Card 11: First Level Response to Domestic Violence

Supporting Women Who Experience Domestic Violence

Most women find it very difficult to talk about violence as they think it is a family matter or that they are at fault. The FLW needs to respond with empathy. The World Health Organisation has provided steps for a level first-level response. These are called LIVES.

L - Listen

- Not just hearing her words, but understanding her emotions.
- Sit at the same level as her and be attentive to what she says - nod your head or say "hmm".
- Refrain from giving any advice and focus on her experience. Don't interrupt or pressurize her to speak, allow pauses.
- Avoid judgemental statements.

I - Inquire About Needs and Concerns

- Ask open-ended questions (instead of yes/no questions) like "How do you feel about that?" or "Can you tell me more about that?"
- Help her identify her needs, for example, "From what you have said, it looks like you may not be comfortable going home today and may need help from your friends."
- Sum up what she says while talking to her, so she knows you have understood her.

V- Validate

Help her see that her feelings are natural and you understand how she feels. You can say:

- "It's not your fault. What happened has no justification or excuse."
- "Help is available. You are not alone. Unfortunately, many other women have faced this problem, too."
- "Your life, your health, you are of value. Everybody deserves to feel safe at home."

E - Ensure and Enhance Safety

- Is there a risk to her or her children's health and safety?
- Is there an immediate risk to her or it is safe to go home? Ask if violence has escalated recently - if her partner has used weapons, is suspicious of her, or if she believes that he may harm her.
- Keep records confidential.
- Discuss how she can explain where she has been, when asked at home.

S - Social Support Facilitation

- Discuss her social support as she may prefer to rely on her informal network.
- Connect her to resources through a referral.
- How to refer: Check if she would like to go the OSC* and if she says yes, you could tell her how to reach there and talk to the staff at the OSC. Follow up with her after she meets the OSC Counsellor to provide local support.

Card 9: Domestic Violence

Women and children are vulnerable to experiencing different kinds of violence/abuse. Unlike what the popular belief is, abuse is not limited to just hitting or physical acts. There are multiple types of violence that a woman may experience. Knowing about these will help her seek the right help and support.

Forms of Violence

Physical:

Slapping, biting, pulling hair, beating, punching, kicking, or causing injuries with or without a weapon, acid attacks, strangling, and pregnancy complications due to abuse.

Emotional:

- Neglect
- Mental trauma
- Threats to cause harm or kill
- Isolation of woman from others
- Verbal abuse - calling her names and demeaning her
- Denying paternity of the child
- Insulting woman in public or private, and finding fault in all her actions

Economic:

- Denial of rights to inherit property and access to money
- Deprivation from food, clothing, education, and health care
- Not allowing women to work
- Dowry demands
- Unpaid domestic labour or harassment by those in positions of power

Sexual:

- Forced sexual activity
- Denying the use of contraceptives
- Advances from other family members
- Forced and/or child marriage

Coercive and controlling:

- Preventing access to personal phone, money, etc.
- Threatening and demanding an explanation for all expenditures.
- Restricting a person's movement outside the home without a family member.
- Preventing access or taking away her personal valuables, such as jewellery, money, documents, or bank access.

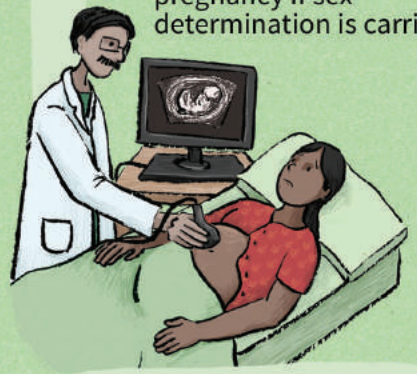
Violence Against Women

Old Age

Abandonment by children, preventing access to her own property, physical abuse by family, lack of financial security to meet one's needs especially ill- health related concerns, not being able to seek treatment for medical problems, preventing one from being with or playing with one's own grandchildren or separation from spouse, making decisions on her behalf without regard to her needs.

Prenatal

Pressure for male child and threat of termination of pregnancy if sex determination is carried out.



Infancy

Unhappiness at birth of female child. Deprivation of nutrition, warmth, care and access to preventive and therapeutic healthcare.

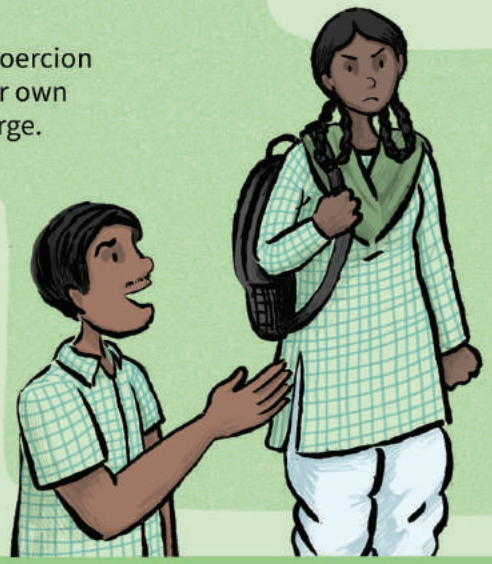
Childhood

Gender discrimination with preference for male children over female children for food, resources, healthcare facilities, career and recreational opportunities.

Adolescence

Forcing adolescent girls to drop out of school, forcing them into employment, early marriages.

Eve teasing and forced sexual advances.



Adulthood

Verbal, physical, emotional, economic, sexual abuse and coercion and controlling by partner, her own family, in-laws or society at large.

Card 10: Assessment of Domestic Violence

Signs of Domestic Violence

The following signs could be suggestive of domestic violence:

Bruises on the body, especially on the face, hit marks on ears, loose or broken teeth.

Injury marks inconsistent with the history of reported injuries.

Physical symptoms related to stress.

Repeated visits.

Evasive, reluctant to speak in front of family or partner.

Overly protective or controlling partner.

Assessing for Domestic Violence

Talk to the woman alone in a safe and private environment. Ensure that her conversation with you is private and that people who could potentially threaten her, including female relatives should not be there while you talk to the mother.

Start by saying "Because violence is so common in many people's lives, I have begun to ask women about it routinely. Everything we discuss will remain confidential."

Ask questions like:

- How are you feeling at home?
- Are you scared of your husband? Have you ever been?
- Does someone in your family talk to you or threaten you in a way that makes you feel you don't deserve to be treated? This could be in the form of calling names, demeaning you, or insulting you in front of other people for minor mistakes.
- Do your family members ever beat you or hurt you physically in any manner?
- If you see any injury marks, ask "Did someone cause these injuries?"
- Does this violence include your children as well?

Sometimes women may be forced to leave the house urgently due to violence that may put her or her children at imminent risk. Ask her to keep a Safety Bag ready for such times. This way, in case of an emergency situation, she can leave immediately with all the essentials needed. If she has children, be sure your safety plan includes ways to keep them safe when violence occurs.

Provide contact numbers of Women and Child Helplines

- Women Helpline (All India) Women in Distress – **1091**
- Women Helpline Domestic Abuse – **181**
- Child Helpline - **1098**
- Local (One Stop Centre) OSC Contact (District-wise)

If the woman does not want to seek further help now, respect her decision. Explain that help is available at all times whenever she would like to talk.

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