

Report: Empower men to resist violence

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A report has confirmed the value of a reflective approach for working with men who use violence against women and children, that encourages men to explore their core values and relationship ideals.

Engaging men in conversations about change is a critical first step to

attitudinal and behavior change, according to a new Flinders University report commissioned by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

The report's findings suggest "invitational narrative" intervention approaches are likely to bring sustainable change and, ultimately, contribute to long-term social transformation.

In narrative practice, people are encouraged to share their stories with genuinely curious, non-judging counselors who support them to consider their ethical preferences—or how they wish to live—and reflect upon what gets in the way of realizing these.

This makes it possible to re-imagine their lives and their relationships.

The research, conducted by researchers at Flinders University with expertise from Uniting Communities in Adelaide, explored how invitational narrative counseling techniques engage perpetrators of domestic violence to change their attitudes and behaviors.

"We found this method engages perpetrators in an emotional journey, supporting them to take responsibility for their behaviors by discovering how they prefer to live, and their capacity to relate in respectful ways," says lead author Professor Sarah Wendt, from Flinders University's Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS).

Narrative approaches use stories to challenge minimization, denial or apathy.

"Through storytelling and purposeful conversations, men are encouraged to uncover their assumptions and look for inconsistencies and contradictions in how they live, empowering them to consider alternative behaviors," Professor Wendt says.

Professor Wendt says engagement involves much more than turning up to appointments or complying with orders, but requires genuine emotional and intentional investment.

"This study highlights the need to actively engage men in change and considers the conditions that can make this possible," she says.

"It has shown this is possible when men believe a program will benefit them."

The report notes that the safety of women and children is paramount, thus counseling must always be complemented by structures of accountability, and processes for supporting women and children.

The study involved an extensive literature review and interviews with experts in the field of invitational narrative approaches, as well as separate interviews with men who use violence, their counselors, and—where appropriate—their ex/partners.

More information: Engaging men who use violence: Invitational narrative approaches: Key findings and future directions: www.anrows.org.au/publication/...d-future-directions/

Provided by Flinders University

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