

BUILDING ON THE VICTIM'S STRENGTHS

ACKNOWLEDGE a woman's strengths and cultural ties, the specific ways she has protected herself or her children, methods she used to leave the abuse or maintain her sanity, and the courage she has demonstrated by telling you about violence or by reaching out to resources and support systems for help. Discuss with the following questions:

- What does she envision for the future? What are her hopes and dreams for herself?
- Does she want to go back to school or get a job?
- What are the steps she needs to take to realize her dream?
- Will she be safe if she acts?

DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS that are victim blaming, such as:

- What keeps you with a person like that?
- Do you get something out of the violence?
- What did you do that caused him to hit you? (The common family preservation techniques of looking for behavioral antecedents and making a situational analysis are counter productive in helping victims understand domestic violence. These techniques often make the victim feel blamed for what the perpetrator has done to her).
- What could you have done to de-escalate the situation?
- Is there any way in which you participate in the escalation of the violence?

VICTIMS ARE NOT PASSIVE recipients of abuse. Rather they constantly try to stop the violence and protect themselves and their children. Their thoughtfulness is often invisible to the outsider because frequently, in the face of erratic and irrational assault, it is best to proceed very cautiously. Even talking to the family preservation practitioner may set off another round of attacks.