



“I always wanted to be just like you, Dad. Now I’m scared that wish just may come true.”

PHOTOS: ROBERT TINKER

the CROWN PRINCE

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada in association with
Health and Welfare Canada

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STUDY GUIDE

I N T R O D U C T I O N

"Just Like Dad?"

Domestic assault on women is a problem which has existed for years as a "family secret." It was after all "nobody's business" what went on behind closed doors.

In recent years, however, the doors have been cracked open and the full extent and effect of domestic violence is becoming known. But with this knowledge comes a challenge to some of our culture's most cherished myths; myths about what a family is and where safety is to be found, myths about the masochism of women who stay, myths about the men who commit the violence.

When we think "wife beater" the image which comes to mind is often of some sort of monster who drags his knuckles on the ground and who is "out of control" or "crazy." This is not the case. The man who assaults his partner looks just like us. He is our father, our brother, our cousin, our friend. Violence against women is not a psychological problem. It is a problem of cultural attitudes towards women and men. It is a problem of learned behaviour. It is a question of choices.

Men who are violent towards their partners have learned certain things about dealing with stress, about hiding their feelings, about how to resolve arguments, about what relationships look like, in short, about who they are "allowed" to hit. These are things we learn from movies, from television shows, from jokes on the street, and from our friends. But mostly we learn them at home.

The Crown Prince looks at the struggle of a boy on the verge of adulthood and the choices he is forced to make. These choices aren't easy. On the one hand he has to look closely at what it has meant to be a witness and victim of assault. On the other is the shocking realization of how deeply he wants to be "just like dad."

BEFORE THE SCREENING

Preparing Yourself

Male violence against women is something which affects each of us directly, in ways we may not even realize. If you are going to present this film to a group it would be wise to preview it. Pay attention to how you feel when watching it, to the moments you find most troublesome. Prepare yourself for a room full of people going through very similar emotions. One purpose of watching *The Crown Prince* is to uncover feelings and attitudes which lie buried in everyday life. This can be a frightening thing. But, as the film itself demonstrates, it can also be liberating. Your own approach can make the difference.

Statistically the chances are that anywhere between 15 and 40 per cent of your audience will have had direct experience of the kind of violence portrayed in *The Crown Prince*. It is possible that this film will help them break the silence for the first time. It would be a good idea to know what resources exist in your community for women, men and children and to have the contact numbers on hand.

Preparing the Group

The major hurdle for an open response to *The Crown Prince* is the dominant nature of public misperceptions. While an individual audience member may well experience complex and confusing emotions in response to the film, these feelings are sometimes undermined by broadly accepted "facts." These "facts" hold that domestic assault of women is not a serious problem, that it only affects a small number of people, and that it is a joking matter. (*Punch and Judy* and some cartoon characters are an example of this attitude.)

One way to stress the seriousness of the problem is to quote the statistics:

- Between 10% and 15% of all women in Canada will be assaulted by their partners *this year*.
- 40% of all women are likely to be assaulted by their partners in the course of their lives.
- 1 in 5 people murdered in this country are women killed by their partners.
- Children who witness assault exhibit the same symptoms as children who are direct victims.
- Children who grow up as witnesses or victims of assault are 10 times more likely to live in a violent relationship when they are adults.



AFTER THE SCREENING

Give the audience time to prepare for the discussion by letting the credits roll without turning up the lights. People may need this private time to begin to assimilate their thoughts and feelings.

Because *The Crown Prince* deals with some highly charged and uncomfortable issues, there may be an understandable desire on the part of some audience members to deflect the discussion. People might laugh inappropriately, or try to dismiss the film on the basis of the acting, or writing. They may begin to judge the characters and put them down. All these are ways of avoiding the real issue, which is their own emotional response.

Try to steer the discussion back by asking empathetic questions: "How do you think you would feel in that situation?" "Can you imagine what she must be going through?" If they continue to deny the issue, question them directly. "Have you never felt like that?" "What are you afraid of here?" This is not just a question of crowd control. To deflect, to deny or to laugh is to reinforce attitudes which lead to the violence in the first place. Other members of the group, especially those who have experienced violence at home, may find such behaviour threatening.

The emphasis in the discussion should be on questioning and understanding the motivations of each character in the film rather than on judgement and easy moralizing. One suggestion is to have each member of the group write a comment or question about the film on a separate piece of paper. Collect the papers and use the comments as a basis for the discussion. This would also allow someone to ask for help without public disclosure. Even an unsympathetic question such as "Why do we have to watch this stupid film?" can lead to an interesting and useful discussion.

Don't feel that you have to have answers to every question. The primary aim for this exercise should be discussion

rather than consensus. This means setting a tone in which people feel comfortable in saying what they have to say, even if it seems contentious. It is important that disagreement or anger be dealt with in a non-threatening, non-abusive way. You will be breaking some taboos just by talking about this issue. People may not even realize what they think until they hear themselves say it.

Try opening with questions which allow the group members to express what they are feeling about the film.

- What part of the film did you find hardest to watch?
- How do you feel about Billy at the end?
- How do you feel about the father?
- Who do you feel closest to in the film?

Remember that feelings can't be argued with. This can help set up an atmosphere in which people can trust their own responses in the discussion.



POSSIBLE QUESTIONS/THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

“W*hy does Billy talk to the police at the beginning? Why is he so nervous when Wendy talks back to the boys in the car?”*

Rigid views of social roles and respect for authority are often clues to violence, especially when applied to traditional male/female relations. In this instance it may also be an indication of Billy's fears, and his feelings of powerlessness in the outside world. How and where does he try to compensate for his perceived powerlessness?

“Why doesn't Billy's mom do anything about the violence?”

There are a number of reasons why a woman may remain with an abusive husband. Traditionally, women have been brought up to judge themselves in terms of the success of their relationships. If her relationship doesn't work she may blame herself. She may be isolated and unable to gain a perspective on what is happening to her, especially if she grew up witnessing assault. She may not know what help is available. Violence has the effect of diminishing motivation in the victims. She might find it very difficult to survive financially outside the family home. She might still love the man and not want to do anything to hurt him (for example, have him arrested).

“Why does she finally decide to go?”

Often it is concern for the children which convinces the woman to take the first step.

“Why hasn't the father done anything about his violence?”

A man who would never think of hitting his boss may still hit his partner. It isn't a question of temper, but of who he believes he is “allowed” to hit. Billy's father has assumed a privileged place in the household and people don't give up



privilege unless the costs are made very clear to them. A man will often seek help only after a charge has been laid or after he has lost his family.

"Why does Billy resort to violence in the garage?"

There is a payoff to violence, otherwise people wouldn't resort to it. This payoff usually comes in the form of establishing control over a situation or person. Similarly, a person may become violent in situations where the desire to control is frustrated. The need for this kind of control is linked to rigid expectations of authority structures and of male/female roles (or adult/child roles).

"Why is Billy constantly putting women down?"

Sexist attitudes and violence are deeply connected. A person diminished and objectified is more easily attacked. This strategy works for armies and football teams as well as for abusive men. *Where did Billy learn these attitudes?*

"Is hitting the only form of violence?"

Physical assault is the underpinning of other, more pernicious forms of abuse: Verbal, psychological and emotional. *How does Billy's father keep Billy in line the morning after the fight? What effect does this have on Billy?*

"Is Freddie right to tell his teacher?"

Unless there is some kind of intervention, the violence does not stop. It tends to get worse over time. *Who else could he turn to?*

"Is it anybody's business how a family fights?"

Violence in the family has repercussions throughout the community.

"Is Billy doomed to be just like his father?"

Men can and do change. Many people brought up in violent homes are not themselves violent. Other choices can be made. Patterns which are learned can be unlearned. Before he can change, though, Billy must face up to what he has done and learn to recognize what brought him to the point of violence.

"Why is Billy so afraid of people finding out?"

"Why is it so important to keep the family together?"

"What can be done to help kids in the same situation as Freddy and Billy?"

"What would you do if Billy came to you for help?"

"What would you do if you were Billy?"



OTHER RESOURCES

The local women's shelter or program for men who batter might be able to provide a speaker or workshop leader on various aspects of the problem.

There are a number of films on the subject of domestic assault available from the NFB, including:

To Have and to Hold

Produced by Emerge, a men's counselling program in Boston, this film features interviews with men who have used physical violence against their partners. They discuss why they inflicted injury on those nearest to them and how, through counselling, they have learned to come to terms with their past behaviour and are beginning to take responsibility for changing it.

20 min. col. 106C 0181 157

Up the Creek

A film about the repercussions of wife beating from the husband's point of view.

15 min. col. 106C 0181 157

A Family Affair

An American drama highlighting the role of the justice system in dealing with domestic assault on women. The effects of the violence on the young daughter and teenage son are portrayed, though not featured.

26 min. col. 106C 0181 169

The Rites of Violence

The Domestic Youth Intervention Program in Duluth, Minnesota utilizes community law enforcement, criminal justice and social service agencies in domestic assault cases. Featuring



a story about a man who batters his wife, this film demonstrates how traditional attitudes can be changed into positive action to end the violence.

28 min. col. 106C 0181 171

Loved, Honoured and Bruised

A battered farm wife who comes to a shelter in Winnipeg describes her 13 year nightmare and tells why and how she finally left her husband. He tells his side of the story as well.

26 min. col. 106C 0180 030

Killing Us Softly; Advertising's Images of Women

A look at the psychological impact of advertising and its effect in perpetuating a negative image of women.

28 min. col. 106C 0791 389

The Next Step:

Sylvie's Story, A Safe Distance, Moving On

A series of three films examining the urgent need for services to battered women.

Sylvie's Story, A Safe Distance, and Moving On explore what happens to a battered woman who decides to leave her partner, concentrating on the various services a woman will need as she attempts to rebuild her life.

3 x 28 min. (approx.) col. C0186504, C0186505, C0186506

Break the Cycle 25 min. colour

Five victims of domestic violence share their pain and insights.

They offer candid advice to teens and victims of abuse.

Available from: Esprit Films Ltd.

P.O. Box 2215, Stn. B

St. Catharines, Ont. L2M 6P6

Rental: \$70.00

As with the films, most books and articles on domestic assault focus on the adults involved. Good general discussions of the issue can be found in:

I Don't Understand . . . Teen Help for Dating and Family Violence

Designed for teens who have witnessed wife assault in their homes or have been in abusive dating relationships. Describes teens' feelings and thoughts when they are victims of dating violence or witnesses to wife assault, and explains how to help a friend, what happens at an emergency shelter, and the differences between healthy and un-healthy relationships.

Available from: HELP for Victims of Family Violence

Box 705

Sundre, Alberta T0M 1M0

Cost: \$5.00

Gondolf, Edward; **Men Who Batter: An Integrated Approach to Stopping Wife Abuse**. Holmes Beach, Fla.: Learning Publications Inc., 1985.

MacLeod, Linda; **Battered But Not Beaten**. Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1987.

Gelles, Richard; **Family Violence**. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1987.



Pressman, Barbara; **Family Violence; Origins and Treatment**. Guelph: Office for Educational Practice, 1984.

Articles which deal more specifically with children include:

Elbow, M., "Children of Violent Marriages; The Forgotten Victims," *Social Casework*, 1982, Vol. 63, pp. 465-471

Rosenbaum, A. and O'Leary, K.D., "Children; The Unintended Victims of Marital Violence," **American Journal of Orthopsychiatry**, 1981, Vol. 51, pp. 692-699. Sopp-Gilson, S., "Children from Violent Homes," **Journal of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies**, 1980, Vol. 23 No. 10, pp. 1-7, 10.

There are a small number of books available for use with younger children;

Davis, Diane, **Something is Wrong at My House**. Seattle: Parents Press, 1984.

Paris, Susan, **Mommy and Daddy are Fighting**. Seattle: The Seal Press, 1986.

Very little has been written for or about teenage children in violent homes. One novel for older readers deals with wife abuse in another family;

Byars, Betsy, **Cracker Jackson**. New York: Viking Kestrel, 1985.

The new **Family Violence Film Catalogue** is available from the National Film Board offices as well as the National Clearing House on Family Violence at the following address:
Family Violence, Prevention Division; Health and Welfare
Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0L2

TO RENT OR BUY NFB FILMS AND VIDEOS:

NFB productions can be booked in a variety of ways. Check with your librarian, school district media resources staff, or contact your nearest NFB library directly. Most NFB films are now available on video, and with our new rates, prices are well within school resource budgets.

The NFB Multiple Video Copy option may suit your needs; for the price of a master tape and \$3 per minute, your school can make unlimited video copies of a film for three years.

Please contact your nearest NFB office for more information or assistance in programming films for your courses. Our representatives will be very pleased to help you.

For more information write to:

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