

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative



SURVIVOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Notes for the interviewer

Interview Goals:

- To use a narrative approach so that the research participants can share their story without our asking (only) specific questions about risk and safety.
- To invite research participants to reflect on and share their experiences, and describe their efforts to assess/manage risk and/or plan/enhance safety.
- To learn about victims' help-seeking behaviours, barriers to seeking help, and the kind of help that may have been more helpful.
- To allow participants' experiences of risk/safety to provide context for the risk factors that we identify in the CDHPVP database and Key Informant interviews.

Framing:

Focus is on actions taken and/or strategies (used by victims on their own, by formal services/systems/supports, and/or with informal supports) aimed at managing risk and enhancing safety rather than the actual violence itself.

Hi, my name is _____.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research interview about risk assessment, risk management and safety planning regarding domestic violence. If you are interested, we can provide you with more information about these terms, however, the overall hope is to learn more about what worked and did not work when trying to be safe, and what might help other people experiencing domestic violence. This interview is being conducted as part of the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations. The Co-Directors are Dr. Peter Jaffe and Dr. Myrna Dawson, and the Co-Investigator for this region is _____.

This interview asks about what you did to try to stay safe or reduce risk when faced with a range of harmful behaviours by an intimate partner in an effort to understand how to improve safety for individuals seeking help when experiencing violence. Some questions I will ask may trigger emotional responses. You may choose to take a few moments to yourself before deciding whether you would like to continue. You may find that the things you talked about during this interview leave you feeling unsettled and may affect

your well being, which is why we provided you with a list of regional/local agencies during the screening process. If you have not already done so, these agencies can help you work on a care plan. This list includes local crisis lines should you need someone to speak with outside of business hours.

Before we begin, I want to make sure we have gone through the Letter of Information and Consent Infographic and that you have had an opportunity to have any questions addressed.

Prompt: Review the Letter of Information and Consent Infographic.

Do you have any questions? Do I have your permission to audio-record your consent now and then begin the interview? YES NO

If no, explain that audio-recording their consent and interview is a criteria to participate in an interview. If they are not comfortable being audio-recorded, thank them for their time.

Now that it is audio-recording, do you agree that:

- You have been given the opportunity to read and understand the Letter of Information and the Consent Infographic describing this research project.
YES NO
- All of your questions have been answered if not what remaining questions to do you have?
YES NO
- Agree to participate in this research project and to have the interview audio-recorded.
YES NO
- Agree to allow direct quotes and the insights from your interview to be used in reports and publications with your personal identifying information removed.
YES NO

This interview will take about one to two hours to complete. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. If we run out of time, and you wish to complete the interview, do I have your permission to contact you at a later date to complete the interview?

YES NO

Are there any other concerns or anything else you need in order to feel comfortable before we begin?

Is the audio clear?

I just want to remind you that if you feel like you need to, please feel free to let me know if you would like to take a break and remember you can take time to reach out to your supports that you spoke about during the screening process or to contact any of the agencies from the regional/local lists we provided to you.

Thank you.

INTERVIEW TEXT: INTRODUCTION

Now that we have reviewed the consent form, I would like to introduce the interview in a bit more detail. I understand that you experienced high-risk domestic violence, where you feared for your safety, the safety of your children and/or family. I realize it may be difficult to talk about these experiences, so direct input from a survivor like yourself will be a very valuable part of this project so thank you for taking to the time to talk to me today. Myself, the research team, and the project as a whole recognize how difficult it can be sharing these experiences and are grateful for you sharing your experiences with us today.

PAUSE

I am not going to be asking specific questions about the violence you experienced, but as you answer the questions, if the violence comes up, that's fine. As we talked about in the consent process, we'll be exploring issues related to risk and safety.

We want to hear about what people do to try to stay safe or reduce risk when faced with a range of harmful behaviours, including physical or sexual violence, or emotional abuse. We understand that every person's situation is different.

I am going to invite you to tell me a few stories about times that you did something to feel or be safer. This could include something you did on your own or a time when you looked for support elsewhere. The supports might have been informal, such as family and/or friends, or more formal supports from agencies and/or community services. You can tell me about times you reached out to services, family, friends, or co-workers – whatever experiences come to mind.

I am going to ask for a few different stories depending on the time and how long you would like to continue the interview. For each story, I am going to ask you some questions about the story, and what the story meant for you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

CONTEXT

First off, can you tell me a little about yourself and the experiences that brought you to participate in this study?

Note for interviewers: This question is aimed at having some context about the violence but there is no need to probe for details. Remember, the interview is not specifically about the violence. Just let the participant say as much or as little as they would like about the violence.

STORY PROMPT

I'm going to invite you to think of a specific time when you did not feel safe. I'm interested in hearing what you did to feel or be safer. Can you describe what happened?

Note for interviewers: This question is the “story prompt”—it’s intended to solicit a narrative or an anecdote about something that happened. We hope that the prompt will solicit just one specific experience but sometimes participants will tell several stories in one. You should try to parse out individual stories and ask the subsequent questions about each one. If you do get more than one story here then follow up when the participant seems to have finished talking by saying something like the following: “I am hearing a few distinct stories here so let’s see if we can talk about them each individually—it sounds like there is one story about [fill in the details], another about [fill in the details] [and so on . . .].” Then let the participant know that in your next questions you would like to talk about each story, one at a time.

You may have to ask questions to keep the narrative going (e.g., “and then what happened?” or “can you describe what happened next or what you did next?”)

STORY EXPLORATION

Note to interviewers: Ask the following questions about this specific experience.

What were you feeling during this time? What emotions do you remember?

In your story, you talked about [*mention the actions described*]. Would you say these actions you described were more helpful or unhelpful in reducing your risk or enhancing your safety?

- *If these actions were more **helpful** at reducing risk or enhancing safety, ask:*
What about these actions do you think made you feel safer and/or reduced your risk?
- *If these actions were more **unhelpful** in reducing risk or enhancing safety, ask:*
How would you change this story to make you feel safer and/or reduce your risk?

Was there anyone else, formal or informal, you think should have been involved at this point?

- *If yes:* Who should have been involved? How do you see that they could have become involved and what should (or could) they have done?

- What might have prevented you from accessing supports?
- What might have prevented supports from providing assistance to you?

You've lived through this and your insights are very valuable. Based on this story, what advice would you give to another person who is in similar circumstances as you?

Based on this story, what advice would you give to the people involved around providing effective support to reduce risk and enhance the safety of someone in similar circumstances as you?

- *Prompt for formal support services:* For instance you mentioned [agency/service involved in case] was involved?
- *Prompt for informal supports:* For instance you mentioned [e.g., family, friend, neighbour] was involved?

STORY INTERPRETATION

The next question is to help me understand what these actions meant to you. I am wondering, if you were going to write about the actions you just described, what would the title be? The idea is to think of a way to sum up the story you've just shared in a few words. You could try to think about a book title, a song title, or maybe a newspaper headline.

Note for the interviewer: This question is designed to gain an understanding of the research participant's interpretation of their own story. This follows principles of narrative research whereby we try to avoid asking about opinions and instead probe the participant's interpretation of their own story. We are interested in what they think their story is about. Some people may find it difficult to come up with a title, while others really like thinking about this question. Be sure to pay attention to whether they are struggling to think of something and to let them know that it's sometimes hard to do this. Let them move on to the next questions and that they can let you know anytime if they think of something.

REPEAT STORY PROMPT, EXPLORATION, AND INTERPRETATION

Note to Interviewer: Repeat the story prompt to generate another action and ask the follow up exploration and interpretation questions. The questions could be repeated as time and energy allows (approximately 2-3 stories or up to 90 minutes).

Thank you for sharing these stories with me.

Note to Interviewer: Ask the question below if all the stories were helpful or if they were all unhelpful. We want to make sure we capture both positive and negative stories, if they had both kinds of actions, so we can learn about effective strategies as well as missed opportunities.

Do you feel these strategies/interactions with agencies were helpful or unhelpful to your experience with domestic violence? If so, can you share the helpful and unhelpful experiences you had and explain why you felt this way?

- *If yes*, repeat questions regarding this action.
- *If no*, invite another story, whether helpful or unhelpful.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

I have a few questions about your actions as a whole:

What overall advice would you give to another person in similar circumstances as you to help them stay safe?

Now I'd like to have you think of a scenario where a victim of domestic violence has approached you asking for help. What advice would you give them based on your own lived experiences to reduce/manage the risks and/or enhance their safety?

Prompt if needed: I'm thinking here of informal supports, like family and friends [or others referred to in the interview], or more formal supports, like [say formal supports referred to in interview but if no formal supports involved, say police or social workers as examples].

If you could make two or three changes to help support people going through what you went through, what would they be?

Thank you for sharing your advice and ideas for changes that would help support people going through what you went through. Your advice and suggestions are really valuable. If you would like the opportunity to review your transcribed interview to make sure that it accurately reflects what you said, please reach out to me by [30 days after interview].

DEMOGRAPHICS

I'm going to now ask some demographic questions that will help me understand a bit more about you and your circumstances at the time of the actions you described. The information we're asking here is for background purposes only. We won't use any identifying information in any reports, articles or presentations. We would just like some demographic information about the people whose stories we have heard.

Note to Interviewer: Ask all questions as open-ended questions. Options below are included in case the participant needs options to answer the question and so you can check the appropriate response(s) instead of writing out the answers to each question. Check more than one box if needed.

You can choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

What year were you born? _____

How do you identify your gender?

- Woman
- Man
- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Genderqueer / gender variant / gender fluid
- Non-binary
- Two-Spirit
- Participant identified as: _____
- Preferred not to answer

Which ethnic or cultural group do you identify most with?

- Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, Inuit, other Indigenous)
- White/Caucasian (Including European decent)
- African, Caribbean or Black
- Latin American
- Arab
- East Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
- South Asian (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)
- Southeast Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, Filipino, etc)
- West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)
- Other, please specify: _____
- Preferred not to answer

What was your relationship with the person who harmed you during the time of the actions you described?

- Dating
- Married/common law and living together
- Married/common law but not living together
- Divorced/separated
- Other _____

What is your current relationship with the person who harmed you?

- Dating
- Married/common law and living together
- Married/common law but not living together
- Divorced/separated
- Other _____

What period of time is covered by the actions you described? (not exact dates, but years/months) _____ to _____

[For immigrant and refugee only] **At what point did the domestic violence start in your migration journey? _____**

Did you have any children at the time you were being harmed?

Yes

- How many children? _____
- What were their ages at the time of the stories you described? _____
- Who were they living with at the time of the stories you described? _____
- Were the children exposed to the domestic violence or did they experience violence themselves? (if indicate children had experienced violence ask to what level to determine if homicide occurred)

No

In what city/community and province did the stories you described take place? As a reminder, the name of your city/community will not be identified in any reports or papers. You can also share if it was a rural community/farm or city if that is more comfortable.

PARTICIPATION EXPERIENCE

We are coming to the end of the interview. These last questions ask about your experience doing this interview and participation in this study.

1. How do you feel about participating in this research study, now that you have completed the interview?
 - *Probe:* Were there any questions that prompted negative feelings or difficult emotions for you? Were there any positive feelings that came up?
2. If you had known in advance what participating in this research interview would feel like, would you still have agreed to participate? Please explain. [Note for interviewer: Report any negative participant experience responses to the Regional Coordinator.]

We have now come to the end of the interview. We appreciate you taking the time to participate in an interview for this research project. Your contribution is important and will be used to educate service providers and the wider community on helping other people who are experiencing domestic or intimate partner violence.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of [the care plan and] the list of local and regional agencies that are available to provide you with further support and we encourage you to connect with them after the interview.

Thank you.