



Prevention Coaching Group

A Project of The Texas Council On Family Violence

Following a Good Hunch

The Texas Council on Family Violence combined educational and facilitation theories to apply the movement's core principles and build a successful community of practice.

Five years ago, TCFV established the Prevention Coaching Group to provide targeted training, technical assistance and coaching to staff at twenty-four domestic violence programs charged with providing prevention education in various sectors of their communities statewide. The project was informed by key theories, research, and guiding principles:

- ◇ *Convivencia* or *el convivir* refer to the connections and meaningful interactions humans require in order to thrive; it addresses the cultural expectation that people look out for each other so everyone can thrive and be well, or *vivir en plenitud*. Coaching Group gatherings set aside time for participants to celebrate victories, share challenges, and strategize.
- ◇ Social Emotional Learning is the process through which people acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to manage emotions, be caring, establish good relationships, and handle challenging situations. Planning gatherings, we consider the content while asking: "How do we want participants to feel before, during, and after the session?"
- ◇ Popular education is an approach to education where participants engage each other and the educator as co-learners to critically reflect on issues and take action to change them. Facilitators participate fully in the exercises.
- ◇ Communities of practice are groups of people with a common interest in a particular field. By sharing information on their lived experiences, members learn from each other in ways that are not possible in a traditional presentation.
- ◇ Connection is the strongest protective factor in prevention because isolation is such a toxic risk factor. The Coaching Group deliberately builds playful and thoughtful physical and virtual settings where the participants' shared love of humanity can thrive. Mutual caring and respect are powerful tools to fight systems that dehumanize all members of society.
- ◇ Prevention is long-term work; getting to the root of the violence that is encouraged in all members of society takes time. TCFV is committed to supporting the Coaching Group as a long-term project.
- ◇ The means is the end. We will never see an end to violence in our lifetimes; yet we advance towards that end with interactions infused with dignity and mutual respect. The Coaching Group is consciously developing a group culture that reflects the healthy relationships participants wish to see thrive in their communities.
- ◇ Gendered violence along with other forms of violence have taken thousands of years to become entrenched in our culture and are interconnected. We are all a product of this conditioning. TCFV models how we can compassionately and kindly hold each other accountable for any missteps by applying a principle Audre Lorde wrote about: "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. ...they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."
- ◇ Strength-based advocacy is a standard in direct services. The same principle has been adapted for use in coaching participants through a program and work planning process that accounts for how oppressive dynamics permeate every aspect of our work.
- ◇ Evaluation as a tool for advancing our efforts is expanded to include reflecting on our own praxis and review how our daily actions may or may not be in line with the principles that guide us. As we assess and reassess, we align our practice, and more importantly, we celebrate our victories in defiance of oppressive narratives that perpetuate hopelessness.
- ◇ Wellness practices for advocates are becoming institutionalized in our programs; secondary traumatization for community and prevention educators is not yet fully understood. Every Coaching Group gathering is designed to offer time for self-care as an act of self-preservation, a radical contradiction to the violence and pressure everyone contends with.