

Learning /Dialogue > Lecturing/Counseling/Advising

Both people are learning from each other. You have info about GBV, they have info about their life, and you come together to create change. In order to do this we have to engage in dialogue rather than counseling or advising. It is not our job to make assumptions or tell people what they should do. It is not our job to be a therapist or counselor. It is our job to be an advocate. It is our job to ask questions to understand their reality.

Connection/Partnership > Isolation/Individualist

You can encourage and explore relationships with social networks, family, and community. If nothing else, you should be connecting with them human to human. Violence thrives in isolation. When victims are isolated, they think they are alone in their experiences. You can tell them about groups and opportunities for connection at WISE. Do not confuse empowerment with “pick yourself up by your bootstraps.” What if you don’t have boots? What if your boots don’t fit? The notion of empowerment and independence gets used to blame victims, and doesn’t consider the social systems in place functioning to keep victims down. None of us are successful on our own. We all have family, or friends, or colleagues, or professionals, who provide us with the structure and support we need to live our lives.

Personalized > Generalized

Place the survivor’s reality and needs at the center of your advocacy, and not those of institutions. Systems were not designed to meet the needs of survivors, so it’s your job to help make the puzzle pieces fit. Remember that survivors are not data points that come with textbook prescriptions of what to do next. You have to listen to them to learn.

Transformational > Transactional

We want to create an experience that is liberating. Where the person who is most impacted is the one who is driving the process. A transactional relationship is giving people things or resources, without any connection or conversation.

Whole Person > Victim of Violence

Recognize the intersection and complexity of their life, rather than a single aspect or event. When we know who they are and what is important to them, we can do a better job brainstorming with them how to get their needs met. What feels risky for them? Have they interacted with PD before? Have they experienced violence before? It’s important to keep in mind all of the things that make this person who they are. Violence is one thing that happened to them, not the defining thing.

Context > Isolated Event

Gender-based violence is a social problem and not a result of “bad individuals”. We live in a society that supports GBV, which creates significant barriers for victims. This culture also tells victims that the violence is their fault, that they should feel shame, that no one will believe them, and that they deserve what has happened to them. You can counteract those messages. You can acknowledge the injustice of being a victim of GBV. You can point out the ways our cultural norms encourage violence.