

Domestic Violence Class for Court - 51

Accountability and its Relation to Domestic Violence

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In today's world we often hear "it is not my fault, they/she/he made me do it." Passing blame for our own choices and behaviors minimizes the harm we have done with those choices. *Not my fault* when someone becomes angry gives the power to the person they are blaming for that anger. Taking responsibility for the end results of our choices and behaviors is called integrity.

In this modern society, this clinician finds a lack of integrity across the board. Also, we are programmed to pass the buck and blame another for our behaviors.

**My wife was a bitch I had to cheat, she made me.*

**My boss is a cheap skate I had to steal, he made me.*

**She did not have my dinner ready at the time I asked, I had to hit her. She made me hit her or she would have continued to be disrespectful.*

**My child made me beat him, he mouthed off once too often.*

**I had to continue with sex after she said NO, she made me horny. I had no choice.*

**It is the medias fault I am overweight, they advertise food constantly.*

Etc.

When we stop blaming other's we will gain integrity. When we own up to our behaviors and their consequences we will be accountable. When we continue to live this way we will model these traits for our children. They will become accountable for their own actions and have integrity.

Even the media colors their statements so they lack accountability. Events will be reported without holding themselves or others accountable. The rest

of the article states men as the abuser and women as the victims. This is not true in entirety. Please read it as if it said man/woman etc. There are incidents of women being the abuser and some believe men do not report abuse because of social pressure and fear of looking weak.

The seriousness and swiftness of the court's response is key to any community's criminal justice response and signals the court's zero tolerance for men's violence against women. Holding the abuser accountable immediately is essential.

We need to teach our girls and women to hold abusers accountable. When a child is molested and this clinician is the therapist, it is encouraged to call the molest "molest", not "what he did to me, or that thing that happened." When a woman suffers from abuse of any kind; belittling, verbal attack, physical attack, sexual abuse, it need to be called THAT, ABUSE.

When children are bullied in school, the school and society need to call it abuse. Our children should be taught to call it abuse also. This clinician see so many children who do not have a clue that what is happening to them is wrong, abusive, and sometimes even a crime. In my therapy it is suggested the child look at the abuser and tell them "that is abusive." Touching someone without permission, let alone hitting, is an assault crime when done between adults. If we begin calling a spade a spade and a crime a crime and hurt hurt, perhaps accountability will come more easily.

In the article ***The Importance of Using Accountable Language*** by Phyllis B Frank and Barry Goldstein, they define unaccountable language;

"Unaccountable language refers to the powerful messages embedded in all forms of speech and media that have all of us lapse into sentence structure that obscures perpetrators, minimizes their abuse, and support blaming victims. One common example is the phrase "an abusive relationship." The relationship did not hit the woman, but rather it was the abuser, typically a man who is husband or intimate partner, who was abusive. Such statements make the person who committed the offense, invisible. More specifically it is the use of passive language that results in making the perpetrator invisible. For example, a phrase like a woman was raped should be replaced by "A man raped a woman." The rape did not just happen, but rather the rapist committed a brutal act. The idea is to focus

attention on the person responsible. Accountably speaking we might say a woman was in a relationship with an abuser or he is abusive to his intimate partner. Another example is exposed by the question, "How many women will be raped or assaulted in this year?" Do we ever hear, "How many men will rape or assault this year?"

Other examples of the language of accountability

Once, when discussing accountable language during a staff training, we looked up on the wall to see a bumper sticker that said, "Every 15 seconds a woman is assaulted." Our objection at the time was not with the accuracy of the information but that the statement failed to focus on the cause of the assaults. "Every 15 seconds a man assaults a woman!" would be an accountable description.

Unaccountable language hides responsibility

The use of accountable language is not a technicality or merely a play on words, but rather an issue with profound social consequences. The systemic use of unaccountable language minimizes men's abuse of women, fails to take his abuse seriously, and hides his responsibility for his actions. If we say "a woman was hurt" it seems like it just happened, as if on its own accord, or by accident, and there is nothing to be done about it. If instead we refer to the man who is hurting the woman, this requires assigning responsibility and taking action to stop him from hurting her again and provide consequences for the harm he caused.

Domestic violence is comprised of a wide range of tactics used by men to maintain power and to control their intimate partners. The tactics are part of a pattern of coercive actions designed to maintain, what he believes (consciously or not), are his male privileges, to control his significant other. Historically, men were assigned, by social and legal norms, control over wives and families. Today, even though that is no longer legally, and for so many, morally, the case, an "abusive relationship" or "domestic dispute" makes it seem like communications or relationship problem between the parties. It suggests counseling or therapy as a remedy instead of consequences to hold abusers accountable for abusive, controlling, and/or violent tactics."

As I mentioned before the media is talented at using unaccountable language. Instead of the Grand Jury finding him to be innocent, they may

report “The Grand Jury did not find evidence to convict.” This gives a feeling they just needed more of the story and he would have been guilty. Politicians say “mistakes were made” instead of “I made a mistake.”

When Child Protective Service is called, the parent may blame their abusive behavior on the child’s despicable behavior. School may blame a child’s lack of learning on the child, rather than say “we made a mistake and need to be more proactive about helping this child.” On and on our society has become good at hiding their blame in the unaccountable language of the day.