

Intimate terror: Working with perpetrators

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Midden in de West-Brabantse samenleving

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Program workshop

- Why should we help perpetrators?
- Typology of intimate terror perpetrators
- Interventions for perpetrators

- Case

- Discussion



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Questions for group

1. Are intimate terrorists treatable?
2. Would systemic therapy be appropriate?
3. Would you be willing to treat an intimate terrorist?



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Why should we help perpetrators?

Prevention of future victimization

- Many perpetrators will show the same behaviour in subsequent relationships
- Domestic violence is a transgenerational problem



Why should we help perpetrators?

We are all human

- Many perpetrators experience psychological problems due to trauma and insecure attachment.
- Many perpetrators suffer from psychopathology
- Many perpetrators experience losses due to their behaviour (relationships, work, family etc)
- Dysphoric feelings increases the risk for violent behaviour.

Reducing intimate terror in society

- Create safety and help for victims
- Increase societal awareness
- Help perpetrators to break the chain of violence

Typology of DV perpetrators

Holzworth-Monroe

- Family only
 - Dependent, avoident, stress induced, non-generalized reactive aggression
- Dysphoric/borderline
 - Emotional unstable, moodswings, separation anxiety, reactive aggression,
- Generally violent antisocial
 - Generally violent, criminal, proactive aggression, substance abuse
- Low level antisocial
 - Proactive aggression, non-generalized



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The need for control

The psychology behind intimate terrorism perpetrators

- Individual factors
 - Low sense of self-esteem
 - Fear of humiliation
 - Separation anxiety
- Social factors
 - Male privilege attitude
 - socialisation
 - Subcultural influences
 - Family pressure (shame, fear of humiliation)



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The code of the street

decency, violence and the moral life of the inner city
(Anderson, 1999)

- **Worldview**
 - The world is unsafe, no one can be trusted
 - Never show weakness, otherwise they will kill you
 - People have to respect you
 - If someone doesn't pay respect, you react with violence
 - Even young people who are not inclined to physical aggression find it necessary to live according to the street code in these neighborhoods
 - Women are regarded as sexual, status-enhancing objects



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Code of the street in Music



- Women are
 - Sexual objects
 - Trophy's
 - Gold-diggers
- Never let a woman humiliate you
- When a woman leaves you, it means that you are weak.



Profiles of intimate terror perpetrators

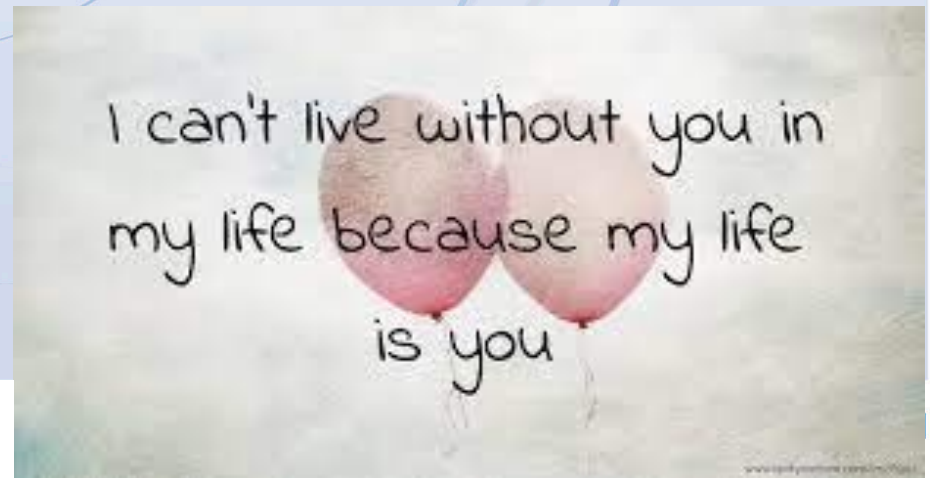
- Borderline
- Narcissistic
- Antisocial



IMPACT	High	Medium	High	High
	Medium	Low	Medium	High
	Low	Low	Low	Medium
		Low	Medium	High
		LIKELIHOOD		

Borderline

- Fear of abandonment
- difficulty tolerating loneliness
- Instable feelings of self-worthiness
- Moodswings
- Impulsive behaviour
- Splitting between idealizing and devaluating
- Jealousy



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Borderline and coercive control

- Preventing someone to leave
- Preventing someone to fall in love with someone else
- Controlling, checking
- Isolation
- Stalking
- Sex as reassurement and conformation of love
- Feelings of insecurity and anger when love is not confirmed



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Narcisism

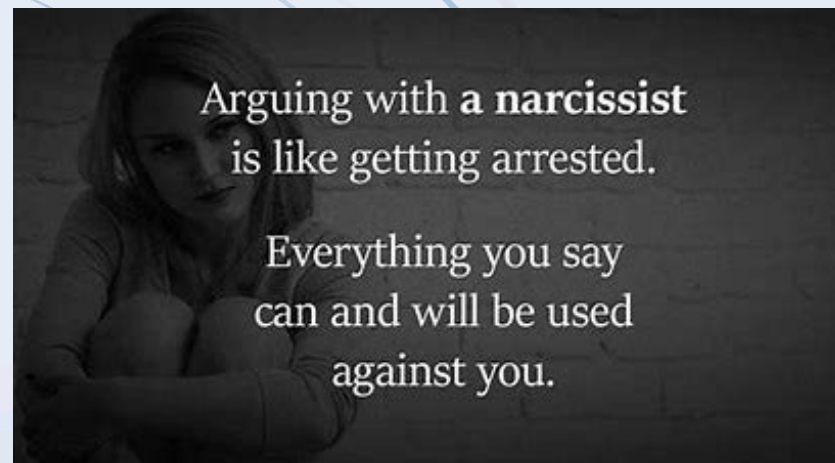
- Have an exaggerated sense of self-importance
- Require constant, excessive admiration
- Expect to be recognized as superior even without achievements that warrant it
- Have an inability or unwillingness to recognize the needs and feelings of others
- Become impatient or angry when they don't receive special treatment
- React with rage or contempt and try to belittle the other person to make themselves appear superior
- Fear of humiliation



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Narcissism and coercive control

- Knows everything better
- Not wanting to share attention
- isolate to avoid critical others
- Idealize and belittle
- Responding to criticism with aggression
- Experience something very quickly as criticism
- Being overly critical on others
- Can't stand rejection



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Antisocial

- Recurring problems with the law, including criminal behavior
- Repeatedly violating the rights of others through intimidation and dishonesty
- Impulsiveness or failure to plan ahead
- Hostility, significant irritability, agitation, aggression or violence
- Lack of empathy for others and lack of remorse about harming others
- Unnecessary risk-taking or dangerous behavior with no regard for the safety of self or others



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Antisocial and coercive control

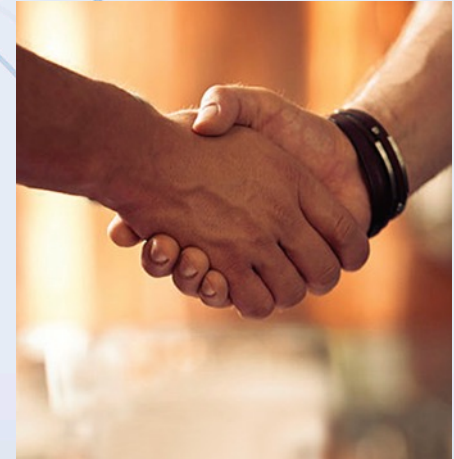


- Mistrust in the intentions of other people
- keep control to protect your property from others
- Making sure you get things your way
- Not interested in the feelings of others



Interventions for perpetrators in general

- Main goals:
 - prevent violence
 - build a working alliance
- How:
 - Don't judge, try to understand, listen
 - Differentiate between feelings and behaviour
 - Show empathy for the feelings
 - Ask questions about the consequences of behaviour.
(Did it help you?)



Phases in the treatment of perpetrators

- Crisis
 - strong emotions because of breakup
 - high risk of violence
 - aim is to ensure safety
- Reducing risks
 - Gain insight into triggers of aggression
 - Gaining insight into protective factors
 - The aim is to reduce the risk of violence
- Recovery
 - Working on well-being, stability and mental health
 - The aim is to reduce the risk of violence



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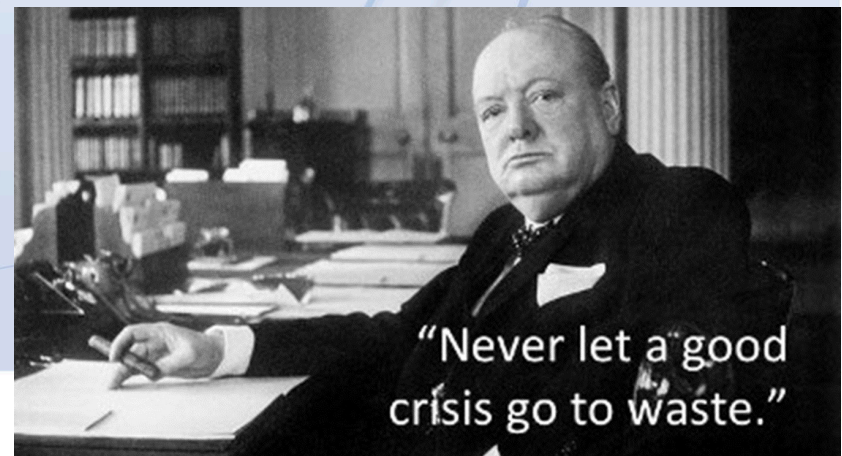
Systemic therapy?

- Crisis Phase/Pre crisis Phase
 - Preferably no couples therapy aimed at solving relational problems because of the possible evoking of triggers (abandonment, criticism).
 - Both partners each have their own therapist who supports their specific interests
 - The therapists do not share information with each other
 - Couples therapy is sometimes possible (and also necessary) after the crisis phase.
 - Both therapists should make a risk assessment.



Phase 1: Crisis

- Be there, be present, be quick
- Listen, show compassion for emotions, not the behaviour
- Do not judge. What is your side of the story?
- Try to find out what he wants
- Be an ally
- Prevent impulsive action



Phase 2: Reducing Risks

- Find out what the triggers are, f.e.
 - Perceived humiliation, injustice, abandonment
 - Loneliness, despair
 - Alcohol, drugs
 - Possession of weapons
- Reduce the influence of triggers
- Don't be a trigger yourself
- Install protective factors, f.e.
 - Positive social support
 - Work, home,



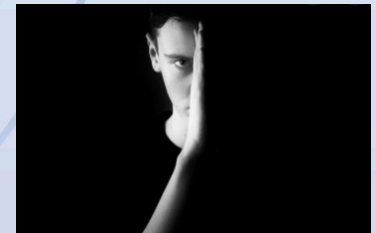
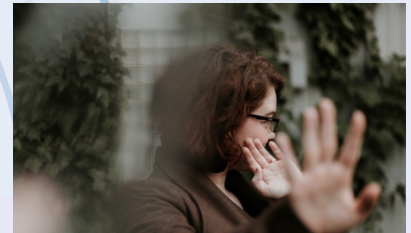
Phase 3: Recovery

- Trauma therapy
- Increase mentalizing ability
- Reduce shame and restore self-esteem
- Increase capacity to endure psychological pain



Specific interventions for specific types of intimate terrorists

- Dependent intimate terrorist
 - Fear of abandonment, jealousy, shame
 - borderline perpetrators
 - Fear of rejection, inferiority, insecurity, shame
 - Narcissistic perpetrators
- Antisocial intimate terrorist
 - Distrust, different values, hardened, numb
 - Antisocial perpetrator



Specific interventions for borderline perpetrators



- keep hope alive in the possibility of reconciliation
 - Trigger: despair leads to escalation
- Stimulate behavior which increases chances for reconciliation
- Organize social support
 - Trigger: Loneliness, abandonment, despair
- Slowly shift attention to other sources of emotional reinforcement

Specific interventions for narcissistic perpetrators

- Show respect and equality
 - Trigger: rejection
- Give him the opportunity
- to take his loss without losing face
 - Trigger: shame
- Create opportunities to boost his ego without being violent
- Label self-control as superior behavior
- Look for alternative sources of success and admiration



Psychotherapy for borderline and narcissistic perpetrators

Evidence based psychotherapy like

- Mentalization based treatment (MBT)
- Schema Focused Psychotherapy (SFT)
- Psychodynamic psychotherapy
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Goals

Aim to repair traumatic interpersonal experiences (like abuse and shame) which leads to reduction of daily tension

Aim to restore (at least a bit of) trust in other people and reduce fear of abandonment or rejection

Insight in own behaviour and it's consequences on how others experience you and react to you



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Specific interventions for antisocial perpetrators

- Psycho-education
- Discuss their cognitive distortions
- Seek alternatives for need gratification (aggression is an addiction)
- Help to create a narrative through which he can show his social group that he is not weak
- Provide social support in order to decrease impulsive actions



Psychotherapeutic interventions for antisocial perpetrators

Evidence based psychotherapy like

- EMDR on trauma, addiction and cognitive distortions
- Schema Focused Psychotherapy (SFT)
- Mentalization based treatment (MBT)

Goals

Create insight about destructiveness of authoritarian relationships

Aim to repair traumatic interpersonal experiences which leads to reduction of daily tension and necessity of addictive behaviour

Aim to restore (at least a bit of) trust in other people

Insight in own behavior and it's consequences on how others experience you and react to you

Less necessity for damping of emotions (decrease addictive behaviour)

Insight in negative influence of controlling behaviour



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Questions for the case

- Type of perpetrator?
- How to handle:
 - With regard to approach
 - With regard to perpetrator
 - With regard to (ex)partner
 - Goal of interventions?
 - Focus / starting points treatment?



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