Guiding explorations for male practitioners in men's domestic, sexual and family violence behaviour change work to develop their **gender antennae**[1]

What has been your journey into co-facilitating men's behaviour change work? What understandings of gender do you bring in from your past professional, activist and personal roles?

What understandings of gender might your past experiences and roles have shielded, protected or privileged you away from?

What parallels do you see in the men's journeying in the behaviour change group around gendered attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and your own journeying in understanding and transforming your own male entitlement and privilege?

What are the differences between the experiences of female and male co-facilitators in doing this work?... What are the unique experiences of the female practitioner as the only woman in the room?

Scenarios to explore in depth → how might you respond as the male co-facilitator? What is your thinking behind how you would respond? What considerations do you have in mind that shapes your response? Consider these questions in relation to each of the scenarios below:

- What have been some of the tricky situations where the men in the group have responded to you differently compared to how they respond to the female co-facilitator? Where the female co-facilitator has been undermined (subtly or directly) by one or more of the men in the group?
- Half-way through the first session in a new group, it dawns on you that many of the men in the group provide you with much more eye contact than they do your female colleague, and that they often have their body slightly turned away from her.
- A man in the group, half-way through a session, looks directly at the female practitioner and says "No offence love, but the courts and cops have it out for us fellas..." Three of the other men nod in agreement.
- See scenarios one, two, three and four to follow.

[1] Exploratory questions to use in supervision (clinical and peer) and in other reflective practice contexts that support male practitioners to develop 'gender antennae' in their work with female colleagues and colleagues of other genders. Drafted by Rodney Vlais, September 2025.

How, as a male practitioner, do you grow your **gender antennae** in men's behaviour change work? What are you monitoring and noticing during group-work about the men's gendered behaviours? What else could you be monitoring?

What do you think your female co-facilitator might be monitoring about the men's behaviours that you might not be, or not to the same extent?

What are you monitoring and noticing about your own gendered behaviour? What are you conscious of?

What are the behaviours that male co-facilitators could use in group-work that might inadvertently exclude or marginalise the female co-facilitator?

Men who do this work need to go on their own parallel journeys of identifying and monitoring their use of gendered entitlement and privilege. Sometimes they might choose to self-disclose something about what they are discovering about this in the group, as a way of breaking down any sense of "as the male practitioner I'm the expert and I'm teaching you the right way" and to enable an approach of "we are here to create a space for you to journey together, one that as a male I'm on too." How might the male co-facilitator do this in a way that doesn't establish a 'brotherhood bond' between him and the men in the group that isolates his female co-facilitator?

How do you connect in with the experiences of your female co-facilitator during the session? How do you keep her in mind at all times?

How do you connect in with the experiences and views of your co-facilitator in pre-session planning?

How do you do so in post-session debriefing?

What does it look like to create a working relationship of safety for your female co-facilitator to offer you feedback about your own gendered behaviours? What responses to feedback, in addition to defensiveness, might lead to a female colleague feeling hesitant to continue to provide feedback?

Men can use particular displays of emotion strategically to deflect feedback and to make it less likely that others will continue to try to make them accountable for harmful behaviour. What should you be conscious of in your own displays of emotion with female colleagues so that you promote rather than deflect accountability for things you could, or might need to do, differently?

What does it look like to make decisions during group-work sessions with your co-facilitator in ways that models respect to the men and that actively counters male privilege and entitlement?

What might male practitioners feel entitled to in their working relationships and arrangements, such that they fail to see the need to negotiate with others? What might they just demand or take?

What are the different forms and types of space-taking and space-dominating that male practitioners need to become aware of?

What would it look like for male practitioners to identify and appropriately share the emotional and social labour that goes into the work? What would it look like for male practitioners to share the mental load around the workplace and in work spaces and in contributing to teamwork and collective practice?

What are the signs that a male practitioner might be overly focused on their own 'mission' to meet their personal or professional needs, in ways that disconnect them from the needs and experiences of their female colleagues? When their commitment to the work is mostly about them and their own professional or personal journeys, and less about contributing towards a team?

Read the resource Superman? Really?[2] What capes might you, as a male practitioner in the work, put on, and in what situations? How might you monitor your cape-wearing so that it does not influence your practice and relationships with female colleagues and colleagues of other genders?

What signs would you look out for to identify men in the work who frequently wear these capes, to the extent of causing significant difficulty, harm or distress for female colleagues or colleagues of other genders? How might you respond to try to limit the harms caused by these men?

How might you identify male practitioners and movement leaders who believe they are entitled to wear the 'cape of benefits' due to their status and standing in the field? What might you do if you identify a male leader as being wrapped up in an 'entitled snugness', who has recruited a system of female and other admirers to shore up their ego and protect themselves from scrutiny? Or even worse, to provide cover for their predatory and grooming behaviours?

Men need to step up actively in the struggle to end men's violence against women and children. They also need to step up in care and community services industries and movements that they have traditionally vacated. At the same time, men need to step back from positions of power to enable space for women and others to step in. How might male activists, change agents and practitioners navigate the need to take up space to prevent and respond to men's violence, without dominating the spaces that women, people without cisgender privilege, and people of colour have to share their experiences and to express their needs?

---

[2] Downloadable from the Featured section of https://www.linkedin.com/in/rodney-vlais/ (scroll down towards the end of the resources listed) for those with a linkedin account.

Scenario One

You and your co-facilitator are halfway through a session focusing on sexual respect and sexual intimacy. You are trying to lay the foundations for this gently, firstly focusing on explorations of the positives of what demonstrating sexual respect, and working towards sexual intimacy, might involve.

After the break, when the session resumes one of the men looks to the female co-facilitator and says in a fairly matter-of-fact way "Look, I know you are trying to be respectful, but can we get to the point, you think we here are a bunch of rapists." At this point, two other men look up to the female co-facilitator in a way that suggests they are joining in with man, almost demanding that the female co-facilitator provides a response to their accusation.

> *What might be some of the issues being experienced by the female co-facilitator at this point?*
>
> *How might different women experience this differently? Or how might the same woman experience this differently at different times?*
>
> *What are some of the considerations that might guide how the male co-facilitator could respond?*
>
> *What might you be trying to model, as the male co-facilitator, to the group?*
>
> *What might be your objectives in terms of group process and culture at this point?*
>
> *How might you go about trying to work towards these objectives?*
>
> *What might you be trying not to do?*

Scenario Two

It's about two-thirds of the way through the group-work curriculum. You and your co-facilitator run a modular group where new men can enter the group at the start of any four-session module. The current module concerns impacts of violence on children, children's needs for safety, and the importance of supporting the bond that children have with their mother / other parent(s).

You and your co-facilitator are running an activity focusing on what it means to be a supportive co-parent, and why it's so important to children that they see and experience their father treating their mother with respect rather than with violence. A new participant Steve – who has attended three group-work sessions so far – says during the activity "It's all very well talking about this stuff when you are in a relationship with a woman who is reasonable - my ex clearly had it in for me. And the family law courts favour women and don't give dads a chance" (upon which another participant in the room, who is bitter about his partner's decision to separate and is initiating family law proceedings, nods his head).

> *What are the options for how the co-facilitators might respond to Steve, and to the other men's reactions?*
>
> *What would you specifically say as the male facilitator in this situation... and why? What is your thinking and intentions behind the option you would choose?*

What might be the considerations here in deciding who steps in, the male or female co-facilitator?

And considerations concerning which co-facilitator does what after that?

What might you need to manage within yourself to respond effectively to Steve and the other men, as part of a co-facilitator team? How might the self-management issues and needs differ (and overlap) between the male and female co-facilitator?

Scenario Three

It's session eight of the program. One of the participants, who had been fairly quiet during the group up until now, begins to fidget and show some signs of mild agitation during an activity focusing on the types of violence. You notice this and invite the man to share what's going on for him during the process of listening to the co-facilitators and some of the other men talk about examples of different types of violence, and of watching these examples being written on chart paper across the room. He responds "Just looking at these lists of different things, Sally does at least one or two things under each of these headings. Alright, she hasn't sexually abused me - well, I wish she would!" (he breaks into a smile and several other men in the group smirk, a couple openly chuckle) "but she's hit me, yelled abuse at me. Yet I'm the one who copped all the blame!"

What might be some of the issues being experienced by the female co-facilitator at this point?

What are some of the considerations that might guide how the male co-facilitator could respond?

What might you be trying to model to the group?

What might be your objectives in terms of group process and culture at this point?

How might you go about trying to work towards these objectives?

What might you be trying not to do?

Scenario Four

You and your co-facilitator have just conducted an internalised other interview, with a participant in the group role-playing his partner while you interviewed ‘her’ about her experience of the violence, its impacts, and the things she did to try to protect herself and her children. After the activity, the men are asked “What might it be like to listen, without defensiveness, to your partner explain her experience of the violence and its impacts?” There is some silence, and then one of the men responds “Nah, I wouldn’t do that, Susie would go on and on about it, she wouldn’t let up, she’s always exaggerating about things like this.” One of the other men in the group smirks “Yeh, that’s my wife to a T. Real drama queen.”

What are the options for how the co-facilitators might respond to this participant, and to the other men’s reactions?

What might be the considerations here in deciding who steps in, the male or female co-facilitator, and how?