

# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: BLACK GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN

*Sean Smith*

This lesson will provide participants with knowledge of concepts and sociocultural facets that are related to intimate partner violence (IPV). Participants will engage in a series of discussions and interactive activities that allow them to identify various forms of IPV and how they may impact their lives as racial and sexual minorities within their families.

## KEYWORDS

---

Communication  
Emotional  
Intelligence  
Gender  
Masculinity  
Mental Health  
Race  
Relationships  
Stigma  
Trauma

## THEME

---

Family &  
Relationships

## FORMAT

---

Workshop

## TIME

---

115 minutes





# PREPARATION

The facilitator(s) should use this section to prepare for the lesson.

## WHY THIS LESSON IS IMPORTANT FOR BLACK MEN

---

Intimate partner violence is one of the most pervasive health disparities that affects us as a society and it disproportionately impacts racial minorities and other impoverished groups (*Stockman, Hayashi, and Campbell, 2015.*) Prevention efforts aimed at reducing its prevalence have long been centered on and led by upper-middle class heterosexual white women. In 2013, Congress amended the Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA) to include provisions to enhance services for undocumented immigrants, Native-American Women, and LGBTQ+ communities (*VAWA, 2013*). Although this was a necessary modification, many service providers, and the social discussions that pertain to this topic continue to alienate sexual and racial minorities.

Little effort has been put forth within the public health field to specifically address how intimate partner violence impacts Black gay and Bisexual men (*Finner & Stephenson, 2013; Finneran & Stephenson, 2015*) and studies that do address IPV among Black men who have sex with men are overwhelmingly centered on its relation to HIV risk and infection (*Wu, El-Bassel, & Gilbert, 2018; Beymer et al., 2017*).

Sociocultural narratives often lend us to believe that Black men are inherently violent and less likely to maintain healthy and stable intimate relationships. For those men who identify with a sexually marginalized group, the belief that a healthy and stable intimate relationship is obtainable is further diminished by the adoption of heteronormative ideologies—misogyny, patriarchy, gender roles, and femmephobia, in particular. Black gay and Bisexual men may internalize these stereotypes and fail to recognize, discuss, and collectively work toward eradicating the prevalence of IPV within their own social structures.

This lesson is specifically focused on providing Black gay and Bisexual men with an opportunity to obtain knowledge and apply practical skills to assist them in understanding the various ways IPV impacts their social and intimate lives, and often contributes to the trauma they experience while navigating spaces as racial and sexual minorities. This lesson will highlight the impact of IPV among Black gay and Bisexual men from an intersectional framework that includes recognizing other closely related social determinants of health such as HIV/AIDS, homelessness, poverty, and religion.

## GOAL

---

Participants will experience an increased understanding of the impact IPV has both on their lives and as a social determinant of health for racial and sexual minorities.

## OBJECTIVES

---

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe four forms of IPV—physical, sexual, psychological, and financial.
- Explain how the four forms of IPV are maintained through systems of power and control, and other forms of sociocultural beliefs.
- Understand the perception of IPV among men, and its intersection with gender and race.
- Develop at least two ways to initiate conversations about IPV as it relates to Black gay and bisexual men.
- Discuss the impact the lack of culturally specific IPV resources has on Black gay and Bisexual men’s overall well-being.
- Learn of resources for victims and survivors of IPV.

## KEY TERMS

---

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** Physical, sexual, and/or psychological aggression committed by a current or former romantic partner.

**Sexual minorities:** A group of individuals whose sexual orientation and/or identity is not heterosexual, and who are otherwise discriminated against, oppressed, or disenfranchised because of their non-heterosexual orientation and/or identity.

**LGBTQ+:** An acronym to describe people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (Questioning).

**Patriarchy:** The social systems and personal values that support male dominance and power throughout society.

**Misogyny:** Holding dislike, contempt, or prejudicial beliefs against women.

**Femmephobia:** The oppression of or contempt for anyone (regardless of gender, sexual orientation/identity) whose behavior is classified as being effeminate.

**Gender roles:** The classification of socially constructed norms and actions that dictate acceptable or appropriate behavior determined by gender (and are influenced by their sex or sexuality).

## TIME

<b>STEPS 1-4</b>	Introductions and Opening Activity	15 min.
<b>STEPS 5-10</b>	IPV Team-Teaching Activity	30 min.
–	Break	10 min.
<b>STEPS 11-13</b>	Societal Perception of IPV Among Men and Resource Challenges	50 min.
<b>STEPS 14-16</b>	Closing Activity	10 min.

## REQUIRED BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR EDUCATORS

Facilitators of this lesson should have some background knowledge of intimate partner violence, and its subsequent impact on racial and sexual minorities. The ideal facilitator for this lesson should understand how the intersection of various social ideologies and structures may impede an individual’s access to resources, their ability to openly disclose instances of IPV, and their willingness to accept certain behaviors within their intimate relationships as violent.

Additionally, facilitators for this lesson must have the capacity to deliver content from a trauma-informed perspective and maintain an empathy-based approach to participants engaged in the learning process. For more on the trauma-informed perspective, visit the Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center website at [traumainformedcare.chcs.org/trauma-informed-care-basics](http://traumainformedcare.chcs.org/trauma-informed-care-basics)

## MATERIALS

The facilitator(s) should have the following materials for the lesson:

- Flip chart paper or whiteboard
- Dry erase markers
- Permanent markers (*multiple colors*)
- Writing utensils (*one per participant*)

## HANDOUTS

Each participant should be provided with the following printed materials:

- H1, “Types of Intimate Partner Violence”
- H2, “LGBTQ+ Power and Control Wheel”
- H3, “Equality Wheel”
- End-of-Session Evaluation

## FACILITATION PREP

---

The facilitator(s) should complete the following tasks before the lesson starts:

- This lesson includes an activity in which participants will be instructed to place themselves at various parts of the front of the room. To prepare, place a long piece of masking tape at the front of the room horizontally, from one end to the other. At points equidistant from each other, place sheets of paper with each of the following numbers: 1, 3, 5, 7, 10. Make sure each is large enough to be visible to someone near it. *(If you have a group with known mobility issues, you may instruct the group to identify their choices verbally, and then follow subsequent instructions as noted.)*
- This lesson includes an activity in which participants will be making decisions about whether to stay in a relationship or go from it. To prepare, print out the “Stay” and “Go” pages from Facilitator Resource A, preferably on cardstock or laminated. *(If you have a group with known mobility issues or are using a small space, write the words “Stay” and “Go” on laminated labels of two different colors, being sure each participant has one of each type to raise and lower.)*
- This lesson includes a team-teaching activity in which participants are expected to look up information on various types of intimate partner violence, and then report what they find to the larger group. Ideally, participants can use tablets, laptops or smartphones to find this information; in the instance that you are not sure what access participants have, you may wish to have several printed sheets of information downloaded from various websites available for each small group (broken down by IPV type), so that they can still complete the exercise without using technological support.
- Prepare six sheets of flip chart paper, each with one of the following headings:

  - Physical Abuse
  - Sexual Abuse
  - Psychological Abuse
  - Financial Abuse
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Decompression Space

Make sure each sheet has ample space underneath to write responses. Adhere the sheets to the wall in various places throughout the room, making sure that they are easily visible to all participants. Place the “Decompression Space” sheet in particular outside of the general activity area, so that participants who wish to use it may experience a reasonable level of privacy.
- If your space allows, arrange participant seating in a circle or semi-circle facing the front of the room.
- Have the participants pick up copies of all necessary handouts as they enter the room.



# PROCEDURE

The facilitator(s) should follow the steps in this section to facilitate the session, and use the margin for notes and prompts.



## Introductions and Opening Activity

### STEP 1

Welcome participants to your session, and thank them for coming. Conduct brief introductions (name, pronouns, fun personal fact—optional) with the group as needed. Review all established group agreements and reaffirm consent from the group. If group agreements have not been completed, please create them at this time (use the *Community Agreements* lesson, if necessary.)

### STEP 2

Introduce the session topic by informing the group that it will be discussing relation dynamics, including those that involve violence and/or abuse. Warn participants that the discussion will be personal and potentially sensitive. Encourage participants to, as they need, care for themselves, and take breaks. Introduce and explain the function of the Decompression Space to participants.

### STEP 3

Direct participants' attention to the tape line at the front of the room. Explain that they will consider where on the line they fit. Invite participants to consider, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "Absolutely Nothing" to 10 being "Everything There Is To Know", how much they believe they know about intimate partner violence.

Once participants have determined where they fit, instruct them to find their respective place on the line, and stand there until everyone has found their place. (If you have a group with mobility issues, instruct participants to identify their choices verbally, and then group themselves with others who share their number.)

Once all participants have found their choice, instruct participants to speak to the participants nearest to them, using the following Discussion Questions:

1. "What made you decide this was the most accurate choice for you?"
2. "In thinking about intimate partner violence, what general facts do you know?"  
(Encourage each small group to come up with at least as many points as the number they've selected—e.g., 3 points for 3 level, 5 for 5, etc.)
3. "For groups that aren't '10s': What information do you believe you would need to get closer to a '10' in understanding?"

Allow each small group 2–3 minutes to answer each question (*If your participants all appear to congregate at one number, process these questions as a whole group.*) Once all questions have been discussed, reconvene the large group and instruct all smaller groups to share their discussion points with everyone else.

**STEP 4**

Thank everyone for their participation, and for sharing their discussion points. Explain that while it is likely not possible that people will ever know everything there is to know about intimate partner violence, it is hoped that everyone will be closer to 10 once the session concludes.

**IPV Team-Teaching Activity****STEP 5**

Explain to participants that they will now have the opportunity to learn and teach others about IPV and its various dimensions. Break the larger group up into four small groups, and then give each group Handout H1, “**Types of Intimate Partner Violence.**” Instruct participants to take five minutes to read over the sheet they have been given, and then assign each group one of the four IPV types.

**STEP 6**

Explain to each group that they now have basic information for the type of IPV they have been assigned; however, explain that they will now be responsible for conducting an internet search to fill in the remaining blanks for other participants. Instruct participants to use their phones or any other available equipment (*see Facilitation Prep*) to answer the following questions:

1. “Among all the types of IPV, how prevalent is this particular type in society? How about among men, Black men, and/or same-gender-loving Black men?”
2. “What are some common characteristics or traits of someone who has been impacted by this type of IPV? Do these characteristics vary if the survivor is male or same-gender-loving and male?”
3. “Does society play a role in affecting how this type of IPV is addressed? If so, what is it?”
4. “What are one or two things that you believe would need to change in society to prevent this form of IPV?” (Explain to groups that this last question is one they should answer themselves, though they can support their answers with any info they find.)

**Give** participants 15 minutes to answer each question. **Write** their answers on the sheets of flip chart paper.

**STEP 7**

After 15 minutes, **reconvene** the large group; **allow** each small group to report out, soliciting questions from each other small group, and filling in blanks and making corrections to information shared, as needed. After each group has shared, **proceed** through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “How was it attempting to answer those questions?”
2. “Which questions were the easiest or most difficult to answer, and why?”
3. “Was it easy or difficult to find information about Black men and IPV during your search? If so, why do you think that is?”

**STEP 8**

**Encourage** participants to consider from the discussion that while physical IPV is the most recognized form, the present exercise helps to show that it can extend to other areas—particularly beyond those that are visible. IPV can impact someone through a singular form of violence, or through multiple forms of violence. Additionally, when we consider and incorporate other aspects of our identities, and how they intersect with IPV, our relationship to this issue may be drastically altered and/or cause us to reflect upon just how personal our relationship to IPV may be—as a victim, as a perpetrator, as a by-stander, or as someone who may assume the role of all three; simultaneously or individually. Furthermore, various factors may contribute to who experiences which form of abuse at any point in time. For example, while someone who is physically stronger than their partner may not be physically abused, they may be subjected to psychological or financial abuse.

**STEP 9**

**Direct** participants’ attention to the flip chart sheet labeled “HIV/AIDS” and **ask** if anyone noticed that no one was assigned to work on it. **Solicit** 2–3 responses, and then instruct the group to consider how living with HIV/AIDS can complicate or create unique IPV experiences in each of the other four areas. **Give** participants 30–60 seconds to think, and then **instruct** a representative from each small group to come to the flip chart sheet and write down a response.



**STEP 10**

Once all responses have been written, **encourage** participants to take some time during the upcoming break to look at the responses from other groups. **Explain** that while this is only an introduction to IPV and its impact among the community, the next activity will further examine how societal perceptions of IPV, and an individual's various identities may impact their decision making while experiencing IPV, and allow perpetrators to maintain power and control over their partner.

**Break**

During the break, **remove** the flip chart paper from the previous activity from the wall. You may choose to keep the paper up on a side of the room that will not be used for the next activity. **Replace** the flip chart paper with the laminated “Stay” or “Go” signs from **Facilitator Resource A, “Forced Choice Exercise: Derek and Justin's Story.”** **Place** the signs on opposite ends of the room from each other, making sure there is ample space around them for participants to move and stand.)

**Societal Perception of IPV Among Men and Resource Challenges****STEP 11**

**Reconvene** the large group, and then **explain** that they will now have an opportunity to engage in the decision-making process of a male victim of IPV. **Inform** them that you will begin by reading a scenario, at various points in the scenario you will ask the participants if they wish to stay in the relationship or go (leave the relationship). **Instruct** all participants to begin by standing up in the back of the room against the wall (or *distribute the smaller laminated “Stay”/“Go” labels created prior to the session—see Facilitation Prep.*)

**STEP 12**

**Direct** participants' attention to the “Stay”/“Go” signs posted on the wall (or **direct** their attention to their laminated card sets). **Explain** that they will be responsible for making one choice for each part of the story that is read, and that once their decision is made, they must move to the side of the room with

the corresponding sign (*or hold up their chosen decision card*). **Explain** to participants that no one should be left in the middle of the two options; participants must choose to either stay or go, and they will repeat this decision-making process until the scenario is complete.

**STEP 13**

**Read aloud** each bullet from Facilitator Resource A, “Forced Choice Exercise: Derek and Justin’s Story.” **Pause** at the appropriate moments for participants to decide if they would stay or leave the relationship. At various points in the activity, **solicit** 1–2 brief comments from participants about why they chose their respective decisions. Once you have finished reading the scenario, **proceed** through the following Discussion Questions:

1. “What did we just see happen in this activity? How do you think it went?”
2. “Was it easy or difficult to make decisions about whether or not to stay or go from the relationship?”
3. “Were there any key moments that made staying or leaving easier or more difficult? If so, which ones?”
4. “How does this match what goes on in real intimate partner relationships?”
5. “How does all of this connect with the information we learned/discussed during the first part of the session?”

After the discussion has concluded, **thank** everyone for their participation in both the activity and discussion before moving on.



### Closing Activity

**STEP 14**

**Ask** if anyone has any outstanding questions about the lesson. **Respond** to these as necessary. **Distribute** a copy of the End-of-Session Evaluation to each participant. **Allow** participants 5–7 minutes to complete the evaluation, and **collect** them as they are completed. After five minutes, **invite** any participants who have not completed the evaluation to do so after the next activity.

**STEP 15**

Distribute Handout H2, “LGBTQ+ Power and Control Wheel,” and Handout H3, “Equality Wheel.” Explain to participants that both handouts feature examples of behaviors that can both add to and take away from an individuals’ health within a relationship. Solicit any immediate questions participants have about the handouts and encourage them to spend some time after the session looking through them, and potentially evaluating their relationships with them. If you are able, offer yourself as available for advice, counseling or other support should people develop any new questions or concerns after the session.

**STEP 16**

Return participants’ attention back to the opening activity and close by asking each participant to report any changes in comfort level from their previously selected number. For any participant who is still not at a “10”, encourage them to think of one thing from the session they will do or continue to think about to help get closer. Once everyone has shared, thank them all for participating and then adjourn the session.



## FACILITATOR RESOURCE A

### FORCED CHOICE EXERCISE: DEREK AND JUSTIN'S STORY

**Directions:** See **STEP 11**. Read each bullet one at a time.

- Derek and Justin have been dating for approximately three months. Justin believes that Derek is his ideal partner and would do anything to ensure that Derek remains satisfied with their relationship. Both are athletic individuals that enjoy being active. They routinely take hiking trips, go horseback riding, and are interested in trying out an extreme sport like skydiving or mountain climbing.

The two met when Derek noticed Justin one day last spring while they were both working out in the gym. Derek had just moved to the city and was attempting to make new friends, but he didn't have much luck because he is kind of shy. Justin was in the gym virtually every day, enjoyed playing basketball, and always spoke to Derek when they passed each other. One day, Derek decided to start a conversation with Justin. He approached Justin as they were both leaving the gym and introduced himself—"Hi, I'm Derek. I noticed that you're in here often; are you from here?" Justin smiled.

Justin had noticed Derek before and was immediately enamored by Derek's stature and his deep southern accent. Justin responded to Derek's initial question—"I was born here but moved away when I was 16. My mom and I recently moved back to help take care of my grandparents." Derek shared that he had just moved to the city a few weeks ago and was interested in having someone show him around town. Justin agreed, and the two decided they would meet at the park the following Sunday.

#### Stay or Go?

- After meeting at the park, Justin and Derek decided to walk around the city for a few hours. Justin showed Derek his favorite places to hang—the black owned coffee shop when he's reading or studying; the only ice cream shop that sells his favorite flavor; the local artists hangout where the walls and sidewalks were filled with murals. Derek felt that he could recreate this experience with Justin again, he casually smiled just as Justin was starting to speak to him—"Derek, I've really enjoyed my time with you, and I sense you feel the same. Would you like to do this again some time?" Derek agreed and their day on the town became a regular Sunday routine.

#### Stay or Go?

- Three months into their relationship Justin got a new job offer that would require him to work longer hours and travel often. Derek, still new to the city, was having a difficult time adjusting in his new role and felt that Justin was not being supportive of his transition and was neglecting their relationship.

#### Stay or Go?

- Justin worked very hard to reassure Derek that he was still invested in him and their relationship, and that his concerns were unnecessary. Derek believed him and continued attempting to adjust to his new city.

#### **Stay or Go?**

- Once, after an extended work trip, Justin returned home to find Derek asleep. Justin gently kissed Derek on his cheek until he awoke. Derek smiled and pulled Justin on the sofa with him. The two cuddled for what seemed like hours, until Derek noticed that Justin was sweating profusely and running a fever. Panicked, Derek suggested that the two go to the ER.

#### **Stay or Go?**

- Justin was given a clean bill of health and was instructed to rest and drink plenty of fluids. Derek ensured that Justin was well cared for while he recuperated. They were entering the sixth month of their relationship and Derek was still very much in love with Justin; although he often questioned if Justin felt the same.

#### **Stay or Go?**

- As their relationship continued, Justin would maintain his hectic work schedule, and Derek would start his own career. Derek would be home each night, not certain if whether Justin would be home or not; Justin often forgot to communicate his schedule with Derek. Derek was concerned but would often be left for days without returned messages or calls from Derek.

#### **Stay or Go?**

- After several days of silence, Justin finally calls Derek, he asks him to wire him \$500.00 so that he can get home. Derek, concern asks—“where has all of your money gone. And why haven’t you been home in a week?” Justin avoids Derek’s question and demands that he sends him the money and states—“I cared for you when you had nothing, send me the money, it’s the least you can do.”

#### **Stay or Go?**

- Derek reluctantly cash app’d Justin the money but became increasingly concerned about the status of things. He knew that he needed to have a conversation with Justin but was uncertain as to what he would say. He was becoming occupied with the thought that he would leave Justin and his work started to become affected by his preoccupations.

#### **Stay or Go?**

#### **What would you do next in this scenario?**

# STAY

OG



# HANDOUT

HANDOUT

## TYPES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

TYPE	DEFINITION & EXAMPLES
<p><b>PHYSICAL ABUSE</b></p>	<p>A pattern of controlling behavior used to maintain power over an individual by intentionally causing physical injury or harm.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> Slapping, Biting, Stabbing, Punching, etc.</p>
<p><b>SEXUAL ABUSE</b></p>	<p>A pattern of non-consensual sexual behavior or actions inflicted upon an individual to coerce them into sex by utilizing tactics of fear.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> Forced object penetration, non-consensual bondage, threats of rape, etc.</p>
<p><b>PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE</b></p>	<p>A pattern of behavior that causes an individual to question their mental state; subjecting an individual to repeated forms of trauma or emotional distress through psychological manipulation.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> Gas lighting, causing severe and persistent doubt about facts, stalking, etc.</p>
<p><b>FINANCIAL ABUSE</b></p>	<p>A pattern of behavior used by an abuser to fraudulently obtain power and control of, or limit, an individual's access to financial resources; the unauthorized use of a person's financial resources.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> Confiscating a paycheck, hiding or limiting access to money, etc.</p>

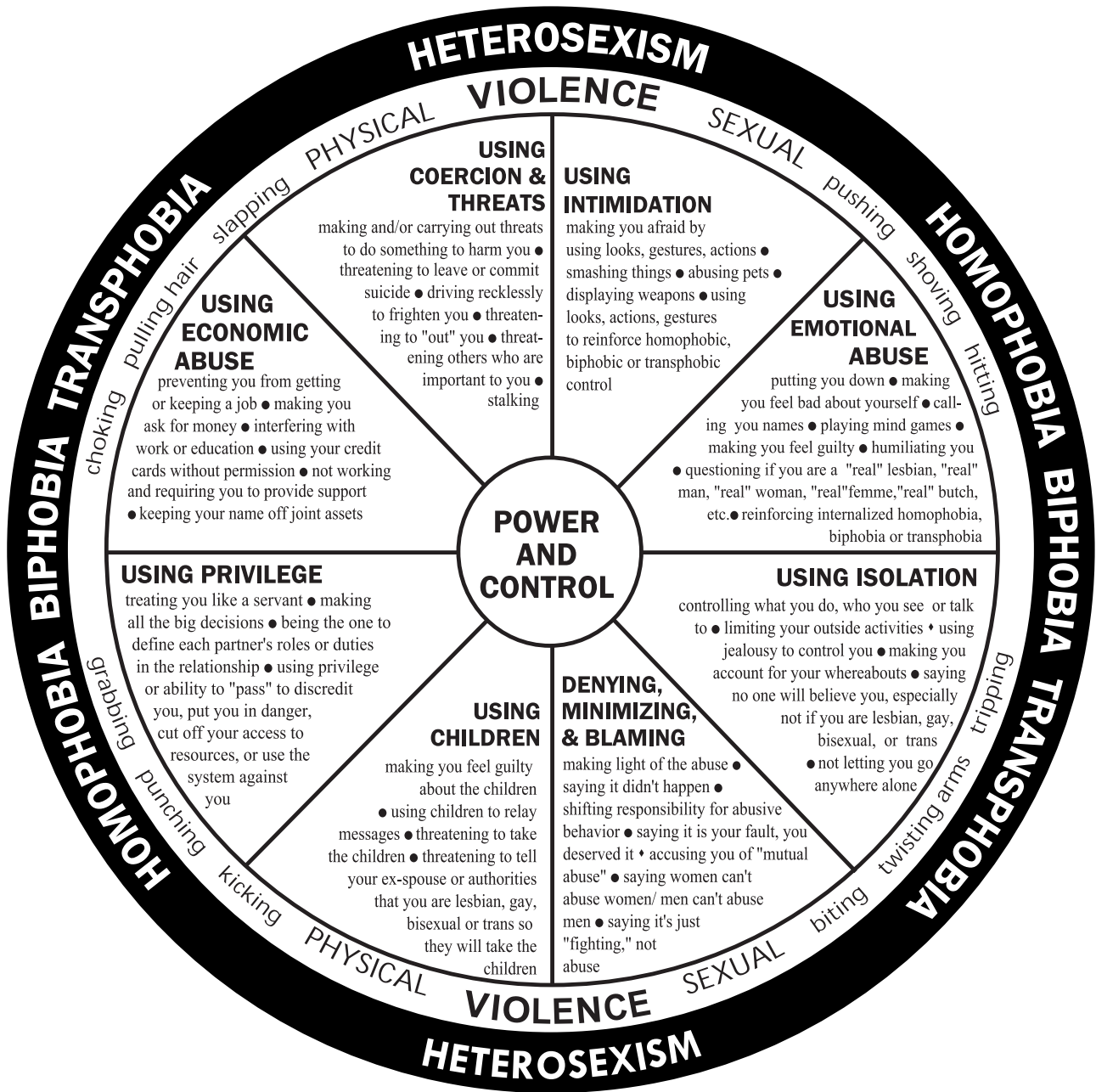




HANDOUT

LGBTQ+ POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

HANDOUT



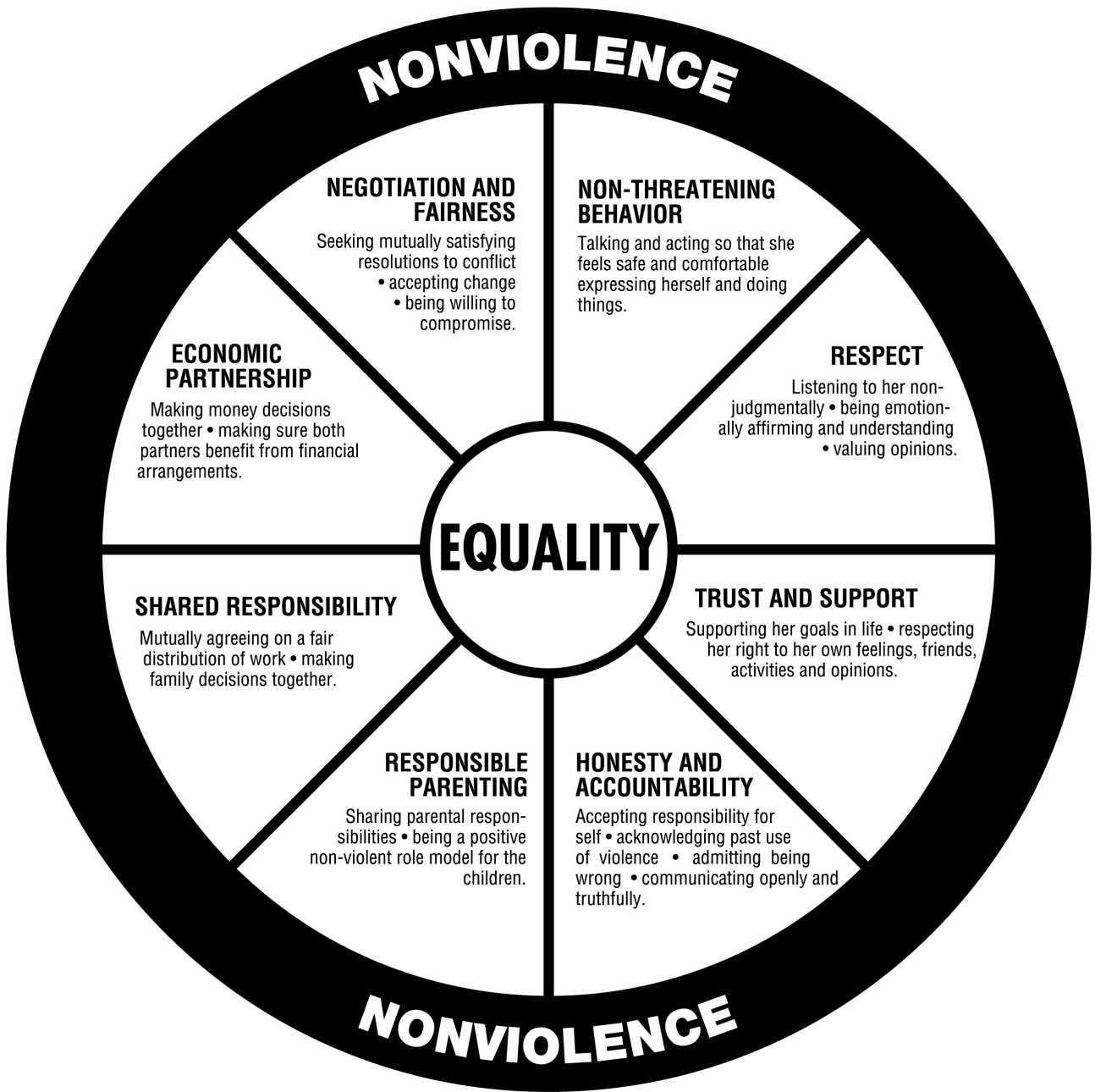
Developed by Roe & Jagodisky; adapted from the Power & Control and Equity Wheels developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project  
206 West Fourth Street, Duluth, MN 55806, (218) 722-4134



# HANDOUT

## EQUALITY WHEEL

HANDOUT



Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs  
 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802, (218) 722-2781  
 theduluthmodel.org