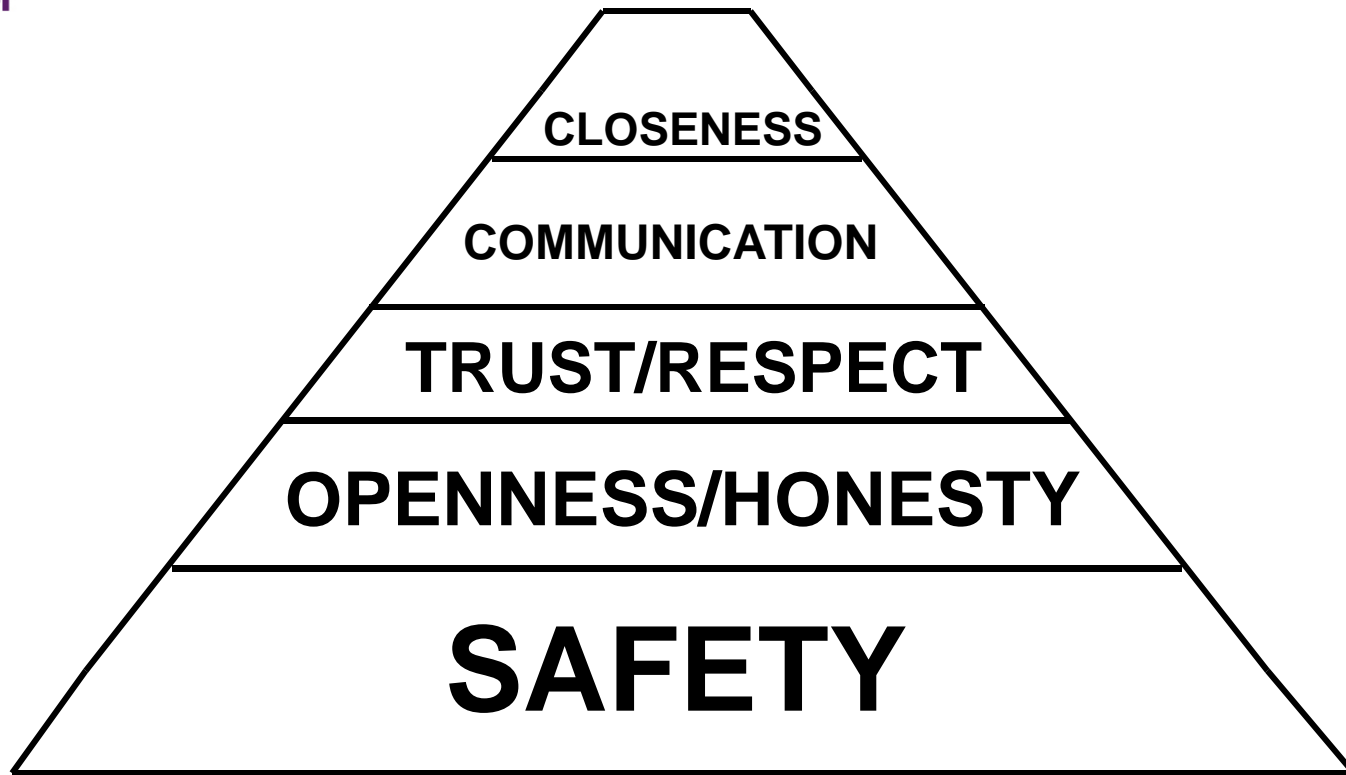


Response-based approach

- Offenders often present their abusive behavior as an effect of internal or external forces they cannot control
- However...
 - their dialogue features many examples of how their behavior is actually a freely chosen response to the circumstances they face
- Concentrating on the language of responses emphasize agency and responsibility

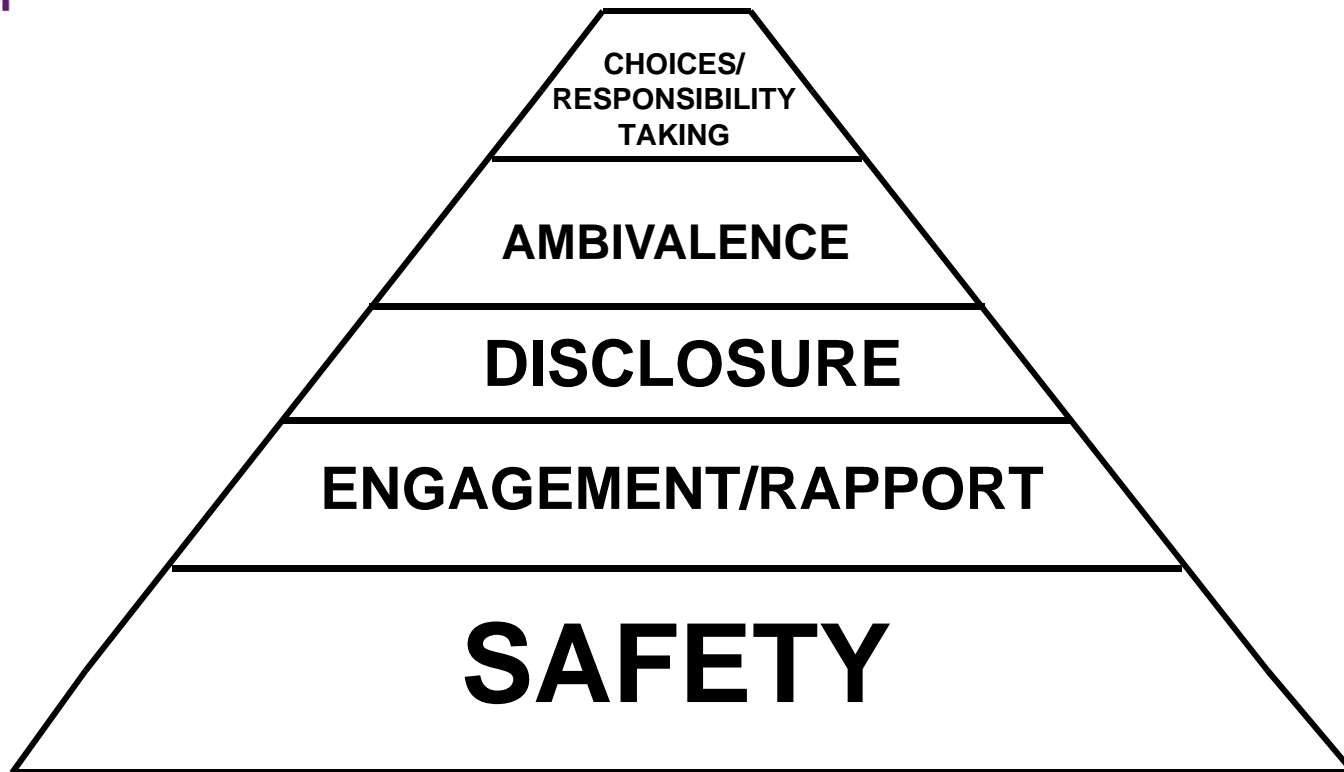


A foundation of safety



In relationships

A foundation of safety



In counselling



A foundation of safety

- The key to change for those who have acted abusively is their own sense of having acted rightly or wrongly
 - Support the person without condoning the behaviour
 - Avoid judgment and blame; create a safe place to talk
 - Excuses can reveal client's values about violence and why it's wrong
 - Look at what they are doing to take responsibility, not at what they are not doing



Research

- Research project completed by Jill Weaver-Dunlop, Lissa Samantaraya, Nick Todd, and Dr. Leslie Tutty
- Examined the impact of the response-based therapeutic approach in counselling abusive men



Methodology

- All men had access to individual and group counselling; women access to individual counselling only
- Final sample included 19 males and 15 females
- Participants were in the program a minimum of 3 months to a maximum of 24 months



Methodology

- Pretest-posttest tools included an adapted form of the Abusive Behaviour Inventory (ABI) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)
- One-on-one semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted adapted from the modified Guided Interview for MCS clients developed by Dankwort (1994)

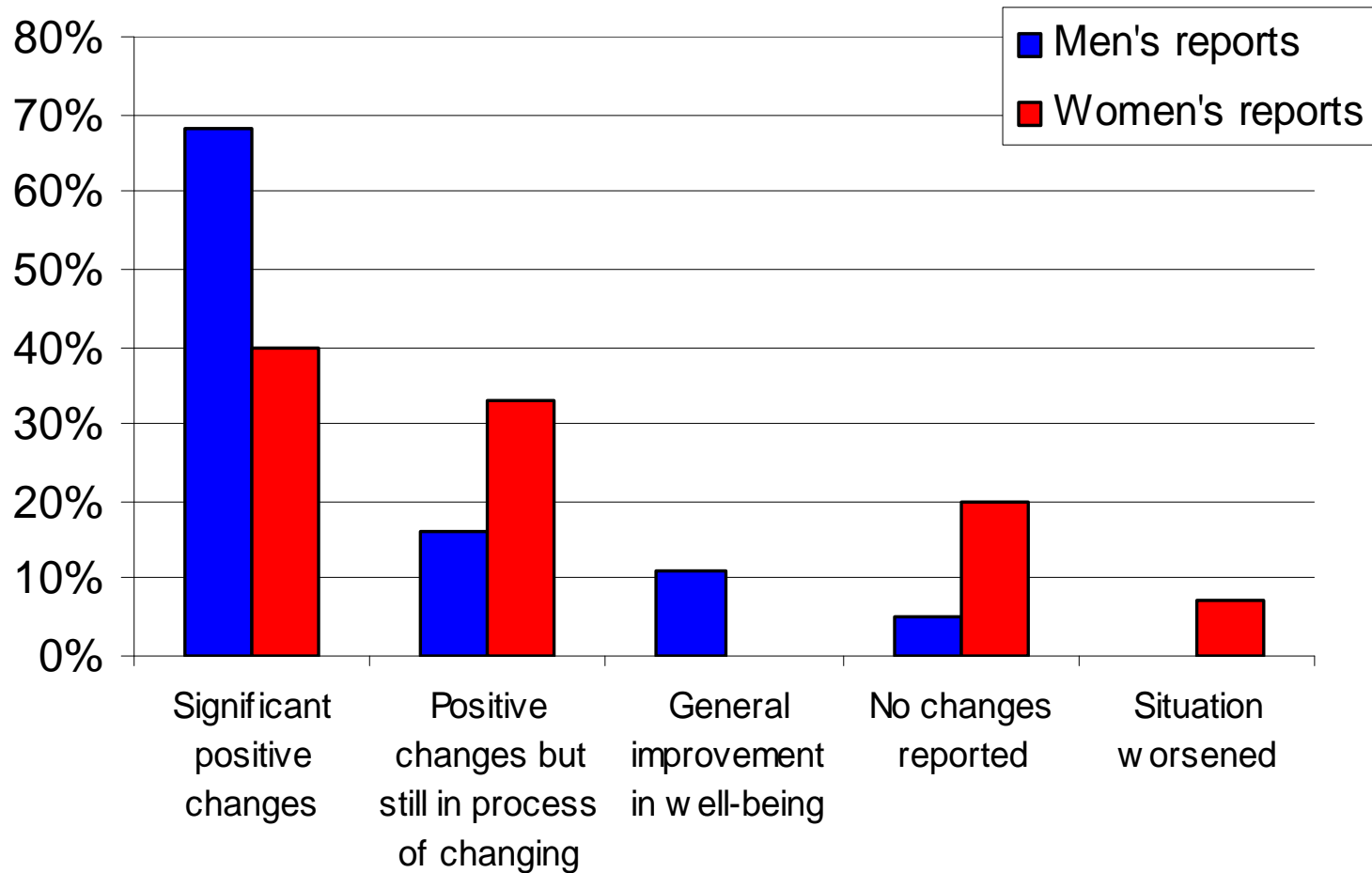


Results

- Almost 70% of men reported making significant positive changes since their first contact with the Men's Counselling Service
- 40% of women perceived their partner as having made significant improvements over the course of counselling
- Compared men's self-reported changes with women's observed changes in men



Results





Results

- Among the changes men reported:
 - Feeling calmer
 - Not getting so upset over “little things”
 - Being able to walk away from arguments
 - Felt less aggressive
 - Less stressed
 - No longer abusive to partner/children



Results

- 95% of the men felt they had made changes in themselves and/or their relationships as a result of counselling they received at MCS
- 40% of women said MCS helped them feel more empowered and reinforced they were not responsible for their partner's abusive behaviour



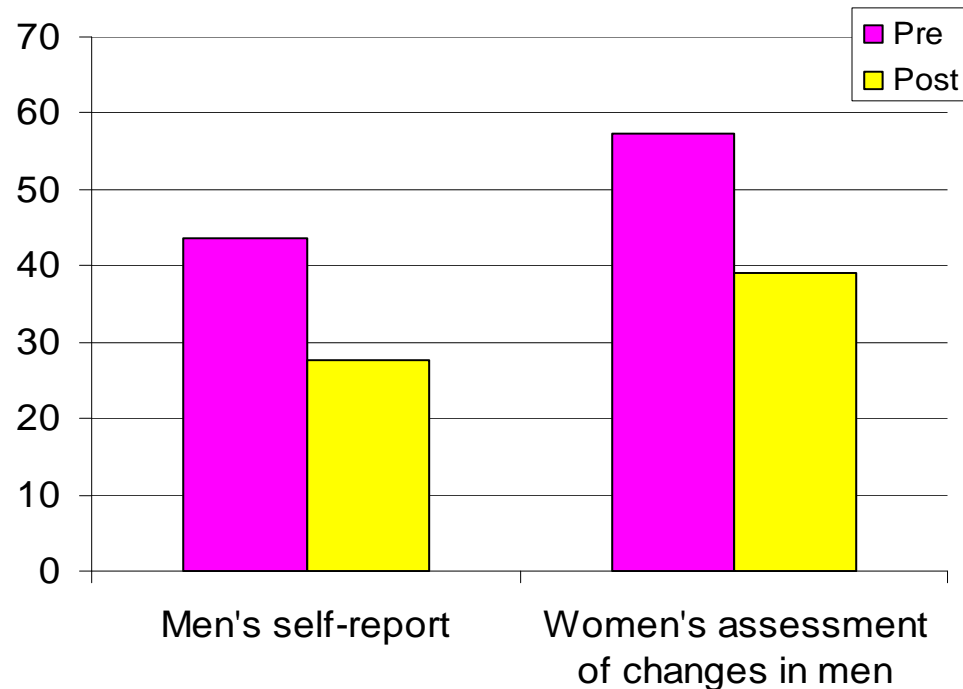
Results

- 74% of men reported taking responsibility for their abusive behaviour and having control over their actions
- 67% of women reported feeling validated and empowered, and were clearer about not being responsible for their partner's abusive behaviour



Results

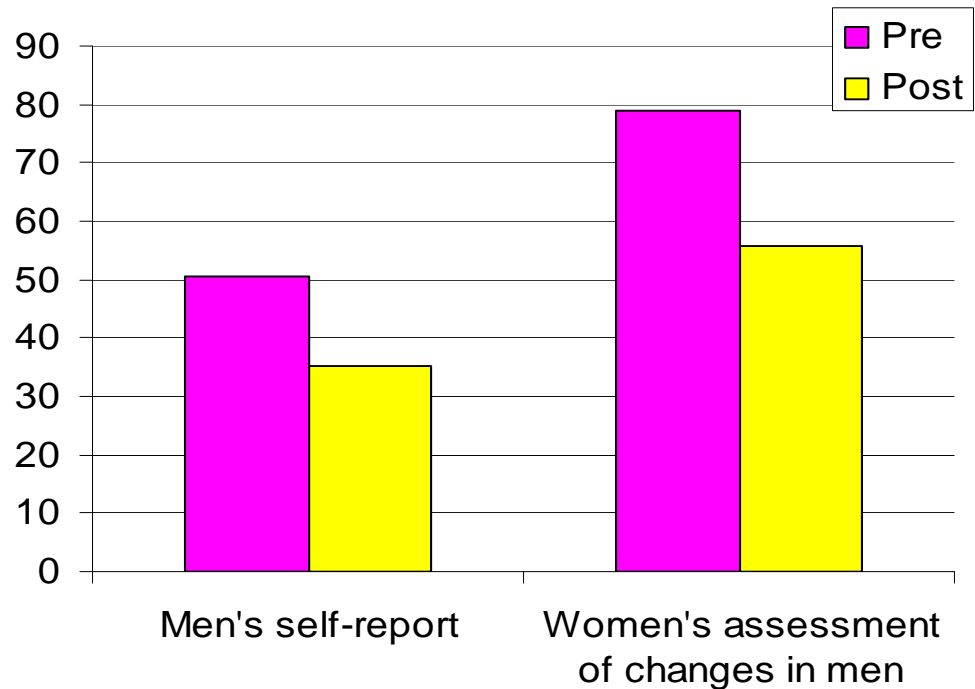
- Statistically significant decrease for men on the Relationship Assessment Scale from pre to post
- $p < 0.001$





Results

- Significant decrease for men on the Abusive Behaviour Inventory from pre to post
- $p < 0.001$





Discussion

- Clients, specifically men, attributed changes they made to their own initiative/motivation, rather than the counsellor
 - Counsellors prompted clients, but clients made the real change
 - Consistent with Response-based approach



Discussion

- Clients are the experts
 - “They’re not voicing their opinion, they’re not telling you what to do or what you shouldn’t do, and it’s nice to hear somebody say, what do you think? How do you think you should have done this?”
 - “They (the counsellors) are doing a wonderful job, but really they’re doing nothing. And that’s probably what’s so wonderful....by putting it back on you, making you look at who you are”



Discussion

- Safety in the counselling relationship
 - “Their approach is sort of casual, sort of helps develop and foster some trust, and delving into issues and opening up has been quite easy, actually. I felt very comfortable confiding in them”
 - “I could tell (the counsellor) just about anything that was on my mind, and he was very non-judgmental in what I said, so that kind of made it nicer. He didn't tell me what I should do and what I shouldn't do. He just asked me how I felt about doing things this way and that”



Discussion

- Recognizing excuses
 - They helped me “just by being there when I needed to say something. Like when I needed to talk to somebody to hear kind of the junk coming out of my own mouth and just bring it more into focus...excuses, you know, excuses are useless.”



Conclusion

- Response-based perspective successful in working with perpetrator
 - Also useful in working with victims, highlighting their responses to abuse
- Respect for the client and their expertise
- Abusive behaviour decreases; internal locus of control increases; satisfaction with/in relationships increases