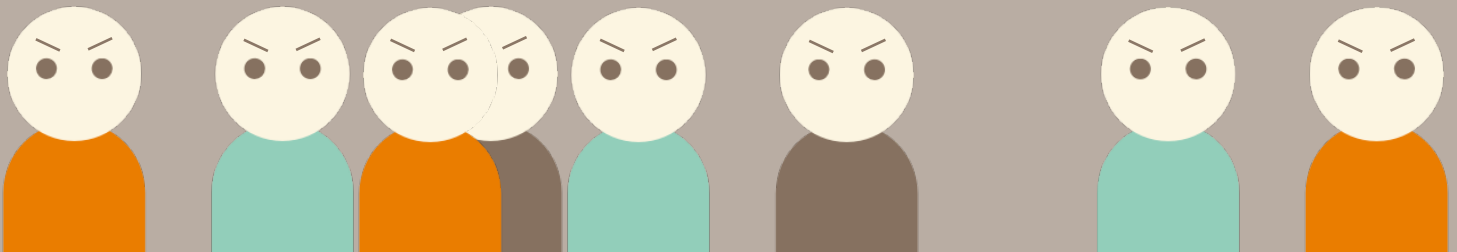


What do batterers get out of it?

When asked how they benefit from abusing their wives, girlfriends, partners, and children, men said . . .

She's scared & won't go out & spend money ♦ **Get your way**: go out ♦ Respect ♦ She won't argue ♦ Feeling superior: she's accountable to me in terms of being somewhere on time: **I decide** ♦ Keeps relationship going - she's too scared to leave ♦ Get the money ♦ Get sex ♦ **Total control** in decision making ♦ Use money for drugs ♦ Don't have to change for her ♦ Power ♦ Decide where to go (as a couple) ♦ Who to see ♦ What to wear ♦ Control the children ♦ If she's late, she won't be again ♦ Intimidation ♦ She's scared & can't confront me ♦ Can convince her she's screwin' up ♦ She feels less worthy so defers to my needs and wants ♦ She will look up to me and accept my decisions without an argument ♦ Decide her social life – what she wears so you can keep your image by how she acts ♦ So she won't get help against you for past beatings because she has no friends to support her and she is confused by my lies ♦ Convince her she's nuts ♦ Convince her she's unattractive ♦ Convince her she's to blame ♦ Convince her she's the problem ♦ I can dump on her ♦ Can use kids to "spy" on mom ♦ Kids won't tell mom what I did ♦ Kids won't disagree with me ♦ Don't have to talk to her ♦ **I'm king of the castle** ♦ Can make yourself scarce ♦ Have someone to unload on ♦ Have someone to bitch at ♦ She won't call police ♦ Tell kids don't have to listen to mom ♦ Get her to drop charges ♦ Get her to support me to her family, my family, cops, judge, SCIP, prosecutors, etc. ♦ Get her to admit it's her fault ♦ She's to blame for the battering ♦ She's an object ♦ **(I get) a robot babysitter, maid, sex, food** Ego booster ♦ She tells me I'm great ♦ Braggin' rights ♦ If she works – get her money ♦ Get her to quit job so she can take care of house ♦ Isolate her so friends can't confront me ♦ Decide how money is spent ♦ "I'm breadwinner" ♦ Buy the toys I want ♦ Take time for myself ♦ She has to depend on me if I break her stuff ♦ **I get to know everything** ♦ She's a nurse-maid ♦ She comforts me ♦ Supper on the table ♦ Invite friends over w/o her knowin' = more work for her ♦ No compromise = more freedom ♦ Don't have to listen to her complaints for not letting her know stuff ♦ She works for me ♦ I don't have to help out ♦ I don't have to hang out with her or kids ♦ Determine what values kids have – who they play with, what school they go to or getting to ignore the process – dictating what they "need" food, clothes, recreation, etc. ♦ **Dictate reality** ♦ Kids on my side against her ♦ Kids do what I say ♦ Mold kids/her so that they will help do what I should do ♦ Keeps kids quiet about abuse ♦ Don't have to get up, take out garbage, watch kids, do dishes, get up at night with kids, do laundry, change diapers, clean house, bring kids to appointments or activities, mop floors, clean refrigerator, etc. ♦ **Answer to nobody** ♦ **Do what you want, when you want to** ♦ Get to ignore/deny your history of violence and other irresponsible behavior ♦ Get to write history ♦ Get to determine future ♦ Choose battles & what it will cost her ♦ Proves your superiority ♦ Win all the arguments ♦ Don't have to listen to her wishes, complaints, anger, fears, etc ♦ Make the rules then break them when you want



For many years, I facilitated court-mandated groups for men who batter. In the early 1980s we were concentrating on healthy relationship skills building, emotional identification and self-control, and anger management, among other related issues. Then battered women in Duluth, Minnesota began gathering to discuss the impact of the violence on their lives. What emerged was that the men who beat them, not only physically assaulted them, but also controlled where they went, who they talked to, what they wore, where they worked, if they worked, how the money was spent, when, with whom, and how they had sex, how the kids were raised, how the domestic labor was split out in the household, etc. You get the picture. Basically, the men got to control the women to get what the men wanted... and the threat and use of violence was the bottom line that ensured it would happen.

Now I was training men in weekly groups at the time to use assertiveness when in conflict with their wives or girlfriends, teaching them how to access and express their feelings appropriately. Then I would send them home to practice. The next week they would come back and report that their new assertiveness “skills” weren’t working. I asked them why, and they would say “Because she still did A, B, C, and D and would not do E, F, and G.” Which is what *he* wanted. I began then to slowly understand that I was teaching men multiple personal life skills and they were simply using those skills in attempts to control her even more effectively.

So what was the point? Why were these men so invested in this controlling and abusive behavior?

One night I started the group by asking the men what they thought the *benefits* were of their violence. At first they all looked at each other (notably) and said, “There are no benefits.” This did not surprise me as men who batter routinely deny their actions—as they deny their intents as well. So I said, “Well, there must be *some* benefits from the violence; otherwise why would you do it?” They looked at each other again and then one guy started admitting there were benefits, and then they all chimed in until the four by eight foot blackboard I was writing their responses on was full, and we ran out of space.

The first time I did this exercise I looked at the blackboard and I thought, “Oh my God. Why *would* they give it up?” I then decided to ask the men. Why give it up? They then filled a two by two foot space on the blackboard with things like, “get arrested,” “divorce,” “get protection orders taken out against you,” “adult kids don’t invite you to their weddings,” and “have to go to groups like this.” That was about it.

This was the first time I fully comprehended the necessity of a consistent coordinated *community* response through the criminal, civil, and family court systems which can mete out effective interventions that hold men who batter accountable while preserving the safety of the women, girls, and boys they abuse. It was on that day that I realized if I ever had to choose between providing batterer groups for men who batter *or* a consistently effective criminal and civil/family court response to domestic violence, I would choose the criminal and civil/family court response every time. There are just too many benefits gained from this behavior.

After that first time asking the men about the benefits of their violence, I began to be much more effective in the facilitation of my work. It was astounding how dramatically the groups changed once I acknowledged and remembered that the violence was functional—and that was why they used it.

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