

Group Psychotherapy Program for Male Perpetrators of Domestic Violence and Female Partners

QUT Ethics Approval Number 200000007

Research team

Principal Researcher:	Mr Dave Misso	Doctor of Philosophy candidate
Associate Researchers:	Prof Robert Schweitzer	Principal Supervisor
	Assoc Prof Patricia Obst	Associate Supervisor

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Why is the study being conducted?

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Philosophy program by Dave Misso.

The purpose of this project is to develop, run and test a 12-week group psychotherapy program for men who perpetrate domestic violence.

Potential participants will be males, aged 18 years and over who report issues with domestic violence involving an intimate partner. Their female partners will also be invited to attend a separate process where they will receive information on domestic violence, aims and objectives of the group program, and be asked about their experiences of their male partners as they progress at specified times during the program. The information obtained from female partners will not be shared with male participants by the research team. Similarly, information shared by the male participants will not be shared with their female partners (unless there is a duty of care with regards to risk to safety to either party).

You are invited to participate in this project because you are currently involved in a relationship where domestic violence is an issue.

You will not be able to participate in this study if:

- You are under 18 years of age;
- If you have any sense of feeling coerced or forced to participate;
- You are in an existing relationship with any member of the research team;
- You have cognitive difficulties, and/or severe mental illness, which may have led to you being hospitalized;
- You turn up for a group session drunk from alcohol or high on drugs. You will not be permitted to join group sessions. Participants who engage in recurrent episodes of intoxication will be excluded from the study;
- If you are currently involved in criminal justice processes;
- If there is a current Domestic Violence Order which does not allow for counselling or contact between the partners.

What does participation involve?

Your participation will involve an initial interview to assess your suitability for the program. Participation will require that you complete three brief questionnaires and participate in an audio recorded interview, (6 weeks prior to and in week 1 of the group program commencing, week 12 and 6 weeks following completion of the group program). Your participation will involve attending a twelve (12) week, for two (2) hours per week, group treatment program for men who have perpetrated acts of domestic violence in their intimate relationships. During the group program, you will also be asked to complete brief questionnaires in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8, while attending the group treatment program.

The study will require you to attend at QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic, Kelvin Grove and each group session will be approximately two (2) hours duration with a small break included. The individual interviews will be conducted separately to the other participants and your partner and will take approximately one (1) hour each. The group sessions at the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic will be video recorded solely for assessment and supervision purposes. Your participation will involve approximately thirty (30) hours of your time over a twenty-four (24) week period.

If you withdraw from the program, your female partner will be given the choice of either continuing in the research or be provided with an exit interview and referral session. If your female partner withdraws from the program, she will be provided with an exit interview and referral session and you will have the option of withdrawing or continuing for the remainder of the program. If you choose to withdraw in this circumstance, you will be provided with an exit interview and referral session. This session will involve discussing options that might be available to you at that point and answering any questions that you might have given your particular situation. We will also assess any risk that might be present for you and your partner and apply the principles as outlined in the Risk section below

You will also be required to adhere to the following group rules:

- A strict policy of non-violence
- Respect for all participants' privacy
- Encourage, but don't force, participation of other group members
- Be straightforward and direct, but unassertive
- No intoxication

If during the group program any member expresses an intent to harm self, or another, this will be addressed in accordance with professional ethics and will be addressed with the particular person and appropriate action taken. In extreme cases this might involve informing the police.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate you can withdraw from the research without comment or penalty. Your decision to participate, or not participate, will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic.

What are the possible benefits for me if I take part?

The program has been designed with a view to reducing the potential for perpetrating domestic violence in intimate relationships. The project aims to improve the quality of current programs aimed at helping men to reduce acts of violence against women and children.

PLEASE NOTE, AS THIS IS A NEW PROGRAM, AND IS BEING TESTED, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE ANY BENEFIT TO YOU DIRECTLY.

PLEASE NOTE ALSO: THIS PROGRAM WILL NOT BENEFIT YOU OR YOUR PARTNER IN ANY LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The program is being directed by a registered Counselling Psychologist with over 30 years' experience in assisting men and women in dealing with issues relating to domestic violence.

The twelve (12) week program is provided at no cost to you or your partner. Free parking will be available and light refreshments will be served during the break at each group session. At the completion of the project you will receive a café voucher to the value of \$10 as a token of appreciation.

What are the possible risks for me if I take part?

The research team has identified the following possible risks in relation to participating in this study:

- The group program provides the opportunity for people to share their thoughts and feelings with other group members. It is not unusual, in this type of situation, for people to feel a level of discomfort, and even distressed, by sharing sensitive personal material, relating to yourself, your partner and your particular experiences with others. The group facilitators are trained to support you in being able to deal with any of these experiences if they arise. Similarly, you may also experience a level of discomfort in answering some of the questions either in the questionnaires, or face-to-face with the researcher.
- If, in the course of the research, you disclose any behaviour that may be considered to be illegal or a threat to yourself, or to another person/s, then the researcher may be obligated to report that behaviour to the appropriate authority. We are required by law to report issues of child abuse. The priority of this research is the safety of the participants, research team, and community. Any behaviour that may be deemed to be harmful to another or where safety is at immediate risk, either to yourself or other, will be discussed with you and your partner. If necessary, you will be referred to the most appropriate service for assistance, which might include suicide prevention services, other mental health agencies, or the police.

In case you experience any discomfort or distress, you can access support from the following sources:

QUT provides for limited free psychology, family therapy or counselling services (face-to-face only) for research participants of QUT projects who may experience discomfort or distress as a result of their participation in the research. Should you wish to access this service please call the Clinic Receptionist on **07 3138 0999** (Monday–Friday only 9am–5pm), QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic, 44 Musk Avenue, Kelvin Grove, and indicate that you are a research participant. Alternatively, Lifeline provides access to online, phone or face-to-face support, call **13 11 14** for 24-hour telephone crisis support.

Support for men is available 24/7 through MensLine Australia on **1300 789 978** (please see <http://www.dvconnect.org/mensline/> for more information).

Support for women is also available at 1800 RESPECT on **1800 737 732**, DVCONNECT on **1800 811 811**, and Brisbane Domestic Violence Service on **07 3217 2544**.

Other options for seeking assistance can be provided at your request and these may involve a fee for service.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses. Information gathered during the course of participating in the intervention will be kept confidential and will only be released under the following conditions:

- With your consent, or
- Where there is a legal obligation to do so, or
- If there is an immediate and specified risk of harm to an identifiable person or persons, that can be averted only by disclosing information.

Any data collected as part of this project will be stored securely as per QUT's Management of Research Data Policy.

The interview/group sessions that will be audio/video recorded will be used solely by the research team and will not be used for any other purpose. The recordings will be saved using codes to protect your privacy and to maintain confidentiality. The recordings will also be password protected, with only the research team having access to the password. All data will be stored indefinitely. The audio/video recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the project.

Please note that **non-identifiable** data collected in this project may be used as comparative data in future projects or stored on a selection of databases in different subject areas that are freely available on the internet for secondary analysis.

At the completion of the project, you will receive a summary report of the findings from this research. No identifying information will be included in the report. The report may include quotations from people's accounts of their experiences. These quotations will not contain any information that might lead to a particular quote being attributed any particular person.

How do I give my consent to participate?

If you are interested in participating, please contact Dave Misso on 07 3342 1838. An initial interview will be arranged to discuss the program with you and your partner, separately, prior to you giving your consent.

What if I have questions about the research project?

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact one of the listed researchers:

Dave Misso	dd.misso@hdr.qut.edu.au	07 3342 1838
Robert Schweitzer	r.schweitzer@qut.edu.au	07 3138 4617
Patricia Obst	p.obst@qut.edu.au	07 3138 4931

What if I have a concern or complaint regarding the conduct of the research project?

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. If you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, particularly in relation to matters concerning policies, information or complaints about the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team on 07 3138 5123 or email

humanethics@gut.edu.au.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.