



# INCORPORATING THE DV PROTECTIVE FACTORS INTO PRACTICE

## HANDOUT 3C

### **Instructions: Individually, read the following case study.**

Sara is a 35-year-old woman who has been married to Alex for 15 years. They have three children: Gabriella, age 5, Maya, age 8, and Luis, age 14. She works part-time as a hairdresser while her kids are at school. Alex is 37 years old and works in construction. Both of them are religious and attend church regularly. They have a modest home in a rural area. They have a 3-year-old dog.

Every Tuesday, Sara works a late shift to make extra money while Alex picks up the children from school and cares for them at night. He enjoys his time with the kids and looks forward to Tuesday evenings and the weekends. However, one recent Tuesday, Alex called Sara's cell phone every fifteen minutes, leaving messages like, "You better get your ass home before I do or you're going to be sorry." He was so upset that Sara told her manager she could not do the late shift. The manager warned Sara that she was on thin ice because of the constant calls from Alex.

A few weeks later, Sara had plans to go to the children's school festival with her mother-in-law, who is very close to her. Alex wanted to go but was not feeling well. Sara said that she and the kids would go anyway. He became angry, pinched her hard on the arm, and pushed her into the living room wall, bruising her arm. Maya started to cry, and Sara heard Luis tell her, "Shut up, or I'll make you sorry." When Alex's mother heard what happened, she was furious with her son and told him he needed to treat his family right.

Some time ago, Sara went shopping with Alex. He was unhappy because Sara had "wasted" money on an air purifier the doctor recommended to help Gabriella with her asthma. Alex argued with Sara on the way to the car and shoved her into the car.

One night, Alex was angry that dinner was not ready precisely at 5 p.m. He took Sara's cell phone, looked through the recent calls, and then broke it. He said that Sara was no longer allowed to have a cell phone. She secretly bought another phone, but Maya told Alex. He accused Sara of cheating. He then took a pair of scissors and cut up all of Sara's work uniforms.

Sara decided to talk to her religious leader. Her religious leader reminded her that marriage is for better or worse and suggested that she begin counseling through the church to work through her issues. He also mentioned that God does not like abuse and offered to talk to Alex about the problems.

Days later, when Sara arrived home from picking up the children from school, the kitchen window was boarded up, and Alex was sitting on the couch drunk. Sara asked why he boarded up the window, and he replied, "It's my god-damn house, and I will do whatever I like in it." Enraged, Sara took the hammer on the table and started to pry the wood off the window. Alex grabbed her and slapped her across the face several times. Observing, Maya had an asthma attack. Her inhaler was not helping her, so Sara rushed her to the hospital. In the car, Luis said, "Why do you have to make him mad all the time? You're stupid just like he says."

While at the hospital, Maya told the nurse that her parents were fighting again, and she was scared. The nurse filed a child abuse report without telling Sara.

When Sara returned home, Alex was regretful and very concerned about Maya's health. He comforted her and offered support. He got emotional during a conversation where he described telling his sister when they were young that he would never be like his father.

## DISCUSSION AND EXERCISE

We often start at the basics when we begin speaking a new language. We focus on what we believe we need, which is true when thinking about organizing our work. We think of a family or client plan to assess what is needed and then make connections to serve that need. Pathways to Healing asks you to do that with an eye toward building protective factors. Creating a plan for the family is just one piece of the puzzle. Creating our own plan of HOW we do our work and WHAT we can add in impact-focused, healing-oriented, and growth-driven options is a more challenging task. Pathways to Healing guides our work, believing every interaction is an opportunity to build and support Protective Factors.

Based on the case study, the following examples reflect what service plans usually contain. These strategies are not wrong and could actually help the family.

- **Safer and More Stable Conditions:** Sara will enroll kids in childcare on Tuesdays so she can keep her job.
- **Social and Emotional Skills:** Sara will attend DV classes.
- **Social, Cultural and Spiritual Connections:** Sara will connect with her religious leader and her mother-in-law for safety planning.
- **Resilience and Growth Mindset:** Luis will go to a therapist.
- **Nurturing Parent-Child Interactions:** Everybody will go to family therapy.

However, building the five protective factors is about the role of helpers. Sometimes, that means using your resources to connect a family with what they need AND using individual strategies that can be the building blocks to healing. We want to stretch your skill-building to the second part by asking you to practice.

**Instructions: On your own or as a group, create a service plan for the family, focusing on strategies you (and your team) can use to build protective factors. These are actions that helpers or the organizations will take, not the family members.**

Here are some examples:

**Building Safer & More Stable Conditions:** Create predictable routines such as texting if you will be late or setting a recurring time to talk. Organizations could meet current needs by providing resources like gas cards or rental assistance.

**Nurturing Parent-Child Interactions:** Meet with adult and child survivors together and start with something fun, like telling a joke or acting like your favorite animal and guessing what it is. Encourage a parent to record themselves reading a book and send it to foster families to sustain connections. Organizations could offer family programs such as a family dinner night or activity, or a lending library of parenting books.

**Resilience and Growth Mindset:** Ask about hopes and dreams, or encourage an adult or child to write down small goals. Share genuine encouragement, acknowledge achievements, write them down, and give them to survivors. Organizations could put up visual reminders that are hopeful and future-driven.

**Social and Emotional Skills:** Ask about survivors' interests and then find something out about it that you can share or remember next time. Organizations could offer information on regulating feelings.

**Social, Cultural, and Spiritual Connections:** Stay with a survivor when they reach out to a supportive person or group, or offer to roleplay the conversation to help them prepare. Organizations could include friends and family in programs when it's safe.