

EMPOWERMENT MEASURES

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Empowering practices lead to empowered outcomes.

We've been talking about "empowering survivors" for a very long time now. But what does that actually mean? What do we *do* to "empower" people, and how do we know if they feel or would say they are "empowered" as a result of talking and working with us?

The sampling of questions on the following pages are *examples* of questions you could ask to make sure that you are engaging in empowering practice, and that the people you talk with are better off (empowered) as a result of meeting you.

Quick definitions:

Survivor centered advocacy calls upon us to engage very skillfully in **empowering practices**. Survivor centered practice and empowering practice are similar, but not the same. Both include:

- always being respectful,
- listening carefully,
- being patient,
- doing our work with humility and curiosity,
- being strategic and persistent and
- knowing the ins and outs of complex legal, social and social service systems.

Survivor centered practice specifically involves working on issues the survivor defines as important

Empowering practice also involves working on issues defined by the survivor as important, but goes further. Empowering practice involves helping survivors have more power over their own lives. This happens by:

- increasing survivors' **self-efficacy**, which happens by
 - showing her how advocacy efforts lead to success, so she can be her own advocate
 - encouraging her and acknowledging her strengths
 - working *with* her to accomplish goals
- raising survivors' **critical consciousness** about sociopolitical realities, which happens by

- talking about how common domestic violence is, the dynamics of domestic violence, how it is not a “relationship problem,” how it fits with other systems of oppression (e.g., sexism, racism)
- talking about how the community response to domestic violence is impacted by sociopolitical factors (e.g., sexism, racism, classism)
- talking about how the availability of community resources (housing, education, etc.) is impacted by sociopolitical factors
- increasing survivors’ **connections to community**, through:
 - focusing on her family and community connections and needs
 - helping her maintain or strengthen important social connections

We believe, and research has shown, that people in crisis who are aided by people who engage in *empowering practice* are likely to have **empowered outcomes**. That is, to be

- more confident,
- more knowledgeable,
- more hopeful,
- better connected,
- aware of how domestic and sexual violence have deep roots in sexism, (in other words that the violence does not reflect an individual personal failing), and
- aware of how sexism and other oppressions impact them.

A few very important cautions.

This long list of questions, in its entirety, is not intended to be copied and pasted into a form. Rather, look at these questions and think "which of these subjects am I the most curious about?"

Use the questions where you would benefit the most. These are all intended as questions that you use to test yourself, not the survivors you serve. And they are intended for internal use, internal reflection. Not for reporting purposes.

Ask them with wide open curiosity and be kind to yourselves when you get the results. Don't use the results to discipline or chastise yourselves. If your agency outcome of the using the survivor outcomes is not heightened morale, then these questions are not being used in the spirit they are intended.

Ask them for a period of time until you have enough data to analyze. Then stop asking them! Spend time reflecting on what survivors have said. How might you change, improve or refine your practice so that it becomes more survivor centered, more empowering? If you make changes, do you see a change in the empowered outcomes that survivors report?

Finally, please share your experiences with the Coalition and with your sister programs. Advocacy is a challenging job and we all need all the support we can get!

Questions that measure survivor centered practices

We could ask some or all of the following questions if we are interested in seeing how we are practices survivor-centered advocacy.

I feel that the advocate ...

Was respectful and supported me to carry on with my customs, and cultural and religious practices.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Worked on the needs and issues I wanted to work on.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Noticed my best qualities.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Was interested in meeting all of my needs.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me define and meet the goals I thought were important.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Cared about my unique needs.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Respected the decisions I made.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Offered to help me rather than waiting for me to ask for their help.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowering practices

We could ask questions like the following if we are interested in seeing how well we support survivor agency (*agency* means the capacity of a person to feel in charge of their own life).

I feel that the advocate ...

Respected the choices I made	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very Much
Treated me like I'm the expert on my life.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Gave me the time to accomplish my goals at my own pace.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Understood that I know what's best for me.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowering practices

We could ask questions like the following if we are interested in seeing how well we help survivors enhance their skills.

I feel that the advocate ...

Helped me think through how to get something or resolve an issue.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me learn new skills or practice existing skills.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me learn new ways to take care of myself emotionally.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me think through my options before I made a decision.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me define and meet the goals I thought were important.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowering practices

We could ask questions like these listed below if we are interested in seeing how well we help raise consciousness.

I feel that the advocate ...

Talked with me about why some people are abusive.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Talked with me about the dynamics of domestic violence.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me learn about the effects of domestic violence on my life.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me learn more about different types of abuse.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Talked with me about how domestic violence relates to other types of violence against women.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Talked to me about how common domestic violence is.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowering practices

We could ask some or all of the following questions if we are interested in seeing how well we focus our advocacy on helping victims (who may have suffered great isolation) to become re-connected with friends, family and community.

I feel that the advocate ...

Asked me about family and friends who are important to me.	I did not want this	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Helped me connect or stay connected with communities I find important.	I did not want this	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
Involved my family or friends in our work together.	I did not want this	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowered outcomes

We could ask questions like the following if we want to gauge how well our practice has resulted in an empowered outcome where survivors feel more confident.

As a result of the time I spent at name of agency I feel

I trust myself and my decisions more.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I am more able to achieve goals I set for myself.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I am better at knowing what steps to take to achieve my goals.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I am more confident about the decisions I make.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding that I have the ability to make changes in my own life.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater sense of freedom to make changes in my own life.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I can do more things on my own.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I am better at figuring out how to handle problems that arise in my life.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowered outcomes

We could ask questions like the following if we want to gauge how well our practice has resulted in an empowered outcome where survivors feel more connected.

As a result of the time I spent at name of agency I feel

I have a greater understanding that if one organization cannot help me there will be another that can.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I know more about the community resources that I might need.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding that I am not alone.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I am better able to get information that will help me.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I am more comfortable asking for help.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much

Questions that measure empowered outcomes

We could ask questions like some or all of the following if we want to gauge how well our practice has resulted in an empowered outcome of consciousness raising.

As a result of the time I spent at name of agency I feel

I have a greater understanding of how common DV is.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding of how domestic violence affects me.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding that woman are not to blame for being abused in a relationship.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding of the causes of domestic violence.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding of how racist systems make it difficult for women to protect themselves and their children.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding that together with other women, I feel I can have a part in ending violence against women.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding of how sexist systems make it difficult for women to protect themselves and their children.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much
I have a greater understanding that I have the right to be angry about what I've experienced.	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much