


Danger Assessment and Risk Factors

An Overview



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Housekeeping



CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? RAISE YOUR HAND



USE THE CHAT BOX OR THE Q&A BOX TO CHAT OR ASK QUESTIONS ANYTIME DURING THE PRESENTATION



IF YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE WITH AUDIO, TRY CALLING IN THROUGH YOUR PHONE

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What is Danger Assessment?

- Gathering information about a survivor’s situation and looking for factors that could indicate a higher risk for injury or lethality
- More art than science

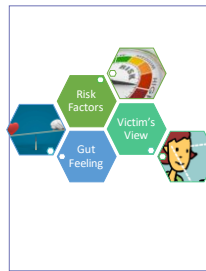


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Assessing for Danger

The best danger assessments include 3 main elements:

- The presence of factors commonly viewed as posing increased risk
- The victim’s view of the factors
- The “hair on the back of the neck” factor



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Can we predict homicide?

- Less than 1% of battered women are killed by their intimate male partners.
- Is there something about abusive relationships where women are killed that is different than other abusive relationships?
- If so, what can we learn that will prevent future serious injury and death?

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Limitations of Danger Assessments

- Young body of research
- Inherently flawed
- Assessment tools only ask questions of victims
- Checklists with yes/or no questions are limiting
- On-going process, not a single "scored" event
- More art than science
- Not a substitute for listening to survivors



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History of violence and violence is escalating

- Prior violence is one of the strongest and most consistent risk factors
 - Threats to kill
 - Threats with weapon
 - Strangling "choking"
 - Beating while pregnant
 - Forced sex
 - Emotional abuse
 - Controlling behaviors
- Violence tends to escalate in severity and frequency prior to the homicide



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Separation



- More at risk when leaving or have left
- Victim is taking steps to end the relationship
- Filing a TPO, moving out or "breaking up."
- Could be emotional separation and in the planning phase
- He may or may not "know" yet

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Firearms

- Female partners are more likely to be killed with a gun than by all other means combined.
- Abusers with military or law enforcement backgrounds may have greater access and skill with firearms.



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Mental Health and Substance Abuse



- History of depression
- Sleep disturbances
- Suicide threats and/or attempts
- Fantasies of homicide
- History of problem drinking and/or drug abuse

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Obsession and ownership

- Obsessed with victim
- Restricting her activities
- Isolating her
- Extreme jealousy
 - May include sexual jealousy either real or perceived
- Stalking behaviors



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Criminal history and prior system contact

- Abuser has prior criminal history
- Prior agency involvement, particularly the police
- Failed criminal justice intervention
- Abuser is not deterred by interventions



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Indicators of Danger—Victim’s view of factors:

- First, listen to what she believes
- Ask her: What is happening? What does it mean? How is the abuser’s behavior different? What does she believe is the abuser’s intent?
- Assess her level of fear keeping in mind that trauma can deaden one’s sense of fear over time and that denial and minimization are classic signs of ongoing trauma



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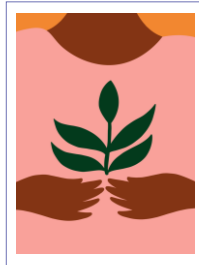
Indicators of Danger— Victim Factors to Consider

- **Separating, attempting to flee**
- Takes abuser's side, recants, wants to drop charges
- Safety planning ability impaired (Rx, drugs/alcohol, depression, PTSD, dissociation)
- Limited Resources to Escape (shelter full, too far away, no money, etc. – see Barriers Model)

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The Hair on the Back of the Neck Factor i.e. Intuition

- Sometimes a particular combination of factors or the timing of things lead you to feel there is great risk
- Trust your intuition, if a case is causing you concern, explore it, listen to it, and react to it



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The Baker Story
Safety Planning activity

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Jane and Steve Baker have been married for five years. She is a high school teacher and he works in construction.

Jane and Steve are from the same small town and moved to Atlanta shortly after they were married. Jane's family lives out of state but she keeps in regular contact with her sister, Leslie, through telephone conversations and emails. Due to Steve's controlling behavior, Jane has been unable to make many close friends in Atlanta. Jane has talked with her pastor about the violence she was experiencing and he suggested that she and Steve come in for counseling.

There is a history of domestic violence. Three years ago, Steve was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor following an incident where he busted Jane's lip. Jane did not want to testify against Steve in court, and agreed with the prosecutor's recommendation that the case be diverted. Steve was ordered to complete an anger management class and have no violent contact with Jane. The case was dismissed after Steve completed the required class.

In the past year, Steve was arrested again and charged with a misdemeanor. This time Steve pled guilty and was sentenced to one year probation. Additionally, he was ordered to complete a 24-week Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP). Since then, he only attended his FVIP intake and one session and met once with his probation officer.

Jane filed for a TPO the day after Steve was arrested. Steve was served with the TPO but failed to appear for the second hearing. Jane was granted a twelve month protective order and temporary possession of the marital residence.

Since separating from Steve, Jane has reconnected with her sister and has talked to her about how Steve won't leave her alone. He calls her at work, leaves notes on her car, and follows her...she feels like Steve always knows where she is. Today, Jane's co-worker asked if everything was okay at home and told her that she was concerned about her. Jane thanks her for her concern but assures her she'll be OK.

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Questions?



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Thank you!

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