

# 1 *"I'm doing everything I can but I'm not seeing the success I hoped for ..."*

For Adult Literacy Practitioners  
One of six info sheets about the effects of violence on learning

- ✓ Learn more about how violence affects learning.
- ✓ Identify approaches to program delivery that promote more effective teaching and learning.

Dealing with the impact of violence on learning is not as difficult as you might think. It may transform some of your most frustrating challenges, and lead to more success for everyone.

## Your journal might say ...

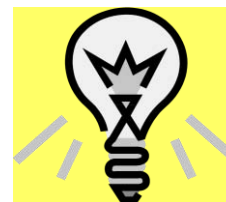
*"I hear about violence and learning but I don't know how it applies to my teaching. I know I did have a woman in my class last year - Sarah.*

*Her sister Mary said that Sarah's husband Dan hits her. They were all in the class. I liked Dan. He was always polite to me, but he did always need to be the best. Other than that - no.*

*And I have enough to worry about without adding something else. So many learners aren't really motivated and don't show up half the time."*



### But did you know ...



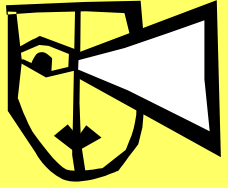
- ① **Violence might affect what happens in your classroom more than you realize.** It's highly likely that more than a few people in your program - learners, volunteers, you, your colleagues - have been hurt, abused, harassed, or mistreated. Maybe people don't talk about it. Maybe you haven't thought consciously about how the experience of violence affects learning and teaching.
- ① **Violence is widespread.** Statistics don't really offer a clear picture of the extent of violence. They don't reveal all forms or degrees of violence, or show that some groups are more vulnerable to violence than others. But they do show a problem that is too large to ignore. Stats Canada estimates 51% of women have experienced at least one incident of violence by the age of 16<sup>1</sup>.
- ① **Violence happens on a continuum** - from humiliating to life-threatening. We can define violence as "any way we have of violating the identity and integrity of another person".<sup>2</sup>
- ① **Violence happens to children and women of all ages, everywhere.** It also affects men. Violence includes systemic inequalities and injustices such as poverty, sexism, racism, homophobia, colonialism, discrimination against elders and people with disabilities, and other forms of oppression.
- ① **The details of violence look different in every culture.** Violence in your own culture may be so familiar you don't notice it. People may not think of their experience as violence. They may say they have been hurt, or been through tough times. They may see harsh or humiliating treatment as normal - just "the way it is" or something they caused. In every culture and community people work to end violence and the institutions and values that support it.

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<sup>1</sup> Stats Canada, Violence Against Women Survey, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Parker Palmer, page 169, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. Jossey Bass, 2004





## Support learning – Look at the impact of violence

- ① The experience of violence can make it hard for learners to learn and frustrating for teachers to teach. Learners who have experienced violence may show some challenging behaviours in the classroom:
  - Have trouble remembering, not pay attention, or seem unmotivated.
  - Start and stop, not attend regularly, miss important tests and tasks.
  - Always be angry, loud, and ready for a fight; not settle and focus.
  - Not connect with others, not value themselves or others, or put themselves and others down.
  - Someone may have told the learners that they have learning disabilities, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, or mental health 'disorders'.
  
- ① When practitioners look at the impacts of violence in the classroom they can be more aware of the sources of challenging behaviours. They can take action and try new approaches that help make learning easier and teaching more fulfilling. **New approaches will help ALL learners.**

New approaches are vital to success for many survivors of violence - and they are good teaching practice for everyone. You don't need to know who has been through violence. In every group you teach you can assume that at least some people have lived through and survived some form of violence.

## What Can I Do to Help Everybody Learn?

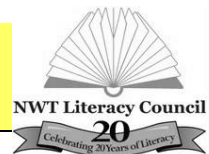
1. **Make it visible that violence is widespread.**
  - Talk with learners and colleagues about the impact of violence on learning. Try to make sure no one feels they have to tell their story. But make it OK to have a difficult story.



2. **Develop curiosity about behaviours while avoiding judgement.**
  - Consider how behaviours that get in the way of learning may have once helped learners survive. Consider how you can gently support learners when they want to try to change old patterns.
3. **Create safer learning environments.**
  - Make your space free of all shaming and echoes of violence, including that directed at the self. Intervene to reduce violence, however subtle.
4. **Create conditions to support learning.**
  - Feed learners' emotions, spirit, body, and mind. Help them feel joyous and hopeful, valued and valuable, comfortable and well fed, capable and smart – these all support learning.
5. **Create connections.**
  - Build trust and community, and connect to creative, counselling, and self-care resources for self and learners.
6. **Create curriculum.**
  - Use activities that acknowledge the impacts of violence on people's lives and that bring the whole self to learning.



### More Information



Go to [www.learningandviolence.net](http://www.learningandviolence.net)

- To start click on [Overview](#) and [Problem](#)
- For statistics, click on [Violence](#)
- Look for more stats on other websites:

[www.sacha.ca/home.php?sec=17&sub=43](http://www.sacha.ca/home.php?sec=17&sub=43)

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