

QUESTION VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Community CONNECTIONS

In our communities, our individual beliefs and behaviors are all connected. Together, they create social norms that impact the lives and wellbeing of women, men, and the whole community. To prevent violence against women, we must all be willing to question the beliefs, attitudes and actions that support it.

This is an excellent exercise to help introduce this year's *16 Days* campaign to your own staff and help them to begin questioning violence against women in their own lives and communities. You can also do this exercise with community members, service providers, or other partners. Together we can all start asking and start changing.

**This game is best suited for groups of 3-10 people.
Time: 1.5 hours (flexible according to your needs)**

MATERIALS

1. Ball of string
2. 16 Days 2012 poster
3. Ample space

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE GAME

1. Hang the *16 Days* 2012 poster somewhere that is visible to all participants.
2. Clear space in the middle of the room for all participants to be able to stand in a circle.
3. Photocopy and cut the VAW Statements at the end of this exercise. Fold the statements in half and place them in a basket/hat/bag or other container.

HOW THE GAME WORKS

During this exercise, one person will stand in the middle of the room holding a ball of string and the rest of the participants will form a circle around her/him. Participants will each be given a small strip of paper with a statement on it. The statements illustrate examples of social norms which support violence against women. Participants will each have a turn to read what is on their strip of paper. The facilitator will then ask each participant to describe how this norm is harmful to the community, passing the ball of string to the person. When the participant responds, she/he will wrap a length of string once around the person in the middle. Eventually, the person in the middle will be wrapped in string. This is a visual symbol of the negative impact of VAW on communities and will be used to foster discussion. To unwrap the person in the middle, participants will need to come up with actions they can take to undo to harmful social norms written on their piece of paper.

The step-by-step guidelines below will help you to facilitate this exercise effectively!



HOW TO FACILITATE THE GAME

1. Introduce this year's 16 Days campaign theme: *Preventing violence against women requires us to change the social norms which make our reality. It calls on us to question widely accepted norms and offer positive alternatives. This year's 16 Days campaign is dedicated to questioning violence against women in our own communities. Change can only start when we begin questioning, so let's start asking and start changing!*
2. Ask for a volunteer from the group. Ask the volunteer to stand in the center of the room. Explain that this person represents "our community."
3. Ask the remaining participants to form a circle around the volunteer.
4. Pass the basket/hat/bag containing the folded statements around the circle and ask each participant to take one piece of folded paper but not to look at it yet.
5. Next, take the ball of string and give the open end of the string to the volunteer in the middle. Remain holding the rest of the ball of string.
6. Explain to the group:
 - a. *In this exercise, we are going to question the social norms that support violence against women and ask ourselves what actions we can take to undo them.*
 - b. *This begins by asking ourselves 'How do our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors support violence against women?'*
 - c. *To answer this question, we will go around the circle and each of you will read aloud the statement on your piece of paper.*
7. Go around the circle and give each participant the opportunity to read their statement aloud.
8. Say to participants that because these norms support violence against women, they are harmful to the entire community.
9. Explain:
 - a. *We will now question how these norms hurt our communities.*
 - b. *I will pass the ball of string to someone to go first.*
 - c. *That person will answer how the norm on their piece of paper hurts our communities.*
 - d. *After they answer, they will take a length of string and wrap it once around the person in the middle, holding onto the rest of the roll.*



- e. *They will then pass the roll of string to another participant who will answer the same question, "How does this norm hurt our communities?" referring to the norm on their piece of paper.*
 - f. *The next participant will repeat the same steps, wrapping the string a little bit higher than the person before.*
 - g. *We will continue until all participants have responded. Let's begin!*
10. Pass the ball of string to the first participant and proceed as described above until all norms have participants have had a turn.
11. If participants struggle to think of ways that their norms are harmful to the community, remind them of key ideas such as:
- a. *Violence against women has serious physical, emotional and psychological consequences not only for survivors, but for children family and friends.*
 - b. *We must treat all people with equal respect and dignity in order to thrive as a community*
 - c. *When we treat boys and girls, men and women differently, we perpetuate gender stereotypes that can lead to violence against women.*
 - d. *Unequal power in relationships prevents the growth of peaceful, happy, and productive families. Balancing power in relationships leads to happier, healthier relationships.*
 - e. *Violence against women denies women and girls the opportunity to reach their full potential, which means that our communities cannot reach their full potential.*
 - f. *When we remain silent about all types of violence against women we allow it to continue.*
12. When all participants have completed their turn ask: "What does this tell us about violence against women in our community?" Invite answers from 3-4 participants (3-2 minutes each) Probe as appropriate using the points above and some additional key points as a guide:
- a. *Our silence about violence against women allows it to continue.*
 - b. *As communities, we hold a wide range of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that support violence against women.*
 - c. *Violence against women negatively impacts the entire community, not just individuals experiencing it.*
 - d. *Violence against women prevents us all from reaching our full potential.*
 - e. *We must all question our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in order to prevent violence against women.*
13. After this discussion, say to participants: As we question violence against women, we must ask ourselves what we can do to change the social norms that support it. Look again at the social norm that is written on your piece of paper. What is one thing you can do to help change that harmful norm? We will now go around the circle and you will each have a chance to answer the question. This time, you will **unwrap** one row of string after you answer and pass the roll to another participant. We will continue in this manner until we have all come up with actions we can take to promote positive change. Let's begin!

14. Pass the ball of string to the first participant to and ask them to join in. When all participants have finished responding, the volunteer in the middle should be completely unwrapped from the string.
15. Debrief the meaning of this exercise with participants, highlighting key points:
 - a. *Violence against women negatively impacts the whole community.*
 - b. *Many social norms support violence against women and allow it to continue.*
 - c. *We must question the harmful attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that we accept as normal in order to prevent violence against women.*
 - d. *We all have a role to play in questioning violence against women in our lives and communities.*
 - e. *When we ask ourselves what we can do to transform harmful social norms, then we can start making positive changes!*



VAW STATEMENTS

1. We often keep silent when we hear neighbors experiencing violence.



2. Many people believe that some violence between a husband and wife is normal.



3. Women are counseled by others that it is their duty to endure violence from their husbands to protect marriage.



4. We do not offer girls the same opportunities that we offer boys.



5. Women are often unable to negotiate whether to use condoms with their husbands.



6. Men often call out inappropriate comments to women walking in the street.



7. Many women do not feel safe in their own homes.



8. When women who experience violence seek support from service providers such as police and health care workers, they are often blamed for the violence.



9. Our media frequently portrays women in an undignified and sensational manner.



10. We laugh or keep quiet when people make inappropriate jokes about women in public.



11. Women do not have the same opportunities in business or politics as men.



12. We do not speak out when male teachers offer higher marks in exchange for sexual favors from female students.



13. We blame our female friends for staying in abusive relationships.



14. Men make the final financial decisions in the household.



15. We convince ourselves that violence against women only happens in poor communities.



16. Families offer their girls for marriage in exchange for money, cattle, or goods.



17. We laugh at men who share household responsibilities with their wives.



18. It is commonly believed that men have the right to offer money in exchange for sex.



19. Many believe that men are more intelligent than women.



20. In our offices, we sometimes treat female staff differently than male staff.



21. We believe that women need a husband to in order to have a good life.



22. Women who work are often accused of being big-headed and ruining traditional families.



23. When a man perpetrates sexual violence against a woman, we blame the woman for dressing provocatively.

