‘Types’ of adults who perpetrate domestic, family and sexual violence: Different motives for using power and control[1]

The exertion of power and control is a consistent feature in men’s, and in many other adult’s, use of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) against intimate partners and family members. However, not all adults who cause DFSV harm use power and control for the same mix of reasons. Their *motives* differ, to an extent, and this can have implications for how to respond.

There have been various attempts to categorise different ‘types’ of DFSV perpetrators. While these explorations are important, until a robust and widely used categorisation evolves (if one is possible), it is perhaps most useful to consider each user of violence as having their own combination of motives, with each motive held to varying degrees.

This resource suggests six main motives for the use of power and control. Some adult users of violence might not hold any of these motives to a significant degree. Others might be driven by one or more of them in terms of their use of power and control against those who are experiencing their harm.

The six motives are to:

- entrap the victim-survivor to purposefully maintain and extend the gender-based benefits and rights they believe they are entitled to – as distinct from ‘merely’ benefitting from everyday male privilege – without having a real interest in forming a relationship with their partner based on genuine connection;
- express misogynistic hatred, and participate in a sense of collective grievance that some communities of men have against women;
- maintain a positive, narcissistic image of themselves, and ensure that they have a relationship and standing that ‘ticks the boxes’ of what they need to feel admired;
- express sadist cruelty;
- psychologically ‘survive’ in the context of substantial emotional dependency on their ex/partner; and/or to
- maintain an ‘attack first’ mentality associated with patterns of generalised violence behaviours.

1. Extractors of entitlement-based benefits

Obtaining entitlement-based benefits is a central motive for the exertion of power and control amongst most users of violence. Men are provided with gender-based privilege by our patriarchal society, and in this context are expected to coerce emotional, domestic labour, material and sexual benefits from women in intimate relationships. As the late Ellen Pence from the Duluth approach emphasised, male DFSV perpetrators do not necessarily *feel* entitled; rather they *are* entitled, and have a way of making sense of the world and their position in it shaped by patriarchy.

---

[1] Written by Rodney Vlais, August 2025. My gratitude towards Dr Ron Frey, Dorthy Halley, David Adams and others whose work I have drawn from for this resource.

Motives around entitlement can differ amongst users of violence, however. Men benefit from male privilege without needing to consciously be on a 'mission' to maximise their gender-based power. They use power and control to obtain entitlement-based benefits because that is expected of them in being a (dominant hegemonic) man. They don't need to think "I'm superior to women", "it's her duty to be provide me with…", "women owe men…", "it's my role to be the head of the family who makes the important decisions…" and so on to benefit from male entitlement. They benefit by virtue of being socialised male.

Users of DFSV differ in the extent to which they use power and control, and entrap the victim-survivor, to purposefully maintain and extend these entitlement-based benefits. In other words, they differ in the extent to which they see it as their *right* to exploit the victim-survivor for their emotional, material, financial and sexual gain. The use of power and control is seen as a means to entrap the victim-survivor to provide these entitlement-based benefits. In this respect, extractive entrapment represents a deliberate occupation of the victim-survivor's sovereignty.

Perpetrators of DFSV who put more effort into exploiting victim-survivors – as distinct from 'merely' benefitting from male privilege and the gender-based benefits they can take from survivors in the patriarchal sea that we all swim in – can tend to pose a higher risk, and cause greater harm. They are perhaps likely to be less interested in genuinely connecting with their intimate partners, less interested in true intimacy and building trust, and more interested in 'consuming' the benefits they can manipulate and coerce from their partner.

Appeals to these men to change their behaviour due to the harmful impacts of their coercive controlling violence on trust, love and connectivity in their relationship might have limited impact, if these men are not interested in, or know little about, true love. They can tend to be deeply invested in continuing to *demand things from* their partner (that they feel entitled to), rather than work towards the intimacy of *connecting with* them.

In this sense, social and psychological entrapment is on a continuum towards enslavement, and in some instances, has some features of the latter. These DFSV perpetrators believe they have the right to engage in enslavement-type behaviours to extract benefits from their partner and from the relationship, even though most would not consider their partner to be their slaves. Indeed, many would consider that their partner is unfairly 'victimising him' by pushing up against his rules and demands.

These perpetrators can feel justified in going to particular lengths to punish their partner when she attempts to push against the boundaries of her entrapment, or resists the demands he makes of her. Punishment can, at times, be degrading and severe. Some might be prepared to engage in severe violence to make sure that 'she doesn't win' against him, as for her to 'win' in his eyes can result in him experiencing what he considers to be 'unbearable' humiliation. After separation, some can engage in tactics to punish their former partner for many years, through for example manipulating systems and using economic violence to make life as hard for her as possible.

For men who feel strongly entitled to the benefits they obtain from exerting power and control, this might or might not extend to viewing their children mainly in terms of their property. Some fathers who use DFSV to entrap their partner into providing benefits are interested in genuine connections with their children; others much less so. While most fathers who perpetrate DFSV believe that they have 'rights' to their children irrespective of the harm their behaviour is causing, it is still possible to yearn for genuine connections with their children at the same time. Some, however, are much more invested in their image of being a father than in actually getting to know their children.

Some men who extract and exploit partners for their material, economic, social, emotional and sexual gain have privilege levers that support and enable them to do so. They might have particular standing in their community, the ability to manipulate systems as part of their patterns of entrapment tactics and coercive control, and/or access to resources and connections. They might have extended family members who collude with their entitlement-based tactics.

Some of these adults are also very adept at using covert coercive control. These are tactics of social and emotional entrapment that to an outside observer, might be seen as innocuous or even as positive expressions of respect, care or love. However, these expressions are highly abusive when taking into account the entire gamut of the adult's behaviours.[2]

These adults can also use strategic vulnerability as part of their repertoire of self-focused rights-based tactics. They might 'manufacture' a degree of distress, or emotively appeal to the 'needs of their children', to draw the victim-survivor's attention to the adult's own 'needs'.

Of course, doing so is an intense form of gaslighting. In the displays of this distress, the adult is rendering invisible the tremendous harm his behaviour has caused and is causing to the victim-survivor (and to their children). Unlike DFSV perpetrators with significantly elevated degrees of narcissism or who use power and control to psychologically survive, these displays of distress might not have an underlying complex trauma basis.

Like many adult users of DFSV, these perpetrators can escalate their tactics in response to victim-survivor resistance to their rules and demands. They can choose to escalate their violence when they feel 'bothered' by the victim-survivor (that is, when her resistance starts to cause him 'inconvenience').

A valid question in these situations is why do many such adults decide to stay with the victim-survivor if they are feeling 'bothered' by her, and escalate their violent and controlling behaviour to prevent her from leaving. In part, this can be due to the intense drive by some of these perpetrators to not let the person they are controlling 'win'. To use an imperfect analogy, slave owners go to great lengths to prevent their slaves from winning freedom. In some cases, the adult user of DFSV might also go to great lengths to keep the relationship due to elevated levels of other motives in their use of power and control, such as to 'psychologically survive' in the context of intense emotional dependency on their partner.

Practice implications for engaging highly entitled adult perpetrators of DFSV include:

- Behaviour change gains through participation in a men's behaviour change program (MBCP) are likely to be modest. However, participation in a program might be a useful way to keep the adult – and his thinking, mood and behaviour – in view.
- There is a heightened risk of these adults weaponising their participation in the program through attempting to manipulate systems.
- These adults can have a sustained focus on their 'rights' with relatively little focus on their responsibilities to others. If possible, attempt to find values, aspirations or ethical strivings that the adult relates to that are consistent with strengthening their focus on responsibilities to others.

[2] For further information on covert coercive control, see https://www.witnesspreparation.au/redefining-coercive-control.html

- These adults can be very fixated on the 'unfairness' of having their rights 'taken away from them' (for example, through justice system responses to their use of DFSV, or through the victim-survivor's resistance or separation from him). It can be difficult to directly challenge their sense of righteousness, and the entitlement-based beliefs that underpins this.
- You might have more success appealing to how the adult's fixation on their rights is so 'enormous' that it 'drowns out' positive things they could be or are working toward in their life. You might be able to incrementally shift the adult's focus a bit away from the victim-survivor, police, courts, etc. being the enemy and towards the *enormity* of his grievance as being the thing he needs to target.
- While not colluding with his sense of righteousness and underlying entitlement-based beliefs, it might be possible to prise some of his energy away from continuing to feed his grievance without you attempting to 'butt horns' with these beliefs head on. Through this, the adult might come to see how allowing his grievance to totally consume him is not in his best interests, and results in significant costs to his life.
- Try to find an overlap where working towards the adult's 'enlightened self-interests' overlaps with what will build safety and freedom for those experiencing his violence.
- Assess risk continuously. Some of these adults can pose a serious risk of severe harm if they have an intense drive to punish a victim-survivor who they perceive as having 'won' against them, 'humiliating' them, or interfering with what they perceive to be their 'rights'. Multi-agency risk management strategies can be crucial.[3]

2. Misogynists

Misogyny can be a feature with some men who deliberately entrap victim-survivors to maintain and extend the benefits they feel entitled to. There is undoubtedly a significant degree of overlap between these two motives for using power and control in intimate relationships. However, not all men who are highly intentional in using power and control to extract benefits from a female partner are misogynists, at least not in the extreme.

Misogyny exists on a continuum: most if not all men who perpetrate DFSV engage in some degree of misogynist practices along this continuum (for example, the use of derogatory terms as part of psychological abuse). A hatred and intense contempt of women, however, is a primary and intense motive for the use of DFSV only in a minority; these men obviously can pose a very serious risk.

Many men are susceptible to manosphere social media and other messaging that 'gender equality movements have gone too far', that 'women have most of the power now' and that 'men are disadvantaged, and are no longer allowed to be real men'.[4] Right-wing misogynist influencers are contributing towards an intensified sense of grievance amongst some young and older men towards women, who are seen as 'taking away their power' and their opportunities to be 'real men'.

---

[3] See the resource *Practice suggestions for identifying & responding to male perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence who pose a risk of severe harm* (available in the Featured section at https://www.linkedin.com/in/rodney-vlais/ - a linkedin account is required to access).

[4] For a succinct and clear description of some contemporary men's grievances against gender equality and positive discrimination policies, see the video explanation by author Jason Pargin https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=9223521494440770

Men who use DFSV differ in the extent to which they are influenced by this sense of collective grievance, ranging from a broad nod of general agreement (that's lightly held) to participating actively in grievance-based manosphere online communities.

Practice implications for engaging misogynistic perpetrators of DFSV:

- Unless engaged at an early age, high levels of misogyny is a contra-indication for participation in an MBCP. However, there might be benefits in mandating participation in a program if only to keep his thinking, moods and behaviours in view, depending on whether he is too disruptive to the group.
- A one-to-one clinical case management approach might be more appropriate to address complex needs and to manage risk.

3. Narcissistic adult users of violence

A third motive that differentiates users of DFSV is the degree of narcissism. Most perpetrators are self-focused, and due to their "I'm the victim here!" thinking and male entitled worldview, are not very other-centred. However, only some have significant elevated 'traits' of narcissism.

At the core, these users of violence have very little tolerance for experiencing any degree of shame, often due to traumatic childhood backgrounds. They can use severe violence against a victim-survivor if they believe that she has 'done something that causes him' to feel shame and humiliation.

DFSV perpetrators with a high degree of narcissism require certain things to be in place in their life to maintain the image of being successful, and to attract admiration. Some have a range of privilege levers (for example, reputation and standing in their community or profession) that they use to draw admiration from others, and to make it seem like they would be the 'last person in the world' who would use violence and abuse. Some are quite predatory, seeking partners or women/people to have sex with who they believe can be easily manipulated due to the perpetrator's 'up on the pedestal' power.

These users of DFSV can become dangerous when the positive image they project – reinforced by others in their community, professional or societal networks – becomes threatened. This might be through the victim-survivor separating from him, disclosing about his violence to authorities leading to police and justice system involvement in his life, and/or calling him out as a perpetrator in a community or public setting.

Not only might these perpetrators become incensed at the potential loss of status, and the benefits that comes with their standing, reputation and access to various forms of privilege and resources being at risk. They might also experience a deep sense of humiliation, and use severe violence as an act of humiliated fury.[5]

DFSV users of violence with elevated narcissism go to great lengths to avoid self-reflection. Like most perpetrators, they will use denial, minimisation and blaming others to smokescreen responsibility for their behaviour, and adopt a strong "I'm the real victim here, not her!" stance. However, they have additional resources and privilege levers to avoid accountability through embedding their positive self-image in their community, natural and professional networks.

[5] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTdmNjnyaF0 for thoughts on humiliated fury by Jess Hill.

By establishing themselves as someone who 'should be admired at', and in some cases by engaging in genuinely prosocial activities that provide them with significant standing and praise, these perpetrators recruit a number of people who are prepared to defend them, and who either inadvertently or explicitly engage in actions that enable them to continue the abuse undetected. Some narcissistic users of DFSV might have high profile connections and admirers in their community or social settings.

In summary, narcissistic perpetrators of DFSV use power and control to maintain their positive self-image, develop and maintain a network of people admiring them, and to avoid having to experience shame.[6] Many have a significant trauma background.

Specific characteristics of adult users of DFSV with elevated narcissistic traits include:

- Adopting an 'I'm exceptional [and entitled]' attitude through obtaining organisational, corporate, hierarchical power… or through being a pillar of the community, a great helper, a heroic leader (who grooms younger people in a helping profession for sexual gain and admiration).
- Being attuned to others mostly in relation to self-relevance: very externally focused, developing internal goals based on what they think they need to do to achieve admiration and validation.
- Can be very charming, hold positions of power and status, have lots of admirers and people to defend their character if allegations are made against them.
- Has a deeply traumatised 'ego' (often due to intense childhood trauma experiences). Further, based on their particular style of ego-restoration strategies, these adults' sense of self-worth can swing dramatically and rapidly between being highly 'pumped up' and complete deflation, in both directions.
- Seeks and depends on admiration from others.
- Only feels worthy if they are admired, unique, exceptional.
- Mines others for love, support, respect and 'kitten strokes' – seeks to extract adoration and support from their partner and others, and to maintain the flow of these 'narcissistic supplies'.
- Has a heightened sense of entitlement.
- Highly susceptible to 'ego bruises' and to feeling wronged.
- Easily overwhelmed by shame – seeks narcissistic supplies to avoid shame.
- Feeling isolated, abandoned or criticised in the slightest can lead to 'narcissistic rage'.
- Has an underlying acknowledgement that depending so much on others for admiration leaves them dependent, weak and helpless → fearful of being exposed → triggered by intense feelings of envy → can result in a dramatic shift from expressing admiration for someone ('you're almost as exceptional as me'; 'idolising and joining with you highlights my own exceptionality') to intense criticism ('you're a phony, you're way beneath me') to restore feeling superior / restore their ego.
- Uses other people to regulate themselves: Emotionality can spin quickly – attacks the person, gives them the silence treatment, etc. based on the slightest hint of criticism.

[6] See the section *Engaging with shame* for an analysis of chronic shame and shame anxiety in the resource *Case planning for adult users of domestic and family violence* (available in the Featured section at https://www.linkedin.com/in/rodney-vlais/ - a linkedin account is required to access).

- Engages in discarding and devaluing behaviours.
- Intense use of gaslighting, blame-shifting and emotional manipulation.
- Variable and intermittent reinforcement, and emotional and social entrapment, makes it very difficult (and sometimes very unsafe) for the survivor to leave… some days for the survivor are great, some are OK, some are bad, some are terrible, some are horribly frightening.
- The practitioner can feel both idealised and devalued by the adult.
- Vulnerable vs grandiose narcissism – the former can be harder to initially identify as these adults use more covert methods to maintain narcissistic supply, drawing in others to see them as a 'victim' where 'no one has suffered like me' who needs the other person's continuous love – the latter want to be associated only with people at their level, are 'snootier' and intolerant of people 'beneath them'.
- Speaks in vague terms to avoid accountability.

Practice implications for engaging narcissistic perpetrators of DFSV include:

- Mental health assessment can be crucial to determine the extent of narcissistic traits.
- Therapeutic treatment with adults with very strong narcissistic traits can take a long time, and be very slow.
- Develop a strong working alliance with the adult, that survives the adult's fragility and strong tendency to dismiss the alliance or withdraw when they are feeling wobbly.
- Consider the careful use of immediacy when the adult moves into vague/general territory or avoids focusing on an issue ("John, is it OK if I talk about something that I'm observing at this very moment? When I asked you about…")
- Collaborate to set concrete, attainable, meaningful goals (as the narcissistic adult will want to focus on grandiose, unattainable ones).
- Agree on clear boundaries – the adult might expect special treatment, feel entitled to skip sessions or turn up intoxicated, etc.
- Do not get into any power struggles, any battles of "I'm right and you're wrong" or "I have the expertise here, listen to me".
- The adult might be more amenable to working with your service if they are experiencing a 'narcissistic wound' – e.g., their partner is leaving him, they've lost a high-status job – which can be a high-risk time as they are likely to amp up their maladaptive coping strategies to try to restore their fractured ego (for example, increase their manipulative behaviour to persuade the survivor to return, threaten severe violence, threaten suicide) → if they are successful in restoring things back to how they were through their maladaptive coping strategies, there's a good chance they will drop out of the program.
- Expect situations where the adult will feel they've been criticised, slighted or shamed, even when you try your hardest not to. Anticipate they might withdraw from the program or from your work as a result.
- If you sense that the adult feels criticised or slighted, apologise in an appropriate way, but don't require the adult to disclose their underlying fragile feelings in that moment (as that will increase their sense of shame).

- Clinical supervision is critical. Working with an adult with high narcissistic traits can result in feeling devalued, discarded, idolised, admired, bored, pulled in, invited to cross boundaries, and feelings of wanting to rescue the adult.
- Effective work with these adults can, at times, be counter-intuitive. For example, to maintain their sense of highly-inflated self-worth, and to protect themselves from felt humiliation and ego deflation, it is not uncommon for these clients to criticise their practitioner/therapist, or to swing dramatically from seeing the practitioner in highly positive ('you are as exceptional as me') to negative terms ('I'm much better than you, and I deserve to work with someone more competent / who is my equal'). Practitioners can feel tempted to defend themselves and their competence in these situations, whereas sometimes with a narcissistic client, especially in the lengthy initial phase of building a working alliance, it can be better to go with the flow of the adult's ego-defence strategies than combat them head on (provided that clear boundaries are maintained).
- Model emotions that the narcissistic adult finds difficult to experience (gratitude, humility, remorse, etc.)
- Model that it's possible to make mistakes and maintain a positive self-image at the same time.
- The adult might, over time, take more interpersonal disclosure risks with you, if you can keep him in the program and if your alliance survives his fragility.
- There are risks associated with bringing his harmful behaviour into the centre of your work with him too early. Direct confrontation of his harmful behaviour can result In the adult feeling criticised and demeaned, leading to hostility and/or withdrawal.
- The main goal is risk management, to make it less likely he will use severely violent and controlling behaviours in the short to medium term.
- If the adult has strong narcissist traits, attempt to find ways to reduce short to medium-term risk without focusing directly on his most harmful, violent and controlling behaviour. For example, there might be various stabilisation factors you can work on in his life to reduce risk.
- If his narcissist traits are only moderately elevated (not to the extent of approaching 'Narcissistic Personality Disorder'), you will have room to focus more centrally on his use of violent and controlling behaviour, earlier in your work with him.[7]
- If he is experiencing a 'narcissistic would', help him to restore a sense of feeling OK without him needing to resort to his usual maladaptive, harmful behaviour to restore his ego. This might require creative case management approaches. Work with him to develop more adaptive, less harmful options.
- Take identity loss in the adult's life seriously – develop strategies to address it.[8]
- You might over time be able to help the adult find an 'authentic self' that they develop confidence in without requiring narcissistic supplies to defend.

[7] Mental health support is important to determine the severity of the adult's narcissism. MBCP practitioners who over-inflate the adult's level of narcissism might needlessly avoid a direct focus on his harmful behaviour, which can of course be collusive.

[8] See the section on identity loss in *Case planning for adult users of domestic and family violence* (available in the Featured section at https://www.linkedin.com/in/rodney-vlais/ - a linkedin account is required to access).

4. Sadistic cruelty

Users of DFSV differ in the degree of sadism, the extent to which they take pleasure out of hurting their intimate partner.[9] While many users of DFSV engage in behaviours that deliberately degrade and humiliate the victim-survivor, only some experience pleasure while producing these impacts.

Sadism is beyond feeling justified or vindicated through the act of causing hurt, which many or most DFSV perpetrators do when causing harm. Sadism refers to the actual enjoyment of inflicting harm through cruelty, which is less common. It's often referred in the literature as *everyday sadism,* defined as pleasure-driven aggression involving the infliction of physical and emotional pain on others to humiliate, punish and/or control them.[10] This concept of everyday sadism distinguishes it from severe forms of sexual sadism (obtaining sexual gratification through inflicting pain on others).

Sadism is correlated with narcissism, and can also be highly associated with psychopathy. However, many adult users of DFSV with elevated narcissistic traits do not necessarily have a strong sadistic enjoyment of hurting others. Some of those who engage in sadistic cruelty have an over-exaggerated sense of self-importance and/or lack empathy, enabling them to purely focus on their own pleasure at the expense of others. For others, the pathway towards sadism might occur through repeatedly engaging in antisocial behaviour that over time desensitises the adult, resulting in them beginning to enjoy hurting others.[11]

5. Exerting power and control for 'psychological survival' in the context of substantial dependency on their partner / former partner

A further motive more or less present in a DFSV perpetrator's decision-making to exert power and control is the degree to which they are dependent on their ex/partner for their psychological survival. Many perpetrators with high dependency, like those with elevated narcissism, have a complex trauma background. They might exhibit significant possessive jealousy (though importantly, possessive jealousy can also be associated with other perpetrator motives to use power and control).[12] These perpetrators might:

- have an intense attachment to the victim-survivor(s) for their own self-worth,
- have difficulties imagining a life for themselves out of their relationship with their partner,
- invest little time working towards goals in their life independent from their partner (in other words, their partner is their life),

---

[9] People with elevated psychopathy traits, as distinct from sadism, might or might not gain pleasure in hurting others, but do so to obtain a desired outcome, and tend not to feel empathy or remorse for their actions. Some people with sadism, however, can feel bad after the cruel act has been enacted – see https://theconversation.com/from-psychopaths-to-everyday-sadists-why-do-humans-harm-the-harmless-144017

[10] Saravia Lalinde, I. A., Longpré, N., & de Roos, M. (2023). Everyday Sadism as a Predictor of Rape Myth Acceptance and Perception of Harassment. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *67*(13-14), 1323-1342.

[11] Lobbestael, J., Slaoui, G., & Gollwitzer, M. (2023). Sadism and personality disorders. *Current psychiatry reports*, *25*(11), 569-576.

[12] See the resource *Addressing violent and controlling behaviours associated with possessive jealousy amongst adult users of domestic, family and sexual violence - updated* (available in the Featured section at https://www.linkedin.com/in/rodney-vlais/ - a linkedin account is required to access).

- experience a significant increase in suicidal ideation and risk should the relationship end or be at risk of ending,
- be at heightened risk of enacting homicide-suicide in these circumstances,
- appear highly suspicious about who his partner is seeing and what she is doing,
- talk freely about his suspicions that she is unfaithful,
- justify his controlling behaviours and 'repercussions' on the basis of those suspicions,
- be highly anxious and very fearful of 'losing her' / the relationship,
- justify his controlling narratives and behaviours as 'expressions of love' ("we are destined to be together for the rest of our lives"),
- have used violence against other men who he sees as a threat,
- leave you with a feeling that he might think 'If I can't have her, nobody will', and/or
- have a history of driving previous partners away, of high surveillance behaviours across relationships, due to possessive jealousy.

Many users of DFSV have a notable degree of psychological dependency on their partner. For male users of violence, this is often associated with making their partner responsible for their emotional states, including blaming their partner for 'causing him' to feel anger, jealousy, shame, humiliation or other undesirable feelings. Some DFSV perpetrators, however, have substantial psychological and other forms of dependency on their partner, and cannot see a life for themselves if their relationship with this particular person was to end. Disruptions to childhood attachment with a safe caregiver and a complex trauma background are common features of these adults.

Practice implications for engaging perpetrators of DFSV who depend on their partner for 'psychological survival' include:

- Adopt strategies to address possessive and obsessive jealousy if required.[13]
- Assess risk for suicide and homicide-suicide on a regular basis, and engage the adult in suicide safety planning if indicated.[14]
- Help him to build meaning and identity in his life that is not dependent upon his ex/partner.
- Address mental health issues such as depression, and promote practices of self-care for his emotional and physical health needs.
- Work with the adult to significantly increase his social supports.
- Work with the adult on his distress tolerance strategies. Adopt both a strengths-based approach focusing on the distress tolerance skills he already has and might use in some situations, and new ones he can learn. Borrow from DBT and ACT toolkits. If safe to do so, work with him on how to apply these strategies in situations where he is likely to misinterpret or make hostile meaning of the victim-survivor's choices and responses.

---

[13] See above.

[14] See the resource *Practice suggestions for identifying & responding to male perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence who pose a risk of severe harm* (available in the Featured section at https://www.linkedin.com/in/rodney-vlais/ - a linkedin account is required to access).

Individual case management, or at least supplementary individual sessions, will often be required to work on these issues; participation in group-work alone might not be sufficient to address risk.

These adults can be highly susceptible to slipping back after making initial behaviour change gains (if such gains are made). It is not uncommon for the intensity of their anxiety and distress to resurface after they have completed a men's behaviour change program, creating challenges for them to continue to choose non-violence in the face of this emotional intensity. **Follow-up engagement with these adults after they have completed a program can be critical.** Some might need post-program trauma-focused counselling.

6. Generalised violence as a means of survival

Finally, some users of DFSV have a history of using violent behaviours in a range of settings and contexts, not only against intimate partners. These DFSV perpetrators might display an 'attack first' mentality, of needing to make sure that others know they are 'not someone who can be messed around with.' They might have engaged in patterns of behaviours whereby they 'strike first' under perceived threat.

Some perpetrators of DFSV with this motive to exert power and control have experienced violence, and been in situations where violence has been normalised, for much of their lives. They might have had periods of homelessness, significant substance misuse and been part of peer groups or street life situations where violence served as a self-protection mechanism. Some might have histories of incarceration, and might be considered by criminologists to have 'anti-social tendencies'.

For these adults, violence and coercion both within relationships and in other contexts becomes an accepted means to:

- resolve conflicts, persuade others to do things and achieve personal and social goals (self-advancement)
- gain respect from others
- to make others listen
- maintain agency and status in a violent world
- secure a fragile self
- defend oneself or others (e.g. in-group peers) when threat is perceived, including 'preventatively'
- secure a sense of identity amongst a peer group or gang when feeling not part of the majority in society
- maintain social identity and obtain social kudos, and achieving a positive outcome for his social group, by physically assaulting those who 'deserve' to be punished
- protect group identity, and/or reinforce personal and collective criminal pride.

Adults with significant histories of using generalised violence might or might not be willing to entertain giving up the use of violence as a strategy to 'stay safe' in the world. Some, after significant periods of incarceration, might be motivated to work towards a 'new me' that is no longer associated with a life of using violence. Others might be unwilling to give up on the strategies they've used to achieve the goals dot-pointed above.

Some adults who remain highly invested in an 'attack first' mentality might be willing to engage with the concept of 'overdoing' their survival strategy. That is, that they apply the strategy in situations where it is not warranted, and in the process move themselves further away from what they value and aspire to in their lives.

Adult perpetrators of DFSV with significant histories of using violence in a wide range of situations still require a gendered response. The existence of generalised pro-violence beliefs is often overlayed with highly gendered and entitlement-based beliefs. However, ignoring the general function of the use of violence in the adult's life can compromise the effectiveness of behaviour change work with these adults.

A concluding word

The six motives for the use of power and control by adults who cause DFSV harm overlap. Any given user of DFSV might have a combination of two, three or more of the above motives, each to varying extents. A significant proportion of MBCP participants will not have elevated levels of any of the motives. DFSV perpetrators whose violent and controlling behaviour is strongly motivated by any one or more of these six motives are likely to pose a serious risk to adult and child victim-survivors.

While this resource has only dipped into the practice implications of engaging DFSV perpetrators based on their profile of motives, understanding the source of their decision-making to exert power and control can assist in developing risk management plans and strategies.

Users of DFSV who do not have significant degrees of any of these motives are still generally using power and control. Their perpetration of violent and controlling behaviour is still intentional. Rather, as outlined at the beginning of this resource, they differ from highly entitled perpetrators in that while they still benefit (significantly) from gender-based entitlement, they do so as part of the patriarchal see that we all swim in, as distinct from 'milking' their entitlement to the nth degree.