WHICH FORM OF ABUSE IS WORSE?

Objectives
By the end of this activity participants should be able to:

- Explore and analyse their own and others’ value judgements about different forms of domestic abuse
- Describe how holding set views about the seriousness of specific forms of abuse can affect the service offered to women and children

Materials
- Copy of Activity Sheet: Statements about domestic abuse - cut into individual statements. See page 85. (Methods 1, 2 and 3)

Equipment
- None

Suggested timing
- 30 to 45 minutes
Method 1

1. Divide participants into smaller groups and give each small group a set of statements from the Activity Sheet ‘Statements about domestic abuse’.

2. Ask each small group to imagine a line/continuum, e.g. on each group's table or down the middle of the part of the room they are working in. At one end of the continuum they place a large card with ‘most abusive’ and, at the other end, a large card with ‘least abusive’.

3. Ask participants to read each statement aloud, one person at a time, and invite each person to place their statement on the imaginary line.

4. Once all the statements have been placed on the line, invite participants to look at them and consider whether or not they agree with the order or if they want to negotiate changes.

5. Points to raise or explore with the whole group, once the task has been completed:
   - value judgements about how much worse one thing is than another and feelings evoked by grading abusive incidents
   - whether or not we all grade abuse even if we do not want to
   - whether or not we believe that emotional/psychological abuse is somehow less valid than physical abuse, and how this might influence the service offered to individual women and children experiencing emotional/psychological abuse
   - what we can do as individuals to reduce our tendency to do this (e.g. being aware of our own value judgements, listening to women, who often say the psychological/emotional abuse was more devastating than the physical)

6. You could finish this activity by hearing what women say about their experiences of different forms of domestic abuse. We provide several examples overleaf.

continues overleaf...
'The physical abuse wasn’t as bad as the mental and the emotional torment and the dragging of you down. So you feel as if you are nothing and you don't want to live anymore...I tried to commit suicide.'

'I think the worst was when I was pregnant with (X). I was about eight and a half months and I got kicked and I nearly lost her through that.'

The quotes are from Reaching Out, Women's Aid in a Rural Area, by East Fife Women's Aid.

**War of Words**

Hateful, cruel words
Raining down like sharp objects
Find me crouched in a corner
Trying to fend them off

Bitter, twisted words
Lashing out, tearing into me
As I cower in fear
Praying they will stop

These words of hate
Are the ultimate weapon
That penetrate and destroy
What little there is left of love
In this war of words

*By Allison*
Method 2

1. Invite small groups to rank the statements on Activity Sheet ‘Statements about domestic abuse’ from most abusive to least abusive, as shown below.

   Most abusive
   
   Least abusive

2. Afterwards, have a whole group discussion to get a flavour of what statements each group ranked highest (‘most abusive’) and lowest (‘least abusive’) and their reasons why. (See Method 1, stage 5, for discussion points.)

3. If appropriate, finish with Method 1, stage 6.

Method 3

1. Invite small groups to grade the statements on Activity Sheet ‘Statements about domestic abuse’ from most abusive to least abusive, on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most abusive; 1 least abusive). They can have more than one statement with the same rating.

2. Towards the end of the activity, go round each group and add up the total scores for each statement. Use the scores as a guide to which areas of abuse to focus on during a whole group plenary session.

4. Afterwards, have a whole group plenary discussion to get a flavour of what each group had as ‘most abusive’ and ‘least abusive’, which statements scored highest and lowest and discuss reasons why. (See also Method 1, stage 5, for discussion points.)

5. If appropriate, finish with Method 1, stage 6.
STATEMENTS ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE

Being spat at

Being urinated on

Being punched on the face

Being in a constant state of fear

Being sexually assaulted with a screwdriver

Being constantly put down in front of all your friends and family

Having food you've prepared thrown on the floor

Being told you are stupid, ugly and an unfit mother

Being forced to have oral sex and swallow the ejaculation

Being locked out of the house in your underwear at two in the morning

Having your children being told that you are a whore and slut

Being kicked and head butted and ending up with a fractured jaw

Being kicked in the stomach when 4 months pregnant and having a miscarriage

Having your husband monitor your phone calls and follow you everywhere

Having your ex-husband shout and harangue you in the street every time he sees you