Success for Survivors in California: Connection not Separation

Anna Melbin
anna@fullframeinitiative.org

The Full Frame Initiative
www.fullframeinitiative.org

February 19, 2015
Webinar

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The mission of the Full Frame Initiative is to change systems so that people and communities experiencing poverty, violence and trauma have the tools, supports and resources they need to thrive.

- Organizations effective with highly marginalized people share a common DNA: Full Frame practice.

- Many more organizations face barriers to Full Frame practice.

- FFI helps remove these barriers through partnerships with government, nonprofits, funders, researchers and communities.
The Five Domains of Wellbeing

Full Frame practice means:

• Focusing on people, not problems.

• Supporting Five Domains of Wellbeing.

• Recognizing and addressing tradeoffs.
What is Success to You?

When you think about what success means to you, in your own life, which phrase best describes it? Please choose one.

1. Having rewarding relationships with friends, family and community

2. Minimizing my problems and challenges

3. ‘Giving back’ – creating value for others

4. Being physically and/or emotionally ‘safe’

5. Living a calm, ‘normal’ life

6. Achieving something for myself – e.g., getting a good job, buying a house, staying sober, learning to fix my car
How Do Survivors Define Success?

A new project for a commonly overlooked question. Goals:

• Help fill knowledge gap about what is survivor success.
• Learn from success, not just crisis.
• Identify opportunities for change.
• Create cultural and linguistic access to increase relevance.
Project Approach

• Significant Moment Reflection and Appreciative Inquiry.

• Focus on exploration, learning and innovation, not traditional evaluation of program effectiveness.

• Did not collect demographic or personally-identifying information.

Guided by a National Advisory Council - 21 experts from diverse disciplines and communities, representing CA-specific and national perspectives.
Project Nuts and Bolts

Literature review 27 sources

Phase I:
Workshops with 151 survivors

Workshops with 186 practitioners in DV and other service settings

Cultural and Linguistic Access Pilot (Pilot)

Interviews with policy advocates and funders

Phase II:
Community conversations with ~90 stakeholders

15 sources

25 participants

12 participants

12
Cultural and Linguistic Access Pilot

- **One-day Train-the-Trainer.**

- **12 participants representing** Latina, Native American, and seven Asian communities.

- First experienced the workshop process; then customized process and content to be culturally relevant.

- **5 “Pilot” workshops conducted:**
  - 2 Native American in English, 1 ไทย (Thai), 1 普通话 (Mandarin), 1 Español (Spanish).
Focusing on *Success*

**Survivor Workshops:**
1. Single *moment* when it felt right for you (and your family).
2. Who/what made that moment *possible*? What did you do?
3. What do you do *in between* these great moments? Who/what helps you keep going?

**Practitioner Workshops:**
1. Single *moment* when it felt right for a survivor you work(ed) with.
2. What did s/he do or others do to make the moment *possible*?
3. What happens *in between* these great moments? Who/what helps him/her keep going?
What We Learned: General Findings

- Survivors and practitioners: more similarity within each group, than between two groups.

- Experience in workshop most commonality between survivors and practitioners.

- DV is central to survivor success and identity, for all groups except survivors.

Findings held true across all geographic, mainstream and culturally specific communities.

- The field is ready for change!
  - Survivors are buried under ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ labels.
  - Practitioners are constrained by systems, and eager to translate project findings into improved response for survivors.
  - Both groups are hungry for time and tools to learn from what goes well.
How Survivors Define Success

• **Connection not separation! (≥55%),** and achieving something of value for self and others (“I did it!”).

• “I did it!” ≠ “I left”. Only 7% of moments related to leaving or changing the relationship.

• **Flipping the narrative:** changes in abusive relationship sometimes occurred *after or as a result of other success.*
Survivor’s Moments of Success

Graduating from college. It was huge for me. I felt like I had never completed anything in my life, and this felt like something I had accomplished for myself.

DV was always the predominant issue in my life until this moment with my daughter. She didn’t like to touch people. [But that day,] holding her hand, for the length of time, was extraordinary... I felt a joy I had never experienced ... [And it was after that that] I left my abuser for the last time and never went back.

[I was] in my kitchen at our house in Arkansas with my husband, and he was taking the day off work just to stay home with me, and we were dancing in the kitchen.
Do these findings:

A. **Affirm** what you already knew about how survivors define success for themselves?

B. **Challenge** what you believe or have previously heard?

C. Give you **new ideas** or thoughts for working with survivors?

D. **All of the above.**
How Practitioners Define Survivor Success

- **Breakthroughs and transformations in abusive relationship:** from “victim” to “survivor”.

- **Access to services and professionals.**
  - 90% of moments happened in formal services context.

- **Recognize that survivors’ efforts and informal connections enable success,** but **overemphasize role of formal systems.**
Practitioner’s Moments of Survivor Success

I was sitting in my office and she [client] said “I’m not going to let him control me anymore” and she stood firmly when she said it.

She lifted her head, unfolded her body. She looked strong and coming back into herself. She had been frail before. Now she looked like she had her hands back on the wheel.

The common theme in getting to success is various services leading to empowering that individual, so you see the transition from being a victim to a survivor ...
Do these findings:

A. Affirm what you already knew about how systems and practitioners define success for survivors?

B. Challenge what you believe, have previously heard, or experience working with survivors?

C. Give you new ideas or thoughts for working with survivors?

D. All of the above.
Commonality: The Workshop Process

- Survivors and practitioners identified experience as positive; very different from ‘business as usual’.

- Value reflecting on when things go well and want more time, space, and tools to do so.

- Survivors and practitioners rarely have support to examine success.
  - Survivors are asked - what’s wrong? what do you need? Not - what’s going well? what do you already have?
  - Practitioners feel constrained and drained by crisis mode context.

This is making me go back to my room and think of all the other things that make me happy. Not just that one thing [we talked about]. There are a million things that make me happy.

- Survivor in workshop
Lessons from the Pilot

- Survivors in this study are far more alike than different.
- Noteworthy difference is role of God/faith in enabling moments of success - #1 for Pilot, #5 for non-Pilot.
- Culturally specific programs’ emphasis on community and on informal connections has wide-reaching relevance.
- Critically important to create space for trust-building and group process.

We can learn to see each other and see ourselves in each other and recognize that human beings are more alike than we are unalike.

- Maya Angelou
Opportunities for Action

Recommendations identified in Phase II

1. Create a Taskforce of diverse stakeholders to translate project findings into shared definition of program success and related metrics.

2. * Develop a Train-the-Trainer to equip the field and communities to systematically learn from what goes well. *

3. Provide skill development for practitioners to more explicitly support survivors’ informal connections and identify assets/resources outside of formal services.
Download Full Report for Free!

http://fullframeinitiative.org/breaking-cycles/projects

Scroll down to 5th project:

Integrated Responses to Domestic Violence in California: Examining Where Differing Assumptions About Success Impede or Enable Survivor Wellbeing

Launched in 2012, this study aims to uncover how domestic violence survivors, service providers, funders, and policymakers across California understand what “survivor success” is, and how different understandings of success may create policy or programmatic barriers or opportunities for survivors.

REPORT (OCTOBER 2014): How Do Survivors Define Success? A New Project to Address an Overlooked Question
Thoughts? Reactions?

• What about the findings affirm what you already know?

• What about the findings challenge or disagree with what you believe or your experience?

• What new ideas or thoughts do the findings spark for your work? Your own life?

• How can you integrate findings into your daily work?
Thank you!

Anna Melbin
Director of Network Growth & Strategy
anna@fullframeinitiative.org
413-695-3994