

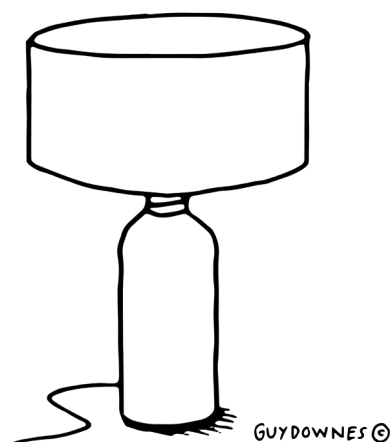
FOLLOW MY LEAD



Reflective questions to responders

- Please describe a specific example of what following a victim-survivors lead has looked like?
- What is one assumption, habit, or discomfort you have to manage in yourself to not take over, in order to follow the person's lead?
- All organisations and roles have constraints and limits. Have you found a way to follow a persons lead within the constraints/rules that you can't change. What do you think about when you do that?
- We won't ever know what our approach might have meant to the victim-survivor at the time, and over time, but what difference do you think this made 'in the moment'?

“That, for her, meant that she could actually bring all of her feelings and all herself as opposed to just one narrative.”



I think that, I think it provides a big sense of relief even its not like something, like they may not even be fully aware of that at the time. But I think that, like, you know, I notice so many women are so conditioned by their abuser often times and by society in general to like defend and justify every decision they make, or there different, whatever it is they do and say, there is this um socialised um, predilection to like, socialised like habit to justify, because they are so used to being asked to justify themselves. And I think when you create an environment, like when I create an environment in which it is clear that I believe them and respect their choices, without them needing to justify or explain their reasoning for why they have made this decision. Um, I can feel or I can hear or sense the relief in their voices that their version of events for the decisions they have made are just accepted without having been challenged.

So, the women's group I run, I provide, I make sure that there is a space, the space is very validating and very accepting of what, of like them for all of who they are, you know. And I often am, the feedback I get um, is that, that sense of validation or that feeling of being believed and being able to just talk about it without having to justify their actions is so important to them.

And you know, like recently a client at the end, we finished running a group and a client at the end said "I just don't know what I would have done without this, you know group over the last", she has come actually, I think she come for four rounds of this group. So "over this past year, I actually don't know what I would have done, because this is one of the only spaces I've been able to be in and actually be understood, and have everyone that's in this space with me, yeah just like believe what I am saying, or understand what I am saying and to be able to relate like that". And I think you know even family and friends etcetera, well this is what she said, but this is what a lot of my clients have said, 'Family and friends will be supportive but you know, only supportive if she leaves for example'.

So, having a space whether it's one to one or in that group setting where she has been able to express that she misses him, or express...the reasons she was in love with him, or still feels love for him or whatever it might be, even after she has experienced really full on violence and abuse, like that, for her, meant that she could actually bring all of her feelings and all herself as opposed to just one narrative.