



Abuse Awareness Among Survivors of Brain Injury, a Round-table Discussion Approach

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Why train survivors of brain injury about abuse?

People with disabilities are more likely to be abused by a greater number of perpetrators, for a longer period of time, and are less likely to escape the abuse. There is a unique relationship that exists between brain injury and domestic violence, in that Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) may be the result of domestic violence. People with brain injuries have unique risk factors that put them at risk of being abused due to the nature of their injury and due to the fact that individuals with disabilities are abused at a greater rate than their non-disabled peers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 11% of TBI deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits combined are related to assaults.

Background

This training was conducted by the I-CAN! Accessibility Project, a collaboration between the VCU School of Social Work and VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities. The project, promotes and facilitates awareness about abuse of people with disabilities and advocates for equal access to services and legal protections. During October and November of 2013, the I-CAN! Accessibility Project provided a series of five, weekly round-table discussions for members of the Mill House, a local clubhouse in Richmond, Virginia for survivors of brain injury. The purpose of sessions was to:

- increase understanding among individuals with traumatic brain injuries about healthy and
- equip participants with information about unhealthy relationships and about community and personal resources.

The brain injury survivors who participated in the round-table discussions created a YouTube video where they illustrated what they learned from the roundtable discussions. The video was produced in Closed Captioning English, No Closed Captioning, Closed Captioning Spanish, and American Sign Language.

CONTENT

The round-table discussions focused on:

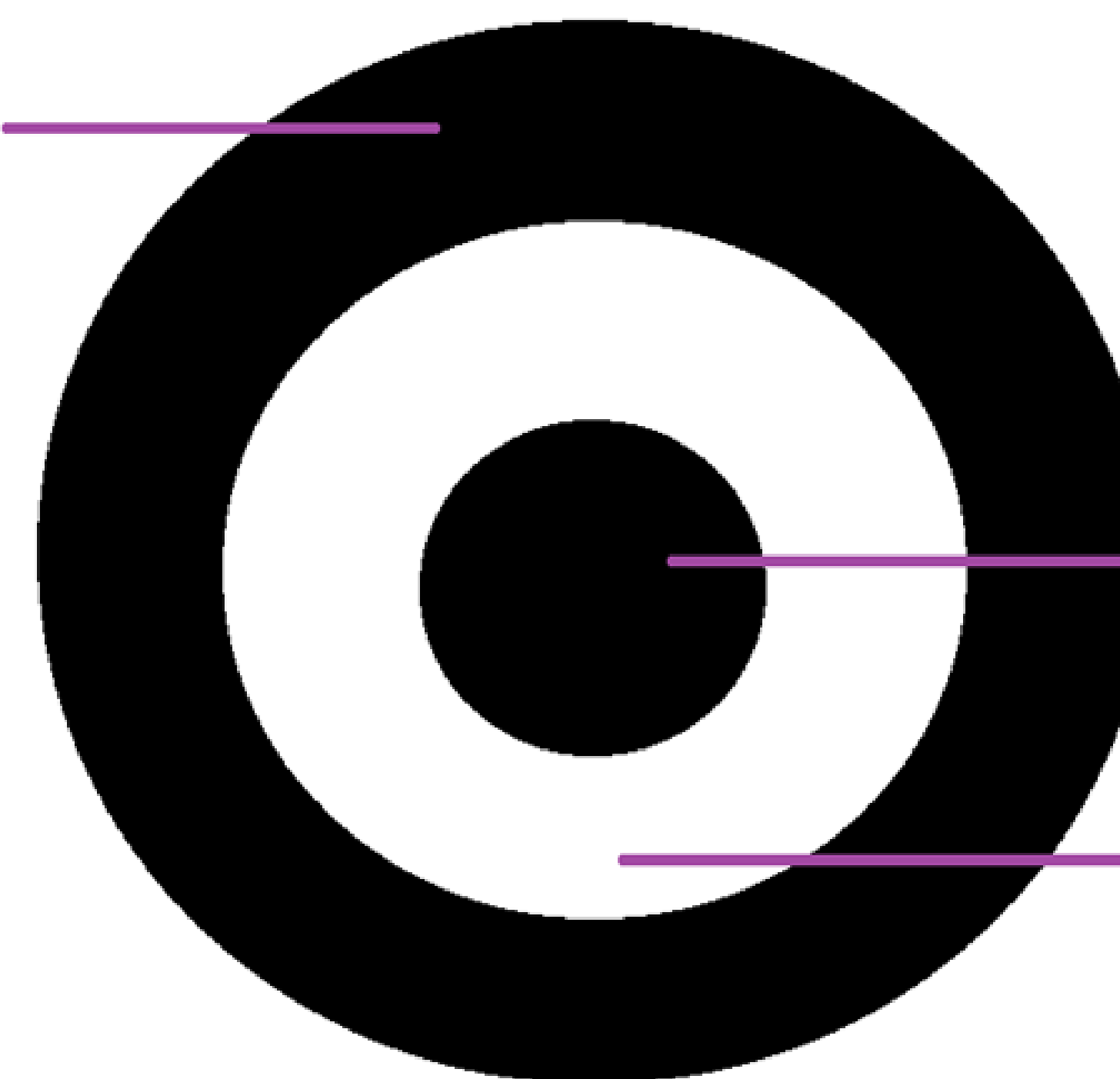
- Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Rights and responsibilities in a relationship.
- Types of abuse and harm that people may experience in unhealthy relationships.
- Community and personal resources available to individuals in unhealthy relationships.
- Safety planning.

"...the part that stood out for me...[is that] you couldn't be forced to do anything you didn't want to do. And I really enjoyed her saying that. It made me feel more comfortable. And, you know I, before I had my injury, I knew all that anyway, but sometimes it might not be as clear to you now."

Evaluation

Evidence of the effectiveness of the training approach was collected through two measures; a bulls-eye evaluation and an interview. A bulls-eye evaluation measure was given after each session to measure how on target the information was for the participants. Participants put a sticker in the center of the bulls-eye if the information was right on target for them, on the next outermost ring if it was somewhat on target, and on the outer ring if it was off target. The interviews were conducted after the last round-table discussion by a Graduate Research Assistant. In the interviews the participants were asked to provide feedback on what they liked about the round-tables discussions, what could be improved, and whether any of the materials had an impact on their daily life.

Not on Target



Right on Target

Somewhat on Target



One participant used the materials in their daily life and felt that the materials helped them see that they were "being over-protective...[and] verbally abusive" in their relationship. The participant shared that the round-tables made them think about whether or not they should engage in that behavior.

Evaluation Findings

On average, four females participated in the female group and 10 males in the male group. Overall, the groups reported sessions as right on target."



The interviews showed that the participants felt the information was relevant to their daily lives. Overall the participants reported that they liked the presentation format and delivery of the round-table discussions. The participants felt that the material had an impact on them, and many had used it in their daily lives and/or planned to use it in the future. The participants felt that the information covered in the sessions helped them know what to do if they found themselves in an abusive situation.

"My relationships are both good and bad, but it made me understand a little bit more about what good and bad really are. It was very good information for everyone to have, I mean, you know. I know mine are good and bad and [the facilitator] was very concise."



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