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# *Battered Women's Protective Strategies: Stronger Than You Know*

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### **Acknowledgements**

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction: A Re-Framing of Stereotypes of Battered Women**

When paradigms become blinders  
Looking beyond “Why do women stay?”  
The negative filter in services for battered women  
The negative filter in research on battered women  
A strengths-based approach to understanding and working with battered women  
A few comments about terminology  
Challenges to recognizing battered women’s protective strategies  
The layout of the book

#### **Chapter 2: A Holistic Approach to the Complex Problem of Battering**

Coping with violence is like coping with any serious problem  
The limits of current approaches to safety planning & dangerousness assessment  
A holistic approach for the complex problem of domestic violence  
A broader view of risks  
    Separation violence  
    Other risks posed by the batterer  
    Financial risks  
    Institutional and legal risks  
    Social and personal risks  
A broader view of coping  
Leaving is not the only protective strategy  
Many women use multiple coping strategies  
Multiple criteria decision making  
Derivative losses  
Cascading effects  
Decision making in cases of “strict dominance”  
The multiple criteria decision-making process  
The VIGOR studies

#### **Chapter 3: Protective Strategies in the Context of Battered Women’s True Risk Burden: The Multitude of Risks Batterers Can Create**

Gender and the reality of battering

The risks posed by batterer's threats and behaviors

Batterer threatens to kill his partner

Batterer threatens to kill or harm children or other people close to victim

Batterer threatens pets

Batterer threatens to commit suicide if she leaves

Batterer threatens to kidnap children

Batterer threatens a contested divorce or custody battle

Work interference, school interference and economic abuse

Separation violence

Batterer stalks victim when she tries to leave or spend time away from partner

Batterer engages in cyber-stalking or cyber-harassment

Batterer promises to change

Batterer begins treatment for violence and/or substance abuse

Batterer minimizes or denies violence

Batterer blames the victim for violence

Batterer hides violence from family, friends, police and courts

Batterer isolates victim

Batterer makes distorted claims about partner

Batterer threatens to destroy partner's belongings

Batterer does not provide child support

#### **Chapter 4: Understanding the Full Context of Violence: Financial and Institutional Issues that Constrain Coping**

Real-world coping constraints

Financial issues

Unemployment and the challenges of finding a job that pays a living wage

Would lose job if missed time from work or moved

The expense of getting and maintaining transportation

Victimized students may lack resources to support self or stay in school without partner

Would lose health insurance for self and/or children

Would lose retirement, paid vacation, or other benefits if switch jobs

Loss of personal belongings

Cannot access a telephone

Cannot afford to file for divorce or pay for a lawyer

Victim and her children would fall into poverty or have much lower standard of living

Joint debt with batterer, risk of bad credit rating or bankruptcy

Children would have to give up sports, lessons, or other activities

Indirect effects on employment and income

Would lose financial security—no "cushion"

Institutional issues that increase the risks of losses for victimized women

Most shelters provide services for 5 days, 30 days, 90 days, or other brief periods

Local shelters are often full

Local shelters often do not accept women with substance abuse or psychological problems

Shelters may not admit victimized women who have previously returned to batterer  
Many programs encourage leaving or divorce as the only effective options  
Unwanted treatment required by many domestic violence agencies  
Police and the courts respond in unhelpful ways  
Police may arrest victim if she has used violence, even in self-defense  
Arrest and jail time for batterers is unlikely, especially if first or second conviction  
Victim at risk for child protective services report for “exposing” children to violence  
Risks losing custody of children in divorce proceedings  
Courts and batterer’s programs support idea that treatment will change batterers  
Immigration laws hamper help-seeking for documented and undocumented immigrants  
Divorce orders may force child visitation with batterer without offering protection  
Many religious institutions oppose divorce for any reason, including violence  
Health care providers may give victimized women stigmatizing psychiatric diagnoses  
Insufficient child support payments and lack of enforcement for nonpayment  
Welfare reform imposes time limits on eligibility for public assistance  
Takes weeks to forward temporary assistance to needy families or other public support  
to new address  
Community services are set up so that the victim is the one expected to leave her home  
Unequal treatment of members of politically disadvantaged groups  
Control of batterer is only substituted by control of law enforcement and social  
agencies

## **Chapter 5: Social Issues, Practical Concerns, and Personal Values that Influence Coping Strategies**

### Social issues and practical concerns

Victim’s family wants couple to stay together  
Victim’s family and friends are afraid to get involved  
Victim’s family unwilling or unable to give social support or money  
Batterer’s family or others in community want couple to stay together  
Batterer’s family uses violence against victim  
Victim and children would lose support of friends and family if they move  
Family would have to change churches if they move or separate from partner  
Would lose partner’s help with childcare and chores  
Children would have less time with both parents because victim has to go to work  
Victim is pregnant and needs help with delivery and caring for newborn baby  
Victimized woman has a serious illness or disability  
Victimized woman is elderly and unable to live alone  
Victim is criticized for having a failed marriage  
Being called a “battered woman” is stigmatizing  
Being a single woman, single mother, and help-seeker are stigmatized  
American Indian victimized women face unique obstacles  
Options for new relationships are limited

### Personal values that constrain coping

Holds religious beliefs that divorce for any reason is wrong  
Believes a violent father in the home is better than no father

Believes the success of marriage is the wife's responsibility  
Believes the man should make the major decisions in a relationship  
The roles of wife and girlfriend are important to many women's self-esteem  
Believes batterer's claims that problems are her fault  
Belief that her own use of violence, even in self-defense, ends her right to be safe  
Believes she should not cause legal or job problems for her partner  
Remembers happier times, believes those are possible again  
Doubts ability to take care of herself and children on her own  
Feels loss of control when she "gives up" on relationship  
Believes children should be raised at home, not in daycare  
Worries about risk of re-victimization in any close relationship  
Loyalty and sense of duty  
Commitment  
Love

## **Chapter 6: Immediate Situational Strategies**

The importance of perspective  
The wide range of immediate situational strategies  
Escaping the scene  
Luring away from dangerous parts of the house  
Calling for help  
Defusing strategies  
Self-defensive actions  
Self-defense, fighting back, and the lines between them  
Self-defense and gender  
Self-defense and retaliation  
Challenges in distinguishing self-defense, retaliation, and other motives for aggression

## **Chapter 7: Protecting Children, Family, Friends, Co-Workers, and Pets**

Immediate protective strategies focused on children and loved ones  
Longer term strategies for protecting children  
Protecting pets  
Pets as a protective strategy  
Protecting other family members, friends and coworkers  
Research on battering versus other research on families  
The field of couples therapy  
The literature on divorce

## **Chapter 8: Reaching Out for Social Support and Navigating the Challenges of Information Management**

Social support and the challenges of information management  
How stigma affects decisions about seeking social support  
Accessing social support

- Research on overall rates of social disclosure
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- Characteristics associated with different types of help-seeking
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## **Chapter 9: Turning to Spiritual and Religious Resources**

- The professional dismissal of spiritual and religious values
- Prayer, religion, and spirituality in the literature on battered women
- Prayer and faith as protective strategies
- Pastoral counseling as a protective strategy
- Culture, religion and spirituality
- A nuanced approach
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## **Chapter 10: Using Formal Services**

- Under-recognized aspects of domestic violence advocacy
- Using “classic” legal and anti-domestic violence services
  - Going to a domestic violence shelter
  - Other domestic violence program services
  - Calling the police
  - Obtaining a restraining order/order of protection
- Use of traditional health, mental health and social services
- The effects of interagency cooperation and coordination

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- Money
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- Education and job training
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- Other types of identity theft protection
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    Relationship-centered advocacy  
    Computerized safety decision aid  
    Coordinated community responses  
    The Victim Inventory of Goals, Options and Risks (VIGOR)  
    Using the VIGOR

## **Chapter 13: Conclusion: Recognizing Protective Strategies Can Create Progress**

Train and educate  
Sufficient and consistent funding  
Integrate and coordinate domestic violence services with other services  
Research and investigate  
A diversity of voices  
Be more developmentally attuned  
Pathways to prevention  
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