

**You are invited to join Yellow Brick House for a free, virtual Zoom screening of the film “Woman” any day from May 14 – 17 at 7 pm. In addition, you can also view a Zoom panel discussion on Monday, May 17<sup>th</sup> from 6 – 7:15 pm. Register on the Yellow Brick House website [www.yellowbrickhouse.org](http://www.yellowbrickhouse.org).  
*Warning: Both the film and panel discussion will contain sensitive content.***

**Summary of April 27, 2021 Speaker Series Presentation by Marisa Mei, Public Education Coordinator for the Yellow Brick House.**

**Topic ... When Love Hurts: Taking the First Step to Escape Domestic Violence**

*WARNING: This summary contains ‘trigger’ words that may be disturbing for some readers. You may wish to discontinue reading.*

CFUW A/N welcomed Marisa Mei, Public Education Coordinator for the Yellow Brick House, as our monthly speaker April 27, 2021. The Yellow Brick House is an emergency shelter for women and their children escaping domestic abuse and violence. In the past 43 years, the Yellow Brick House has provided life-saving support to 6,220 women.

The numbers tell the story about the impact of COVID-19 prevention measures that resulted in women being trapped with their abusers. Gender-Based Violence has increased 30% across Canada. A woman is killed every 2.5 days by her intimate partner. Prior to COVID-19, the death rate was 1 life snuffed out every 6 days.

During this period (2019-2020), the Yellow Brick House has provided emergency shelter to 183 women and 161 children. Unfortunately, they were not able to accommodate 347 women and 444 children that needed emergency shelter. Their team provided 11,000 hours of care related to arranging transitional housing support, individual counselling to women and their children and legal support. In a virtual environment, this was a huge challenge for their team.

Their **crisis line** handled 4,335 crisis and support calls. This line is open 24/7 and women can text if they cannot call. **The number is 1-800-263-3247.**

Through Yellow Brick House’s public educational program, they aim to reach out to 4000+ students. 9,415 people have signed up for the FREE online training modules for educators, facilitators, and interested community members.

What is the definition of the word *abuse*? “ANY behaviour or action that is used to scare, harm, threaten, control, intimidate or injure another person. Abuse included the assertion of *power and control*. An *abuser asserts their power over you to control your* behaviour or feelings.” Exerting Power and Control over another person is the goal of abusive behaviour.

Marisa briefly described eight different types of abuse\*:

- 1) Physical – threatens to hurt you, someone else or something of importance to you; forced confinement; withholding food or medication; locks you in a car and drives dangerously which threatens your life
- 2) Emotional – denigrates you; makes you feel it's 'your fault' or that you deserve the abuse.
- 3) Social – restricts your activities and who you see. In a school setting, isolating/excluding you
- 4) Sexual – anything sexual that you did not give consent to; degrading behaviour, comments, attitudes.
- 5) Economic/financial – controls access to all the money; you have to ask partner for money and it is never enough. Denies access to a job that would provide financial independence. Or forces you to get a job but you never see your pay check
- 6) Spiritual – forcing you to adhere to a religion that is not your choice, denying you the right to practice your faith. Degrading, devaluing your morals, beliefs and values.
- 7) Stalking & Harassment – following, constantly texting and calling to track your movements/interactions
- 8) Cyber – all of the foregoing items and cyberbullying and abuse by inflicting abuse through technology

\*Abuse and violence in any form, including a single occurrence is never justified under any circumstance

What is the harm done to a woman and her children? At the very least, it erodes a woman's self-esteem and self-confidence making it much harder for her to have the courage to reach out for help. When she does extricate herself and her children from a dangerous or deadly situation, it takes time and great effort to rebuild her life and that of her children.

When the community hears about a case of abuse or the death of a woman at the hands of her intimate partner, the community is shaken to think that could happen. This deadly abuse crosses all socio-economic boundaries.

Increased awareness and education about what constitutes a healthy, non-abusive, relationship are needed to reduce the incidence of unacceptable, and sometimes deadly, behaviours between intimate partners.

A signal for help has been developed and advertised widely. It comes with a caveat: As the signal becomes better known, abusers may be able to recognize it. Great caution must be taken when either *signalling* for help or when you *acknowledge* someone else's plea for help. *If an abuser is aware of the silent messages being passed back and forth, it can greatly increase the danger for a woman. She is at much greater risk when she takes steps to leave, making it important to access support to develop a safety plan.*

Below is a picture of the two-step signal for help. 1. Thumb across palm. 2. Close fingers down around thumb.



### **How can we help as a community?**

Talk about abuse and violence between intimate partners and gender based violence, in general. Speak up and out! Vote for politicians who have a track record of working to improve protections and equity for women in society as a whole. Educate yourself and others, attend community events/ support the cause to end violence against women and children. Look for opportunities to provide support to endangered women and their children.

When the pandemic is over and life returns to normal, the Yellow Brick House will welcome volunteers. Donations of money and new 'Wish List' items are always welcome. The cost of providing emergency shelter in a hotel during the pandemic is \$150 a night. Check the website for the wish list of items women ask for most often and see the instructions about where to take the items.

### **How can you help someone who is trying to leave an abusive situation?**

Be supportive and listen patiently. Never question; always believe them. Let them know you will not be able to fix the situation. Assure them that healing and recovery is possible. Encourage them to move from survive to thrive. Help them to get connected to a shelter.

**The crisis line is active 24/7 for phone calls or text messages. The number is 1-800-263-3247.**

**Website: [www.yellowbrickhouse.org](http://www.yellowbrickhouse.org)**

*Written by Delores Ritchie for the Program Committee*