

3.2 HAVING DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Most faith communities have some kind of delivery of a message or address such as a formal sermon. These can be used as an opportunity to talk about violence against women and the importance of equality between men and women in preventing violence against women. This discussion can also reflect on the role of women in your faith community and how there can be greater inclusion of women in the community.

The purpose of this section is to provide faith and spiritual leaders with ideas on how to have discussions with the community about the need for equality and respect toward women and its links to preventing family violence. These include:

- Including women, men and young people in discussions.
- Inviting experts to speak to your community.
- Discussing the role of women in your community.
- Example of an address or statement.

When talking about violence against women and respect and equality in your community, think about whether your community is ready to hear about this kind of address. These are difficult ideas to understand and explain so you might like to ease your community into this discussion by starting off with some basic facts about violence against women. (Use the fact sheets in this resource). Or, you could use a case of violence against women featured in the newspaper as a 'conversation starter'.

Including women, men and young people in the discussion

We can all play a part in promoting equality in our communities, so it is important to involve everyone - women, men and young people - in discussions about these issues. Think about having separate discussions with women, men and young people to create comfortable and safe spaces for individuals to freely talk before coming back to a larger group discussion.

Inviting experts in the area to speak

Your community could invite an expert on the area to speak. There are many organisations that you could contact and ask for someone to talk with your community (remember there may be a cost involved). See Section 5.1 for organisations that you could contact.

Discussing the role of women in your faith community

Considering the role of women in your faith community should be an important part of the discussion. You can engage your community to reflect on the role that women have and how this is different to the position/s that men possess. This could lead to a conversation about how women could be included further in, for example, worship practices, leadership and decision-making. Make sure women are involved in these discussions. Use the faith perspectives in Section 4 to reflect on how your faith tradition fosters respect and equality between women and men.

Other ways to have discussions

As a faith leader, if you feel uncomfortable delivering an address about violence against women and equality and respect, there are other ways to have these discussions. Leaders could have conversations in a less formal setting such as in smaller groups where people can interact with each other.

PROMOTING EQUALITY AND RESPECT

Example of an address or statement:

Taken from: World Conference of Religions for Peace. (2009). *Restoring Dignity: A toolkit for religious communities to end violence against women*. New York, World Conference of Religions for Peace.

Our faith celebrates life. It calls on us to treat one another as we would like to be treated—with respect, compassion and kindness—however inequalities are abundant in our communities. Women and girls are often treated with far less respect, compassion and kindness than they deserve. In our community and in communities around the world, violence is used to perpetuate power inequalities and violence against women. The terrifying physical, psychological and spiritual devastation that is a reality for too many of our sisters is an affront to our core values and beliefs. Violence against any member of the human family can never be justified.

And so today, we join together in one voice as women and men of faith, ready to speak out in solidarity with those who have been silenced; we must advocate for their right to live healthy and dignified lives. We must prevent the violence from persisting unaddressed.

Many of us are already actively engaged with ending poverty, caring for the sick, and resolving conflict. We know that transformation is possible with these problems, and therefore we know there is reason for hope that our efforts to eliminate violence against women can also effect change. We will remember and draw

lessons from our community's long tradition of promoting peaceful and healthy relationships, as we continue to work together to promote justice and provide a safe environment for all.

[This could be a good place to highlight examples of past or ongoing actions within your community.]

In speaking out against violence against women and caring for survivors, we are not alone. Many religious communities and individual people of faith are committed to ending violence against women, and our actions will be stronger and more effective if we join together. We are all affected by a culture of violence, and we can all respond by creating a multi-religious community that is safe and healthy for all—women, men, girls and boys.

As a multi-religious front within our own community, we must speak out against violence against women and girls in our sermons and religious instructions to ensure that the violence and suffering stops here and now.

We resolve to make violence against women and girls history, so that future generations of young women and young men can grow up in harmony, non-violence and peace.