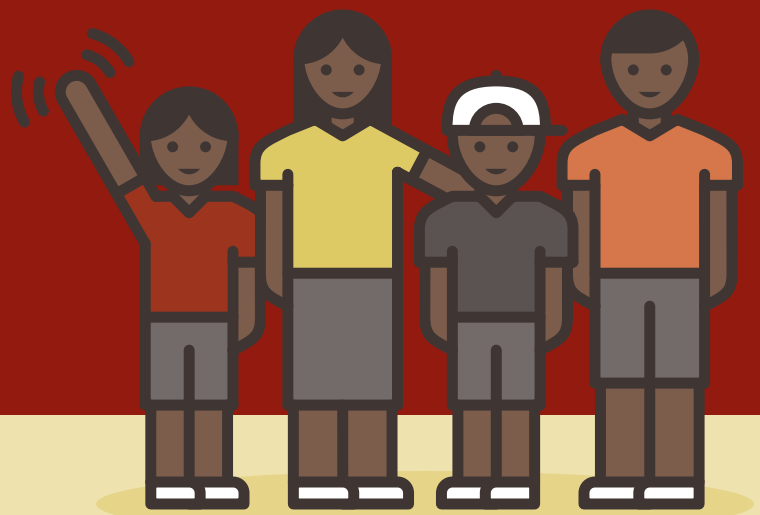




The Grow Model of family violence primary prevention

Changing attitudes
and beliefs to stop violence
before it begins



Why have we created this model?

Domestic, sexual and family violence (DFSV) is a serious and pervasive issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the Northern Territory (NT).

The NT has the highest prevalence of DFSV in Australia and the highest rate of associated homicides, 67% of homicides in the NT are related to DFSV compared with the national average of 39%¹. Aboriginal women in the NT are 18 times more likely to experience this violence than non-Aboriginal women.² There is a pressing need for creative, community-driven and holistic primary prevention.

The Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention Program (TFVPP) operates within Tangentyere Council, the major service delivery agency for the 16 'Town Camp' communities in Alice Springs. TFVPP is comprised of three separate, yet integrated areas of service delivery. These are; Tangentyere Men's Behaviour Change Program, Tangentyere Domestic Violence Specialist Children's Service and the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group. TFVPP is committed to applying an integrated response to prevent family violence in Town Camps and in the wider Alice Springs community. It acknowledges and aims to raise awareness that cultural and societal change is required to facilitate movement towards a safer, healthier and stronger future for families and community.

The work of the TFVPP is underpinned by the Northern Territory Government's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028 – 'Safe Respected and Free from Violence'.³ Additionally, the work is influenced by and hopes to build upon the work of Our Watch, a national organisation which promotes change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children nationwide. Of relevance for TFVPP is Our Watch's

document, 'Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, 2018'.⁴

The TFVPP acknowledges that Town Camp communities of Alice Springs have identified gendered violence as an issue of great worry for them. Community members are concerned that children are being exposed to violence and that harmful gender stereotypes are being reinforced within family dynamics. TFVPP is concerned that there is a risk that the extremity of these stereotypes will increase from generation to generation. It is understood that parents have a large influence on the gender role socialisation of their children, and it is in this context that the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group developed the *Mums Can, Dads Can Project*.⁵ The aim of the project is to influence parents in their modelling of the next generation of parents, and therefore change attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins.

There is an increasing awareness of the scale and severity of the problem of family, domestic and sexual violence in the Northern Territory.⁶ However, the TFVPP is concerned that the focus of responses is often centred on how to mitigate the impacts of violence after it has occurred, rather than addressing its underlying causes and drivers.⁷ By developing a prevention approach that identifies and addresses the deeper driver of violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the TFVPP hopes to begin to start reducing and ultimately preventing violence from occurring in the first place.

Reflecting the messaging of Our Watch's Changing the Picture resource, TFVPP wishes to acknowledge that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is not an 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem'. This violence is an Australian problem, and all of us have a responsibility to work together to prevent domestic, sexual and family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.⁸



Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory have the highest rates of victimisation in the world and are...

18x

more likely to experience family and domestic violence than non-Aboriginal people

40x

more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be hospitalised for family and domestic violence related assaults

The 'Grow Model' of primary prevention – what is it?

Informed by an understanding of the specific nature of DFSV in the NT, and by an understanding of best practice principles in family violence primary prevention, the TFVPP has developed a 'Grow Model' for primary prevention programs. TFVPP has experience of this model working in the context of family violence prevention work but it is likely that this model could be applicable in other areas of primary prevention.

The Grow Model uses the metaphor of a tree to illustrate how the TFVPP approaches family violence primary prevention. This resource will further explore the nature of the problem of family violence and outline the good practice principles that inform the model, before stepping through the process with reference to TFVPP's *Mums Can Dads Can* project as an example of how the model works in practice.

The model combines evidence-based theory with practice wisdom and experience of what works, which is underpinned by key frameworks that create the conditions for growth. The tree metaphor allows primary prevention to be understood as taking place in context. Just like how trees find ways to thrive in the harsh conditions of the Central Australian desert, with the help of sun, water and soil nutrients, so too can primary prevention programs be successful in the context of all the social challenges they face. If the right conditions are created, the tree can grow up strong.

Please note that whilst the Grow Model is detailed through a series of three separate stages TFVPP considers the stages to at times run concurrently and in parallel to each other. Therefore, there has been at times no clear definition of the beginning and end of each stage, and the Grow Model itself does not represent a linear process of change.



The Northern Territory Government's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence reduction framework snapshot.⁹

- The Northern Territory has the highest prevalence of DFSV in Australia;
- The Northern Territory Police Officers and emergency service representatives attend to more than 61 incidents related to domestic and family violence on a typical day in the Northern Territory;
- At least one child is subjected to domestic and family violence every day of the year in the Northern Territory;
- The victimisation rates of domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory is about three times higher than any other jurisdiction;
- The victimisation rate for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory is 18 times higher than non-Indigenous people;
- The Northern Territory has the highest rate of domestic and family violence associated homicides in Australia;
- Women are significantly overrepresented as victims of DFSV;
- DFSV takes on many forms;
- No two experiences are the same.

The drivers of violence¹⁰

There is substantial evidence from research and consultation that gender inequality and rigid gender stereotypes are key drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, alongside the ongoing effects of colonisation. Our Watch's Changing the Picture research demonstrates that gendered factors intersect with other determinants such as trauma, poverty and multidimensional disadvantage.

To address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Our Watch recommends a number of evidence-based strategies including intersectional approaches, supporting Indigenous female leadership and challenging gender stereotypes and the impacts of colonisation on men's and women's roles, relationships and identities.

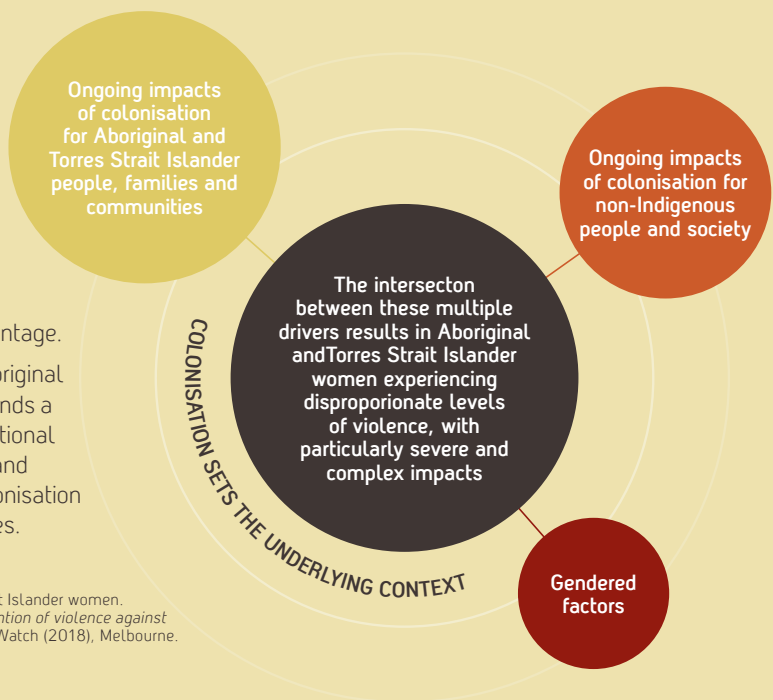


Figure: The intersecting drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Adapted from 'Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children' (p13), by Our Watch (2018), Melbourne. Available at www.ourwatch.org.au. Adapted with permission.

Principles for prevention in practice¹¹

Impactful prevention programs consider the way in which programs achieve change. The Grow Model is guided by the following principles:

Principles	Indicators	Principles	Indicators
Community-driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous people involved in conception, design and delivery; Community owns, leads and governs; and Engages and mobilises Indigenous community. 	Framework and theory-informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has gendered lens and acknowledges the gendered nature of domestic, family and sexual violence; Uses an intersectional framework; and Is trauma informed and contextualises domestic, family and sexual violence within colonisation.
Culturally safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works in a way that is respectful and celebrates Indigenous culture; Build relationships with community; and Listens to community and values their knowledge and experience. 	Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses assertive outreach; Assists people to overcome barriers to access; and Takes the program to where people are.
Holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caters to women, men and children; Works to strengthen families; and Takes a whole-of-community approach. 	Accountability for men who use violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges men's use of violence; Focuses on changing men's behaviour; and Integrates and elevates survivors' voices.
Safety-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centres women and children's safety; Ongoing risk assessment; and Safety planning. 	Multiagency-coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shares resources and information; Refers and follows up with other services; and Participates in multi-agency meetings and contributes to integrated responses and strategies.
Strengths-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-judgemental and draws upon community assets; Engages and strengthens social capital; and Strengthens and celebrates culture. 	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trains the community to identify, intervene and report; Challenges the attitudes which condone domestic, sexual and family violence; and Models equal and respectful relationships.

Mums Can Dads Can

The *Mums Can Dads Can* is a community-led primary prevention program that addresses the gender-based drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence. The program campaigns to challenge the rigid gender stereotypes that coexist with a range of intersectional contributors and of DFSV. Community Champions design, develop and deliver strength-based, accessible and meaningful public messages and resources that promote gender equity, respectful relationships and equal parenting.

The *Mums Can Dads Can* primary prevention program followed the logic of a 'grow model' organised around three stages of change:

- (1) Community Consultation;
- (2) Program Development;
- (3) Resource Development and Implementation.

These stages of the 'Grow Model' are explained in detail over the page illustrated by the example of the *Mums Can Dads Can* project.



'Community Champions design, develop and deliver strength-based, accessible and meaningful public messages and resources that promote gender equity, respectful relationships and equal parenting.'





Stage One

Community consultation

Assess community readiness

Test and prepare the soil

Community readiness¹² is the soil into which the seed can be planted. The soil has been tested and time has been taken to prepare it for planting. It is now ready for the seed to be planted.

Community readiness is assessed using a whole-of-community approach and is led by a group of Community Champions. Community Champions are identified by acknowledging the pre-existing efforts and role of leaders within the community in working towards the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence. A relationship is built with the Community Champions in order to better understand the enabling factors and barriers for development of the prevention program. Thus, the model inherently assesses the community's readiness for change through engagement with the champions. Champions are acknowledged as the experts in their communities and are continuously consulted regarding the accuracy and usefulness of the intended messaging.

The *Mums Can Dads Can* project built on prior relationships with Town Camp community members, who have a history of leadership within the Town Camps of Alice Springs. The project workers undertook consultations with a number of groups from within the community in order to develop the concepts and messaging behind *Mums Can Dads Can* and assess the community's overall readiness for the program. These groups continued to be engaged throughout the development, design and delivery of the program in order to ensure ongoing readiness for the program's messaging.

Talking straight

Planting the seed

Talking straight is about planting the seed for change within the community. It is important that this seed is planted with transparency and integrity, and the community trust that the organisation is fully committed to growing the tree up right.

Community Champions prepare participants to be brought into the prevention program through talking straight. An understanding of primary prevention requires a solid foundation in domestic, family and sexual violence and language here is key. The concepts can be understood via 'talking straight' – which means that the reality or impact of domestic, family and sexual violence is not diluted. Talking straight about violence is necessary because it hurts our women, children, men and communities. Working from a strengths-based perspective does not downplay the reality or impact of domestic, family and sexual violence.

Community Champions supported project workers to develop the messaging used throughout *Mums Can Dads Can* workshops in communities. *Mums Can Dads Can* utilises fun, positive messaging, which allows for the soft entry of participants into a space where they feel supported to have conversations about DFSV. Participants are encouraged to flip gender stereotypes and draw parallels between rigid gender roles and their experiences of violence. Project workers are committed to a no violence message and are sure not to minimise the experiences of women at any stage during community workshops.

'Community readiness is comparable to bush medicine growing in a sandy crop – with the right conditions, a community can grow and thrive.'

'Talking straight must include men who are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of being a man and contribute to the process of change at a community level.'



Stage Two

Program development

Community-driven change

Establishing roots

Community Champions and Cultural safety ensure that the prevention program is embedded within community. They are the roots that provide the strong foundations through which the tree can begin to grow up strong. Strong Community Champions and a commitment to Cultural Safety are essential for the future growth of the tree, without these roots the tree cannot thrive.

Community Champions

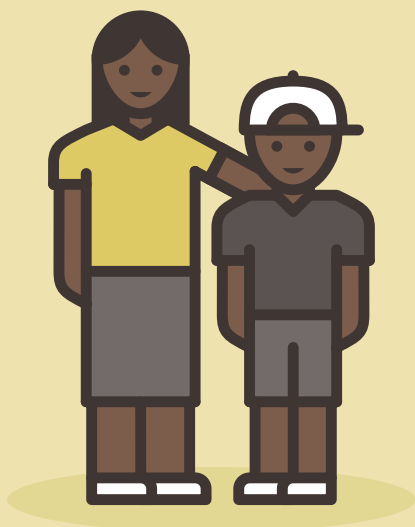
Community-driven prevention programs require the establishment of strong partnerships with Community Champions. The Community Champions ensure that there is an understanding of DFSV and a solid gender-based perspective on the cause of violence prior to resourcing and implementation. The Community Champions are ready to challenge gender roles by promoting the messages and understanding the links between the campaign and the drivers of violence. The Community Champions can support participants to become more involved in the project and themselves become champions of the program.

Cultural Safety

The Community Champions, once identified and trained, ensure that the program is developed to be culturally safe. The Community Champions make the assessment regarding cultural safety, so they can be prepared and confident to promote the key messages of the campaign. Community Champions ensure that the program is inclusive of a wide range of voices, opinions and experiences, so that the material will resonate with the target audiences. Cultural safety also includes awareness of language and literacy, which can often be a barrier for many Aboriginal people and ensuring that the resources developed are visual or translated into local languages where possible.

Mums Can Dads Can is steered by existing community leadership groups. These groups had a track record in working on community initiatives. They work in partnership with the staff to provide a range of perspectives from men, women and young people; and offer a diversity of skills, benefits and strengths. All members undertook training to ensure that they possessed a shared understanding of DFSV from a gendered perspective, including the importance of gender equity, and challenging rigid gender roles and stereotypes in parenting.

The members of these leadership groups were the initial Community Champions for the program. They stood up as individuals to have their photographs displayed on posters throughout the community, demonstrating to others that they were willing to stand up strong against DFSV. As the program developed and workshops were undertaken across Town Camp communities a number of additional community members wished to stand up strong and be Champions for *Mums Can Dads Can*. Thus, whilst Community Champions were important for initial stages of the prevention program, Community Champions have joined *Mums Can Dads Can* at all stages of the program's development.



'We were talking about family violence before we started talking about primary prevention.'



Stage Three

Implementation and evaluation

Resource Development and Implementation

The resources are the culmination of the work. They are the buds and the blossoms, and they carry meaningful and impactful messages throughout communities. Just like a mature tree is covered in blossoms, the messages of the resources saturate communities.

The Community Champions work with staff to develop program materials so that they are appropriate, meaningful and impactful. The messages offer an alternative to rigid gender stereotypes and challenges stigma, shame and discrimination. The messages are spread through culturally appropriate and accessible resources (posters, short film clips and photo language cards), community workshops, and merchandise (t-shirts). These represent and promote gender equity, respectful relationships and equal parenting. These messages introduce new values, thinking processes and relationship skills to encourage equity in relationships. In keeping with Our Watch's primary prevention best practice guidelines, resource implementation should aim to saturate these messages across target populations (children, young people, and adults), using a variety of mediums and channels. Integral to the success of these campaigns is the ownership of the messages by the community via the leadership of the Community Champions. By stage three, the Community Champions are merged with the participants, the staff, service providers and the public, and everyone is involved in the continuation of the program. By this stage, the messages achieve a 'universality' and are adaptable and meaningful across target audiences.

Mums Can Dads Can builds on pre-existing campaigns including the anti-violence signage at the entrance to Town Camps. In addition, the program created t-shirts, posters, short videos and risk assessment cards. The messages were also promoted through community educational workshops which facilitated debate and discussion about the connection between rigid gender roles and DFSV, where participants are encouraged to question and critique gender stereotypes. The aim is to liberate people from a sense of what women and men are allowed to do, which many participants have called the 'new way' with one participant commenting that 'the new way feels free'.

Program Assessment and Growth

Program Assessment and Growth is checking up on the tree and making sure it's healthy and thriving. It's looking at the bark, the branches, the leaves and the flowers, it's re-testing the soil regularly, it's making sure everything is on track and figuring out how the tree could thrive even more.

Program Assessment is a vital element of this model as it allows an organisation to know about what's working and what could work better. Program Assessment should be seen as a useful tool for organisations, and one that is created in-house to best assess the effectiveness of the program *as per the organisation's own objectives*, rather than an externally-

imposed rubric to assess effectiveness against a funder's ideas of what the program should achieve. Evaluation should be structured as a collaborative and iterative process. Program Assessment should follow a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model, which changes and adapts the project based on input and feedback throughout the process.¹³ The program is able to adapt because it is community owned, driven and directed: it reflects what the community wants and changes according to their priorities – in this way, the program is accountable to the community.¹⁴ The program should seek input from a wide range of stakeholders throughout the iterative evaluation processes, where evidence is collected alongside program implementation to allow for program adaption. Ideally, a variety of methods could be used to gather information and assess impacts and then this data can be triangulated to build a picture of effectiveness. Whilst it is not possible to measure the long-term impact of a prevention program during its implementation, the data collection will inform an assessment of program impact over time.

The program workers are committed to an ongoing process of workshoping and assessing *Mums Can Dads Can* alongside community members. Assessments of the resources' impacts are undertaken through a 'yarning' approach, where project workers engage with community members regarding their attitudes towards gender roles pre and post participation in the workshops.¹⁵ *Mums Can Dads Can* intentionally takes a qualitative approach to data collection. This is due to an acknowledgement that quantitative data does not sit well with Indigenous ontologies and that it has historically exploited Indigenous people and contributed to their oppression in various ways.¹⁶ The learnings gained from this qualitative assessment process has then influenced the further development of messages and resources, such as the train the trainer toolkit and the upcoming *Mums Can Dads Can* children's book. As such *Mums Can Dads Can* is inherently accountable to the community that it is working for.



Pollination

Primary prevention is a cyclical process. The learnings from one project will inform future programs, spreading principles of good practice. Primary prevention workers and Community Champions take the nectar of the thriving program elsewhere within the organisation, the community and beyond. This resource is part of that pollination process.

Theories and frameworks underpinning practise

Acknowledgment of ongoing colonisation

Acknowledgment of ongoing colonisation¹⁷ allows us to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to experience dispossession and are often excluded by the structures and systems within the dominant society. Colonialism is an ongoing structure of domination, which privileges some groups and disenfranchises and oppresses others. By acknowledging ongoing colonisation and valuing Aboriginal culture and knowledge, it is possible to transform the dominant power relationships. This process is known as decolonising practice.

Community development theory

Community development theory¹⁸ involves working with communities to achieve their own social, cultural, environmental and economic objectives. It works to strengthen and develop communities and enhance their capacity to engage in addressing problems or issues that they identify. It recognises community members as the experts in their lives and matters that pertain to them. The community is upheld as possessing the knowledge and wisdom to create effective, sustainable change.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is a philosophy and a way of operating that ensures all individuals and groups are treated with regard given to their unique cultural needs and differences. It assumes the right to difference and calls for interactions that do not diminish, demean or disempower individuals based on a perceived or actual difference.¹⁹

Trauma-informed care and practice

Trauma-informed care and practice²⁰ denotes that services and their staff work in a way that acknowledges the diverse experiences of the person they are working with and how this might impact on their sense of safety and willingness to engage. Trauma-informed practice is one that is committed to a focus on recovery and incorporates messages of optimism and hope. Core principles of trauma-informed care include; safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. It is acknowledged that as large numbers of people who experience trauma-related problems access a diverse range of services, it is important that the full range of service delivery introduce trauma-informed principles into their practice.

Anti-oppressive practice

Anti-oppressive practice²¹ empowers communities and individuals by reducing the power imbalances that exist within social hierarchies that serve to oppress certain societal groups. Anti-oppressive practice aims to provide appropriate social services that are responsive and sensitive to the needs of service users (or 'clients') 'regardless of their social status'.

Strengths-based practice

Strengths-based practice²² focusses on the strengths, resilience, abilities and knowledge of individuals and groups. It recognises existing resources within a community and encourages collaborative relationships with the aim of empowering service users, thus producing positive outcomes. A strengths-based approach seeks to build on an individual's strengths rather than deficits.

Two-way learning

Two-way learning is about Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people coming together as equals to share stories and work together. Two-way learning uses the strengths and knowledge of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people to grow safe and strong communities.²³

The United Nations rights of Indigenous peoples

The United Nations rights of Indigenous peoples²⁴ is a foundational, guiding document to community development in the Aboriginal context. The Declaration provides a blueprint for Indigenous communities and governments around the world, it is based on the principles of self-determination and participation, emphasising the need to respect the rights and roles of Aboriginal peoples within society. Ultimately, it sets out the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples worldwide.

Intersectional feminism

Intersectional feminism²⁵ is at the core of the grow model approach, recognising that there are several different factors at play that may increase the vulnerability of Aboriginal women to violence. Intersectional feminism allows us to recognise that multiple systems and structures of oppression and discrimination intersect and reinforce each other. Therefore, any community program focused on the emancipation of women from violence must have an intersectional approach, recognising race, culture, history, gender and class are intersecting factors that result in experiences of entrenched gender inequality.

Narrative theory

Narrative theory²⁶ is a practice that can facilitate community work in ways that are culturally resonant and safe for Aboriginal people. Narrative practice is described as 'telling our stories in ways that make us stronger'. Narrative theory highlights the collective story for Aboriginal communities, emphasising that the experience of ongoing colonisation must be acknowledged. Narrative theory aims to find ways to reduce the power of the problem story and to focus on the strong story of Aboriginal peoples, this is a strengths-based approach, fostering the inherent resilience within Aboriginal communities.

Critical theory

Critical theory²⁷ attributes social problems to structures in society that privilege certain societal groups whilst oppressing others based on factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Typically, it is recognised that these structures were established by and are largely still dominated by 'bourgeois, Christian, heterosexual males of European origin'. Individuals within the oppressed group are more susceptible to a range of social problems – to rectify this disparity, social equity must replace the dominant and subordinate social dichotomy. Critical theory is concerned with changing the world in ways that can help 'emancipate' those on the margins of society.

The stages of change

The stages of change²⁸ explains how activities that are designed to produce change achieve their impact. The model acknowledges change to be an intentional process that occurs over time, through a series of six 'changes'. These include; pre-contemplation, contemplation, determination, action, relapse and maintenance. Participants exit and re-enter the cycle at any stage, experiencing setbacks, stumbling and stay strong. The Grow Model is underpinned by knowledge of the stages through which change occurs. The model reflects the cyclical nature of change using the metaphor of the life cycle of the tree. As the tree blossoms and bears seed the cycle of life begins again, so too do primary prevention programs instil new knowledge and hope for future programs and leaders.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)²⁹ is the most comprehensive human rights instrument to protect women from discrimination. It is the first international treaty to address the fundamental rights of women in politics, health care, education, economics, employment, law, property and marriage and family relations.

'Without strong theoretical frameworks, the 'Grow Model' doesn't have the same potential to grow and flourish. Theories and frameworks create the right conditions for the tree to grow and flourish; nourishing, nurturing, grounding, supporting and keeping the tree strong.'



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WORKING
TOGETHER
WALKING
TOGETHER