# Letting go

Exercise 16.1

Grief and letting go – Direct teaching input & discussion

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| 3  Matl. | None |

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| 2  Aims. | Aims / Key learning points |

* To acknowledge that losing a relationship can lead to a grief process akin to that which you might experience after bereavement
* To acknowledge that grieving a loss is a long, slow process
* To make men more aware of their sadness and loss, and to encourage them to stay with those feelings rather than acting abusively to move away from them

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| 1  Exer. | The exercise |

Run this as direct teaching input with discussion and questions. Go over some of the following material with the group.

Letting go of a relationship usually involves accepting loss and grieving over it. Most difficult for a man who is generally very controlling, it involves accepting his real and complete loss of control over his partner. It involves him respecting his partner’s wishes. It’s a process that can take some time and a lot of pain.

The grief model of getting over any shock or loss suggests that we move from denial to anger to sadness to experimentation to decision to action to recovery. If we don’t go through the downwards dip into sadness and depression, but try to jump over it straight into action, we will simply cycle from denial and anger to apparent recovery and back again many times.

Exercise 16.2

Not letting go: controlling behaviours – Brainstorm

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| 3  Matl. | Flipchart paper and pens, handout on not letting go |

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| 2  Aims. | Aims / Key learning points |

* To increase each man’s awareness of behaviours designed to keep his control over his (ex)-partner even when she’s no longer in a relationship with him

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| 1  Exer. | The exercise |

Many a man using domestic violence has a lot of difficulty in letting his partner go. It’s like giving her the last word – it’s the final proof that ultimately he can’t control her. It’s therefore an incredibly dangerous period for her. The time at which a woman is at the greatest risk of being killed by an (ex)-partner is actually just after she has left the relationship. It is a time when the man may feel he has nothing left to lose – and what we can think of as the “fuck-it factor” may kick in. When a man is in this “fuck-it” state, he is at his most dangerous and the intervention project needs to give partner work a very high priority.

Brainstorm the ways in which men might try to hold on to control of an ex-partner. In particular, ask each man what he does or has done in the past to keep control. Give out and go through the handout to fill in any gaps.

Exercise 16.3

Letting go – Exercise

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| 3  Matl. | Flipchart paper and pens |

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| 2  Aims. | Aims / Key learning points |

* To help men develop ways of supporting themselves when separating from an ex-partner

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| 1  Exer. | The exercise |

Get the men into small groups and ask them to brainstorm the things that they would or that they do find most difficult about not being in a relationship. Ask them to try to come up with strategies for coping with these issues or situations. Feed back to the large group.

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| 6  Trap | **Trap**  This module will have the strongest resonance with men who are currently separated from their ex-partners either temporarily or permanently. Nonetheless it may be a useful lesson to others. Many men who use domestic violence are particularly afraid that their partners will leave them, and this can be an area where they exert a great deal of control while still in the relationship. Facing some of these fears can help them relax their controlling strategies such as isolation. In the longer run, any of the men may find himself separating from a partner in the future, so this module is still worth his time and attention. |

## Handout – Not letting go

# WAYS OF TRYING TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF YOUR PARTNER

1. Refusing to find solutions or compromises that can settle financial arrangements about your possessions, the house, children, etc.
2. Using financial exchanges or negotiations as a way to meet your partner
3. Using childcare, discipline, baby-sitters, schooling or holidays as ways of maintaining control, by either refusing or controlling negotiation on these issues and by not putting the children’ interests first within such negotiation
4. Controlling when and how finances are exchanged or negotiated
5. Refusing to negotiate settlements through mediators, letters, lawyers, meetings in public places or in any other way that feels safe for her
6. Withdrawing support or co-operation from her around issues such as the children
7. Making it harder for her to control the children or to finance herself or them, as a way to punish her for not being with you
8. Competing over the cost of gifts for the children
9. Controlling how and what is bought for the children
10. Pumping the children for information about her
11. Passing messages to her via the children
12. Using the children as pawns – trying to turn them against her
13. Using talk with the children as an arena to put her down and blame her
14. Making the children feel sorry for you or anxious about your well-being, such that they may then put pressure on her
15. Using children to meet her
16. Disrupting agreements about times, places and methods for contact and childcare
17. Using a special occasions such as a child's birthday, an anniversary or Christmas Day as an excuse to disregard your partner’s wishes about contact
18. Making unwelcome calls or visits
19. Not checking what is welcome in terms of calls and visits
20. Any form of monitoring her movements, such as watching the house, following her, hanging round places she or the children may go, waiting for her at her work, calling her at her workplace, waiting at the school or meeting the children other than at agreed contact times
21. Contacting her friends or family to monitor her movements or to pass messages to her
22. Spending time in her neighbourhood hoping to meet her
23. Sending flowers, letters, presents or other forms of unwelcome communication
24. Pestering her for dates and promises about reunion
25. Pestering her to get back together with you – repeatedly asking her why she won’t
26. Putting her down and blaming her to mutual friends – trying to turn them against her
27. Reading her stuff or going through her pockets
28. Persistently asking her where she's at with the separation
29. Not waiting for her to be the one to invite you into her life (in terms of telephone calls, visits, time spent, intimacy levels etc.) when and as far as she wishes
30. Not allowing her to vacillate, or pressuring her not to change her mind and back off further, when and as far as she wishes
31. Using her engagement in any of the above behaviours as an excuse to do the same yourself