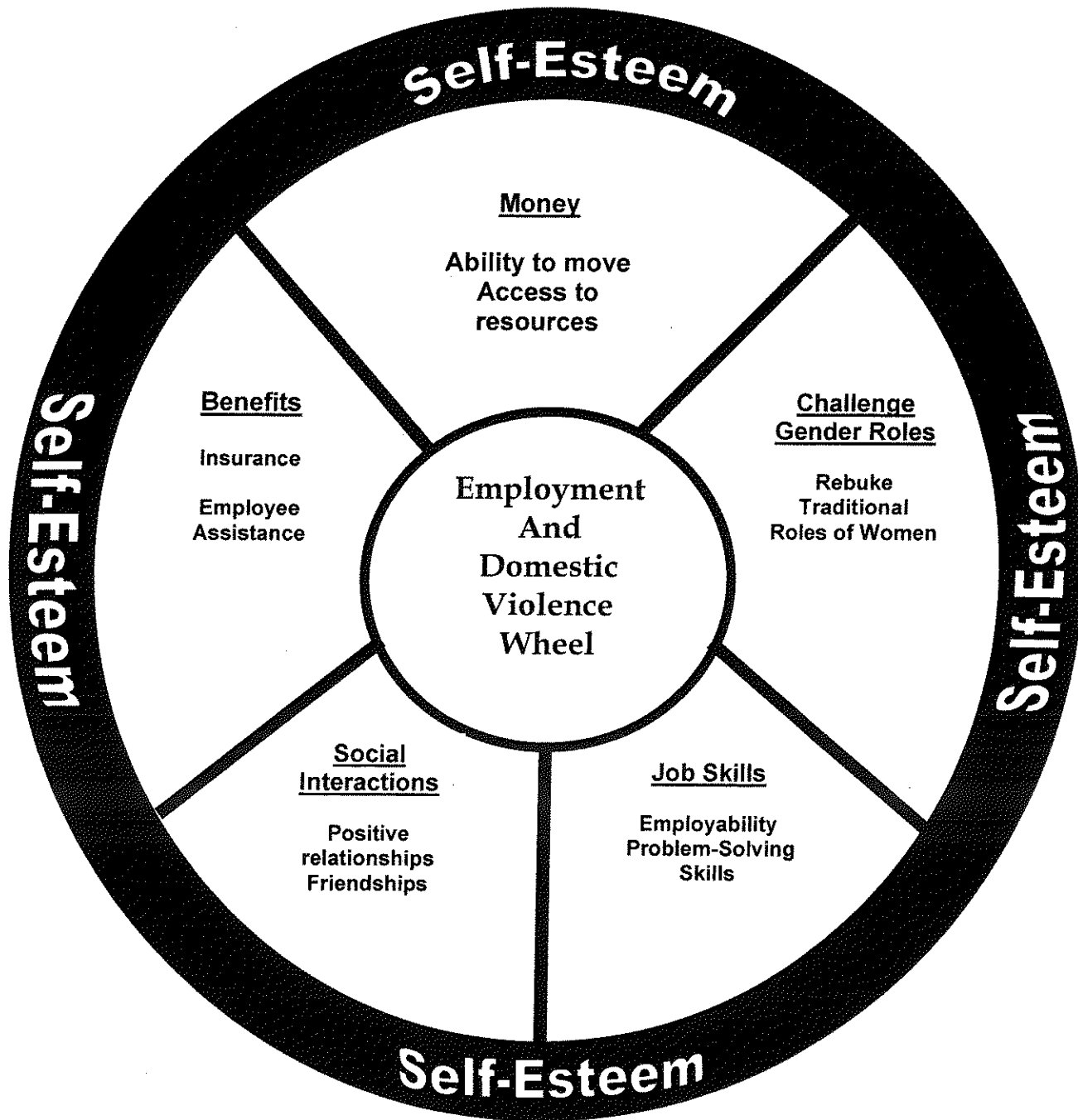


Domestic Violence and Employment Wheel



Peace at Work 2005

Adapted from the Duluth Domestic Violence Project's Power and Control Wheel

Domestic Violence and Employment Wheel

The Domestic Violence and Employment Wheel describes how a job can act as a “protective factor” to help prevent abuse. It illustrates the benefits that work provides to victims and conversely the reasons why abusers try to prevent the victim from being employed. While being “gainfully employed” does not prevent abusive relationships in every situation, a job does provide the key support systems that can help an individual avoid or leave abusive relationships.

Money

Especially when the victim and abuser cohabit, money may provide the victim the literal means to leave the abusive relationship. Getting the taxi or gas to travel to a hotel room or another city requires financial resources. Establishing a new place to live may include a down payment for mortgage or rent, setting up utilities and other costs of moving possessions. Civil legal actions, medical bills and other services require resources which would be difficult for a person financially dependent on the abuser. Money simply provides flexibility and more options for victims.

Job Skills

Just by being employed, victims are gaining skills that make them more independent. Every job provides a person with problem solving skills which will have direct application towards their efforts to be independent. While employed, new skills are developed which allow for promotion and advancement. Having a consistent work history is more attractive to potential employers. If a victim chooses to relocate, these skills make it easier for them to begin their life anew.

Benefits

While support services vary, employment often offers programs such as Employee Assistance Programs, Occupational Health, Wellness and Security. It is these services which may provide contact with the local community victim service agency. Just as important is the additional financial support of health care and disability insurance which may include mental health services.

Challenge Traditional Roles

While not a benefit per se, employment does challenge stereotyped gender-roles. As domestic violence often impacts women, it is the conventional position that men should be the “bread-winners” while the women stay at home. It is this perpetration of male dominance that denies women the right to obtain meaningful and rewarding employment. While there have been strides in ending such discrimination, this view is still held to deny a woman’s right to work. When victims do work, it often still the woman’s responsibility to care for the house-hold (laundry, cooking, cleaning, care of children) and lapses of such often become the excuses for the violence and the demand for her to quit.

Social Interaction

While abusers commonly use isolation as a means to control, employment provides the victim opportunity to find friends and be exposed to positive relationships. Supervisors and co-workers can offer praise and encouragement, a different message from the criticism and put-downs that the victim often continually hears from the abuser. Friendship is a powerful support mechanism in that it can offer a listening ear, advice, encouragement, a place to stay and other assistance.

Self-Esteem

All of these components, including the simple fact that they are employed, provide a victim with building blocks for greater self-esteem. Having a position and being part of an organization, no matter the title or company, gives a person a sense of identity. Knowing that they have a role, responsibility and a place that they are needed, a victim may recognize their own self-worth. Combined with money in the bank, employability, belief that they have the right to work and knowing others who respect and care for them, a victim is more likely to refuse the abuse that endangers their well-being and even their life.