

# Intimate Partner Abuse Screening Tool For Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Relationships

A Project of the GLBT Domestic  
Violence Coalition

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# theNetwork laRed



- Survivor-led, social justice organization dedicated to ending partner abuse in lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and/or transgender (LGBQ/T) communities, we also work with SM and polyamorous communities
- Bilingual (English/Spanish) services include:
  - 90 Hour Hotline
  - Emergency Safehome
  - Advocacy
  - Support Groups (In-person & Phone-base)
  - Organizing, Outreach, and Education
  - Technical Assistance



# Message Behind the Message

- **AGE:** How old were you when you received this message?
- **MESSAGE:** What is the *earliest* message you remember receiving about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer and/or Transgender people?
- **WHO:** Who did you receive the message from?
- **+, -, NEUTRAL:** Was it positive, negative or neutral?



# Partner Abuse\*

*A systematic pattern of behaviors where one person tries to control the thoughts, beliefs, and/or actions of their partner, someone they are dating, or someone they are close to.*

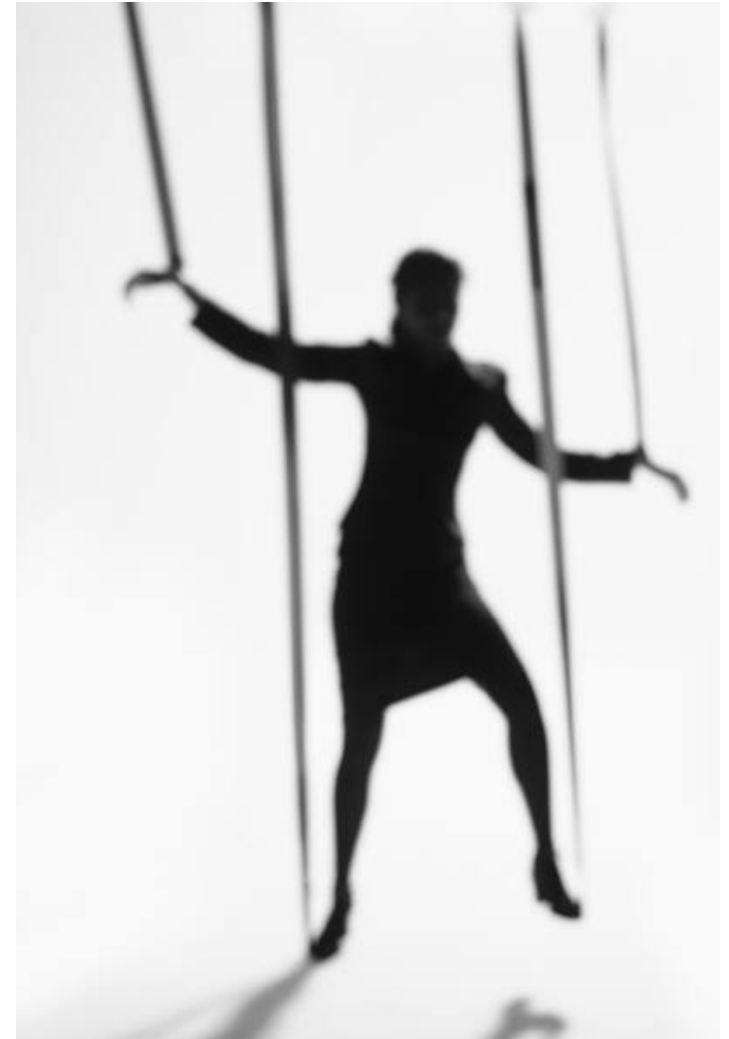


***\*Also called domestic violence, dating violence, battering, and/or intimate partner***

Crosses all ethnic, racial, social, class, and economic lines

# Abuse is NOT:

- Just happening in heterosexual relationships (where neither partner is transgender)
- About size, strength, or who is “butch” or more masculine
- About both partners just “fighting it out” all the time.
- **Partner abuse is not mutual.** *Although the survivor may defend themselves, there is a difference between self-defense and abuse.*



**1 in 4 Lesbian Gay  
Bisexual Transgender  
people are abused by a  
partner during their  
lifetime.**

**Partner Abuse is about using control to  
gain power over**



# Differences from Straight DV

- LGBTQ/T communities do not identify partner abuse as a community issue leading to increased isolation
- Survivor is likely to have same support system, such as friends, social spaces, etc., as abuser
- Internalized homo/bi/transphobia can result in increase in self-blame
- Sexuality and/or gender identity blamed for abuse by family or friends
- Less validation of relationship and self
- Lack of mainstream visibility and heterosexism and homo/bi/trans/phobia in mainstream resources



# Reluctance to screening

Some may see screening as...

- Antithetical to a feminist response to self-identified survivors of domestic violence
- Not acceptable, regarding state standards for client services
- Fear of being judgmental: Why do I get to determine?

• Double-standard





# Why screen?

Abusers often...

- See themselves as victims
- Check on whether their partner is seeking services
- Try to cut their partner off from services





# Why screen?

Survivors may have...

- Used coercive/aggressive behaviors as a strategy to survive abuse
- Fought back
- Been labeled as abusers



# Why screen?

*Remember!*

- Restraining orders
- Previous arrests
- Previous stays in shelter
- Use of community-based DV/SA services, etc.

**Cannot** be counted on as reliable indicators of abuser/survivor identification



# Alternatives to screening (These are NOT RECOMMENDED)

## Results of alternative strategies

- Provide services to the wrong person
- Deny services to the correct person
- Set survivor up



# Alternatives to screening (These are NOT RECOMMENDED)

Harmful messages sent by alternative strategies

- “Mutual abuse” is real
- LGBTQ/T domestic violence not that serious
- LGBTQ/T abusers are not that dangerous



# Why Screen?



- Partner abuse is about one person establishing power and control over another person in a relationship.
- Many behaviors can be used by a person to survive abuse or by a person to establish control over their partner.
- Screening lets us look at the whole picture for a pattern of abuse, regardless of the gender of individuals involved.



# Screening:

## *What you already know*

- Supportive listening- you know how to listen and ask questions in a dynamic way
- You can recognize domestic violence- you know it is one person exerting power control over another
- You know tactics of abuse



# Things to consider



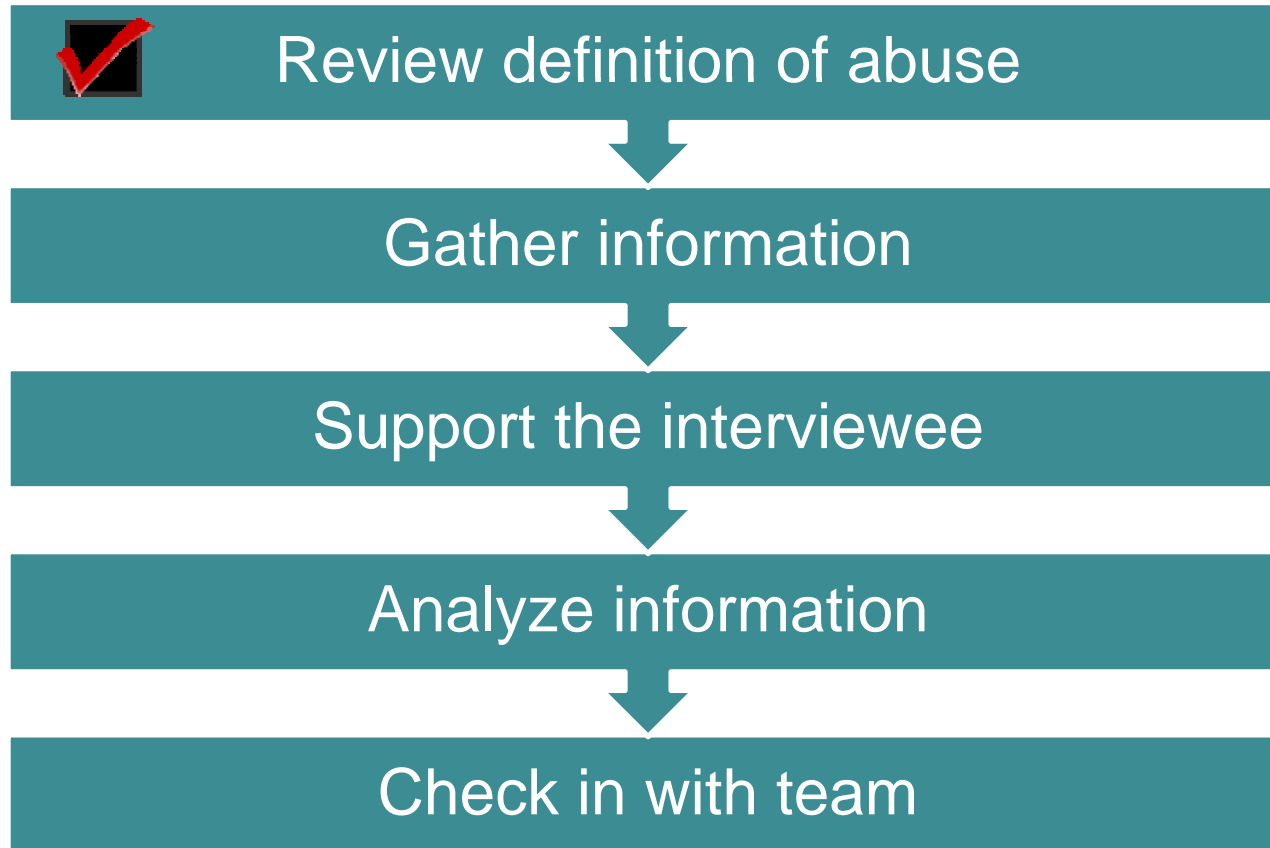
- Screening is a process- There are no simple checklists.
- Go with your gut- if something feels wrong, keep exploring.
- We never stop screening- listen for red flags
- Screening is a team event- stop the conversation at least once to check in with a coworker.
- We screen at every level- staff, board, volunteers, and callers. We have found



abusers at every level.

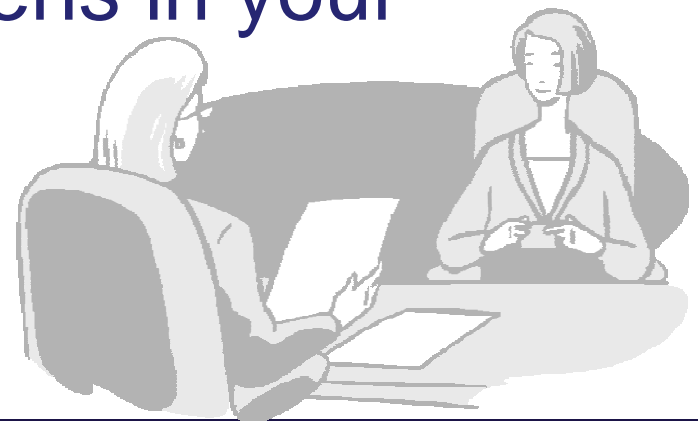


# Process of Screening



# Gathering Information

- Can you tell me a little about what's been going on?
- What led you to call us today?
- What is your most pressing concern?
- Is this typical of what happens in your relationship?



# More on Gathering Information

Ask *WHAT?*

.....not *WHY?*



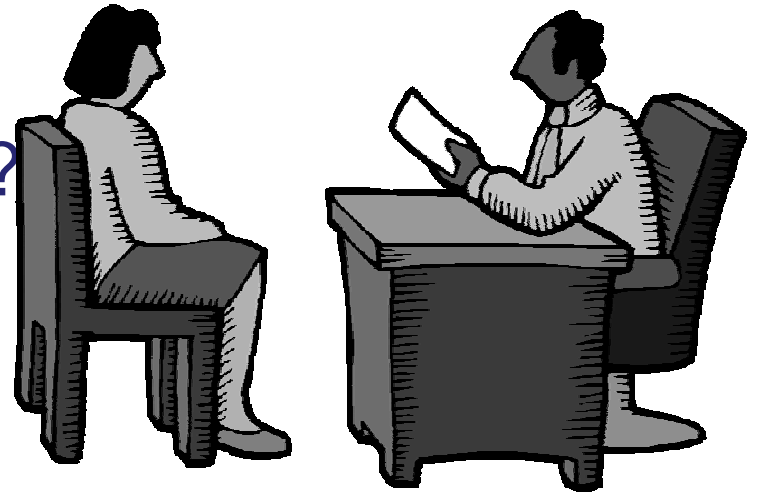
# Gathering Information

- What are your fights about? What are they like? Where and when do they happened?
- What's the worst thing your partner has done?
- What do you do when you are angry? What does your partner do?



# Gathering Information

- Can you give me an example of...
- What was happening right before the incident?
- What happened during the fight?
- What was the argument about?
- How did the fight end?



# Gathering Information

- How are decisions made in the relationship?
- Do you have contact with friends, family or other supports?
- What happens when you say no?
- Does your partner pressure you into having sex?
- Who controls the money?
- Do you or your partner ever lie? When and about what?
- Do either of you go to work or school? Does your partner interfere with that?



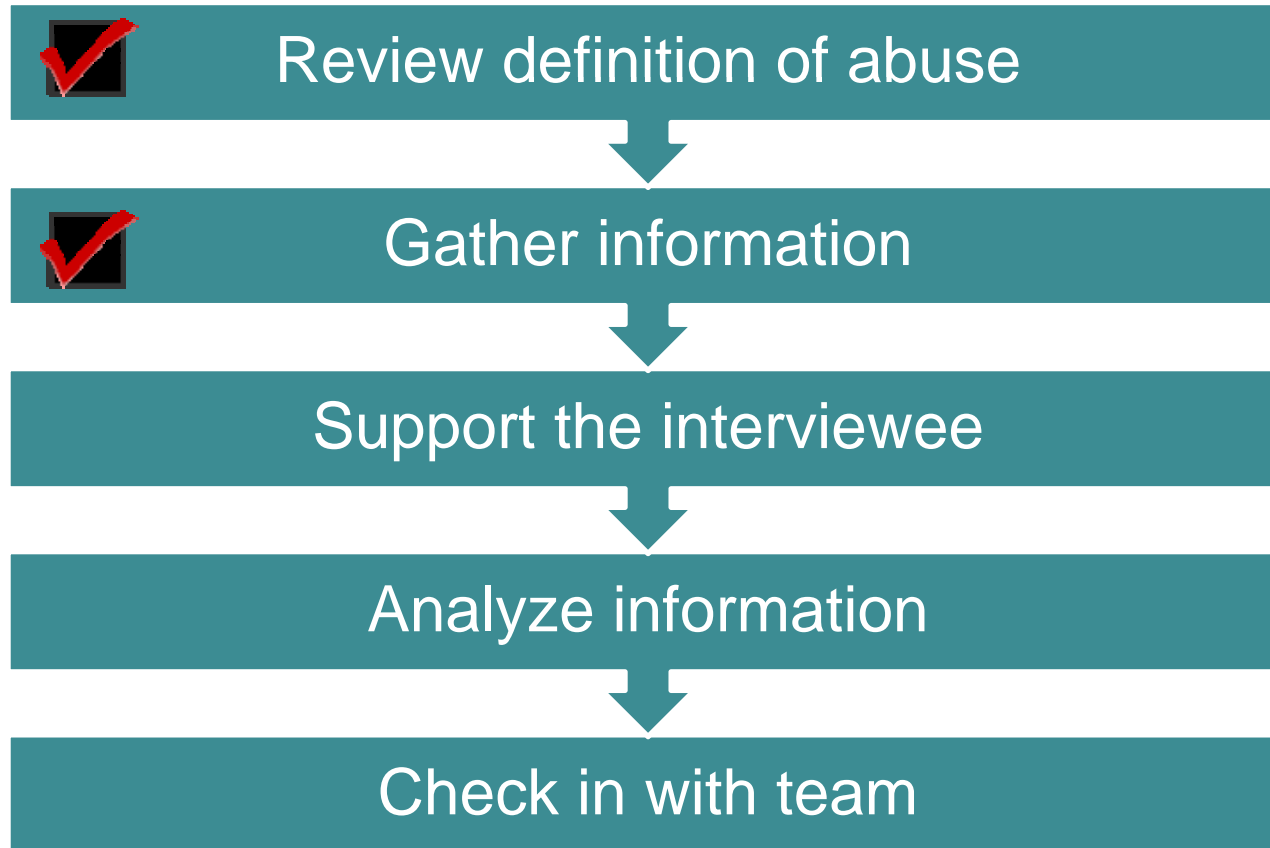
# Gathering Information



- Respect confidentiality and safety
- Do not share information with either party until you have determined who is the abuser
- Take restraining orders, arrests, and other outside sources with a grain of salt- ask around incidents for context

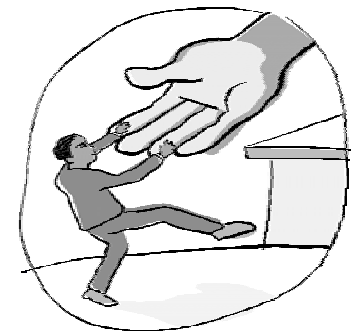


# Process of Screening

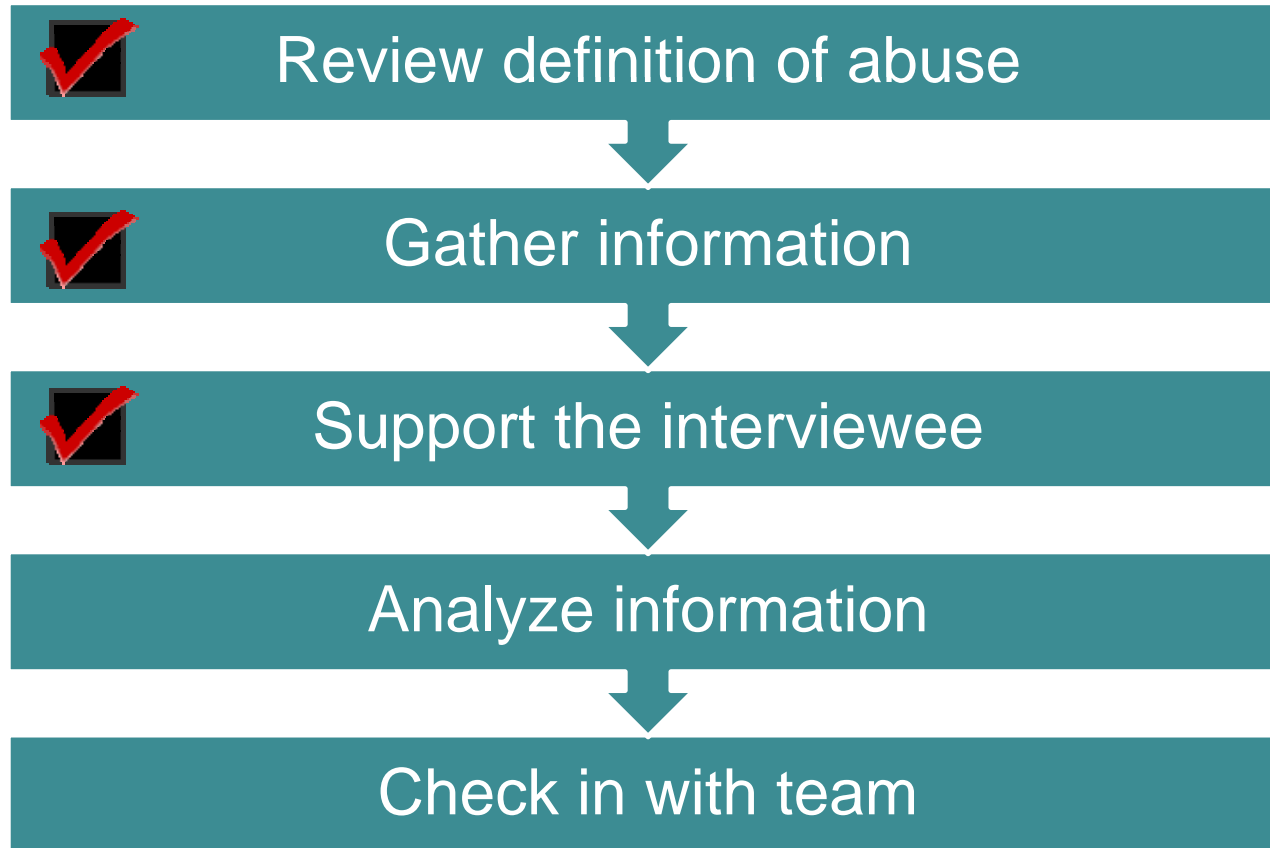


# Support the Interviewee

- Ask permission to ask question
- Listen and respond to feelings as well as answers
- Stay calm and centered
- Let them tell their whole story before asking questions
- Educate/Inform the interviewee
- Give permission to stop



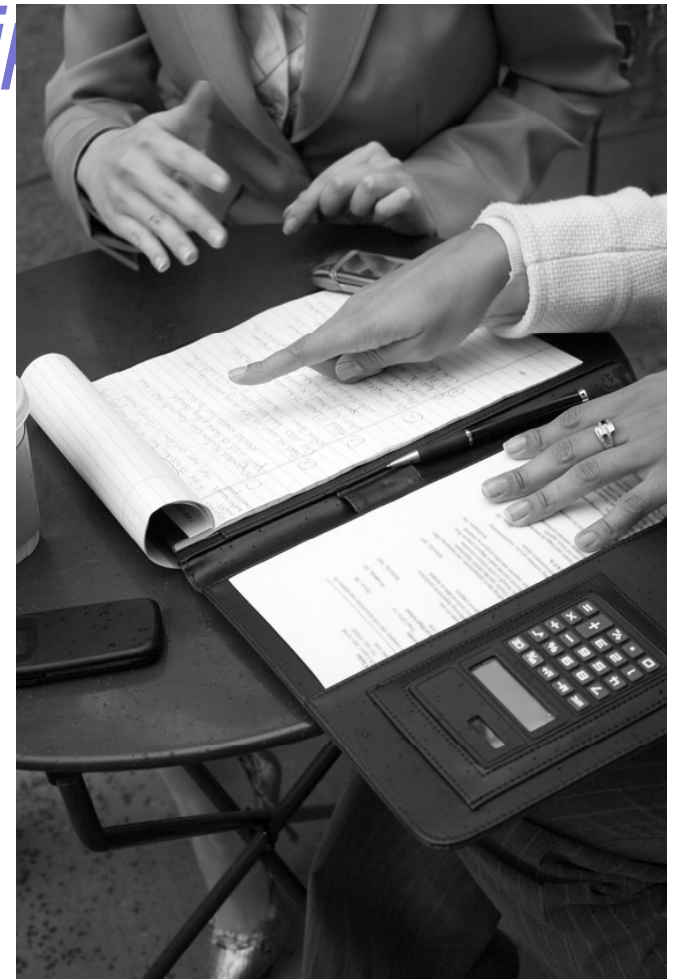
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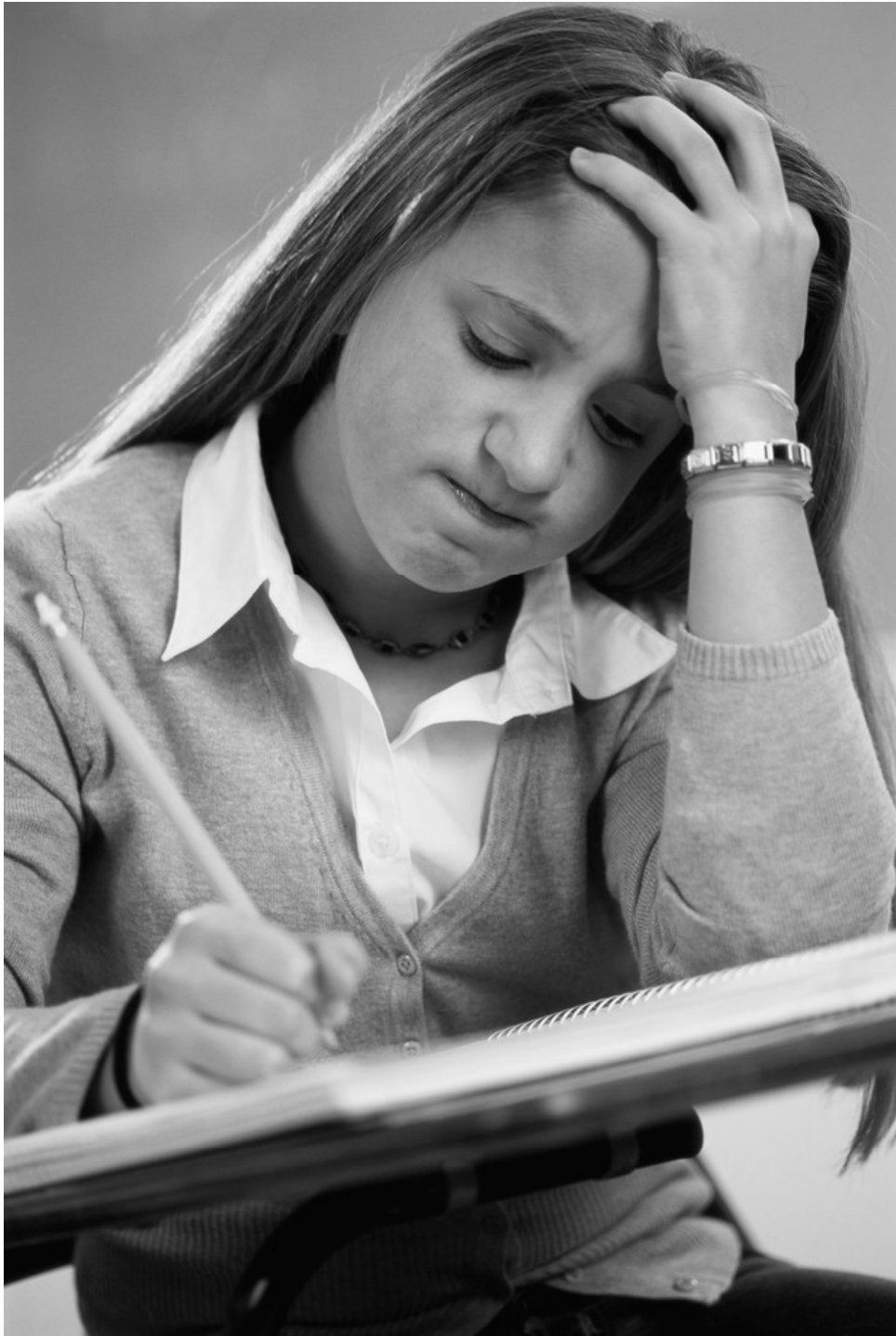


# Analyzing Information

*Look at the whole relationship,  
not just one incident:*

1. Context, Intent, Effect
2. Empathy
3. Agency
4. Assertion of Will
5. Entitlement
6. Fear

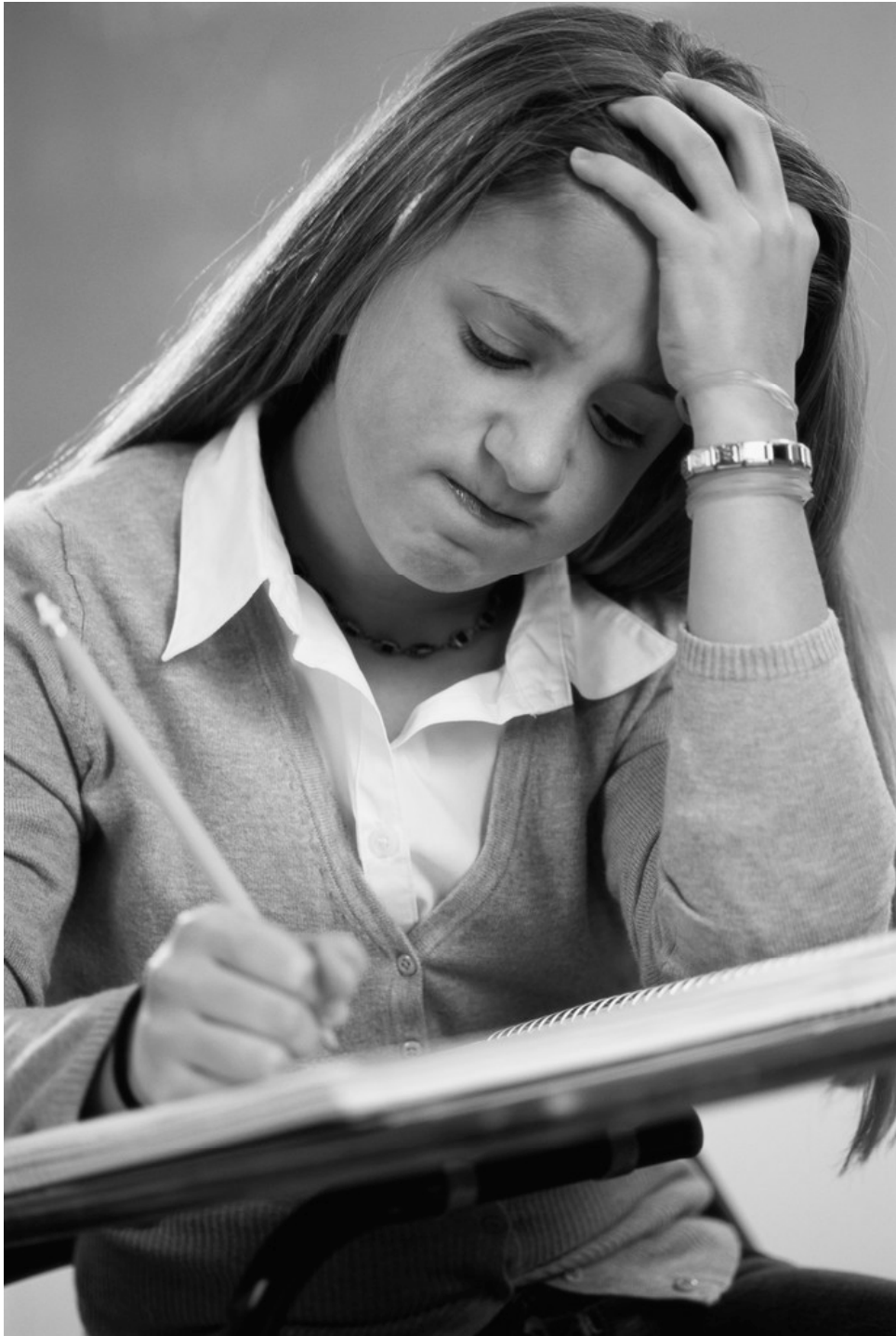




# Activity

- Write down 2 different specific tactics of abuse that an abuser could use to control their partner
- Example: controlling the money, pressuring your partner to have sex.
- Briefly explain to your neighbor how an abuser might use each tactic to control their partner.





## Activity Part 2

- Take a minute to think of ways that survivors might use the same behaviors as a means of resisting abuse.
- Example: controlling the money, pressuring your partner to have sex.
- Share your feelings, ideas, and questions with your neighbor.

# Analyzing Information

- Context in which behavior occurred
- Intent of its use (controlling partner or gaining control of oneself)
- Effect of behavior (is person afraid or have they established control?)





# Context, Intent, Effect Example:

Survivor	Abuser
<p><b>Incident:</b> Two women who are dating are in a car. The woman in the passenger seat punches the woman who is driving.</p>	
<p><b>Context:</b> “My partner was driving the car and screaming at me and driving dangerously. At a red light, I punched her and ran out of the car.”</p> <p><b>Intent:</b> To get free of a dangerous situation, self defense</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> Survivor gets away and flees to a friend’s house, fearing the repercussions of her action.</p>	<p><b>Context:</b> “My partner was driving. We were fighting and she pulled the car over and tried to get out to leave. I punched her and told her to keep driving.”</p> <p><b>Intent:</b> Control partner, keep her in the car</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> Abuser gains power and control through fear and violence.</p>



# Analyzing Information

## Empathy

- Survivors will often (not always) empathize with the feelings, opinions or reactions of their partner. They may make excuses for their partner's behavior.
- Abusers often have trouble empathizing with the survivor and will blame them for the abuse or be dismissive of their feelings.



# Looking for Empathy

Ask questions about the partner feelings and notice whether the response is dismissive or empathetic.

Take note of when there is a lack of information or lack of accounting for the partner's feelings.  
(Lack of Empathy)

Take note of when there is a lot of explaining or understanding of the partner's behavior.



(Empathy)

# Empathy Examples:

Survivor	Abuser
Empathy for partner	Lack of empathy for partner
<p>“I know she just lost her job and is going through a tough time right now and that’s why she is acting this way.”</p> <p>“I know his childhood issues of abandonment make him very insecure and that’s why he wants to always know where I am.”</p>	<p>“She blew up at me because she just can’t handle things. I know she lost her job this week but why should I pay for her being a flake?”</p> <p>“He is taking it out on me because he just can’t get his act together. He is a mess because of some abandonment issues he just can’t get over.”</p>



# Analyzing Information

## Agency

- Agency is making decisions for oneself, having control over one's own life.



# Looking for Agency

- Ask yourself:
  - Who is making the decisions?
  - Were these decisions coerced?
  - What are the consequences for making decisions that the partner doesn't like?
  - Whose life is getting smaller?



# Agency Examples:

Survivor	Abuser
Loss of freedom to make decisions for themselves	Freedom to make decisions for themselves and within the relationship
“She doesn’t like me hanging out with other people, so I don’t really have anyone I can talk to.”	“We like to spend all our time together. Her old friends were always trying to break us up and get in our business so we don’t talk to them any more.”
“He called my work so many times a day that I finally got fired. Now he wants me to stay home and do the housework while he goes to work. He doesn’t want me to get another job.”	“We decided that I make enough money for him to stay home and take care of the house. I actually kind of envy him. He complains that he misses it, but he just needs to realize how lucky he is.”



# Analyzing Information

## Assertion of Will

The abuser exerts power OVER the survivor to get their way.

The survivor may try to say no, set boundaries, or make decisions but the abuser does not respect these choices.





# Looking for Assertion of Will

- Look at the patterns of assertion of will.  
Who is getting their way?
- Look at:
  - Are there times where one partner sets a boundary but the other partner does something anyway?
  - Is this a pattern?



# Assertion of Will Examples:

Survivor	Abuser
Boundaries and decisions are not respected	Does not respect boundaries or decisions
<p>“She knows I have asthma and I’m allergic to cats but she brought home a cat anyway. I’m paying rent but she still won’t listen to me.”</p> <p>“I started using the name Maria and asked my friends to call me she. Everyone is trying to be supportive but they are confused because my boyfriend still calls me by my old name.”</p>	<p>“I found this homeless kitten on the street and brought her home. I don’t know why she’s complaining. Her allergies aren’t that bad. There’s no way I’m going to give up this cute little kitten.”</p> <p>“Last year, he started going by the name Maria and wants to be called she. I told our friends that my boyfriend may cross-dress but I’m gay and I am dating a man not a woman.”</p>

# Analyzing Information

## Entitlement

- Entitlement is an attitude where someone believes they have the right to have their way at the expense of others.
- Entitlement comes from a lack of empathy
- Entitlement is often associated with a “me-first” attitude, asserting their will over others



# Entitlement Examples:

Survivor	Abuser
Does not feel like their needs are as important as their partners	Believes their needs are more important
<p>“I’m the only one working and we can barely pay the bills. I tried to set a budget but then I come home and she’s bought a new designer purse. I know she likes nice things but she hasn’t worked in over six months.”</p> <p>“I know that my boyfriend smokes but I told him when he moved in that he couldn’t smoke in the house. My asthma is so bad I may end up in the hospital, but he smokes inside anyway.”</p>	<p>“My partner always tries to control the money and blows up at me for buying the things I need. I know she’s working overtime to support us both but I need some of the finer things in life to be happy.”</p> <p>“I have the right to smoke in my own home. I shouldn’t be forced outside in the cold to smoke. He’s just trying to control my smoking.”</p>



# Analyzing Information

## Fear

- Is one partner in fear of the other?
- Look at actions and behaviors:
  - Is one person telling you they are afraid?
  - Is one person afraid to go home?
  - Is one person planning around safety?
  - Has one person tried to flee or hide?
  - Is one person making decisions because they are afraid of consequences?
- Make sure to contextualize what they are afraid of
  - An abuser may state they are afraid, but upon further probing, you may find their “fear” is around not being able to control

their partner.



# Examples of fear:

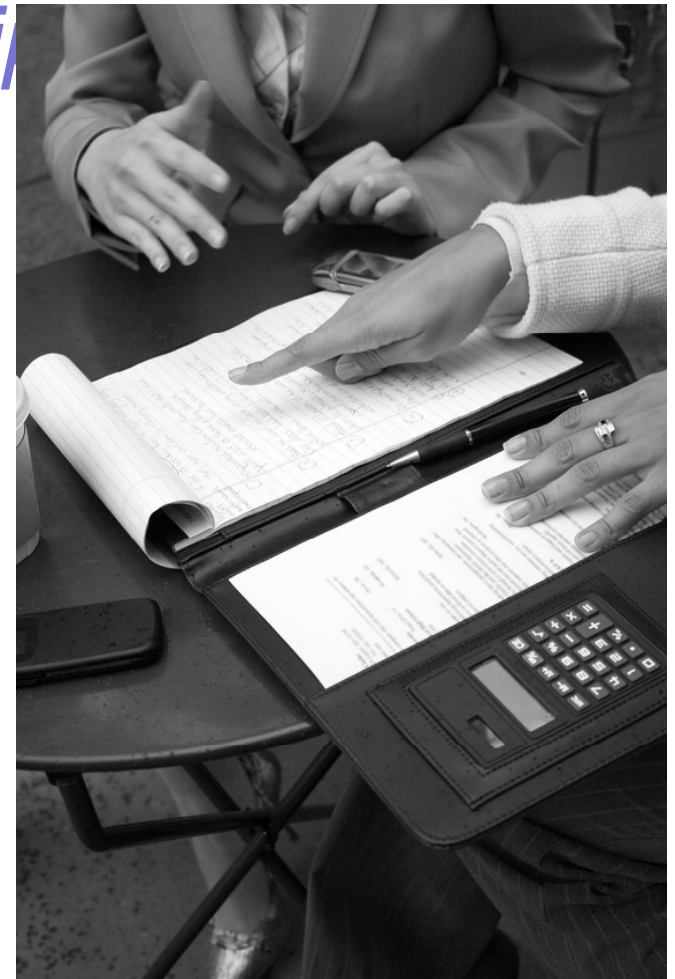
Survivor	Abuser
Changes behavior because of fear	Fear is about losing control of partner
<p>“I stopped inviting my friends over the house on Friday nights because she always comes home drunk and wants to start trouble. I just don’t want them to see what she does to me when she’s like that.”</p>	<p>“The last time we fought she disappeared for 3 days and didn’t return my calls. I was so scared- I had no idea where she was staying. I went to each of our friend’s houses to find her so I could talk to her.”</p>
<p>“My partner doesn’t like me going to AA, so I have to go on my lunch break at work so he won’t find out.”</p>	<p>“I hate it when my partner goes to AA. I get really scared about who he might be talking to there.”</p>



# Analyzing Information

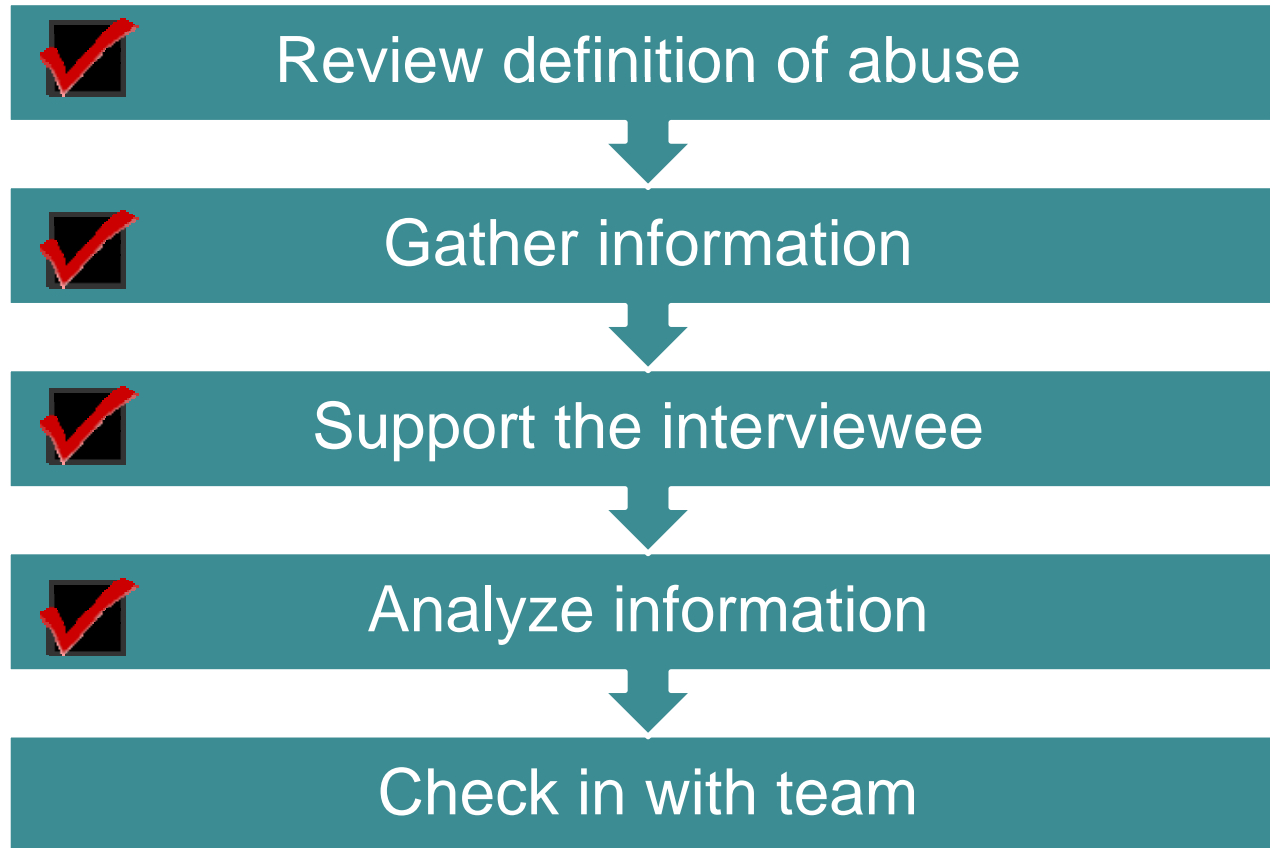
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# Process of Screening

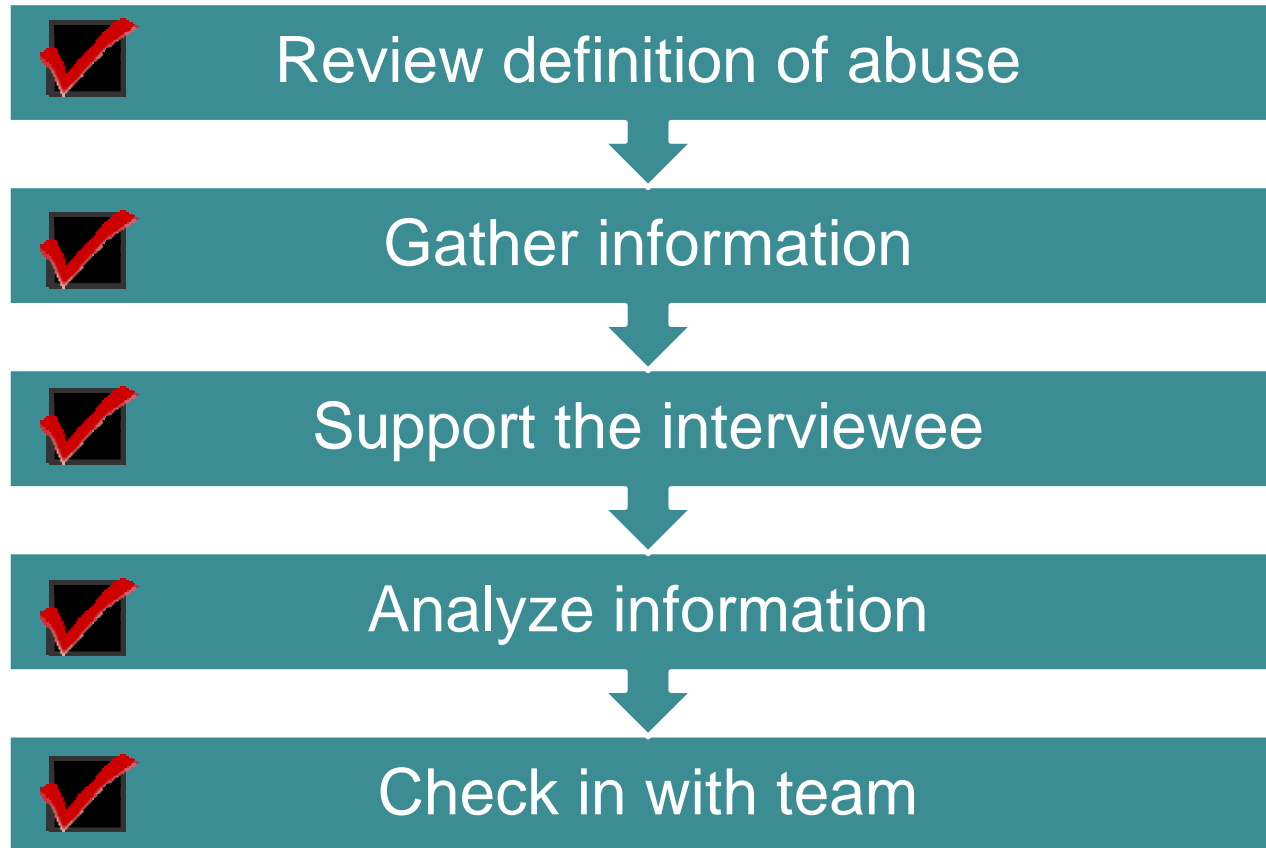


# Check in with someone from your team

- Check in- get input and check for red flags.
- Try letting someone else screen the person for awhile to get a different perspective.
- Try having two people screen together.
- If you are feeling triggered and/or confused- you might be talking to an abuser- remember to pay attention to your gut!
- An abuser will not share everything with you and may lie. Try to read between the lines- *what is not being said?*



# Process of Screening



# It's an abuser! now what?

- We tell the abuser, “From what you have shared with us, at this time we believe that you’ve been abusive.”
- We do not offer services for people who have been abusive.
- We refer them to batterer’s intervention- a program called Emerge that works with LGBTQ/T people who have been abusive



# It's a survivor- now what?

- Until we are sure we are speaking to a survivor, we do not offer services or give referrals that may be limited resources.
- When writing letters of support , we clarify, “At this time, from our conversations, we believe that this person is the survivor.”
- We continue to be alert to any red flags and continue screening.



# Elements of Screening

- **Context, Intent and Effect**
- **Agency**
- **Assertion of Will**
- **Empathy**
- **Entitlement**
- **Fear**



# Questions? Comments?

