



**Rob Veale Ltd**

**Family Violence Workshop Series**



**Risk Assessment & Intimate Partner Violence**

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## My Background

- Over 30 years in NZ Police, last 16 years as an Inspector (Violence Reduction Unit at PNHQ)
- Involved in a number of national initiatives (i.e. strategy, policy, legislative reform, risk assessment, information sharing, FSTs, PSOs, national training initiatives)
- Four years seconded to NZAID (DV and the Pacific)
- Inaugural member of the FV Death Review Committee
- 8 years working as a VIP Coordinator at CCDHB
- Training health professionals, policy development

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Today's workshop

- Learning from history – a personal perspective on risk assessment
- Case study examples
- Discuss theory and practice
- Identify key tools
- Apply violence high risk theory into practice with specific

*This session is intended to be respectful, constructive, sensitive to all parties, especially the families of homicide victims, while seeking to identify opportunities for practice, policy and process improvements.*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Remember



Domestic violence is the single most common context in which child abuse occurs.



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risks to Children

- 42% were **assaulted by their violent partners while pregnant**,
- 28% were either first harmed or suffered more severe harm from their partners while pregnant,
- Almost a quarter (23%) **disclosed violence towards their children as well as themselves**,
- Almost half (49%) had experienced their abusive partner **taking or threatening to take their children away**,
- 19% disclosed that their violent partners had **threatened to hurt or kill their children**, and
- Almost all were harmed in front of their children**, including physical abuse (74%) and verbal abuse or emotional abuse (84%).



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risks to Children

- 42% were assaulted by their violent partners while pregnant,
- 28% were either first harmed or suffered more severe harm from their partners while pregnant,
- Almost a quarter (23%) disclosed violence towards their children as well as themselves,
- Almost half (49%) had experienced their abusive partner taking or threatening to take their children away,
- 19% disclosed that their violent partners had threatened to hurt or kill their children, and
- Almost all were harmed in front of their children, including physical abuse (74%) and verbal abuse or emotional abuse (84%).

*Please remember. Children don't witness family violence, they experience it!*



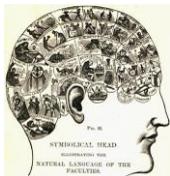
www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025



## Phrenology

The personality traits of a person can be derived from the shape of the skull. It was developed by German physician Franz Joseph Gall in 1796. The discipline was very popular in the 19th century and was influential in 19th-century psychiatry and modern neuroscience.

Phrenology, which focused on personality and character, was distinguished from craniometry, which is the study of skull size, weight and shape, and physiognomy, the study of facial features.



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## A Natural Practice

Conventional wisdom suggests that we can not predict violence. But we do - everyday!

Great deal of debate – on both practical and ethical grounds.

Studies have examined intimate partner homicides – attempting to identify the risk factors preceding lethal violence.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Definitions

Risk assessment is defined as ...

“The **formal application of instruments** to assess the likelihood that intimate partner violence will be repeated and escalated. The term is synonymous with dangerousness assessment and encompasses lethality assessment, the use of instruments specifically developed **to identify potentially lethal situations.**”

Roehl & Guertin, 2000, p.171

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Gender Differences

Studies have identified apparently different risks for men and women.

- Women at greatest risk when they attempt to leave (or the perception of separation) or end the relationship. This risk is greatest within the first two months. Stalking is also a recognised risk factor.
- Risk factors for women killing male partners - frequency of violence incidents, severity of injuries, men's threats to kill, women's threats of suicide, man's drug use, intoxicated and forced sexual acts. (Browne, 1997)

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Benefits

The benefits in using risk assessment have been identified ...

- To assist women and domestic violence workers develop more effective **safety plans**.
- To assist perpetrator programmes to select the **amount and type of treatment**.
- To assist the criminal justice system to identify which **offenders need closer supervision**.
- As a **tool for education** service providers about domestic violence.
- By providing a **shared language** across a range of agencies.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Challenges

Risk assessment presents challenges across four dimensions

- **Victim** – comfort, safety, culture, experiences
- **Staff** – training, sensitivity, manner, time
- **Instrument** – validity and reliability
- **Organisational level** – how information is interpreted and influenced by processes, systems and policies at an agency or inter-agency level

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

Table 1: Characteristics that increase the likelihood of re-assault.

|                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| History of assault       | Stability of relationships |
| Motivation for treatment | Childhood abuse            |
| Stability of employment  | Attitudes to women         |

(Gondolf 2002)

Table 2: Indicative of life-threatening attack on a spouse include

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Homicide/suicide threats                | Homicide/suicide fantasies |
| Access to weapons                       | Displaying 'ownership'     |
| Displaying dependence                   | Being separated            |
| Access to potential victims             | Being depressed            |
| Escalation of recklessness              | Hostage taking             |
| Victim having contacted law enforcement |                            |

(Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence in Milton, 1990)

## Other 'Markers'

Risk factors across five dimensions

- **Batterer history** - previous assaults, suicide attempts
- **Batterer behaviour** - stalking, escalating violence
- **Batterer personality** - jealous, possessive, entitlement
- **Context** - separation, weapons, victim's suicide attempts
- Other **elements identifying extreme danger** - sudden changes in behaviour, breaches of orders, violence outside the home.

## Predictive power

Predictive power of risk markers is very weak (Gondolf, 2002).

The most comprehensive effort to date is study on femicide by Campbell et al. 2003

Found strongest links with femicide to be abuser's unemployment, arrest as a protective factor, presence of children increased risk, separation, use of a gun and illicit drug use.

## Survivors' Predictions

Advocates have stressed the importance of listening to women's assessments (Hart, 1994)

Women's perceptions of safety and the likelihood of re-assault [emerged as the] most consistent and strongest risk marker.

In fact, the women's predictions were as useful as all the batterer characteristics combined.' (Gondolf, 2002)

## Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment

DV-MOSAIC 2000

Spousal Assault Risk Assessment

ASAP B-SAFER

Stalking Assessment Management

Danger Assessment

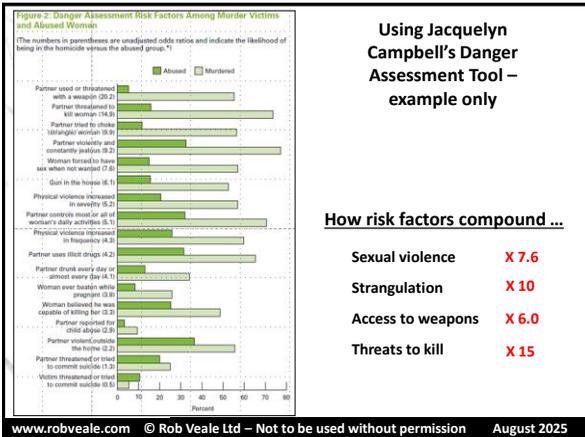
DASH

Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-entry (DRAOR)

'Danger Assessment is a process not a product' and that it can consist of two parallel processes – a brief re-offending risk assessment for criminal justice cases and a danger (lethality) process which is a longer process carried out with the victim for safety planning.

## RA & Safety Planning

- Dr Jacquelyn Campbell described the importance of basing safety planning on a thorough assessment of the lethality surrounding each client's family violence.
- Her Danger Assessment is one of the most widely-used instruments developed for this purpose.



Using Jacquelyn Campbell's Danger Assessment Tool – example only

**How risk factors compound ...**

- Sexual violence X 7.6**
- Strangulation X 10**
- Access to weapons X 6.0**
- Threats to kill X 15**

## Health & Risk Assessment Questions

1. Is your partner here now?
2. Are you **afraid** to go/stay home?
3. Has the physical **violence increased in frequency or severity** over the past year?
4. Has your partner ever **choked you** (one or more times)?
5. Have you ever been **knocked out** by your partner?
6. (If applicable) Have you ever been **beaten by your partner while pregnant**?
7. Has your partner ever **used a weapon against you, or threatened you with a weapon**?
8. Do **you believe** your partner is capable of killing you?
9. Is your **partner constantly jealous** of you? If yes, has the jealousy resulted in violence?
10. Have you **recently left your partner**, or are you **considering leaving**?
11. Has your **partner ever threatened to commit suicide**?
12. Have you ever **considered hurting yourself/suicide**?
13. Is **alcohol or substance misuse** a problem for you or your partner?
14. Have the **children seen or heard the violence**?
15. Has anyone **physically abused the children**?

**PARTNER ABUSE RISK ASSESSMENT ASSESS PATIENT'S SAFETY**

1. Is the abuser the real?
2. Is the abuser violent?
3. Has the abuser ever threatened to kill you?
4. Has the abuser ever threatened to harm you or your children?
5. Has the abuser ever threatened to harm you or your children while pregnant?
6. Has the abuser ever used a weapon against you, or threatened you with a weapon?
7. Do you believe the abuser is capable of killing you?
8. Has the abuser ever choked you (one or more times)?
9. Have you ever been knocked out by your partner?
10. (If applicable) Have you ever been beaten by your partner while pregnant?
11. Has your partner ever used a weapon against you, or threatened you with a weapon?
12. Do you believe your partner is capable of killing you?
13. Is your partner constantly jealous of you? If yes, has the jealousy resulted in violence?
14. Have you recently left your partner, or are you considering leaving?
15. Has your partner ever threatened to commit suicide?
16. Have you ever considered hurting yourself/suicide?
17. Is alcohol or substance misuse a problem for you or your partner?
18. Have the children seen or heard the violence?
19. Has anyone physically abused the children?

Ministry of Health  
 PV Assessment & Intervention  
 Guidelines 2016 (pg 58)

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission March 2016

## What about the form?

Take a look at the forms

- For people who have forms.
  - Do questions on your forms facilitate conversations about 'safer'?
- For people who have conversations.
  - What do you make sure you discuss?

"The form drives the work."

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Caution

- Using cue cards ....
- Using forms for documenting discussions ....
- Making it real – when to complete the form

"The form drives the work."

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Police RA tools

**Three Questions** (for adult victims)

- Provides the contextual background
- Adapted from Queensland Police initiative

**Twelve Red Flags**

- Risk markers for dangerousness adapted from numerous international examples

**Risk & Lethality Assessment Worksheet**

- Quantitative instrument
- Adapted from Napa Valley Probation Dept, California

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Three Questions

1. How frequently and seriously does he or she intimidate, threaten or injure you or other family members?
2. Describe the most frightening event/worst incident of violence involving him or her?
3. How has his or her past behaviour impacted on you and your children's feelings of personal safety?

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Twelve Red Flags

-  The suspect is obsessed with, dependent on, or is stalking the victim.
-  Recent separation, issue of a court order, or divorce and behaving in a dangerous manner.
-  The victim believes the suspect could injure or kill them.
-  There is a history of family violence, and it is getting more severe or frequent.

## Twelve Red Flags

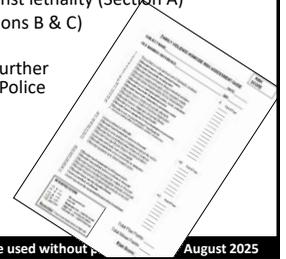
-  The suspect has strangled or attempted to strangle the victim.
-  The suspect has threatened to commit suicide or to kill the victim, children or other family members.
-  The suspect has access to weapons, particularly firearms and has used or threatened to use them. They may have convictions involving weapons.
-  The offender has easy access to the victim, children or other family members.

## Twelve Red Flags

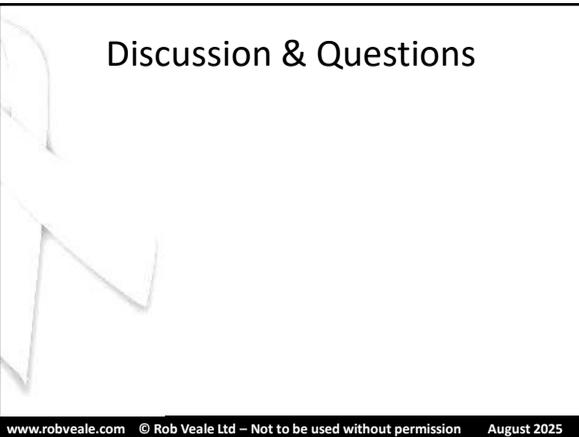
-  Children are in the home when the violence occurred, or have been hurt or threatened in family violence situations.
-  Incidents of animal abuse.
-  History of alcohol or drug problems/dependency.
-  History of violent behaviour against non-family members.

## Risk & Lethality Worksheet

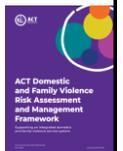
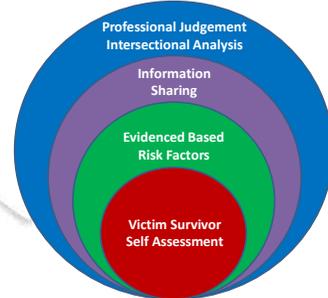
- Information can be obtained from the investigation
- Divided into three parts
  - Factors that mitigate against lethality (Section A)
  - Aggravating factors (Sections B & C)
- Used to determine cases for further investigation, or attention by Police or other agencies



## Discussion & Questions



## Professional Judgement



## Professional Judgement

This practice model of structured professional judgement (adapted from MARAM) enables professionals to assess information to determine the level or seriousness of risk.

Professionals are asked to bring their **experience, skills and knowledge** to the risk assessment process to make an assessment.



MARAM - The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

Risk assessment relies on you or another professional understanding:

- a victim-survivor's **self-assessment of their level of risk**, fear and safety, and
- identifying the **evidence-based risk factors** that are present.

You can gather information to inform this approach from a variety of sources, including:

- **interviewing** or 'assessing' the victim-survivor directly
- **requesting or sharing**, as authorised under applicable legislative information-sharing schemes, with other organisations about the risk factors present or other family violence risk-relevant information about a victim-survivor or perpetrator's circumstances.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Professional Judgement

You should consider this information and apply your professional judgement to each of the elements.

This is the act of you analysing and interpreting information to determine the level of risk.

Risk assessment is a **point-in-time assessment** of the level of risk. Risk is **dynamic** and can change over time, which means that risk should be regularly reviewed, and any changes should inform future assessment.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Professional Judgement

Your assessment of the level or seriousness of risk, as well as appropriate risk management approaches must be informed by **an intersectional analysis**.

You can also take into account relevant information about a victim-survivor or perpetrator's circumstances.



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Professional Judgement

Best-practice approaches to risk assessment with victim-survivors enables them to share their stories with you by you believing them about:

- **their experience** of violence
- the **relationship**
- **how this has impacted any children** in the family (that is, understanding risk experienced by children as victim-survivors)
- **how they are survivors in their own right**, which may also be informed by direct assessment (of children), and
- **attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the perpetrator**.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Professional Judgement

Evidence shows that **adult victim-survivors are often good predictors of their own level of safety and risk** and that this is the most accurate assessment of their level of risk.

By taking a person- or victim-centred approach to risk assessment and management and listening to and believing the victim-survivor you can **recognise the victim-survivor as expert in their own safety**, with intimate knowledge.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Trust your instincts

*Douglas Adams parodied this test in his book Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*

*If it looks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, we have at least to consider the possibility that we have a small aquatic bird of the family Anatidae on our hands.*

*(It's probably a duck!)*



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## 12 RED FLAGS – HIGH RISK

| Yes                      | No                       |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender is obsessed with, dependent upon, or is stalking the victim.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recent separation, issue of a court order, or divorce and responding in a dangerous manner.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The victim believes the offender could injure or kill them.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender has strangled or attempted to strangle the victim.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a history of domestic violence and it is ongoing, recurrent, severe or increasing in frequency.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender has threatened / attempted to commit suicide, or to kill the victim, children or other family members.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender has access to weapons, particularly firearms and has used, or threatened to use them. They may have convictions involving weapons (knives, firearms). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender has easy access to the victim, children or other family members.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Children are in the home when the violence occurred or have been hurt or threatened in family violence situations.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Incidents of animal abuse by the offender.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender has a history of alcohol or drug problems.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The offender has a history of violent behaviour against non-family members.  |

Let's discuss some of the high-risk markers

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Reviewing Risk Markers

In this section we will review some common risk markers used to determine 'high risk' situations.

While there are many actual tools we could use, let's have a look at the ACT framework released in 2022 as a guide for our discussion.

In small groups, let's discuss the risk markers and prepare to share your thoughts about them with the wider group.



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

### Recent, pending or planned separation

Women are most at risk of being killed or seriously harmed during and/or immediately after separation.

The NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team recorded that 65% of female victims killed by a former partner between 2000 and 2014 had ended their relationship within three months prior to the homicide.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Separation

- A well known trigger point for pushing controlling people to a tipping point.
- Controlling people always have the potential for separation in mind, it's their biggest fear and paranoia.
- Constant accusation of infidelity or disloyalty are a warning marker that a person is preoccupied with such thoughts. They are not broken but outraged by separation, not the loss of the person but the relationship.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 116, In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

### Assaulted while pregnant or with a new baby

Violence often begins when women are pregnant and where it was previously occurring, it often escalates in frequency and severity.

Family violence during pregnancy is regarded as a significant indicator of future harm to the woman and child victim.

This factor is associated with control and escalation of violence already occurring.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Pregnancy

- Pregnancy is a possible trigger point when coercive control and violence becomes more visible. It's a method to trap and control their partner.
- Pregnant women are not only more physically vulnerable, they may be more financially and emotionally dependant.
- A woman's priorities may change, when medical professionals and families may become more influential.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 136, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder*, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

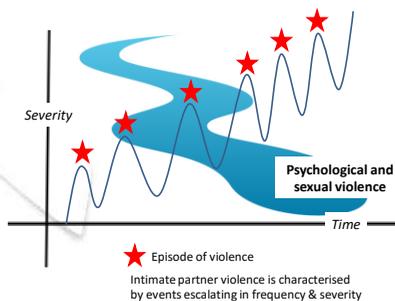
### Escalation in severity and/or frequency

The escalation in frequency and severity of violence over time is linked to lethality and often occurs when there are shifts in other dynamic risk factors, such as the attempts by the victim to leave the relationship.

Dwyer and Miller (2014) found that police investigations and family, criminal or civil court proceedings can trigger an escalation in the aggressive and violent behaviour of the perpetrator and heighten risk to the partner and children. Transition points such as this should be treated with great caution.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Escalating Violence



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

### Strangulation and/or choking

Strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of intimate partner violence. The seriousness of strangulation as an indicator of future lethality is often misidentified, or not responded to proportionately, as a consequence of the often minimal visibility of physical injury. However, many victims suffer internal injuries which may result in subsequent serious or fatal harm.

Most perpetrators do not strangle to kill but to show that they can kill. Non-lethal strangulation is a powerful method of exerting control over victims.

Through credible threat of death, perpetrators coerce compliance.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Consent and Strangulation



The blanket assumption should never be that anyone suffering control would consent to potentially fatal practices, or that a fetish for strangulation is widespread in women.

There are reports that women, and especially young women are increasingly being pressured into strangulation by their partners.

Most report they are frightened by it and find it painful, not arousing.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 124, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder*, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

### Coercive control

Elliott (2017) found through a synthesis of key empirical research, that coercive control is a gendered pattern of abuse, and is the primary strategy used to coerce and exercise control over female survivors by a current or former male partner.

Understanding violence as coercive control, highlights that it is ongoing, cumulative, chronic and routine.

Coercive and controlling patterns of behaviours are particularly dangerous and can heighten the risk of lethality, in contexts where other high-risk factors are present, such as attempts by the victim to leave the relationship.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

### Coercive control continued ...

A perpetrator's obsessive and/or excessive behaviour when experiencing jealousy is often related to controlling behaviours founded in rigid beliefs about gender roles and ownership of victims and has been linked to violent attacks.

Coercive control can include isolating the victim from family and friends.

## Coercive Control

With coercive control,  
compliance doesn't look like fear,  
It looks like consent.



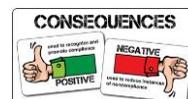
## Instilling fear

Chronic fear is built through experience. Victims learn what provokes the controlling person, and how they respond. Controlling people will instill in their victims, the price of their resistance.

Professor Evan Stark  
*Coercive Control How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life, 2007*

## Questions victims ask?

What are the consequences  
likely to be?



## Web of control

- Control is not one-dimensional, but types of control interweave to form an inescapable web.
- For example, financial abuse adds another layer of control.
- It may involve unwitting collusion of others.
- And there may be threats of serious harm to those that matter to the victim.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 118, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2014*

## The 'jealousy code'

- Jealousy often seen in the narrative on a 'crime of passion' as a defence for murder, a **natural output of romantic love**.
- Controlling people want their partner to **avoid doing things that make them jealous**.
- **Jealousy is a pattern** – it's who they are. Results in people living isolated and miserable lives – a ruse which **reveals their partners paranoia and entitlement, not their love**.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 79-80, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2011*

## The 'jealousy code'

- Young people in first relationships are particularly vulnerable – seeing **jealously as a sign of great love**.
- Excessive jealousy is always **a warning sign**. The control and manipulation that jealousy forgives leads us to understand how coercive control takes hold.
- It **gives power to controlling people** because they become plausible explanations for what is actually control.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 79-80, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## The 'loyalty code'

- **Follows quickly on from the jealousy code**.
- It's imposed through a series of hidden tests designed to make someone **chose between two sides and prove their devotion** to the controlling person.
- **Friends and family are likely targets**. Friends are a 'bad influence', family members may be trying to 'split up the relationship'.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 81, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Routines and Rituals

- While the jealousy and loyalty codes quickly open the door to instilling and maintain control, **rituals and routines function as an early warning system to abusers that control is being challenged**.
- There is micro-management, where the **slightest change becomes highly visible**.
- Planning to leave would be difficult, underpinned with the real fear of the consequences.

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 116, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Questions about control

**How often does your current partner try to ...**

- keep you from seeing your friends?
- restrict your contact with your family or relatives?
- insist on knowing where you are in a way that goes beyond general concern?
- get angry if you speak with another man/woman?
- become suspicious that you are unfaithful?
- prevent you from making decisions about family finances and from shopping independently?
- forbid you to work outside the home, forbid you to leave the house, takes away your car keys, or locks you up?

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

**Perpetrator has threatened to harm or kill the victim and/or the children**

Perpetrators who threaten to harm or kill their partner or former partner, themselves or others including their children, are particularly dangerous.

Campbell et al. (2003) found that women whose partners threatened them with murder were 15 times more likely than other women experiencing abuse to be killed.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Multiple threats to kill

In Emerge study of 20 attempted homicides:

- 19 victims said perpetrator had made at least one prior threat to kill
- 18 reported more than one threat
- 10 said monthly or more
- 5 said weekly or more
- 2 said daily threats



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Examples of threats prior to homicide attempts

- To maim her, to kill daughter, to make her watch him raping new partner
- To kill her with axe he kept under the bed
- To make her watch as he killed her parents
- To shoot her in head and cut her to pieces
- To chop fingers and then arms off
- To have his daughter kill her

## Threats

Threats serve two purposes for the serious abuser:

1. To intimidate and deter partner
2. To 'test the waters', psych himself up to carry out threats

Quote from one killer:

- "The more I said it, the more real it became that I could actually do it"

## Threats

Never ask as a yes/no question

Ask:

- How many threats have been made?
- When, including the most recent?
- What were the exact words and actions?
- Have the threats escalated or changed?

## Threats involving fire



## Suicide or homicide

Suicide threats from controlling people in such a situation are a concern, but they are also quite common. Some of these will be real.

The person may intend to take their own life, but in cases **where there is coercive control it is prudent to consider them veiled homicide threats.**

When **death has entered the conversation, it is indicating a final view of things.**

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 167, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021*

## What note is this

*My wife Nancy, you are the most wonderful woman, a caring mother and beautiful person. I have treated you very badly over the years, and you did not deserve this, I should have been different. I know I was wrong, and I will forever regret the things I did to you. I am going to end it. You will be free of me.* Angus

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 167, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021*

## Risk Markers

### History of domestic and family violence

The most consistently identified risk factor for intimate partner lethality and risk of re-assault is the previous history of violence by the perpetrator against the victim.

## Risk Markers

### Sexual violence

Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) is a uniquely dangerous form of exerting power and control due to its invasive attack on victims' bodies and the severity of mental health, physical injury and gynaecological consequences.

Campbell et al. (2003) found that IPSV was the strongest indicator of escalating frequency and severity of violence.

## Risk Markers

### Sexual violence continued ...

Heenan (2004) found that Australian domestic violence workers believe that **90–100% of their female clients have experienced IPSV**.

More than other factors, IPSV is under-reported by victims. Shame and stigma caused by commonly held assumptions that discussing sex or sexual assault within relationships is 'taboo', are significant barriers to seeking help for IPSV.

## Consent and Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is nearly always present in coercive control in some way....

It is not unusual for sexual force to be **described by perpetrators as 'playful' or consensual** ... 'just messing about or the victim's fault, and victims can be accused of over-reacting or not being open enough in their own sexual behaviour.

The word '**vanilla**' is used as an insult just as the word '**frigid**' are still **used to make victims feel inadequate**. This leads to the rise of the 'sex games gone wrong' defence in Court....

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 124, *In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder*, 2021

## Risk Markers

### Stalking

Stalking behaviours (repeated, persistent and unwanted) including technology-facilitated surveillance, GPS tracking, interferences with property, persistent phoning/texting and contact against court order conditions, increases risk of male-perpetrated homicide.

The **vast majority of perpetrators of stalking, and the most dangerous, are intimate partners of the victim, and not strangers**.

## Risk Markers

### Stalking continued ...

**Stalking when coupled with physical assault**, is strongly connected to murder or attempted murder.

**Stalking behaviour and obsessive thinking** are highly related behaviours.

Technology-facilitated abuse, including on social media, surveillance technologies and apps is a type of stalking.

## Stalking Strategies

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Surveillance</b></p> <p>How is he tracking you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow</li> <li>Watch</li> <li>Wait</li> <li>Show up</li> <li>Tracking software</li> <li>Obtain information about target</li> <li>Proxy</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Life Invasion</b></p> <p>How many ways has he invaded your life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwanted contact at home, work, and other places</li> <li>Phone calls</li> <li>Other unwanted contact</li> <li>Property invasion</li> <li>Spreading rumours</li> <li>Public humiliation</li> <li>Harass friends and family</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Intimidation</b></p> <p>How has he tried to intimidate/scare you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threats</li> <li>Property damage</li> <li>Forced confrontations</li> <li>Keep target from leaving or going somewhere</li> <li>Road rage</li> <li>Threaten or actually harm self</li> <li>Threats to target about harming others</li> </ul> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interfere by Sabotage / Attack</b></p> <p>How much have you lost or what are you afraid of losing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial &amp; work sabotage</li> <li>Ruining reputation</li> <li>Custody interference</li> <li>Attack friends and family</li> <li>Physical / sexual attack</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|---|

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Stalking

- The most **prevalent and dangerous category of stalker is the ex-partner**.
- UK Police have a useful pneumonic to identify stalking –
  - F** – Fixated
  - O** – Obsessive
  - U** – Unwanted
  - R** – Repeated

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
Pg 136, In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

**Access to and/or has made threats with weapons**

A weapon is defined as any tool or object used by a perpetrator to threaten or intimidate, harm or kill a victim or victims, or to destroy property.

Perpetrators with access to weapons, particularly guns and knives, are much more likely to seriously injure or kill a victim or victims than perpetrators without access to weapons.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

**Breach of orders**

Breaching a court order, conditions of parole or any other protection order, indicates a disregard for the law and authority. Such behaviour is a serious indicator of increased risk of future violence.

Breaching an intervention order, or any other order with family violence protection conditions, indicates the accused is not willing to abide by the orders of a court. It also indicates a disregard for the law and authority. Such behaviour is a serious indicator of increased risk of future violence.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

**Threats or harm to pets**

Cruelty and harm directed to pets and other animals can indicate risk of future or more severe violence and are often used as a control tactic by perpetrators.

**Perpetrator misuse of drugs and alcohol**

Perpetrators with a serious problem with illicit drugs, alcohol, prescription drugs or inhalants can lead to impairment in social functioning and creates an increased risk of family violence. This includes temporary drug-induced psychosis.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Risk Markers

**Perpetrator mental illness and/or threatened suicide**

Threats or attempts to self-harm or commit suicide are a risk factor for murder-suicide. This factor is an extreme extension of controlling behaviours.

**Victims' perception of risk**

Victims know their perpetrator best and can often accurately predict their own level of safety and risk, including the risk of re-assault. Practitioners need to be aware that sometimes victims may minimise their risk as a result of the perpetrators abuse tactics which can create fear, confusion or denial.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Summing Up

1. **Clusters of risk markers** are more helpful than numbers of risk markers.
2. **Motivation** is more helpful than actions.
3. **Patterns** are more helpful than incidents or episodes.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Two positions that may help with assessing risk

1. Measuring time investment of the stalker.
2. Tracking an escalation progression in intimate partner stalking.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Non-serious stalking?

We tend to consider small gestures, remote surveillance, and trivial breaches as non-serious.

We should re-consider from the perspective of fixation and obsessions, and time invested.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## A non-serious stalking case?

- The person is tracking your Facebook posts.
- You have seen the person in your street twice in the last week.
- They have texted you at least a couple of times every day.
- There was damage to your wipers and mirrors on your car.
- They left some flowers by your front door.
- They breached the conditions of a protection order by texting you.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## A non-serious stalking case?

- The person is tracking your Facebook posts.
- You have seen the person in your street twice in the last week.
- They have texted you at least a couple of times every day.
- There was damage to your wipers and mirrors on your car.
- They left some flowers by your front door.
- They breached the conditions of a protection order by texting you.

*Is this a High Risk case of stalking?*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Let's re-interpret?

- The person is tracking your Facebook posts. *How much time do they spend looking at your cyber-activity every day. Let's say they look at you Facebook page for an hour a day.*
- You have seen the person in your street twice in the last week. *Where do they live? How long does it take for them to get to your street? How much time are they taking out of their day to get to and from your street?*
- They have texted you at least a couple of times every day. *How much time do they spend texting the victim? More importantly the victim is on their mind.*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Let's re-interpret?

- There was damage to your wipers and mirrors on your car. **How long to get to your car, how long waiting to see no-one was around? How long to get home again?**
- They left some flowers by your front door. **How long to go the florist, buy the flowers, go to your place and then return home?**
- They breached the conditions of a protection order by texting you. **What are the potential repercussions? Is this person willing to do anything which is not in their own best interests.**

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## High Risk?

At least 4 hours. That's only what we know about. That's a part-time job.

Willingness to breach orders and bail conditions indicates that the stalking is more important to them than what might happen to them.

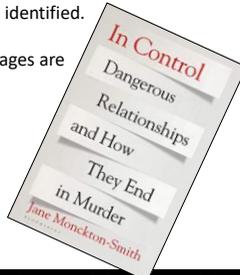
www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## When does risk escalate?

Tracked the chronologies of hundreds of IPV homicides.

A dominant eight-stage pattern was identified.

**Temporal sequencing** – the latter stages are preceded by the earlier stages.



www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Eight Stages – Homicide Timeline

1. Pre-relationship history: criminal record, allegations
2. Early relationship behaviours: early commitment
3. Relationship behaviours: risk markers
4. Potential homicide trigger: separation, ill health, financial problems, threats or rumours
5. Escalation – frequency. Seriousness, stalking, persistence

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Eight Stages – Homicide Timeline

6. Change of thinking
7. Planning – buying weapons, grave digging, manipulate meetings, letters, organise papers.
8. Homicide – homicide/suicide, confessions, missing person, denial, accident, multiple victims

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Eight Stages – Homicide Timeline

1. Pre-relationship history: criminal record, allegations  
**The person has a history of stalking and/or domestic violence (with or without arrests)**
2. Early relationship behaviours: early commitment  
**Early cohabitation, early pregnancy, early declarations of love using possessive language (you're mine, together forever etc), pushes for early commitment, possessive at early stage, jealous at early stage, resists attempts to slow down or end the relationship.**

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Eight Stages – Homicide Timeline

- 3. Relationship behaviours: risk markers  
Coercive control, stalking, violence, sexual aggression, possessiveness, jealousy, threats to kill, suicide, isolating the victim from family and friends, enforces routines on victim and family, threats to pets or children, quick temper, thin skin, drug or alcohol problems (not causal but can exacerbate), depression (not causal but can exacerbate)
- 4. Potential homicide trigger: separation, ill health, financial problems, threats or rumours  
Separation, threat of separation, imagines separation (constant accusations of an affair or similar), bankruptcy or financial ruin, physical health deteriorates in offender or victim, redundancy or retirement, event which prompts retaliation or revenge on victim

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
 In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Eight Stages – Homicide Timeline

- 5. Escalation – frequency. Seriousness, stalking, persistence  
Concerning behaviours become more frequent, concerning behaviours become more serious or severe, stalking (even low level), threats to kill or suicide, may use language like, 'I won't let you leave.' 'I can't live without you.' 'If I can't have you no-one can.'
- 6. Change of thinking  
Last attempts at reconciliation (taking a holiday, begging, crying, temper, force, violence, threats), stalking, victim does not respond to threats or can not respond, there is a new relationship for the victim, financial or reputation ruin is imminent or irreversible, mental or physical health deterioration is irreversible, status irretrievably diminished

Professor Jane Monckton-Smith  
 In Control Dangerous Relationships and How They End in Murder, 2021

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Eight Stages – Homicide Timeline

- 7. Planning – buying weapons, grave digging, manipulate meetings, letters, organise papers.  
Stalking, change in usual behaviour, possible withdrawal, increased menace, may tell people of plans or may continue to make threats, internet searches, gathering of weapons or tools to incapacitate the victim or dispose of them, suicide threats, isolate children
- 8. Homicide – homicide/suicide, confessions, missing person, denial, accident, multiple victims  
Clear homicide with confession, homicide with suicide of offender, homicide made to look like suicide, homicide made to look like 'mercy killing', homicide made to look like accident, homicide made to look like accident or natural causes, stage missing person, children targeted for homicide, children collateral damage, children witness homicide, victim blaming – claiming provocation or self defence

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Discussion & Questions

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## What glasses are you wearing?



Someone said, 'I am not a mental health professional'.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## What glasses are you wearing?



Someone said, 'I am not a mental health professional'.  
 My question is: Was this mainly a mental health matter with some family violence or family violence with some mental health issues?

**Determining the best pathway is absolutely critical!**

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Final Thoughts

Our goal however is not to predict violence, but to prevent it.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## The ‘Gift of Fear’

“ ... we want to believe that people are infinitely complex, with millions of motivations and varieties of behaviours. It is not so. We want to believe that with all the possible combinations of human beings and human feelings, predicting violence is a difficult as picking the winning lottery ticket, yet it isn't difficult at all. We want to believe that human violence is somehow beyond our understanding because as long as it remains a mystery, we have no duty to avoid it, explore it, or anticipate it. We need feel no responsibility for failing to read signals if there are none to read. We can tell ourselves that violence just happens without warning, and usually to others, but in service of these comfortable myths, victims suffer and criminals prosper.”

DeBecker, Gavin. The Gift of Fear, New York: Little Brown and Company, 1997. P.16.

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## What do we believe?

“ ... our work is predicated on the belief that many, if not all, domestic violence deaths are preventable, provided we continue the search for greater knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence: sharing that knowledge with those most likely to be in a position to intervene. Unlike many other homicides, these are not characterised by random acts of violence upon random or circumstantial victims.

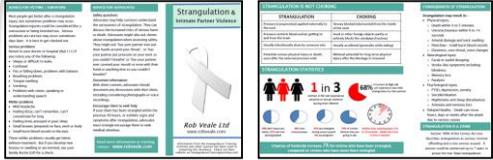
**Compared to other homicides, intimate partner homicides are to some degree or another, calculated acts upon targeted victims.**

*When Domestic Violence Kills . Project Safeguard, Denver, 2001*

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025

## Further contact

- Thank you for your time today.
- If you would like any further information following the session or follow-up training, please feel free to contact me on [robveale@xtra.co.nz](mailto:robveale@xtra.co.nz)



Strangulation brochure

www.robveale.com © Rob Veale Ltd – Not to be used without permission August 2025