

Exercise

Power Relations

AVERT
FAMILY VIOLENCE



**Collaborative Responses in
the Family Law System**



An Australian Government Initiative

Australian
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Contact us

Inquiries regarding the licence and any use of this resource are welcome at:

Assistant Secretary

Family Law Branch

Attorney-General's Department

3-5 National Circuit

Barton ACT 2600

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Power Relations Exercise

Purpose:

- To provide an opportunity for participants to contextualise violence within power relations
- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on power relations through an experiential exercise
- To provide an experience that helps identify the covert nature of power relations.

Materials required:

- Numbers from 1 to 10 on small pieces of paper – enough for there to be one for each participant
- Sticky tape
- Optional: music

Process:

1. Participants are instructed that they will shortly have a number from 1 – 10 taped on their back. (The facilitator can decide how many '10's, '3's, etc depending on how they wish to influence the process). During the exercise they are not to look at what number is taped to their back, nor tell other participants what their respective number is.
2. Tape one number each onto the participants' backs.
3. Participants are informed they are about to pretend they are all at a party where they do not know people very well. They are to treat other party guests according to the number they see on that guests' back. People with number 1 have the highest status in the community and those with 10 the lowest. People with high status are those we seek to connect with, people with low status we have no interest in.



Set the scene for participants; describe the party environment, perhaps play some background music. Get participants to pick up an imaginary drink or plate of food. Initiate an example of small talk and allow the party to commence.

4. After a few minutes – allow at least 5 minutes for sufficient time for interactions to progress – ***without looking at their number, or telling others what their number is*** - ask participants to line themselves up according to what number they ***think*** they have on their back.
5. Debrief the activity:
 - Notice what participants originally thought their status might be versus how they interpreted people treating them over time. Did their sense of what their status was change? What influenced this? How did the way they were treated make them feel? How did their own behaviour evolve during the party? Draw out how subtle the tactics of power relations are, yet how strong their effects.

Key elements to draw out of the discussion:

- Power relations are socially arranged and not always expressed through overt negativity
- Power relations are also *continuously* expressed and operate through styles of relating
- Professional practices of engagement and assessment need to be mindful of power, in order to be effective.

Variation:

- Without knowing your own status number, try and pair up with someone who has the same status as you
- Instead of 1 to 10 put director, accountant, doctor, cleaner, refugee, Muslim visiting scholar, stay-at-home mum/dad, bikie etc....