

Northern Family & Domestic Violence Service



The Attune Project

Using film to help workers
attune to children & their mother's experience
after family violence

Shannon Keebaugh – Practice, Policy & Research Consultant, NFDVS, Attune Project Manager

Emma Toone – Psychoanalytic Child Psychotherapist, Team Leader of the Turtle Program



Acknowledgement



Workshop overview

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1. **Context for the Attune project**

- ❑ Family violence sector reform
- ❑ Themes arising in NFDVS consultation
- ❑ The process of making the DVD

2. **Thinking creatively to reach the child after family violence**

- ❑ Impact on children
- ❑ Supporting the mother-child relationship

A child's experience

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPzVUGE3dds>

Time for Action: Systemic Change

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Human rights issues requires law & political will for change

Impact on children included in legal definitions of family violence & child abuse

- Family Violence Protection (Vic) Act 2008 (section 5)
- Family Law Act (Cth)1975 (sect 4), 2011 Family Violence amendments

Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to

Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2009-2021

- First 'point of contact' needs to be capable of responding to family violence
- Build capacity to meet needs of children affected by family violence

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Practice Frameworks

- Rights based – gender & culture aware
- Trauma-informed
- Strength-based / client led
- High focus on ongoing risk & safety assessment
- Including systemic advocacy for justice response



Programs

- across 7 local government areas
- provides a immediate response to women & children
- case work & site based outreach (eg courts, ELN, etc)
- secondary consultation
- Turtle mother/child therapeutic program

Activity

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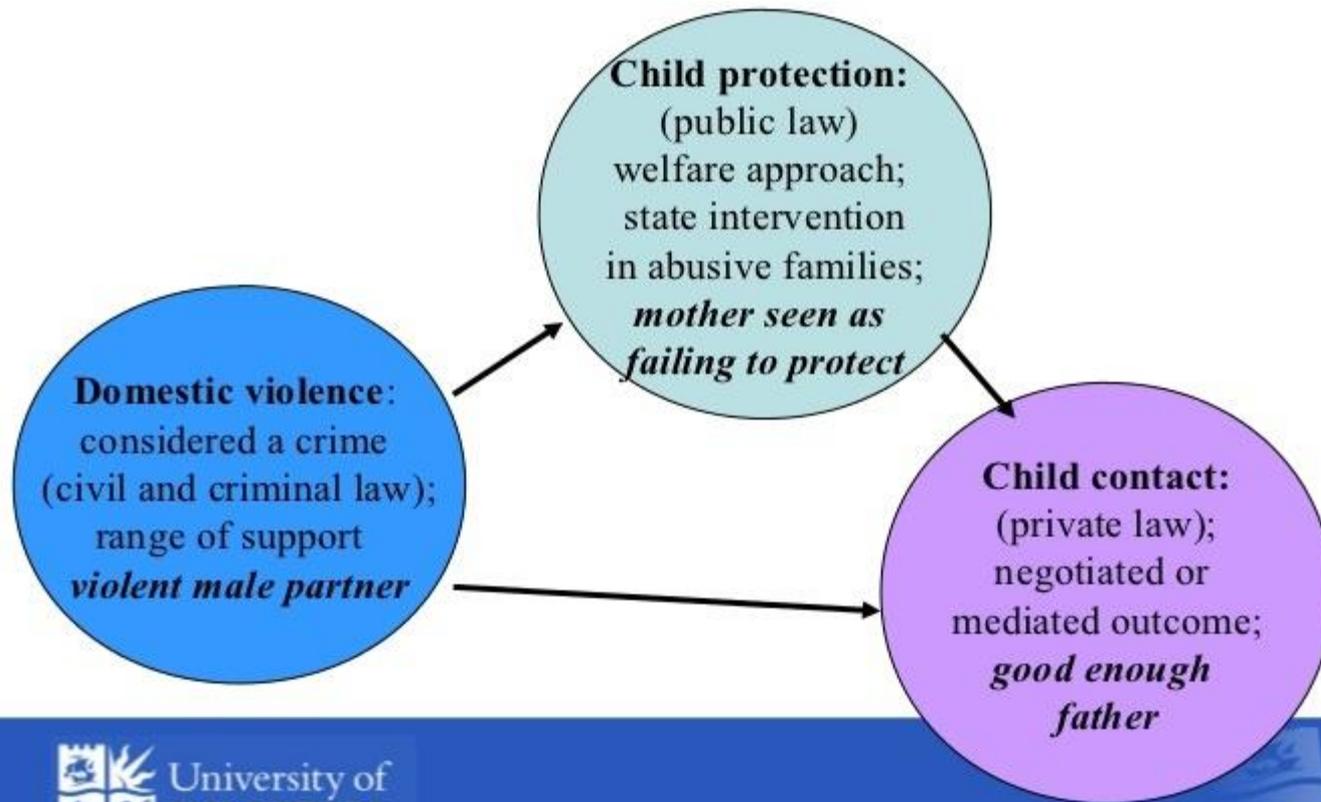
- At your table, please introduce yourself

Please discuss the following questions:

- Where you work
- Your primary client group
- Key frameworks that inform your work
- Why did you come to see this presentation today?

Activity: What planet/s are we from? (Hester 2011)

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Multiple clients: child, parent & parenting relationship

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- Holding in mind:
 - child
 - mother/s
 - absent/present father
- AND
 - child/parent relationship(s)



Attune Consultation: Three Perspectives

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- Mother/ survivors
- Practitioner Teams
- Experts & Researchers



Consultation: Mothers

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Themes: advice to workers

- ▣ affirm the client's capability as a mother
- ▣ recognize violence & impact eg. fear, risk & safety
- ▣ be clear about limited confidentiality
- ▣ advocate transparently
- ▣ foster agency & choice
- ▣ give emotional & practical support
- ▣ support mothers to understand children's behaviour
- ▣ support mother to respond to her children
- ▣ positive changes do happen



Consultation: Practitioners

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Film is a good medium as like to see
'how to'

- ❑ discuss risk & safety with mothers who still live with violence at home
- ❑ sensitively to explain to mothers the impact of violence on their children
- ❑ contain mother's disclosures about violence when a child is at an appointment
- ❑ discuss family violence with children
- ❑ discuss partners & fathers in a feminist framework
- ❑ balance competing rights child & mother
- ❑ apply theories in practice

Consultation: Aboriginal Practitioners

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- ▣ VACCA Family Violence Teams
- ▣ Elizabeth Hoffman House,
- ▣ Aboriginal Women's Services (EHH)

Themes

- ▣ Cultural considerations eg. re safety & community
- ▣ Holistic response including fathers, extended family
- ▣ Confidentiality & shame
- ▣ Choice of service key to safety
- ▣ Recognition of history & role of authorities
- ▣ Transparent practice & advocacy



Script process

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Films to focus on initial engagement – to encourage child awareness in family violence risk & safety assessment

1. Role plays drafted drawing on consultation transcripts
2. Pairs of experienced practitioners, improved wording
3. Cross disciplinary team work-shopped
4. Modified for actresses style on filming day



Filming & editing process

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- Role plays filmed with 1 camera
- Script read from auto-cue
- Or from paper in not being filmed
- Interviews filmed with expert & practitioner
- Client quotes audio taped

- All filmed in 4 days!
- Editing scripts developed
- Edited in around 10 days
- Reviewed by steering committee
- Re-structured into 10 minute sections



Activity Impact on children:

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Taneka

‘He’s only little and wasn’t in the room at the time’

In your group identify

- How did the worker in the role play privilege the infant’s experience?
- What cultural issues might you consider?
- How might a resource like this film be of use to you in your service?

Film Supporting the mother-child relationship

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Tania

‘I feel like I am parenting in a fog’

In your group discuss

- Some of the ways family violence may impact on parenting
- Are there any strategies you might use to support the mother to reach the child?

Activity Supporting the mother-child relationship

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Tania & Cassie

‘My friends can’t come around, we’re embarrassed.’

In your group identify

- How do you think the child experienced this meeting?
- What strategies did the worker use to balance the rights of child and mother?

Importance of mother-child relationship

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‘The young’s child’s sense of self evolves in the context of relationships & enhancing the emotional quality of those relationships is the most effective vehicle for promoting the child’s healthy development’

Lieberman 2005

Concluding thoughts

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“She helped me draw a parrot
& helped me feel better about my daddy”

(Sally, 5 years)

- Children and their mothers remember how they are treated: this informs what they feel they may expect in future relationships.
- We model that even very violent situations can be thought about, rather than just reacted to.
- We do our best to show – through our careful thinking and action – what safety in relationships *means*, including showing them that help-seeking is possible.