

the BEST-EARS approach

responding to blame, minimisation and denial by an adult user of violence



Breathe & manage
your own anxiety

Empathise
Selectively

Turn the
conversation
towards:

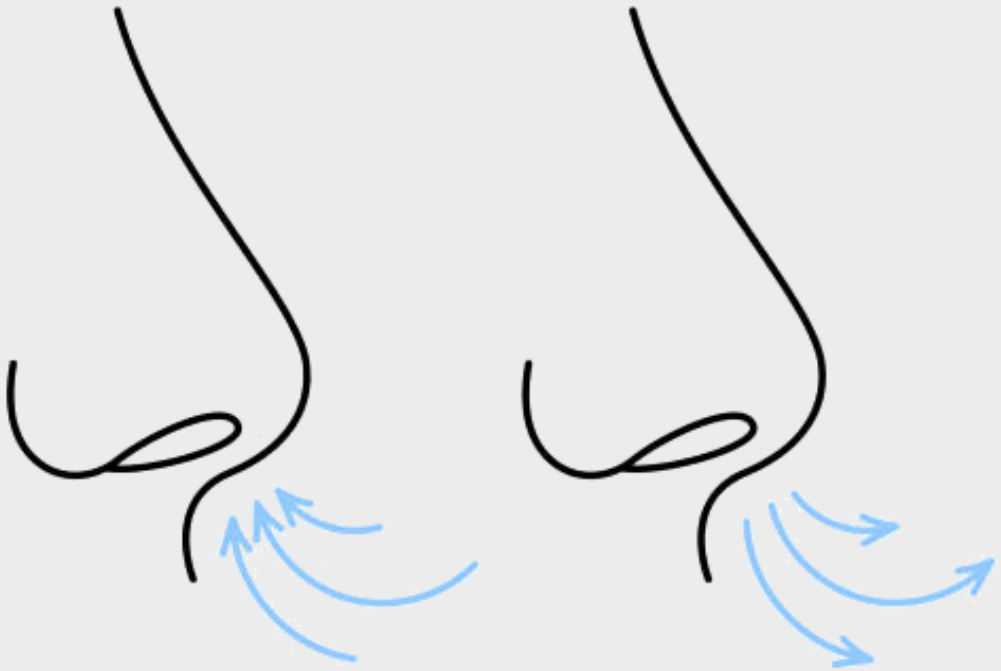
Ethical Aspirations,

Responsibility,

and

Safety.

Breathe and manage your own anxiety



Expect blame, minimisation and denial (BMD)... it's par for the course

Remind yourself: You do not need to challenge his whole violence-supporting belief system

Ground your senses, soften your tension

Breathe through the force of his BMD

You can **turn** the focus, rather than push back

Expect him to revert back to BMD again (and again)... you might need to turn the conversation towards ethical aspirations, responsibility and/or safety multiple times

Empathise selectively



If he experiences you as listening to him, you will have more sway to **turn** the conversation

Find something you can strategically paraphrase or reframe to set up a focus on ethical aspirations, responsibility and/or safety

Strip out the responsibility-minimising and sexist aspects of his narrative in your paraphrase or reframe

A degree of care and concern in your voice does not mean you are colluding

“She knows how to hurt me by removing the kids!”

“Being the best Dad you can be means a lot to you...”

“She was hysterical, she was right up in my face!”

“Sally was really upset and wanted you to know it.”

“She wastes all my money buying stuff we don’t need.”

“Sounds like money is tight, and you worry about what to buy.”

“She always going behind my back, I’m sure she’s cheating on me!”

“You’re anxious about keeping the relationship. Can I ask, how do you manage that anxiety?”

turn to exploring Ethical Aspirations



Use his blame, denial or minimisation as an opportunity to ask about aspirations or values inconsistent with the behaviour he is avoiding taking responsibility about

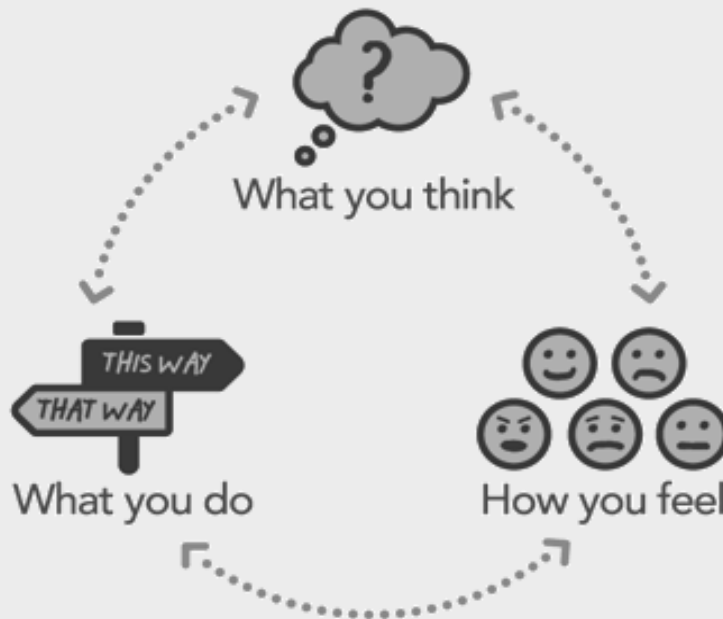
“If she hadn’t have... I wouldn’t have...”; “The police got it wrong, I didn’t...”; “It was only a ...”

“It sounds like X is something you don’t want to do. Can you tell me why?”

“You’re telling me that doing X is not who you are, I’d like to hear more about that...”

“Chris [one of his partners] isn’t here to give their perspective about what they experienced, but you are saying that looking back you don’t consider yourself to have intimidated them. It sounds like you don’t want Chris to feel intimidated?... Could you tell me what’s important about that for you, so that Chris doesn’t feel intimidated by you?...What’s important about that for Chris?”

turn to exploring Responsibility



Take a ‘curious and dumb’ approach which:

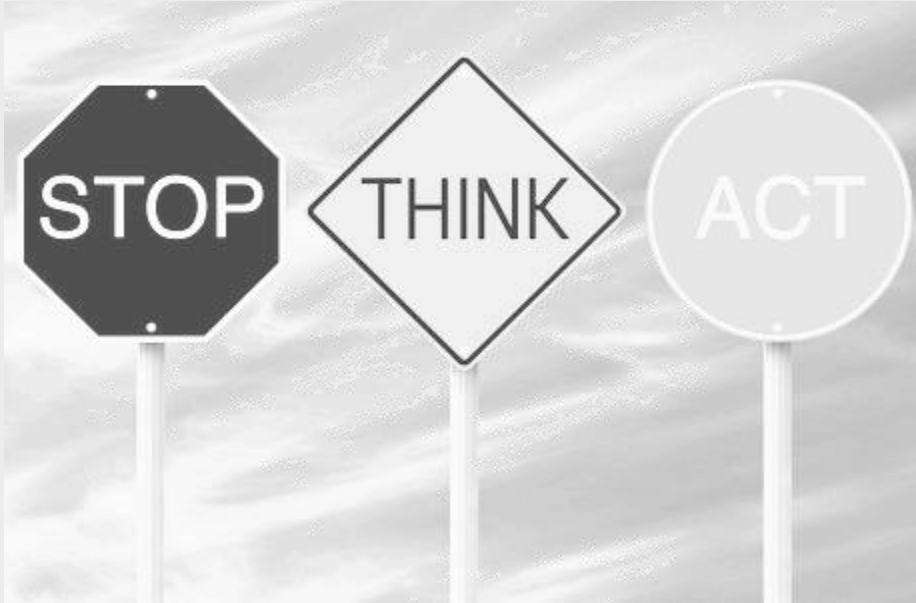
- ✓ Infers that he has a choice in the situation about how he acts, and what he thinks
- ✓ Infers a difference between the emotion he experiences in the situation (anger, jealousy, frustration, anxiety, etc.) and the behaviour he uses responding to the emotion
- ✓ invites him to talk about his actions through the perspectives of another
- ✓ invites him to consider safer and respectful actions more in line with his ethical aspirations

“When you were feeling very worked up in that situation, what did Sally [his partner] see you say or do?”

“You’ve talked about wanting to be a calm Dad who doesn’t lose his cool in front of the kids. What could you have done in that moment to be that calm Dad?”

“What were you thinking at that time?... My guess is that those thoughts were circling around in your head. What could you have told yourself in that moment that would have helped you to stay calm?”

turn to exploring Safety



Behaviour change is of course a very long journey, often requiring the assistance of specialist services and programs.

You might be able to plant a seed or two towards him accepting a referral.

You might also be able to scaffold some conversation on what he can do to move towards his ethical aspirations in ways that build safety.

“What might being a calm Dad around your kids look like over the next week?... What would your children see?... What would your partner see?”

“Let’s discuss some things you can do to make it as likely as possible that you will be that calm Dad, no matter what the situation is, no matter what you are feeling...”

“What do you need to stay away from, or do less, so that you don’t take steps away from being that calm Dad...”

What are the situations where you will need to be the most careful?... What can you do to stay calm in those moments?”